

Flying to Mexico

AFA strongly suggests you contact AOPA first.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association is the best source of information for US pilots. Look at <http://www.aopa.org>

Here is just some of the information available from AOPA:

International Flight Quick Briefing Mexico

This briefing is designed to be advisory in nature for a private pilot conducting a recreational flight and is not intended to be a substitute for thorough and adequate preparation.

You have selected Mexico and the following topics will be covered: proof of citizenship, aircraft documentation and equipment, pilot credentials, pre-clearance items, entry into and flight operations within Mexico, departing Mexico, returning to the U.S., and charts.

For AOPA members, additional information is available on the AOPA web site at www.aopa.org or by calling AOPA's Fax on Demand service (AVFAX) at 800-462-8329 and request document 9000, which is a quick sub-menu of International Operations Documents.

From Baja to Cozumel, from sea level on both coasts to the 18,700-foot mountain peaks, and from desert to rain forest, Mexico offers the flying tourist a wide range of environment, activities, scenery, and culture.

Here is a brief set of operating tips to help you get started.

Proof of Citizenship

Each person on board must have current passport or birth certificate. The birth certificate must be the original or a certified copy. Certified copies have a raised or embossed seal on them. Birth certificates require accompanying photo identification. Tourist visas are required and may be obtained at the first airport of entry in Mexico or in advance through a travel agent.

Any minor children on the flight accompanied by only one parent must have a notarized letter from the absent parent authorizing the trip. Specific dates, places, and names should be included. For single parent households, contact AOPA's Aviation Services for further information.

Aircraft Documentation/Equipment

Standard Airworthiness Certificate, a permanent Registration Certificate (no temporaries or pink slips), Radio Station License (even though no longer required for domestic operations, it is still needed for international operations), Operating Limitations, and Weight and Balance are required. If the aircraft is registered in another person's or corporation's name, we recommend that you have a notarized letter authorizing use of the aircraft for flights in Mexico.

All U.S. registered aircraft must have an identification data plate on the exterior surface. For penetrating the Air Defense Identification Zone, twelve (12) inch high registration marks (temporary or permanent) are required per FAR 45.11. Bring an original, completed Form 337 if fuel tanks have been installed in the baggage or passenger compartment. A transponder with Mode C is also required.

Pilots should verify their existing insurance policy covers the latitudes in Mexico where they are visiting. In addition, one must obtain a Mexican third party liability insurance certificate from a Mexican insurance company before the flight.

U.S. Customs also has a \$25.00 annual user fee decal that will be required. We recommend that you obtain it in advance of your departure or contact the airport of entry you will be using for your return to see if they have a supply of decals on hand.

Pilot Credentials

You will need your Pilot Certificate, Medical Certificate, and Radio Telephone Operators permit.

All certificates must be original and current.

Pre-clearance Items

Normally, private flights do not pre-clear with US customs; however, if the pilot and/or passengers are taking expensive items abroad, it is a good idea to declare those items with US Customs before you leave. US Customs is serious about declaring items purchased aboard and by declaring expensive items before you leave the U.S. it is less likely that you would face a duty or a tax issue on your own belongings when you return. Monetary amounts over \$10,000.00 must be declared with customs before you leave and when you return to the U.S. Non-U.S. citizens may have pre-clearance requirements and the pilot should confirm those prior to departing the U.S. with the appropriate customs offices.

Entry into Mexico

You are required to provide at least one (1) hour advance notice to Mexican customs. This can be done by noting advise customs or ADCUS in the remarks block of your flight plan. You must be on an activated IFR or Defense VFR flight plan for border crossing. Aircraft entering Mexico must make their first landing at a designated airport of entry along their route for their type of aircraft. In Mexico airports of entry are designated separately for use by jet or turbine aircraft and for piston engine singles and twins.

Commercial operators, helicopters, and privately owned aircraft with more than 16 passenger seats or rental aircraft with more than 8 passenger seats require advance permits. The permission must be requested in writing, at least 5 working days before the scheduled date of the trip.

Experimental Airworthiness Certificates are not valid for international flight and require advance permission from Mexico, as in most foreign countries.

Flight Operations in Mexico

You must always be on a flight plan while you are in Mexico and be sure to keep hard copies of it with you. When practical, overfly landing strips for inspection. It's important to keep a laid back attitude, smile and express your thanks frequently.

If your flight entails over-water, desert, or mountain flying, consider carrying appropriate survival gear. It is wise to take along your own oil, tie-down equipment, and security devices.

For any IFR night operation, the pilot should call ahead to insure the destination airport will be open. VFR night operations are not permitted with the exception of certain authorized border airports for approved direct U.S. return flights. Overtime fees may accrue for late arrivals. Overnight parking fees and landing fees are charged at towered airports and are weight based. Air traffic control fees are included in the price of fuel for piston aircraft. Jet and turbine aircraft are billed separately for ATC services. Fuel is payable in cash with pesos or U.S. dollars. Bring plenty of small bills along to meet the exact amount. Fuel is available at airports of entry and towered fields in Mexico.

Importation of firearms is prohibited in Mexico. An aircraft may not leave Mexico unless the same crew and passengers are on board. Only the airport commandant can grant permission to deviate from this requirement.

Departing Mexico

You will be required to clear out of Mexico. You must depart from an airport of exit. It is required that you return your tourist visa when you clear out of Mexico. In addition, a passenger departure tax may be charged.

Returning to the U.S.

