

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Commissioner
I&NS, Washington, D. C.

FROM : L. W. Gilman, Chief Patrol Inspector
Brownsville, Texas

SUBJECT: Construction of Proposed Fence - Brownsville, Texas

ATTENTION: Mr. Cates, Border Patrol Branch

DATE: March 30, 1955



The actual problem of the physical location of the proposed 4.9 miles of fence was given a great deal of study and exploration by officers of this station and all of the proposed sites gone over very carefully. It is believed that the proposed location as outlined below will be most advantageous to the Service in controlling the illegal entry of aliens in the Brownsville area. Four and nine tenths (4.9) miles is sufficient to cover the area most used in the past, and in the present, by aliens attempting illegal entry in this area. It has been so placed as to cover almost the entire river front between the cities of Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico. It will be possible to have a jeep patrol road on the river side of the fence for a majority of the length. The only break in this road will be under the Gateway Bridge where insufficient room exists of the passage of a vehicle. At that point it will be necessary for the patrol jeep to leave the river bank and go around through the City of Brownsville to a point on the upriver side of the bridge to again enter the patrol road on the river side of the fence. This leaves a short area which cannot be patrolled by jeep, but which it is believed, can be successfully guarded by officers on foot after alighting from a patrolling jeep at the nearest entrance. For the sake of better understanding of areas and pictures mentioned, the pictures have been designated as View No. I through VI, and the fence divided into Sections 1 through 4.7. This designation of the fence into sections was made in order that each portion of the fence which presented a particular or different problem might be dealt with separately.

Section 1: This section is best shown by Views numbered I and II. View I was taken from the southeast section of Matamoros, Mexico, looking upriver, or northward, from the lower end of Fort Brown bend toward Brownsville, showing the lower terminus of the fence. There are no problems in Section 1 of the fence. The fence will be on the upper bank of the river, approximately twelve feet from the edge, allowing for the patrol road to be placed on the river side. The ground in the entire area is soft river silt. There is no large vegetation in the pathway shown for the fence. Section 1 covers approximately 1.6 miles of fence. There are no gates necessary in this section. Property in Section 1 is owned or controlled by the City of Brownsville, Texas which has evidenced its agreement to the position of the fence.

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Section 2: This section is shown by Views II and VI. It is necessary to look at View VI in order to get a better understanding of the problems involved in Section Number 2. In the right center of View VI there can be seen a pump with a pipe running over the levee. This pump supplies water for the lake in the background. At this point the river bank is very abrupt and steep, and a revetment and levee have been built by the International Boundry Commission. This levee is the actual river bank for approximately fifty yards and there is no room on the river side of the levee for a roadway. On View VI looking to the left, toward the Gateway bridge from this point, the river bank widens out to a width varying from ten to approximately forty yards. A ramp has been built by the International Boundry Commission approximately 25 yards to the north, or the upriver side of the pump, in order that they may maintain the levee.

The International Boundry Commission representatives who went over the site with officers from this office stated that the International Boundry Commission would in all probability not allow a fence on the levee and proposed that the fence be placed as shown in white on Views II and VI, with a gate at the point of the ramp, and with the fence running along the break in the slope of the river side of the levee at the narrowest point of the bank, and running through the middle of the wider parts of the bank near the Gateway bridge. This would allow for vehicles to move on the river side of the fence for about 100 yards nearest the Gateway Bridge, and allow for work on the river bank and revetments at that point. However, this office believes that should the fence be placed on the outer edge of the levee, as shown in black, from the Gateway bridge to a point approximately 400 yards downriver where it would cross the levee and drop down to the river bank, with a gate on the levee, a better patrol and control of the fence could be had. The reason given by the International Boundry Commission representative for not placing the fence on the levee was that levee maintenance would be too difficult. However, with the levee paved for this short distance and used as a patrol road, maintenance should be very easy. The International Boundry Commission representative agreed that possibly his superiors might be persuaded to place the fence as desired by this office. The ground on which the fence must be built in this area presents some problems, the first being that should the fence be placed on the riverside of the levee as desired by the International Boundry Commission all along the revetment area, a layer of heavy rock is very near the surface, making digging of post holes, or trenches to bury the fence very difficult. Also, the fence must be built on the slope of the levee, making it much more difficult. Should the fence continue on through the lower side of the levee, the same problem of rock would be encountered almost the entire distance of Section 2 and there would have to be two gates in Section 2 under the International Boundry Commission plan. Should the fence be placed on the levee, the work of installing would be relatively simple, and only one gate would be necessary. This would give a patrol road all along the length of Sections 1 and 2, while the International Boundry Commission's plan would allow for no road along Section 2. All of Section 2 is controlled by the International Boundry Commission.

