

COELUM.

The Metropolitan Airport System.

An impossible plan.

by Carlos Sierra



DECEMBER NEWS on Mexican Aviation

COELUM: Pronunciation: 'che-l&m, is Latin for airspace or sky. The Romans began questioning the rights they had in the space above the land they owned and to how high above did that right extended to. Ad coelum et ad inferos, they discussed, meaning that their right of property would extend as high up to the heavens and down to hell.

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During the months of November and December of 2019 the newly formed Federal Civil Aviation Agency (AFAC) and the Ministry of Defense (SEDENA) conducted a series of presentations to all relevant stakeholders to inform the Master Plan for the new Santa Lucia Airport and the development of infrastructure associated with the development and operation of the Metropolitan Airport System that intends to include the existing airports at Mexico City (MEX) and Toluca (TLC) in addition to the new Santa Lucia Airport. The involvement of SEDENA in this project obeys to the fact that the Santa Lucia Airport is currently a military air base and the Ministry of Defense has been designated by the government to undertake the construction and operation of the new airport.

“Of particular importance is the referred difficulty to operate both airports with simultaneous operations.”

The presentations were received with interest and skepticism considering the major damage caused by the cancellation of the partially constructed new Mexico City airport project in Texcoco and given the continuing and well documented doubts about the technical viability of operating the three airports at the same time; particularly given the impossibility to conduct simultaneous operations at MEX and Santa Lucia, which has been loudly voiced by IATA and several other authorized organizations and experts.

The AFAC conducted such presentations through a series of six technical committees that continue to conduct presentations since November 25, 2019 and intend to conclude on February 6, 2020.

The committees are addressing the following topics:

1. Aerial Spaces;
2. Metropolitan Airport Infrastructure for commercial flights;
3. Metropolitan Airport Infrastructure for cargo;
4. General Aviation / Helicopters;
5. Ancillary Services; and
6. Urban Mobility.

Invitations to participate were issued to the air transport industry through the Air Transport Chamber (CANAERO)

Within the agenda of the appointed technical committees was the report of the development of the Master Plan for the Santa Lucia Airport, which construction commenced in haste before the Master Plan was even developed even considering that the commencement of the works was delayed for six months as result of the provisional suspensions ordered by several district courts as result of the amparo proceedings that were filed by several organizations to prevent the construction of the new airport and to maintain and resume the construction of the cancelled project in Texcoco. An enormous waste of public funds that should not be unpunished. The suspensions were lifted by the courts under the falace argument presented by the government that the construction of the new airport was a matter of national security. The amparo proceedings are still in course, but the possibilities that they will succeed in the end are nearly inexistent.

Of particular importance is the referred difficulty

to operate both airports with simultaneous operations. To address this point the AFAC has commissioned NavBlue, an Airbus company, to study and develop the viability of these operations.

In several presentations the AFAC made the following highlight points¹:

- The use of “Point Merge”² constitutes a tool that has been successfully used in prior “success” cases at other airports for which the government concludes that the redesigned air space for MEX and TLC with PBN³ procedures will be viable with the use of “Point Merge”
- Aircraft that operate under 20,000 feet (turboprop aircraft for instance) will be guided through vectors by air traffic controllers.
- NavBlue has conducted the analysis of obstacles which is still under review.
- Aborted approaches will be guided in defined vectors by air traffic controllers.
- Saturation of “Point Merge” will not be permitted.
- Flight simulation exercises are being conducted in FTS (Fast Time Simulation) and RTS (Real time Simulation) is being contemplated.
- The use of the proposed PBN procedures will reduce the workload of Air Traffic Control (ATC) permitting additional time for surveillance and efficiency of air traffic controllers in the control of ascending and descending aircraft.

- Phase 1 of the project that involves TLC and MEX has been nearly concluded.
- Phase 2 of the project will involve Santa Lucia, MEX and TLC. This has not been concluded.
- Space for waiting patterns is available in the virtual octagon which will not interfere with departures.
- The “frustrated” approaches will only be considered when visual conditions shall be present for approaches.
- Simulation exercises have been conducted executing the proposed procedures in maximum stress conditions considering all potentially adverse situations to validate the efficiency of these procedures.
- The modifications to be made to the air space configuration contemplate the main airports, however the project will be expanded to the entire country with the redefinition of routes to maximize efficiency.
- Agreements have been reached with the Air Force to modify operational positions in regards to air space.
- The PBN procedures for Phase 1 shall be validated and contemplated in PIAs⁴ by no later than May 31, 2020.
- The AFAC intends to eradicate the operational risk at MEX which will not increase its operation as result of the implementation of PBN procedures.