U.S. Customs requires advanced notice of arrival. These requirements may vary. Be sure to check the requirements for the specific airport used. These can be found in the U.S. Customs Guide for Private Flyers. The phone numbers for U.S. Customs offices are listed in the front pages of AOPA's airport directory and in the U.S. Customs Guide for Private Flyers. Most airports of entry will require no less than one hour but no more than 23 hours advance notification. You must be on an activated Defense VFR or IFR flight plan with ADCUS or Advise Customs listed in the remarks section. We strongly suggest that you use a telephone and not rely on the ADCUS message in your flight plan. AOPA recommends a phone call to Customs due to violations reported to us by pilots when Customs has not received the ADCUS message in a timely fashion. Typically, customs violations will start at \$5,000 for the first offense. When calling customs, we suggest that you also get a badge number of the customs official that took your information and if you have a telephone credit card, use it so that you will have a statement that shows the date and time you made the call.

Keep in mind that it is important to be on time. It's always better to be a little late than too early. Pilots should update their estimated time of arrival by contacting U.S. Air Traffic Control or a flight service station and requesting them to advise Customs of the new arrival time in the U.S. Unless you have obtained an overflight permit in advance, your first point of landing in the U.S. must be at the first designated airport of entry after border or coastline crossing point.

Because you are returning through the Air Defense Identification Zone, ensure that you comply with the ADIZ equipment and notification requirements as noted earlier. Your flight plan should include the estimated time of ADIZ penetration. We recommend continuous radio communications with U.S. Air Traffic Control to ensure that your flight plan information is received at least 15 minutes in advance of the ADIZ penetration.

Aliens who are permanent residents of the U.S. must have their registration cards with them in order to re-enter the U.S. The pilot must report the nationality of any passenger on board to Customs and

Immigrations. Pilot and passengers should remain inside the aircraft until the Customs officer motions you to come out.

Charts

AOPA's Chart department can provide you with National Oceanic Service, Jeppesen Sanderson, and Department of Defense products for Mexico. Our Chart department can be reached at 1-800-4 CHARTS (424-2787). AOPA members may also purchase our International Operations Portfolio for Mexico that provides an overview of operating procedures and information for a printing fee of \$8.00.

Technical specialists in AOPA's Aviation Services department are available to answer your questions during regular business hours from 8:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. Eastern Time Monday through Friday, telephone 800/USA-AOPA (872-2672).

AOPA's Flight Planning Guide - Mexico

INTRODUCTION

From Baja to Cozumel, from sea level on both coasts to the 18,700-foot peak of Citlaltepetl (Orizaba), and from desert to rain forest, Mexico offers the flying tourist a wide range of environment, activities, scenery, and culture.

Most widely publicized are the many seashore vacation opportunities in a country with both Caribbean and Pacific coastlines, but there is much more to this land of variety. As you venture inland, there are the many vestiges of a long history and rich cultural background in the Mayan and Aztec ruins. The mix of the past and the present is embodied in mile-high-plus Mexico City, claimed to be the oldest inhabited city in North America. Built on the remains of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec empire, this modern metropolis offers history, culture, and shopping by day followed by unmatched cuisine and lively nightlife.

And how better than to sample the abundant variety at your own pace and according to your own itinerary than to take advantage of the geographical freedom offered only by your general aviation airplane.

The key for making the most of your flying vacation to Mexico is the same as for any flight ó proper flight planning. Visiting high-elevation inland spots like Mexico City at 7,300 feet surrounded by peaks up to 17,000 feet? Brush up on your mountain flying skills. Flying across water? Carry overwater survival gear. What about planning the variety and amount of clothing for the various "seasons" you will encounter and, of course, the related weight and balance considerations, especially at hot and high airports?

AOPA offers this booklet as one of the planning tools to help general aviation tourists pave their way to a relaxed vacation through thorough preparation. Whether a first-timer to south-of-the-border travel or a seasoned visitor to our longtime neighbor, you will find useful tips and reminders. Remember that this publication is advisory in nature and is meant to be used in conjunction with proper preflight and

planning practices. Pilots should plan their flights based upon personal experience levels, pilot proficiency, aircraft capabilities, and weather conditions.

Once you are familiar with the information provided in this booklet, AOPA's Aviation Services Department will be happy to assist with further questions on preparing for and planning your flight to Mexico.

NOTE: The information presented in this booklet is accurate to the best of our knowledge as of the date of publication. Information pertaining to your flight, such as airport special notices, radio frequencies, prices of charts, Customs fees, etc., are subject to change. Up-to-date information on these can be obtained by contacting the appropriate government aeronautical agency, the organizations listed in the Appendix of this booklet, or AOPA's Aviation Services Department, 800/USA-AOPA (800/872-2672) and www.aopa.org.

This booklet provides introductory information for the private pilot planning a pleasure (non-commercial) flight to, within and from Mexico. Pilots planning commercial/business flights will have additional regulations and should contact the appropriate government offices (e.g., Customs, Consulates, Mexican DGAC [Director General of Civil Aeronautics] offices, etc.) for assistance.

AOPA's Flight Planning Guide to Mexico is intended to be used in combination with AOPA's Flight Planning Mexico packet and should not be used as a sole means of guidance for flights in Mexico.

CHAPTER 2

FLYING TO MEXICO

Departure from the United States

The primary requirement for private (non-commercial) aircraft leaving the United States for Mexico is to file a flight plan. Unless otherwise authorized by ATC, no person may operate an aircraft into, within, or across the contiguous U.S. Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) unless he has filed a *DVFR or IFR flight plan*.

