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*Executive Aviation in Mexico.
Market context of executive aviation in
Mexico
by Carlos Campillo*

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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 how high above them those rights would extend. They decided on, Ad coelum et ad inferos, meaning that their property rights would extend as high up as the heavens and all the way down to hell.

Executive Aviation in Mexico.

Market context of executive aviation in Mexico

Carlos Campillo

Mexico is, actually, one of the most important markets of executive aviation in the whole Latin America. Mexico occupies one of the first five positions in the world executive aviation, although the United States represents more than 50% of the global market, and the second and third place are disputed between Canada, Brazil and Mexico.

More recently, Mexico and Brazil have been pointed out as the dominant markets in Latin America in this segment, which is already considered to be in a more mature phase in the Latin America ^[1].

This sector has changed its perception: private aircrafts stopped being only a symbol of exclusivity to become a strategic tool for business productivity, valued for its connectivity, time saving and access to destinations with less commercial coverage ^[2]. According to Guillermo Morales Montesinos (Patriot Aviation), executive aviation has grown “a lot” in the last decade, keeping a sustained growth since the pandemic, moment in which more people got to know this kind of transportation, not only with recreational purposes but as a work tool ^[3]. A change in the ownership models is also observed: before, many clients depended on non – scheduled charters; however, nowadays more of them look for fractional or total ownership, searching for more control given the impact that this kind of travel has in their businesses ^[1].

In terms of market size, the Mexican aerospace sector as a whole (which includes commercial, executive, general and military aviation) has an estimated value of USD 8.88 billion in 2026, with a growth projection of 6.94% per year until reaching USD 12.41 billion in 2031 ^[4].

1. Non-commercial private aviation

Definition - Article 28 of the Civil Aviation Law ^[5]: non-commercial private air transportation is considered to be that one which is destined to a particular use, without profit purposes.

“Article 28.- non-commercial private air transportation is considered to be that which is destined to particular use without profit purposes. The operation of non-commercial private air transport aircraft shall not require a permit; however, it must have the registration and airworthiness certificates, as well as an insurance policy. The persons who operate the aircraft referred to in this article may not, under any circumstance, provide commercial services to third parties.” - Civil Aviation Law, Art. 28 ^[5]

Main characteristics

- **No prior permit required:** the operation of these aircraft does not require a permit from the authority, but it must count with valid registration certificate, airworthiness certificate and insurance policy ^[5].
- **Prohibition to commercialize:** the persons who operate these aircraft cannot, under any circumstance, render commercial services to third parties ^[5].
- **Specific regulatory framework:** this kind of transportation is ruled specifically by the Law, its Regulations and the applicable legal dispositions ^[6].
- **Pilot licenses:** for this segment, pilots —both Mexican and foreign— may validate or obtain a private pilot license, once the requirements established in the corresponding regulation have been fulfilled ^[7].
- **Foreign aircraft:** these can overfly the national airspace and land/take off in Mexico if they count

with the AFAC's authorization, having to make their first landing at an international airport in order to process such authorization with the *Comandancia*. Previously, there were two options: a single-entry authorization valid for 6 months, or a multiple-entry authorization valid until December 31st of the requested year. However, due to a recent amendment, only a single-entry authorization is now applicable before the *Comandancia* ^[6].

- **Insurance:** the air operator of non-commercial private transportation is also obligated to contract the insurance foreseen by the Law ^[8].

2. Commercial private aviation

Definition - Article 27 of the Civil Aviation Law [9]: commercial private air transportation is considered to be that one which is destined to the service of one or more natural or legal persons, other than the owner or holder of the aircraft itself, with profit purposes. Within commercial private transportation, the so-called specialized air services are found.

"Article 27.- Commercial private air transportation is considered to be that which is destined to the service of one or more natural or legal persons, other than the owner or holder of the aircraft itself, with profit purposes. Within commercial private air transportation, the specialized air services are found, which, in turn, comprise aerial photography, aerial topography, commercial advertising, aerial fumigation, artificial rain provocation and training, among others." — Civil Aviation Law, Art. 27 ^[9]

The commercial private air transportation service is also listed as one of the modalities subject to permit, in accordance with Article 11, section IV of the LAC ^[10].