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Section 3: This section, shown in Views III and V, is that area just upriver, or northwest from the Gateway Bridge. It consists of approximately 500 yards of fence, all of which must be built on property controlled by the International Boundry Commission. The site was considered with a representative of the International Boundry Commission, and it was agreed that the only logical place for the fence for the first 400 yards was on the top of the levee. However, the International Boundry Commission representative desired that the fence be placed on the south, or river edge of the levee, while this Service desires it placed on the north edge of the levee. If placed on the north side, the top of the levee which is paved, could be used for a patrol road from the Gateway bridge northward for a distance of approximately 400 yards, while if it were placed on the south, or river side, no patrol road could be had for that distance as it is impossible to build a road on the river bank at that distance. From the point approximately 400 yards upriver or northwest from the Gateway bridge the fence would follow an old dirt levee and the second bank of the river and there is no question or problem in either its location or construction. On the portion to be built on top of the International Boundry Commission levee, construction may be difficult as the fill was made with rock, which comes very close to the top of the levee, making any postholes or trenches difficult. Also, the top of the levee is paved and the edges concreted, making construction more of a problem. In this section there should be one four foot gate adjoining the Gateway Bridge to allow for the entrance on foot of persons, and one ten foot gate as shown on the drawings, approximately 400 yards upriver, or northwest of the Gateway Bridge.

Section 4: This section as seen in Views III, IV and V, covers approximately .6 miles and presents no problems in building. The fence follows an existing high second bank of the river for the most part, after starting out on an old levee. There is sufficient room for the fence and patrol to be built in this area. It will come in very close to the river as it passes under the Brownsville and Matamoros railroad bridge, and continues on upriver on the second bank. Ground is soft and building should be simple. The entire area is owned or controlled by the Brownsville and Matamoros Bridge Company, which is in turn controlled by the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Responsible officials of the Missouri Pacific railroad Company have been contacted and stated that they felt sure that their company would grant an easement on the needed right-of-way. There are no gates planned in Section 4.

Section 5: This section as shown in Views III and IV presents few problems. It is to be built on a high bluff bank of the river, on land owned or controlled by the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company and under lease to Mr. R. Mathers. Both concerned parties have been contacted and have indicated that they would grant easement for right-of-way. The ground is soft, and there is sufficient room for the fence and patrol road on the river side. There will be one ten foot gate in this section in order to allow for animals which are being pastured on the area to reach water. Also, it will be necessary to build a culvert with a locked headgate at the point

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indicated in the upper right of View IV to take care of drain from a large creek at that point. The site of the proposed tower is shown on View III and IV and is in Section 5 of the fence area. This tower should cover the entire area of Section 4, 5 and 6.

Section 6: This section is shown in View III and IV and covers approximately 1.0 miles. It is relatively simple, with only one problem presented. The land is owned by Mr. R. Mathers who has indicated that he would grant easement. At one point, in the upper right of View IV, Mr. Mathers has a pump in the river occasionally, and a gate for passage to the pump, together with some arrangement for the passage of a 10" pipe under the fence will have to be arranged. The fence will follow the second bank of the river for the most part, but at the point where the pump and gate will be located, the river bank is so abrupt and steep that the fence will have to be placed on Mr. Mathers' levee, for a distance of approximately 200 yards. This was talked over with him and he agreed. For the remainder of the distance, the fence will return to the second bank, and the construction should not be difficult as the soil is a deep loam.

