

JUSTIFICATION, EXTENSION OF FENCES, MEXICAN BORDER

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1. For many years there have been in existence sections of man-proof fences--18 miles in all--along the border between the United States and Mexico, separating communities on either side of the international boundary line. Experience has established the value of such fences in deterring illegal traffic, in both directions, of persons and things. For example, a comparison of apprehensions of illegal entrants in two localities demonstrates the effectiveness of a fence in preventing illegal crossings of the border. Thus, where Nogales in the United States is divided from Nogales, Sonora, in Mexico by a fence, there were but 474 arrests during the period from July 1, 1955, to December 31, 1955; but in the area where El Paso in the United States is separated only by a dry river bed from Juarez, Mexico, there were in the same period 5,954 arrests.

2. A continuing study of the entire border situation during the past two years indicates conclusively that the 34.3 miles of fence requested in the Immigration and Naturalization Service appropriations for the fiscal year 1957 will reduce the present rate of illegal crossings 30% to 50%. The average of apprehensions today is somewhat less than 200 daily. There are ten Sectors averaging in length about 200 miles each along our southern border. In some instances, in the Sectors, as many as 60% of the apprehensions are of illegal entries in an area proposed for protection by a fence.

3. To achieve the benefits and the same results which would follow from erection of a fence by utilization of manpower would require an increase of at least 200 officers in the Border Patrol. On a pure money basis, the capital expense of 1.4 million dollars for the proposed fences is obviously more economical than a continuing annual expense of 1.8 million dollars for additional personnel and supporting equipment needed to maintain their efficiency. And, under no circumstances will the efficiency of the increased personnel approximate what can be accomplished by the fence.

4. At present the principal type of individuals apprehended in the areas where fences are desired are women and children, teen-agers, pilferers and scavengers, and occasionally the truly dangerous criminal type, including the trafficker in narcotic drugs. The use of a fence would permit the diversion of highly trained officers to operate in the open country through which the more dangerous group of illegal aliens attempts to penetrate the line.

5. The value of a fence as an aid in preventing the surreptitious entry of Red agents should not be overlooked. Where fencing is proposed, conditions along the border are ideal for harboring such people. These agents are highly skilled in their business and choose their own time to attempt an entry. The smuggling of fissionable materials by such sources, particularly at night, is an alarming possibility. Therefore, any measure to better control this threat

from without will help to strengthen national security.

6. Since the time when this matter of a fence was first given publicity, it is understood that persons, both United States citizens and Mexicans, in the vicinity of Brownsville, have expressed opposition to a fence in the Brownsville-Matamoras locality on the basis that for their purposes it would be more suitable there to have a series of bear-trap dams which would create an artificial water barrier, equally effective for our purposes. The Service does not contemplate placing a fence in that vicinity. However, elsewhere, communities on both sides of the international border favor fences in the places where they are intended to be erected.