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IA Special Instruction
 PO-53-47
 International Information Administration March 12, 1953

INFORMATION POLICY FOR
 UNITED STATES SHRIMP BOAT PROBLEM

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this instruction is to establish information policy guidance regarding treatment of the shrimp boat controversy with Mexico.

II. BACKGROUND

Mexico has seized American shrimp boats occasionally over the past several years, but the present seizure is the largest to have occurred so far. There are good shrimp fisheries along the Mexican Gulf coast which American shrimp fishermen are naturally anxious to exploit. Mexico claims a nine-mile strip of territorial waters, whereas the United States recognizes only a three-mile limit. The United States has not been in a position to argue the point too strongly with Mexico, or to take the matter to an international tribunal for adjudication because the Mexicans have strong points on their side and our legal people feel we would probably lose the case. The Department refrains from advising shrimp fishermen to stay out of the Mexican nine-mile limit, but we do inform them of the Mexican claim.

American shrimp fishermen undoubtedly on occasion violate not only the Mexican nine-mile limit, but also the three-mile limit. The shrimp fishermen also approach very close to the Mexican shore and engage in trade at small Mexican coastal villages without proper Mexican customs control. The Mexican shrimp industry is opposed to United States shrimp fishermen because it feels they contribute to reduction of available shrimp. All of these circumstances create high feeling in Mexico and contribute to over-zealousness on the part of Mexican patrol authorities.

It is usually extremely difficult to obtain exact information on the position of shrimp boats which are seized. It is, therefore, difficult to know whether they are actually violating Mexican regulations or not. The Department and its representatives in Mexico have constantly taken every feasible action to assist seized American vessels and their crews and to press legitimate claims against the Mexican Government for illegal seizures.

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