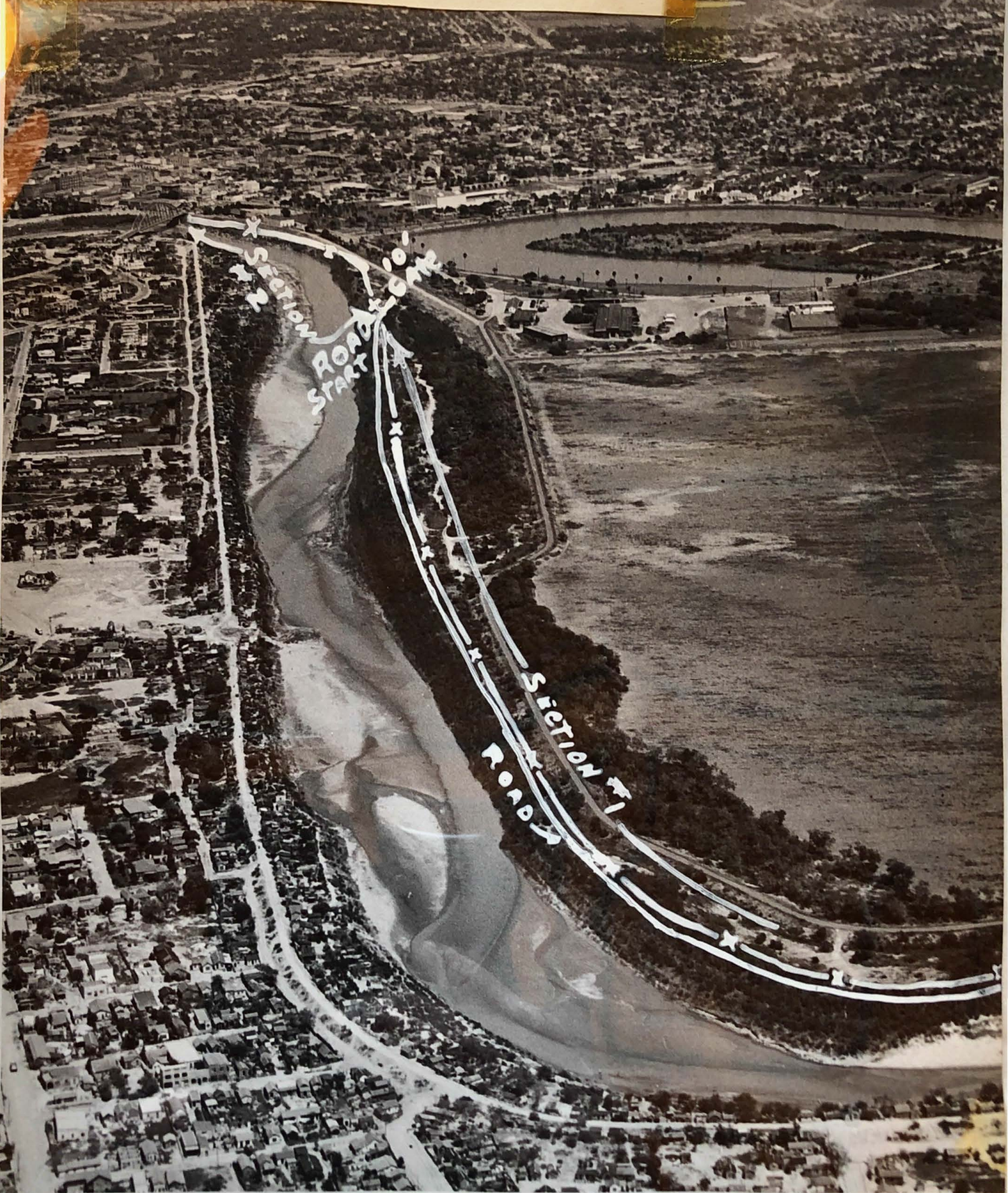
Section 7: This section will extend along the second bank of the river from approximately one mile upriver from the boundaries shown on Views III and IV. There are no problems in this Section, as the physical makeup of the terrain presents no problem, and the ownership is in Mr. R. Mathers who has previously indicated that he would grant easement. There is sufficient room for a patrol road on the south, or river side of the fence. One gate will be necessary so that stock and animals would be able to get to the river for water.

Towers: There are three towers, as shown on Views II and III. Tower No. 1 will be located in the Ft. Brown Bend, at the southern or downriver terminus of the fence. It should be an 80' foot tower, and can be used with walkie talkie radio to patrol vehicle. Tower No. 2 is tentatively located at the north terminus of the Gateway Bridge on property owned by the Treasury Department. Tower No. 2 will control the fence and patrol road from Section one through Section four. Tower No. 3 is located as shown in Views No. III and IV, and will control part of Sections 4, 5, 6 and 7. It will be on land owned by the Missouri Pacific Railroad and leased by Mr. R. Mathers. Both have indicated that they will grant easement.

cc: 1 cy Regional Ofc.
1 cy District Ofc.

A. L. Leman

VIEW NO. I - looking north, upriver from lower end of Ft Brown bend, toward Brownsville, Texas. View is of Sections No. 1 & 2 of fence. View is from the south, or downriver side of Matamoras, looking toward the U. S. Approximately 1.75 miles of fence shown. N. road shown in Section No. 2.



VIEW NO. 11 - looking downriver or southward, from the approximate center of Brownsville, Texas toward the southern part of Matamoros. Sections 1 & 2 of fence shown. Same sections as View No. 1.