You do not have to clear U.S. Customs outbound unless you are carrying cargo or passengers for hire. AOPA recommends, however, if you are carrying expensive or foreign manufactured cameras, fishing equipment, scuba gear, etc., that you go to a Customs office and declare these items on a Special Customs Service Form. This can save considerable time and trouble on re-entry. Also, non-U.S. citizens may have additional requirements.

ADIZ Requirements

Because flights to and from Mexico involve crossing the ADIZ, make sure you comply with recent changes in the Federal Aviation Regulations.

Any aircraft penetrating the ADIZ must display *12-inch-high-nationality and registration marks* on the airplane (These can be temporary; i.e., tape, but be sure the N numbers are a full 12 inches high and 2 inches ' wide and the color contrasts). Also, pilots must provide a copy of FAA Form 337 on board if the aircraft has been fitted with fuel tanks within the baggage or passenger compartments.

Another recent requirement is that if the aircraft has a transponder installed, including **Mode C**, the pilot must use it.

Position reporting for IFR flights will be the same as normal IFR position reports. Generally, pilots on DVFR flights will need to provide ATC with the estimated time of ADIZ penetration 15 minutes in advance.

Both IFR and DVFR aircraft position tolerances are 10 nm from the centerline for an intended track over an estimated reporting point or penetration point and 20 nm over water.

An air-filed VFR flight plan makes an aircraft subject to interception for positive identification when entering an ADIZ. Pilots are therefore urged to file the required DVFR flight plan, either in person or by telephone, prior to departure. Interception procedures and signals are covered in the Appendix.

Additional operational requirements for aircraft operations associated with an ADIZ are covered in the *Airman's Information Manual* (AIM) in the National Security and Interception Procedures section. This information is available on the AOPA Web site at www.aopa.org/members/files/aim/.

Outward Declaration

Aircraft operating commercially anywhere outside the United States must file an outward declaration with U.S. Customs prior to departure. This requirement applies whenever you carry for compensation or hire either cargo or passengers.

Landing Permission

Prior notification is required to the airport of arrival (ADCUS-**AD**vise **CUS**toms; see below), and a DVFR or IFR flight plan must be on file.

Private flights in fixed-wing aircraft with not more than 16-seat configuration, providing transportation entirely free of charge, do not need prior written permission to enter or overfly Mexico.

Aircraft rented without pilots (not chartered) will be permitted to enter the country provided they are single- or twin-engine with a maximum of eight seats. If they are multiengine and have a greater seating capacity, they require previous written permission. (See below.)

Nonscheduled commercial flights and all helicopters overflying or landing for commercial or noncommercial purposes must obtain a written permit at least five working days in advance from:

Departamento de Transporte Aero Internacional

Direccion General De Aeronautica Civil

Providencia 807, Piso 2

Col. Del Valle,

03200 Mexico City

Mexico D.F.

Telephone: 011-525-523-2815

Fax: 011-525-523-3419 or 011-525-523-7207

All requests must include:

1. name, nationality, address, and business of aircraft operator.
2. complete route of flight from point of origin to final destination, including airports of landing in Mexico.
3. purpose of flight.
4. type, nationality, and registration marks of aircraft and date of airworthiness certification and certificate number.
5. names, nationalities, and certificate numbers of crewmembers.
6. payment for services, including avgas, must be made in U.S. Dollars or Mexican currency (pesos).

Nonscheduled commercial flights have additional requirements. Commercial operators should review the Mexico International Flight Information Manual (IFIM) for special requirements and contact the Mexican DGAC for further assistance.

Planning Your Arrival in Mexico

Your first landing in Mexico must be at an Airport of Entry. The Mexican government has established Airports of Entry (AOEs) for piston-engine aircraft that differ from the AOEs available to jet or turbine aircraft.

The AOEs are specified in the Appendix for all aircraft types.

No enroute landings are permitted, and the pilot must follow the airways previously established by the Secretaria. de Comunicaciones y Transportes.

Pilots are required to inform the aviation authorities in Mexico of their presence at the international airport closest to the point at which they expect to cross the Mexican border.

In the event this airport is overflowed, contact must be made as soon as possible with that airport's control tower in order to furnish a position report and estimated time of arrival to the international airport of destination.

A written flight plan must be filed with the Aeronautics Authority of the Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transportes at the nearest AOE to the point of crossing the Mexican border. In the case of jet aircraft that overfly the border airports, pilots must make contact with the control center for air transit.

Customs

Customs inspections are provided free of charge to noncommercial private aircraft during regular

Customs business hours, which normally are 0900 to 1700 local time, Monday through Friday, unless specified otherwise. After- hours service, when and if available, may entail considerable overtime charges. AOPA recommends planning your flight early in the day to avoid possible extraordinary service fees. A listing of Mexican government holidays is provided in the appendix.

ADCUS, Forms and Arrival Procedures

By using the notation "**ADCUS**" in the remarks section of your flight plan, the Mexican Customs and Immigrations officials at your AOE should be notified of your ETA. **Keep in mind, however, that flight plans incorporating the ADCUS message are not forwarded to your destination for Customs notification until your flight plan is activated.**

Before you depart your airplane, AOPA's Aviation Services Department recommends that you gather all your documents together in a folder and that you keep hard copies of all documents, including your U.S. border crossing flight plan for your required stops with the Mexican officials.

Upon arrival at the AOE, pilots are required to close their border crossing flight plans with the dispatch office, which is typically located near the base of the tower. This office is similar to an U.S. flight service station and is referred to as "dispatch" or "SENEAM."