1.- Source CANAERO

2.- “Point Merge” is a systemized method for sequencing arrival flows. As one of the ICAO aviation system block upgrades (ASBU) is referenced as a technique to support continuous descent operations (CDO - ICAO doc 9931).

3.- Performance-based Navigation (ICAO Doc 9613).

4.- Aeronautic Information Publication issued by AFAC.

- Measures are being taken to prevent potential GPS interference.
- Investment will be made in ground technology equipment for positioning.
- All work conducted shall guarantee the operational security.

In respect to the development of the Metropolitan Airport Infrastructure for Cargo and Urban Mobility the Master Plan for the Santa Lucia Airport involves the following highlights:

- The information presented is for the first approach to be made with the airlines;
- The validation process for cargo infrastructure is being developed in accordance with ICAO regulations in respect to which the AFAC shall conduct final approval;
- SEDENA has conducted sessions with stakeholders for the development of infrastructure with participation of the Tributary Administration Service (SAT), the Ministry of Communications and Transport (SCT) as well as conducting visits to survey cargo operations at MEX, CUN and QRO;
- The initial phase of the cargo infrastructure project at Santa Lucia contemplates between 67,200 and 86,400 square meters for cargo installations, with bonded warehouses occupying 4,800 square meters each, which will be made available to airlines wishing to invest. In principle up to three bonded warehouses could be assigned per airline subject to the requirements of each operator;
- The project installations contemplate

capacity for C, E and D aircraft. For type D however only one position is being considered in the stage to be built in 2042.

- Three security checkpoints are contemplated towards air side;
- Technical Metropolitan Airport Infrastructure Committees will be appointed for commercial flights to review technical data (e.g. length of installations, runways, meteorological conditions as well as potential affectations);
- Urban Mobility Committees will be appointed to address the ground connectivity project for the Santa Lucia Airport.

As it can be concluded, at least for now, the development of the announced Metropolitan Airport System, the Master Plan for the Santa Lucia airport and, most importantly, the project that will allegedly make simultaneous operations between Santa Lucia and MEX viable, are far from being completed and their success is not yet ensured.

The government has made strenuous efforts to convince public opinion and stakeholders of the viability of its plans while in the opinion of experts from around the world this set of projects is notoriously and technically unviable in every respect.

Meanwhile, we now have two partially built airports. One without a project, another in abandonment and decay.

A sad waste of time and money. So many opportunities lost. The story continues.

EU Takes Aim at Aviation Fuel with Tax Clampdown on CO2 Output.

European Union finance ministers will endorse a restoration of energy-taxation laws that could end exclusions for jet fuel while promoting cleaner forms of energy, as the bloc steps up attempts to cut carbon emissions. The Ministers will be meeting in Brussels on Dec. 5 and will ask the European Commission to present the updated rules on the taxation of biofuels and sectors such as aviation. Furthermore, according to a draft of their communique seen by Bloomberg News. The wording signals that the favored tax treatment of aviation fuel could be phased out, under a new set of regulations. www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-28/eu-takes-aim-at-aviation-fuel-with-tax-clampdown-on-co2-output December 01, 2019.

Recycled materials for Santa Lucía.

The materials that would have been used at Texcoco Airport will be reused at Santa Lucia Airport to generate savings. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador confirmed that the total savings of the construction of the terminal will be 100 billion pesos. Some of the Texcoco materials that will be used in Santa Lucia are gravel, sand, the structural steel elements for buildings, and the design will even be modified to use Texcoco profiles, and prevent them from being wasted. There will also be a saving in wages, since a significant number of those who build the airport are military. www.dineroenimagen.com/actualidad/materiales-que-se-usarian-en-naim-se-reciclaran-para-santa-lucia/116928 December 02, 2019.

FAA requests not to aim lasers at the sky.

The Federal Administration of Civil Aviation (FAA) of the United States warned that the projections of lasers from the facades of the houses, commonly used in holiday time, could be dangerous for the aircraft when they aim at the sky. The agency reported that each year it receives reports from pilots who are distracted or partially blinded by these lights, creating a potential risk for pilots and their passengers. www.a21.com.mx/aeronautica/2019/12/06/pide-faa-no-apuntar-laseres-al- December 06, 2019.

Dare to Dream: The organization getting women into aviation.

Captain Kgomotso Phatsima from Botswana describes the aviation industry as “white and male”. To combat this, she founded Dare to Dream – an organization whose aim is to get more women into all aspects of the industry. In this BBC Africa One Minute Story she explains how she inspires young African women to reach for the sky. www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-50785321/dare-to-dream-the-organisation-getting-women-into-aviation December 15, 2019.