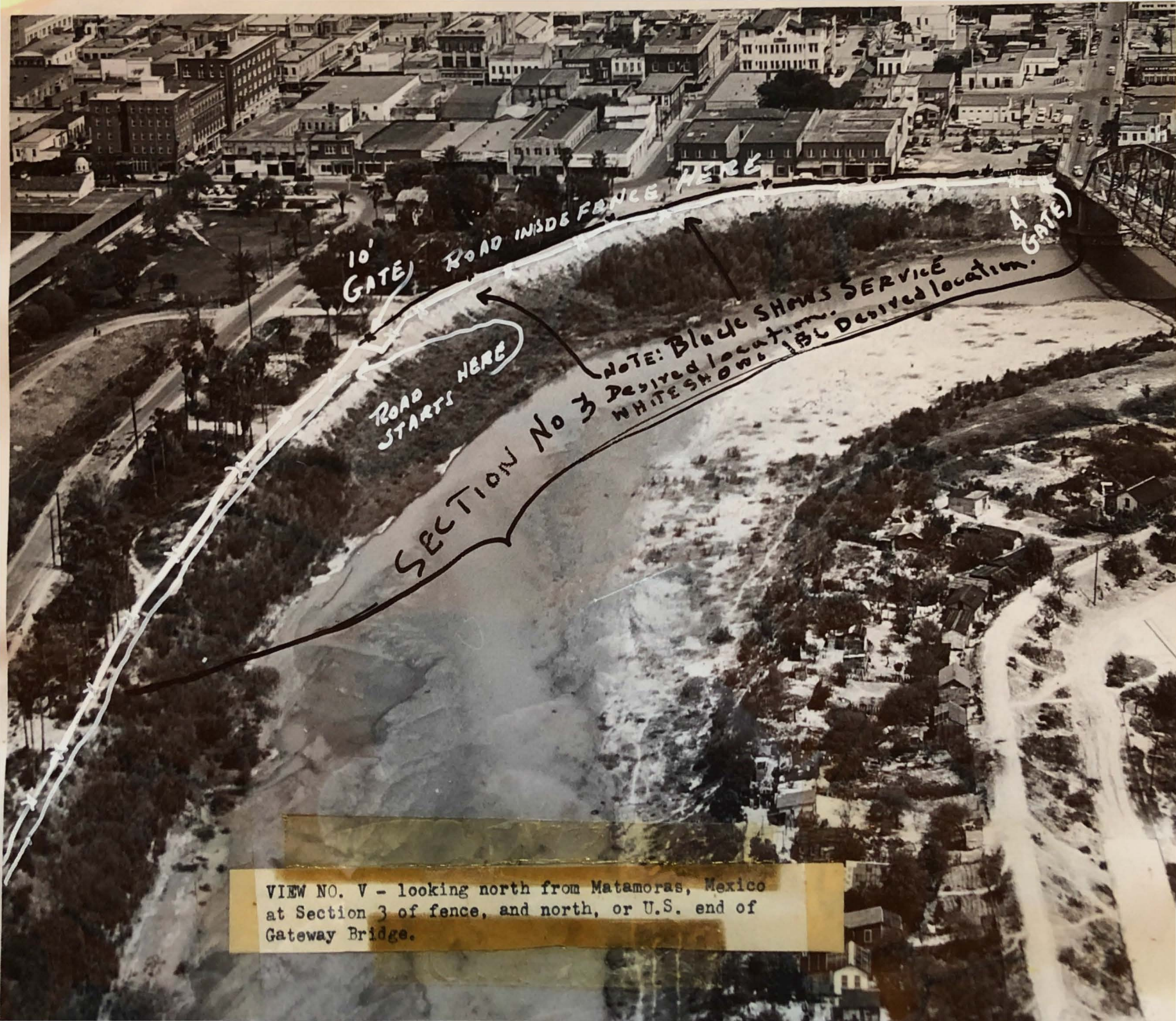


VIEW NO. III - looking upriver (or westward at this point) at sections 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7 of fence. View from approximate center of Brownsville, Texas looking toward the western edge of Matamoras, Mexico. B&M bridge shown in upper center, Gateway Bridge in lower center.





VIEW NO. IV - looking southeast toward Brownsville, Texas (down-river) from upper terminus of fence. View from western edge of Matamoras, Mexico. Sections 7, 6, 5, 4, & 3 of fence shown.



VIEW NO. V - looking north from Matamoras, Mexico
at Section 3 of fence, and north, or U.S. end of
Gateway Bridge.



VIEW NO. VI - looking north from Matamoras, Mexico toward Brownsville, Texas, Shows the north, or U.S. end of Gateway Bridge and Section No. 2 of fence.