Pilots are required to fill out and sign Form G.H.C.-001, the aircraft entrance form, commonly referred to as a "green sheet." After filling out the form, submit it to the Airport Commandant for approval. The original copy is returned to the pilot and must be kept aboard the aircraft at all times and shown to Mexican authorities upon request. (You will surrender the green sheet to the Airport Commandant at the airport of departure from Mexico.)

You will need to go through Customs, Immigration, and Health inspections after filling out the "green sheet," and the officials in these Departments will require you to have the following original documentation in addition to your "green sheet":

1. Aircraft Registration (**no pink slips, permit registration only**)
2. Aircraft Airworthiness Certificate
3. Radio Station License
4. Aircraft Operating Limitations
5. Weight and balance information
6. Permit to operate an aircraft with other than a standard airworthiness certificate (ferry permit)
7. FAA Form 337 (if fuel tanks have been installed in the baggage or passenger compartments)
8. Mexican third-party liability insurance certificate
9. Letter of Authorization from owner, if you are borrowing or renting the aircraft

Pilot Documentation

1. Airman Certificate (student pilot certificates are not valid on international flights)
2. Current Medical Certificate
3. Radiotelephone Operator Permit

***Note: All airman and aircraft documents must be originals, not photocopies**

Personal Documentation

1. All persons entering Mexico must have proof of citizenship (valid passport or original or certified copy of birth certificate). AOPA's Flight Operations Department recommends carrying a photo ID when using birth certificate information (e.g., driver's license with picture).
2. Aliens who are permanent U.S. residents must have a U.S. alien registration card in order to return to the United States. A driver's license alone will not be accepted as proof of citizenship.

Note: Children (under the age of 18) traveling with only one parent must have a notarized statement of approval from the absent parent that specifies the dates of the trip. For additional information, contact the Mexican Embassy, 2829 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; telephone (202) 728-1600.

Visas and Mexican Immigrations

A visa is required. U.S. citizens traveling as tourists may obtain tourist cards at the airport of entry in Mexico. Proof of U.S. citizenship will be required. All persons staying in Mexico over 72 hours must have a tourist visa card. The charge for this card is US\$15.00 (N\$150.00) and can be good for 180 days. You may also get a tourist visa in lieu of visas in advance from the nearest Mexican Consulate or Mexican Tourism Office. Business travelers will require visas in advance and have additional requirements in order to obtain visas. Refer to the Mexico IFIM pages and contact the nearest Mexican Consulate for assistance.

Typically, Customs and Immigration will review personal and aircraft documents and apply appropriate stamps to Mexican documents. You may be required to have your aircraft and luggage inspected, and AOPA's Flight Operations would recommend that the pilot be as helpful and professional as possible. Typically these inspections do not last long.

Immunizations

Proof of immunization (for yellow fever, for example) is required only when the traveler is arriving from an infected area. The U.S. Public Health Service reports that a malaria risk exists south of 22 degrees north latitude in areas where the elevation is less than 1,000 meters (3,280 feet). This does not include Mexico City and most coastal resort areas. You may wish to check with the U.S. National Centers for Disease Control, telephone (404) 639-3311, for additional information.

Parking and Security

Before you depart the airport, your aircraft will need to be secured and parking arrangements made. AOPA recommends that you bring along your own tiedown equipment and confirm parking arrangements.

Although AOPA Aviation Services has not received pilot reports of theft or vandalism for some time, park your aircraft in well-lit areas. And use security devices such as propeller and throttle locks, sunscreens, door locks, etc.

Fees

Air navigation services in Mexico are not free. The information listed below is our best understanding of the current Mexican fee structure. You can expect to pay:

- 1) A US\$42.00 tax for each time an aircraft crosses into Mexican airspace (an annual permit can be purchased from Mexico City for US\$750)
- 2) A landing fee based on the weight of the aircraft. (about US\$8.00 for a single, \$15 for a twin)
- 3) A US\$15.00 per person immigration fee. (this can be purchased as a multiple entry and would be good for 180 days.

All other fees and taxes are local. Pilots should contact AOPA Aviation Services Department for specific information and updates. Also, pilots are reminded that the above procedures and fees are general in nature and may vary from airport to airport.

Weather Services

Mexico does not have flight service stations like those of the United States'. AOPA recommends that you obtain a thorough weather briefing from a U.S. international FSS or U.S./Mexico-border FSS prior to departing for Mexico. After crossing the border, it is a good practice to obtain current weather conditions from a Mexican ATS facility (center or enroute tower), or visit the flight planning office or weather station at the first airport you land at in Mexico.

When flying in Mexican airspace, monitor that country's ATC frequencies for weather information and exchange pilot reports with other transient pilots. If your hotel in Mexico has cable television, a good tip is to watch the Weather Channel (CNN) before departure. Although this does not provide "official" aviation weather information for filing requirements, it offers a good general outlook.

The lack of timely and accurate weather forecasts poses one of general aviation's biggest problems in Mexico. In Mexico, aviation weather reports are made according to the same code in the United States. Many weather stations operate on a 24-hour basis; some close down about 2130 or later and open again at 0630 or earlier.

Do not take these reports as completely valid, because the weather changes frequently and fast over Mexican terrain. At most of the larger airports (particularly where there is airline service), weather facilities are available to the private pilot.