The International Airport of Mexico City presents technical failures in flight plans.

The International Airport of Mexico City (AICM) reported that in the morning of December 19, there were technical failures in the computers that have the emission of flight plans. These flight plans are loaded into the computers managed by the Navigation Services in the Mexican Airspace (SENEAM), which gives flight authorizations, such as departures and arrivals. www.milenio.com/negocios/aicm-presenta-fallas-tecnicas-planes-vuelo December 19, 2019.

Mexico and Russia will collaborate on Space Projects.

The Mexican Space Agency (AEM) and the Russian Federal Space Agency (ROSCOSMOS) agreed to carry out joint work for the development of scientific projects for the benefit of the Mexican population. The agreement, engaged by Salvador Landeros Ayala the general director of the AEM and Alexander Bochkarev, deputy head of ROSCOSMOS, states that Mexico will develop space projects that will aid the priority regarding social tasks for the Mexican society, such as the protection of population from disasters, floods, droughts, fires, as well as support connectivity, agricultural productivity, security, oil exploration, etc. www.a21.com.mx/aeroespacial/2019/12/23/colaboraran-mexico-y-rusia-en-proyectos-espaciales December 23, 2019.

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Flight attendant: synonym of flight safety.

During any passenger flight, whether if it is a commercial or an executive flight, there is the rigorous presence of the service cabin personnel destined to ensure the integrity of the passenger whose important activity is predominantly complementary in terms of its operational safety. In Mexico, in order to possess the respective license it is required a minimum degree of high school studies, the approval of the certificate of psychophysical aptitude group III and having completed the respective course in an institution authorized by the Federal Agency of Civil Aviation. The ICAO recommendation criteria establishes an additional flight attendant for every 50 passengers, however the criterion varies in the regulations of each Contracting State in its legal framework, which usually establishes more than one for every fifty passengers, but beyond the pre-established criteria, regulation has varied by relying on the amount of available seats that the manufacturer establishes, regardless of their occupation or not. www.a21.com.mx/aeronautica/2019/12/24/sobrecargo-sinonimo-de-seguridad-de-vuelo December 24, 2019.

Mexico, in route to reach 100 million air passengers.

National and international airlines operating in Mexico transferred between January and November 92 million 29,915 passengers, which represented an increase of 5% (the second lowest since 2011 when it increased 3.2%), still affected by the negative behavior of foreign firms, according to the Ministry of Communications and Transportation (SCT). However, in the tenth month of 2019, the total number of users served rose 5.9%, which encourages the possibility that at the end of the year the figure of 100 million passengers will be exceeded, despite economic complications and lack of tourist promotion. www.eleconomista.com.mx/empresas/Mexico-en-ruta-para-alcanzar-100-millones-de-pasajeros-aereos-20191225-0060.html December 25, 2019.

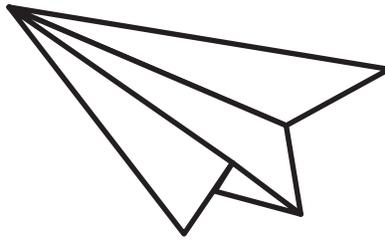
Aerospace industry seeks Brexit reassurance.

Civil aviation authorities across the Taiwan Strait have confirmed the operation of additional flights to the island during the Spring Festival next year, a spokeswoman for the mainland said Wednesday from China. All additional flights will be approved before December 31, and the airlines will offer some between January 9 and 10, said Zhu Fenglian, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council at a press conference. The civil aviation authority of the mainland has repeatedly suggested to its counterpart on the island that additional flights be organized to meet the needs of Taiwanese compatriots to return home during the Lunar New Year, to be held on January 25. The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council will continue to coordinate with the aviation authority of the mainland to ensure additional flights, he added. www.spanish.xinhuanet.com/2019-12/25/c_138657261.htm December 25, 2019.

The Next Decade Will Be All About Cutting Carbon Emission.

The aviation industry has been working progressively to alleviate its carbon emission problem. And it has really made some headway this year. But over the next few decades, there'll be big changes when it comes to battling climate change. And it's almost undeniable the next decade will be all about cutting CO2 emissions. And one of the main ways in which this will be possible, is with the development of the large electric plane. Furthermore, airlines also need to convince an ever-growing segment of society that flying can be done responsibly and with environmental diligence. www.a21.com.mx/organismos/2019/11/28/nombra-oaci-nuevo-presidente-de-comision-de-navegacion-aerea December 26, 2019.

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