Main characteristics

- **Subject to permit:** this service requires a permit from AFAC and must only operate in the areas authorized by it, previous fulfillment of the conditions and requirements established by the Law, these Regulations and the corresponding Mexican official mandatory rulings ^[10] ^[11].
- **Classification - Article 14 of the Regulations ^[11]:** the service is divided into (I) aircraft rental to third parties; (II) specialized air services; and (III) those that the AFAC determines in attention to the technological development, in accordance with the applicable Mexican official mandatory rulings.
- **Aircraft rental to third parties:** It is a lease arrangement, under which a permit holder—i.e., a company authorized to provide private commercial air transportation services—leases an aircraft to a third party, who uses it for its own purposes. The permit holder rendering this service is forbidden to agree on the assignment of certain rights such as, maintenance and should keep valid the airworthiness and registration certificates and insurance policy, as expressly indicated by the Mexican official mandatory rulings ^[12].
- **Specialized air services:** these are rendered with aircraft holding a private-service registration and must be crewed only by aeronautical technical personnel holding the license and capacity certificate corresponding to the kind and type of aircraft used, as well as the characteristics of the service. Among others, these include log transportation, fire extinction and control, and glider towing ^[13].
- **Proceedings:** any request to modify the authorized operation areas must be resolved within a term not exceeding ten working days; if such term elapses without a resolution, the corresponding affirmative or negative default applies ^[11].

- **Start of operations:** the permit holder must accredit, notifying to AFAC, that it fulfills the requirements of article 20 of the Regulations ^[14].
- **Insurance:** every commercial private air service permit holder must contract the insurance indicated in section II of the corresponding article, informing the passenger about the scope of such coverage ^[15] [8].

3. Key differences between both figures



Aspect	Non-commercial private	Commercial private
Purpose	Particular use, without profit purposes	Service to third parties, with profit purposes
Requires permit	No. Only registration certificate, airworthiness certificate and insurance policy	Yes, granted by AFAC
Legal basis	Art. 28 LAC [1]; Art. 14 and 65 of the Regulations [7]	Art. 11 and 27 LAC [5][6]; Art. 14 to 17 of the Regulations [7][8][9]
Who it transports	The owner/holder itself and its guests	Natural or legal persons other than the owner
Charging for the service	Forbidden in every case	Allowed; it is the essence of the service
Modalities	Not applicable (particular use)	Aircraft rental to third parties; specialized air services such as: transport of logs, fire suppression and control, towing of objects, aerial advertising, agricultural fumigation or spraying, aerial photography or filming, prospecting, surveying, research, instruction and training, search and rescue, air ambulance services, inspection of transmission lines and pipelines, placement of structures, external-load operations, traffic surveillance and control, meteorology, retransmission of radio or television signals, and any other activity which, by its nature, does not constitute public, private, or state air transport [7][9]
Typical examples	A person's own aircraft, used by him or for only the use of a company without profit purposes.	Non-Scheduled charter, air taxi, aircraft rental, aerial photography, aerial fumigation, etc.

4. Future challenges

4.1 Regulatory and institutional

- **Instability inside the AFAC:** the Federal Civil Aviation Agency has experienced frequent leadership changes, transfer of faculties towards the military sector and lack of budgetary autonomy. The challenge is to transform it into a truly autonomous and professionalized organism, capable of fighting corruption and optimizing its inspection and surveillance functions including Comandancias.
- **Cabotage with foreign-registered aircraft:** one of the most specific problems of the sector is the improper use of foreign-registered aircraft (mainly those whose registration starts with “N”, registered in the U.S.) operating as air taxis inside Mexico, which is forbidden by Article 17 Bis of the LAC ^[16]. Since May 2026, the AFAC has tightened the controls, requiring the previous submission of the whole flight planning, technical documentation, licenses and passenger lists for private flights with foreign registration, which adds administrative burden to the operators but pretends to stop the unfair competition.
- **Regulations and license issuance:** there are still pending issues regarding the efficiency in the issuance of pilot and technical personnel licenses, an issue that affects the availability of qualified crews for the sector’s growth, homologation and the requirements for each airport and specific and clear regulations with international standards and best international practices.

4.2 Airport infrastructure

- **Need for long-term planning:** it has been pointed out the lack of a comprehensive infrastructure plan for the next 20 to 25 years, beyond merely aesthetic remodeling works, which is relevant for executive aviation, given that it relies on adequate FBO terminals and hangar capacity and secondary airport infrastructure ^[17].

4.3 Bilateral relationship and international standards

- **Tensions with the United States:** sanctions and FAA alerts related to military activities and airspace coordination generate operational uncertainty, which is especially relevant for operators with frequent cross-border routes (U.S.-Mexico), very common in the executive segment ^[18].
- **Compliance with ICAO standards:** recent audits have shown performance indicators below what was expected, which could translate into a bigger international regulatory scrutiny ^[18].

4.4 Demand and operational capacity

- **Pressure from international events:** the expected traffic growth puts to the test the capacity of ground support services, FBOs and specialized personnel, which represents a scalability challenge for the sector, such as the past Soccer World Cup.
- **Aircraft and parts shortage:** the global demand for executive aircraft exceeds the available production, which affects delivery times and the availability of spare parts for maintenance in Mexico ^[3].

4.5 Human talent

- **Specialized human capital:** the national aeronautical policy currently being prepared for 2026 identifies safety, governance and human capital as key guiding axes, which suggests that the training of pilots, mechanics and specialized ground personnel will keep on being a structural challenge ^[17].

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