Because of the varied geography, Mexico also has a variety of climates, but fortunately for pilot-visitors, they are fairly constant throughout the year. The high central plateau on which Mexico City, Guadalajara, and many of the country's colonial cities are located is spring like year-round

a bit cooler in the winter, a little warmer in summer. When a low-pressure area moves into the Mexico City valley, it causes low visibility with fog, haze, and smoke. Low ceilings are prevalent during the rainy season in Mexico City. The low-lying areas, mostly along Mexico's coastline, have a tropical

climate, which makes its coastal resorts particularly popular with U.S. and Canadian pilots when the weather's cold really grips the northern areas. In between the two extremes of altitude (and altitude is the key to climate in Mexico) are the semitropical areas. Throughout the country, there is a rainy season from May to October, which causes little inconvenience to the flying tourist, because in most places it consists of a brief afternoon shower followed immediately by clear skies. It is important to point out that in Mexico, it rains usually in the late afternoon. **Serious thunderstorms develop after 1300 in the mountainous areas during July, August, and September.** Fly in the morning. Good weather prevails during March, April, May, June, October, and November. Almost perfect weather occurs during December, January, and February.

The most densely populated section of Mexico, the Central plateau, is pleasantly cool year-round. Although it is just south of the Tropic of Cancer, the 5,000- to 8,000-foot altitude gives it a climate much cooler than the tropical latitude would suggest. Mexico City and most of the other cities commonly visited by tourists have an ideal vacation climate-warm summer days, only slightly cooler winter days, and cool nights always. There is a wide variation between day and night temperatures.

To the north, the plateau slopes gradually to a low altitude, becoming warmer and more arid. It is bounded on the east and west by mountain ranges, which slope down to the narrow coastal plains. The climate in the coastal cities, such as Acapulco and Mazatlan on the Pacific and Veracruz and Tampico on the Caribbean, although hot and humid, is made comfortable by the sea breezes.

From Tampico southward, or at slightly above sea level, the climate is generally tropical; north of this point, at about the same elevation, it is semitropical; this is true southward at elevations from 11000 to 6,000 feet. The plateau has four seasons in the north and a wet and dry season in the south. The dry season is from November to April-the shade is cool, and the nights are cold. During the rainy season on the plateau, mornings are pleasant, noon is hot, and heavy rain falls in the afternoon or early evening.

This mountain region falls away on the east to the low-lying and flat Yucatan Peninsula. This is "tierra caliente," or hot land. Here the climate is warm and humid throughout the year, with a variation of only 7 to 12 in average temperature between winter and summer. Veteran pilots agree that flights in Mexico during the rainy season (June through September) should be completed if possible by midday, after which there is usually a buildup of severe thunder- storm activity. During the dry season, there is turbulence below 12,000 feet from 1200 to 1400, particularly over the desert country.

The following chart was presented by Mexican SENEAM officials in October, 1993 Operation

Friendship meeting in San Diego, California.

The chart depicts the location of 31 dispatch offices (Mexican FSS) where weather and flight planning services are provided.

Borrowed, Leased, or Rented U.S. Aircraft in Mexico

If you do not own the aircraft you are flying in Mexico, carry a notarized letter of authorization that gives you permission to use it in that country. Tourist pilots utilizing aircraft that are registered in a corporation should certify to the Mexican officials the nature and type of operation in which the aircraft is involved, for example, personal use not for profit.

A simple authorization from the owner could state: "**This authorizes [name] to fly aircraft [N number], [model], in Mexico between the dates of ____ and ____.**" It should be signed, dated, and

notarized.

On any Mexican forms that request the name of the owner/operator, pilots flying rented or borrowed aircraft should fill in their names, rather than the names of the owners, to avoid the possibility of Customs officials considering the flights as commercial or business.

Experimental and Modified Military Aircraft

Pilots who are operating modified military aircraft must obtain a license for temporary export from the Office of Munitions Control, PM/MC, Room 800, SA-6, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520 (703-875-6644) and file it at least 10 days prior to the departure date.

In addition to contacting the Office of Munitions Control, AOPA's Aviation Services Department recommends contacting the Departamento de Transporte Aero Internacional, Direccion General De Aeronautica Civil, Providencia 807, Piso 2, Col. Del Valle, 03200 Mexico City, Mexico D.F. (tel. 011-525-523-2815 or fax 011-525-523-3419 or 011-525-523-3419) for assistance with regulations pertaining to your flight, prior to departure.

CHAPTER 3

MEXICAN FLIGHT RULES

All pilots proposing flights into Mexico should be aware of the fact that a flight into Mexico differs materially from that into the United States in factors such as flight plan filing requirements, limited communications, and weather service availability. Pilots accustomed to the U.S. system and facilities are warned not to expect the same reliability and service in Mexico. You'll have to rely more on pilotage and dead reckoning, because you won't have as much going for you as you do at home in the weather and nav aids departments. It is always wise to operate on the assumption that your flight plan might not have been transmitted. It is always wise to carry a carbon copy of your flight plan with you to prove that you did file it in conformance with Mexican regulations. The authority responsible for civil aviation in Mexico is the Director General of Civil Aviation. The address and telephone numbers are in the appendix.

Cruising Levels

Cruising levels in Mexico are the same as in the United States: VFR - odd thousands plus 500 feet for 0-179 degrees, and even thousands plus 500 for 180-359 degrees; IFR - odd thousands between 0-179 degrees and even thousands for 180-359 degrees.

Flight levels in Mexican airspace begin at FL160. (Note: FL190 is not an assigned flight level.)

Except as provided in the following paragraph, VFR flights in level cruising flight, when operated above 3,000 feet (300 meters) from the ground or water, or a higher datum as specified by the appropriate ATS authority, shall be conducted at a flight level appropriate to the track as specified in the table of cruising altitudes.

