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Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

May 9, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Tillerson & Administrator Pruitt:

I am writing you regarding the significant sewage spill that has occurred into the Tijuana River from Mexico and continues to pour into the U.S. through San Diego County. I know you have received correspondence from some of my Congressional colleagues regarding this issue and I fully share their concerns with the adverse affect these millions of gallons, constituting the worst sewage spill in over a decade, has had on our local region. There is, however, another critical aspect to this problem that warrants your attention.

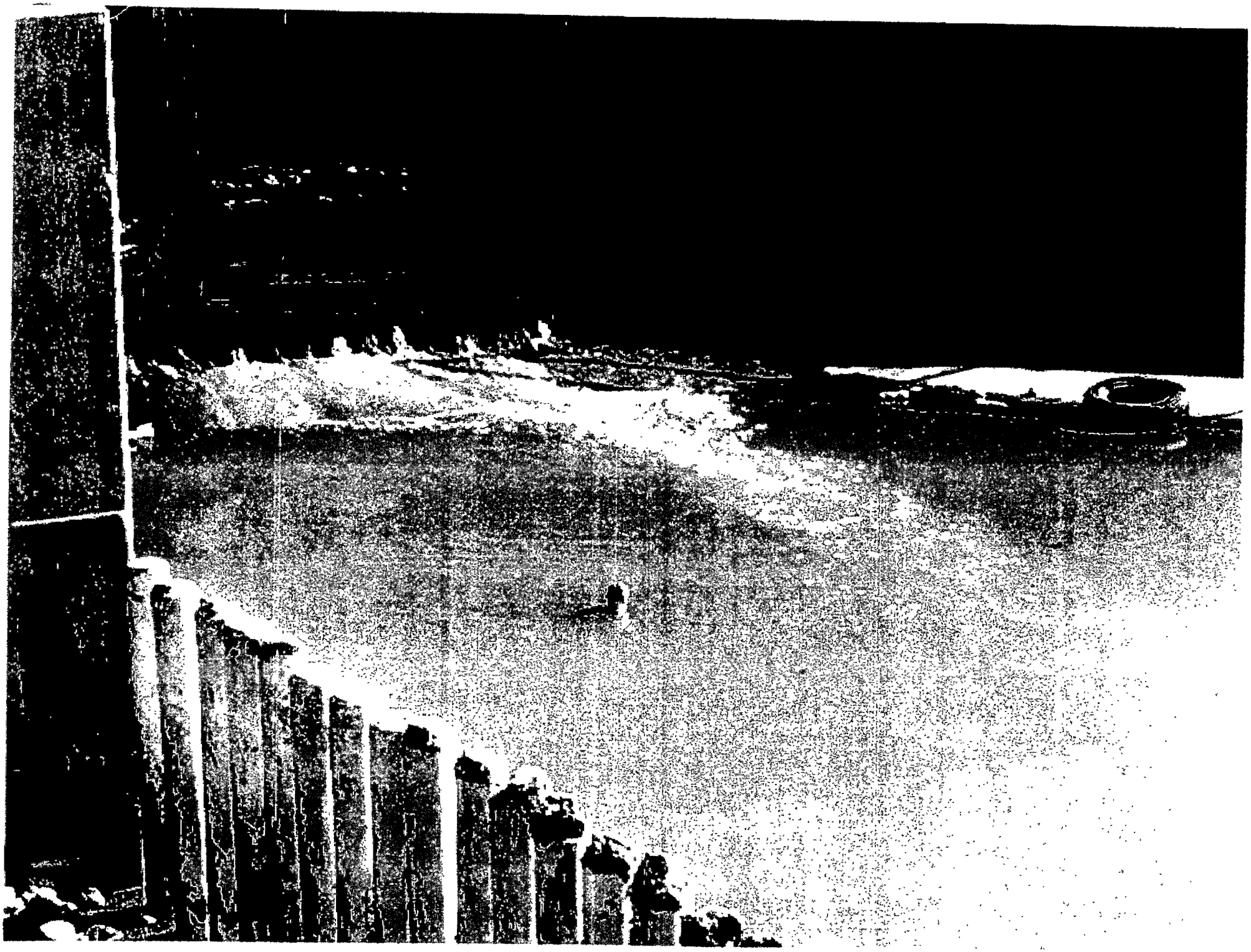
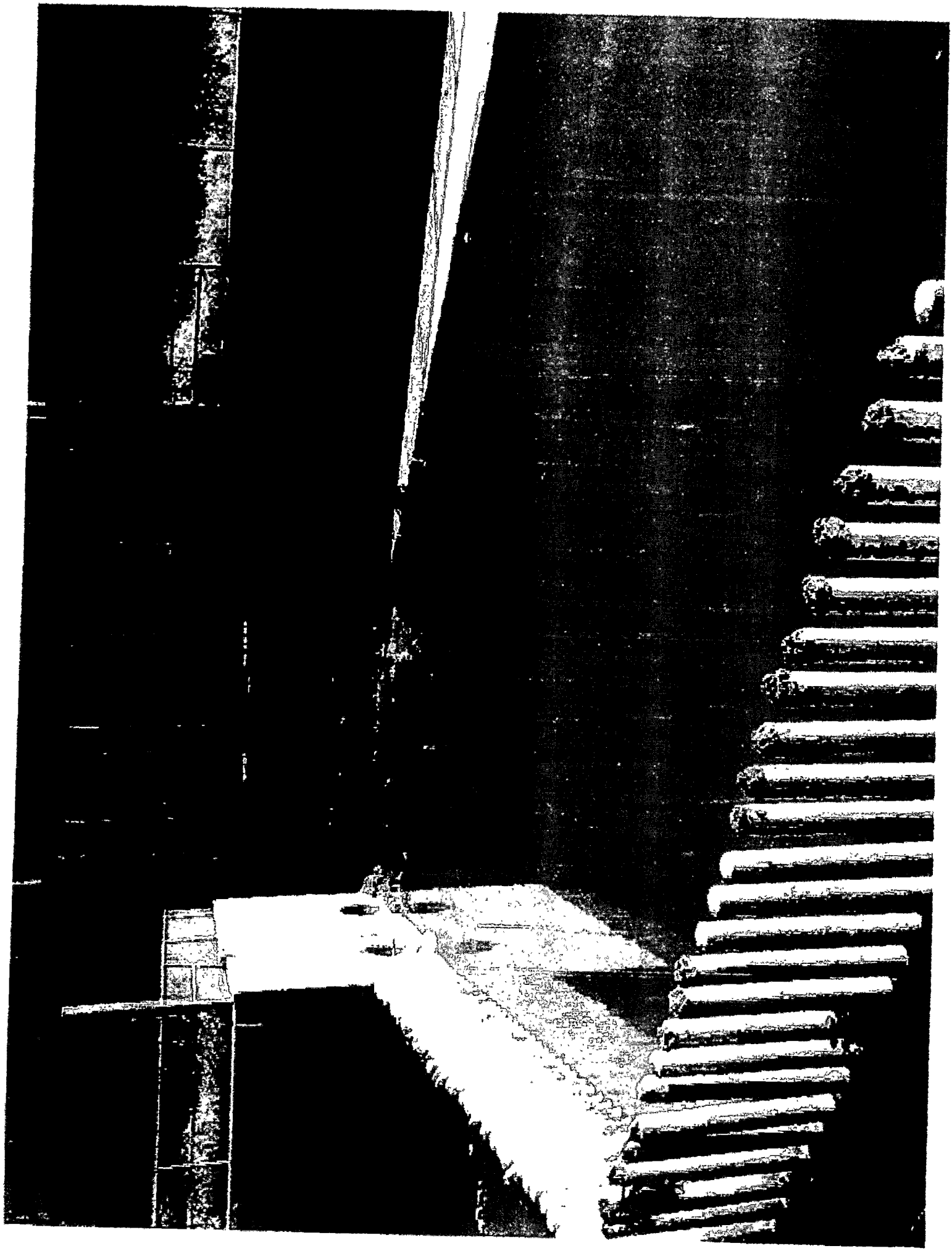
Compounding the environmental, economic and public health ramifications, it is imperative to highlight the negative impact this situation is having on our military and border enforcement personnel. Individuals with the U.S. Border Patrol and U.S. Navy SEAL teams perform their responsibilities throughout this area on a daily basis. The current spill, as indicated in the pictures I've enclosed, is significant and has increased their risk for exposure to a multitude of diseases and pollutants. While I am aware that several meetings with local officials have occurred regarding the responsibilities and actions by the United States International Boundary Water Commission (IBWC), I believe a review alone is woefully insufficient.

