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JOINT MEXICAN-UNITED STATES  
DEFENSE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

UNITED STATES SECTION

CONFIDENTIAL

23 January 1946

Mr. George S. Messersmith,  
U. S. Ambassador to Mexico,  
American Embassy,  
Mexico D. F., Mexico

My dear Mr. Ambassador:

The allocation of airplanes set up by the Joint Staff Conversations to Mexico has been approved by the Department of State, and, of course, by the War Department. Having had advance information that these approvals would take place, and having had an opportunity to talk to the Mexican Ambassador here in Washington, with General Guzman Cardenas, I told the Ambassador that, in my opinion, it would be most advantageous for Mexico if they would inform the War Department of what planes they desired for the Mexican Air Force.

The Mexican Ambassador concurred and directed General Guzman Cardenas to send a telegram to the Department of National Defense. He sent one, reading substantially as follows:

"The United States Section of the Joint Defense Commission requests information as to number and types of planes which Mexico plans to procure during 1946, in order that the War Department may be able to estimate the Latin American program. Prices, it is understood, will be considerably less than original cost. Please advise."

Under date of 16 January General Guzman Cardenas has sent me the following information, which he states is an answer to the above telegram:

"By instructions of the President of Mexico you will note that there will be not any purchase of planes during the present year. General Leon, Chief of Staff."

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(Letter to Mr. Messersmith, 23 January 1946)

From the foregoing it appears that Mexico does not desire to acquire any aircraft for its Air Force during 1946, thru Surplus Property channels. This decision, of course, probably means that a year hence there will be no aircraft available at such advantageous terms, and probably any aircraft then desired by Mexico would have to be obtained from the manufacturers at standard prices.

I understand that the U. S. aircraft now in Mexico, and which we send there for their supposed use, are not being flown by the Mexicans as General Salinas has received instructions not to fly them, although I believe the Mexican Government graciously accepted the conditions under which they can be flown.

This letter is being written in order to obtain your opinion as to why Mexico is taking the above stand on these two matters. Is their failure to purchase aircraft under Surplus Property due to their belief that we will ultimately give them to them; or due to lack of money; or due to a policy of not developing their Air Forces; or due to a political situation and fear of General Salinas?

This latter will probably refer more to keeping the present aircraft in Mexico grounded than it would to obtaining additional aircraft out of the general allocation thru Surplus Property channels.

Any information that you can give me on the above would be of assistance in our dealings with the Mexicans up here, as well as clarifying matters along this line in general.

Col. Deerwester informs me that Lieut. General Barney Giles, Air Forces, is visiting Mexico City, with his wife, informally on or about 10 February, and that the Mexican Department of National Defense expects to award him the Merito Militar medal at that time. You will probably also hear of this visit thru the Department of State.

With kind regards to you and Mrs. Messersmith from Col. Deerwester and myself, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

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GUY V. HENRY,  
Major General, U.S. Army.