Altimeter Settings

At or below FL180, over land or coastal areas, use QNH (altitude above mean sea level based on local station pressure). Use the latest official altimeter setting at your departure airport until you are able to obtain the setting for your destination. If you are departing an airport that does not offer an altimeter setting, initially set your altimeter to the airport elevation.

At FL200 or above 2,000 feet over oceanic areas more than 100 nm from the coast, use QNE (altimeter setting 29.92 inches of mercury).

Airport Traffic Procedures

Traffic pattern procedures in Mexico are the same as those in the United States. However, AOPA suggests pilots circle all non-controlled airports in Mexico prior to landing to check that the runway is clear of airplanes, livestock, and other traffic. Often, an overhead entry also serves to announce your arrival to those on the ground such as resort owners and taxi drivers.

TMA Control Areas

TMA control areas in Mexico are not Class B airspace per se, but airspace of a predetermined dimension in which all aircraft are subject to control (usually 50 nm). Check enroute radio and terminal charts. Each control area is set off by latitude and longitude coordinates. Every aircraft will be assigned a discrete frequency to monitor while in controlled airspace. Aircraft must be equipped with two-way radios and transponders. The altitude of the control area is not defined.

Mexico City Airport

The Benito Juarez (Mexico City) International Airport currently has a NOTAM that restricts take off and landings for piston and turboprop aircraft. Slot reservations are required and will only be issued between 23:00 and 05:00 local time for repair services. There is also a notice that restricts local flights out of Mexico City Airport within a 100 NM radius of the Mexico City VOR. There is also a Special Notice for peak landing fees for Mexico City airport of approximately \$1,256.

AOPA recommends pilots planning to visit Mexico City land at Toluca, about 25 minutes from Mexico City by freeway, or Puebla, about the same distance away.

Due to these notices, pilots should review international NOTAMs and contact AOPA Aviation Services for additional assistance.

Communications Requirement

An operating two-way radio is required for all aircraft entering Mexico.

While in Mexico, pilots are required to maintain radio contact with the controlling facility for the airspace in which they are operating. Position reporting is mandatory, both for IFR and VFR flights. All enroute and terminal controllers in Mexico are required to have a working knowledge of the English language.

It is recommended that pilots use correct radio phraseology and speak clearly and concisely, without the use of slang.

General Guide to Mexico's Air Navigation and Air Traffic Procedures

Although pilots should refer to the latest available Aeronautical charts and the ***Publication Information Aeronautical*** for information concerning the specifics of Mexican airspace and ATC services, the following generalized statements are presented here to help establish a clear basic understanding of Mexico's current air navigation and ATC system.

Mexican airspace is encompassed by FIRs (Flight Information Regions), which extend from the surface to FL200. Flights above FL200 must be on IFR flight plans and are controlled by the respective area control center UIRs/UTAs (Upper FIRs/Upper Control Areas).

The country is served by many miles of airways, Victor airways, jet routes, and few low frequency airways. Jet routes begin at 20,000 feet, and Victor airways are below 20,000 feet.

Large segments of the airways below 20,000 feet are not yet served by air traffic control (radar) and thus are "non-radar controlled."

Currently that portion of the airspace of Mexico that is a "Control Area" is serviced by four Area Control Centers (Mexico City, Monterrey, Mazatlan, and Merida) and by 23 terminal control areas. There are also a sizable number of non-approach-control units, together with the necessary subsidiary equipment such as VHF communications.

Air traffic rules in the Mexico area are basically similar to the U.S. FARs and follow the Rules of the Air, Annex 1, of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) except for differences in flight plans, arrival reports, visual flight rules, and altimeter area transitions.

Operational Procedures for Flying Outside Controlled Airspace in Mexico

As mentioned earlier in the section titled "General Guide to Mexico's Air Navigation and Air Traffic Procedures," large segments of the airspace are not yet served by air traffic control (radar), and areas are therefore "non-radar controlled." This fact presents certain problems to pilots operating within the non-controlled portions of the airspace system, especially during periods of IFR weather conditions.

As a means of improving this situation until such time as air traffic control can be provided throughout Mexico, the following operational hints are recommended for use. They have been in use now for several years.

Operational Hints

VFR and IFR flights operating outside controlled airspace (non-radar), but within or into areas or along routes designated by the appropriate ATS authority, shall maintain continuous listening watch on the appropriate radio frequency and report position, as necessary, to the air traffic services unit providing flight information service.

Note: For VFR and IFR aircraft ó when communication is not possible with Air Traffic Services, transmit your position report in the blind and monitor your assigned frequency.

The position reports must contain the following information:

1. Identification
2. Position

3. Time
4. Route
5. Altitude
6. ETA to next facility or next reporting point.

VFR Weather Minimums

Mexico adheres to flight rules according to the International Civil Aviation Organization. The following excerpts are from ICAO rules of the air that will apply to flights throughout Mexico.

Except as otherwise authorized by the appropriate ATC unit for VFR flights within control zones, VFR flights shall be conducted so that the aircraft is flown in conditions of visibility and distance from clouds equal to or greater than those specified in the following table:

Airspace Class B C D E F G

Above 900 m (3,000 ft) AMSL or above 300 m (1,000 ft) above terrain, whichever is the higher At
and below 900 m (3,000 ft) AMSL or 300 m (1,000 ft) above terrain, whichever is the higher

Distance from Cloud Clear of Cloud 1,500 m horizontally

300 m (1,000 ft) vertically Clear of cloud and in sight of the surface

Flight Visibility 8 km and above 3,050 m (10,000 ft) AMSL

5 km below 3,050 m (10,000 ft) AMSL 5 km**

*When the height of the transition altitude is lower than 3,050 m (10,000 ft) AMSL, FL100 should be used in lieu of 10,000 ft.