I have personally received reports of Border Patrol agents falling ill, being forced to leave their shifts and seek medical attention, possibly even putting their families at risk when these agents return home following events of exposure. Additionally, I am aware of critical military operations and exercises in the area being suspended because of the harmful conditions and risk the current spill poses. In other words, this sewage spill is unquestionably adversely affecting our ability to respond to national security priorities. In the meantime, the response by the federal government of Mexico is passive at best. For far too often, our expectations regarding Mexico on these types of issues are lowered for no other reason than hoping a "provide money" approach will solve the problem. Greater accountability and involvement with identifiable benchmarks is the approach that should be utilized and an approach that I am confident Mexico is fully capable of meeting.

For these reasons, I firmly believe it is imperative your offices become directly involved to ensure every federal resource available beyond the IBWC is dedicated toward resolving this situation. While the IBWC is responsible for administering the Tijuana River flow project and other environmental controls, the current problem deserves more substantive action and response. Additionally, direct involvement by your offices will also help ensure that Mexico is motivated to equally dedicate itself toward addressing this critical situation on their side of the border. I strongly encourage both of you to pursue this course of action.

Thank you in advance for allowing me to share my views on this important matter. Please be assured that I am available in any capacity that may assist with resolving the current situation and if you would like to further discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (202) 225-5672.

Sincerely,

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress

Enclosures