SECRET


Dear Carrigan:

I have to refer to our telephone conversation this morning with regard to the fourteen planes which have been left here by the Army Air Force on loan and for demonstration purposes and use by the Mexican Army and Air Force. I note that, in this connection, a letter has been received from the Army to which the Department is preparing a reply.

You were good enough to inform me in this conversation that this letter from the Army states that these planes were sent to Mexico at my request. I am sure you will know how to handle this statement of the Army, for I need not tell you that it had never occurred to me to have some planes sent here. This was entirely the proposal of General Arnold and entirely on his initiative as the reports and letters of this Embassy will show. I am sure that the Department in its reply to the Army will make it clear where this initiative came from.

With reference to the suggestion which has been made, that the B-25s and the C-47s which have been left here, might be charged against the interim allocation of Mexico under the program of interim allocations of aircraft to Mexico, and certain of the other American republics, I would like to confirm what I said over the telephone to the effect that in my opinion this would not be a desirable procedure to follow. We told the Mexicans that these planes would be left here under certain conditions. I think these conditions must be carried through. The conversations which I had were with the highest officers of the Mexican Government, including the President. We cannot, as I have pointed out in my despatches and letters, in any measure afford not to carry through the plan as originally laid down to the Mexican Government and accepted by it.

The interim

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The interim allocation for Mexico is not large as provided for in the interim program. It is in no sense disproportionate. Under these circumstances, therefore, there is no reason why these fourteen planes should be charged to the interim allocation - in fact every reason why they should not be, including the controlling reason above set forth.

With regard to the thought which has been expressed, apparently by the Army, that these fourteen planes might be returned and that new planes under the interim allocation replace them, I think this is not feasible, in view of what has been said above. We have told the Mexicans they can have these planes, although they are technically on loan, and we cannot in any degree violate that arrangement.

With respect to the suggestion that we "charge" for these planes, I do not see how we can do that, for we have told them they are going to have them at no cost. The only thing we can do is to charge some nominal sum, which under the circumstances should not be over $5 (five dollars) a plane. To us, they are not worth any more. We know what would happen to them if they were at home.

We have got to consider this matter of these fourteen planes as entirely a special and separate arrangement with Mexico which has nothing to do with any other arrangements and we have to carry through the agreement that we originally entered into. If we don't, we will be destroying a basis of confidence that we have, and we cannot afford that when this Military, as other, collaboration is so important to us.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.

(In triplicate)