**When so prescribed by the appropriate ATS authority

a. Lower flight visibilities to 1,500 m may be permitted for flights operating:

1. At speeds that, in the prevailing visibility, will give adequate opportunity to observe other traffic or any obstacles in time to avoid collision; or

2. In circumstances in which the probability of encounters with other traffic would normally be low; e.g., in areas of low traffic and for aerial work at low levels.

b. HELICOPTERS may be permitted to operate in less than 1,500 m flight visibility, if maneuvered at a speed that will give adequate opportunity to observe other traffic or any obstacles in time to avoid collision.

Except when a clearance is obtained from an ATC unit, VFR flights shall not take off or land at an Aerodrome within a control zone or enter the Aerodrome traffic zones or traffic pattern:

* When the ceiling is less than 1,500 feet (450 m); or

* When the ground visibility is less than 5 miles (8 km), or 3 miles (5 km) if so prescribed by the appropriate air traffic service authority.

Unless authorized by the appropriate ATS authority, VFR flights shall not be operated:

* Between sunset and sunrise, or such other period between sunset and sunrise as may be prescribed by the appropriate ATS authority;

* Above FL200.

NIGHT FLIGHTS

Between sunrise and sunset, VFR or IFR flight plans are required for all flights into, within, and out of Mexico. Between sunset and sunrise, IFR flight plans are required. There is no VFR night flying allowed within Mexican airspace- with one exception. VFR night flights are allowed only when the aircraft is heading back to the United States when departing from these border airports: Ciudad Juarez, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, Tijuana, and Mexicali. Even these flights are subject to the following requirements:

1. VFR weather conditions shall prevail all along the route from the departure airport to the destination airport.
2. The flight path must be within the control zone of the departure airport until the United States border is crossed.
3. The flight must be concluded within the operational hours of the departure airport. Radio communications must be maintained with the departure airport's ATC tower until advised of frequency change.
4. All applicable regulations of international operations must be complied with.
5. A VFR flight plan must be filed.
6. Flights may be made only with prior authorization from the Commandant.

MEXICAN FLIGHT PLANS

Deviation from the flight plan itinerary is not permitted except in an emergency. While flying to a designated airport of entry in the interior of Mexico, enroute landings are not permitted. Such landings are considered illegal entries and may result in severe penalties. Flight plans are filed in person with the flight planning station, located usually at the base of the ATC tower. After filling out the flight plan, the pilot must have it stamped for approval with Customs, Immigration, and the Airport Commandant. The pilot then returns to the flight planning station where the copies are removed, and the pilot receives the original copy. It is very important for the pilot to keep his original copy with him at all times during the flight.

Upon arrival at the destination airport, the pilot fills out an arrival report in the flight planning office. When operating an aircraft to and from non-towered airports, pilots must include these transient stops on

the original flight plan and close them when they eventually land at an airport with communications (an airport with a tower, flight planning office, or an Airport Commandant).

Filing a flight plan does not constitute a request for Customs notification. Customs requirements are explained in a separate section.

Have the officers at your Airport of Entry assist you with filing the original flight plan for your flights inside Mexico to avoid flying illegally in the country.

VFR/IFR Flight Plan

Pilots operating aircraft in accordance with the visual flight rules who wish to change to compliance with the instrument flight rules shall:

* If a flight plan was submitted, communicate the necessary changes to be effected to the current flight plan; or

* Submit a flight plan to the appropriate air traffic services unit and obtain a clearance prior to proceeding IFR when in controlled airspace.

PLAN DE VUELO

(Mexican Flight Plan)

Start from the very top of the form.

Lugar óindicate the place you are taking off from (threeóletter identifier)

Fecha óindicate the current date

Block A ócheck VFR or IFR

Block B óstate your aircraft type

Block C óstate your tail number (N number)

Block D óstate your call sign if it is different from your tail number

Block E óstate the threeóletter identifier or where you plan to land

Block F óstate your proposed takeoff time (in Zulu)

Block G ólist your cruising altitude or flight level and then put in the route of flight

Block H óstate your planned flight time

Block I óstate your cruising airspeed

Block J óstate the threeóletter identifier for your alternate

Block K óstate VHF

Block L óstate the total time you can fly with the fuel load on board

Block M óstate the pilot's and copilot's last name

Block N óstate your FAA certificate number

Block O óstate your address

Block P óstate the basic color of your aircraft

Block Q óstate the total number of passengers and crew

Observacione ólist the passengers' names

Sign the form in the lower left (Pilot's Signature).

REPORTE DE LLEGADA EN VUELO DE RUTA

(Mexican form for closing flight plan)

(DGAC Forma 116)

Start from the top.

Aeropuerto en óindicate where you just landed (the three letter identifier is okay)

Avion óstate your tail number (N number)

Tipo óstate your aircraft type

Matricula óstate you tail number again

Piloto óstate your last name

Lic. nurn óstate your FAA certificate number

Clase de Vuelo óindicate IFR or VFR, as applicable

Procedencia óprovide the three letter identifier of where you came from

Hora ónote your takeoff time (in Zulu)

Pasajeros ólist the names of your passengers

Observaciones óleave blank

Date the form and sign it.

Navigation Aids

Navigational aids may be shut down without prior notice. AOPA's Aviation Services Department strongly recommends that pilots check the appropriate NOTOMs prior to departure.

The following charts were presented by Mexican SENEAM personnel in the October 1993 Operation Friendship meeting in San Diego, California.

This information is presented not for navigation purposes, but in order to provide pilots with a comparison of services available in Mexico. AOPA recommends pilots consult appropriate charts and supplement information for their particular flights.

LORAN-C NAS COVERAGE DIAGRAM

The following information is taken from FAA Advisory Circular 90-92

Parameters

- * Contour: SNR ñ 10db; Oceanic GDOP 7,700 ft/us;
- * NAS GDOP 4,200 ft/us
- * NAS Contour Symbology: ó ó ó
- * Average Atmospheric Noise: 64db
- * Surface to FL 600
- * Flight Verified

Aircraft Accident Notifications

In the event of an accident, the owner/operator of the aircraft is responsible to notify the nearest airport Commandant.

In addition to notifying the Commandant, you are also compelled to contact the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in the United States. Your Mexican insurance company will also require notification. Due to the many governmental agencies and complex reporting requirements, covering all aspects of an aircraft accident would not be practical in this manual. For additional assistance, contact the American Consulate at the U.S. Embassy. Also, AOPA's technical staff will be able to provide general guidance with FAA enforcement actions.

Flying seriously injured or deceased persons from Mexico to the United States must be cleared with Mexican authorities. Aid should be requested from the U.S. Consulate and the Mexican Tourist Bureau.

Search and Rescue

Search and rescue services are provided by local jurisdictions. There is no national (federal) authority that coordinates or provides search and rescue capability. Specific questions on the subject may be addressed to the nearest U.S. agency:

Commander (OSR)

Eighth Coast Guard District

Hale Boggs Federal Building

501 Magazine Street

New Orleans, LA 70130-3399

Telephone: (504) 589-6225

AOPA's Aviation Services Department recommends that pilots leave a copy of their itinerary with friends or family (see "Emergencies" and "Travel Tips" in Chapter 5).

Restricted Areas

Watch for restricted areas around Guadalajara, Mexico City, Tuxla Guterrez, Veracruz, and Villahermosa. Airspace dimensions and hours of operation may be obtained from current Aeronautical charts and NOTAM publications.

Forms to Carry

Keep with you the green sheet (aircraft entrance form), tourist card, and a hard copy of your flight plan. Visitors should remember to carry their visa/tourist card, which must be produced upon request from any Customs officer.

Flying Mexican-Registered Aircraft

A Mexican private pilot certificate will be issued on the basis of a valid certificate issued by any member state of the ICAO. However, civil aviation is on a small scale in Mexico, and aircraft available for rent will be difficult to find.

Aviation Fuel

Fuel is available at tower-controlled airports only. Keep this in mind and flight plan carefully. Plan on paying cash for fuel, which is sold by the government; credit cards are rarely accepted. Fuel is sold in liters, not gallons. (See the Appendix for a conversion table.)

At the majority of airports that offer fuel, service is provided by trucks. When you are refueled from tank trucks or underground tanks, there usually is little chance of contamination. However, should you have to refuel from drums, strain the fuel through a fine Teflon mesh strainer or a chamois. The best practice is to avoid potential problems and refuel at major airports.

Jet, 80/87-, and 100/130-octane avgas are readily available; however, 100LL is scarce. Always request fuel immediately upon landing and monitor the refueling process. Oil is expensive-when it is available-and it is good practice to bring a few quarts of your own, keeping weight and balance considerations in mind.

The FAA has been advised by the State Department that in Baja California, Mexico, private pilots may

purchase fuel only at Tijuana, Mexicali, Loreto, Los Cabos, and Guerro Negro.

Repairs

Generally, mechanical assistance facilities in Mexico are few and far between. It is good practice to check with your aircraft manufacturer for a list of international dealers and repair shops before departing the United States.

Prior to repairing any aircraft, the pilot should ask the Commandant for assistance with Mexican regulations.

Repairs in foreign countries typically will require a U.S. FAA certificated mechanic and a certified resident mechanic.

Any repairs done to the aircraft outside the USA must be reported to U.S. Customs and may require duty to be paid upon arrival. The FAA produces a list of certified maintenance agencies for Mexico and other foreign countries. Pilots can obtain a current copy of this advisory circular from the U.S. Government Printing Office, which is listed in the Appendix. However, an excerpt from AC 140-7J, dated 7/13/99, is provided as a general planning reference in the Appendix.

Posted Friday, December 10, 1999 12:56:15 PM

The Mexican pilots association,

FEDERACION MEXICANA DE PILOTOS Y PROPIETARIOS DE AERONAVES (FEMPPA),

has posted a letter to the Mexican authorities opposing the TUA. Here are a few excerpts from FEMPPA's web site located at: <http://www.femppa.org>.

FEMPPA arguments against the TUA:

1. ICAO Document 9082 that basically states: Consultation with airport users is necessary before imposing new fees so that their impact can be assessed. These consultations should include the service providers as well.
2. The charges imposed on GA should be reasonable taking into account that a healthy GA should be promoted.
3. User should not pay for services that they do not use and general aviation use of the terminal is not the same as use by commercial passengers.
4. In the US and Canada, Passenger Facility Charges have been in place for years, but were never intended to be assessed on noncommercial users.
5. The economic impact of general aviation is disproportionate or even discriminatory. An example, a pilot flying three other people was paying \$30 last month and now pays \$400 (Mexican).

6. The TUA is a GA "killer."

7. Asking the Mexican Government to stop the collection of TUA.

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