

# The September 2017 Earthquake in Mexico and the Cooperation Between the American Air Forces

COLONEL GABRIEL GARCÍA JIMÉNEZ, FAPA, DEMA



Since 2013, Mexico has been part of the System of Cooperation among the American Air Forces (SICOFAA). Since then, personnel from the Mexican Air Force have participated in various committees and meetings exchanging information and experiences on topics of interest to all members, such as education and training, air safety and prevention of air accidents, logistics, humanitarian aid, among others.

The continuity within the SICOFAA has allowed the Mexican Air Force to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and mutual support with the rest of the member countries, which was felt during the month of September last year as follows:

At 23:49 hours, on September 7, 2017, an earthquake of 8.2 magnitude struck the southeast of Mexico, with an epicenter in Pijijiapan, Chiapas, affecting mainly the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas.

Later, on September 19, 2017, just 32 years after the earthquake that caused thousands of deaths in Mexico City in 1985, at 13:14 hours on that date there was a 7.1 magnitude earthquake affecting the states of Morelos, Puebla, State of Mexico, Guerrero and Oaxaca, leaving more than 360 dead, and causing major damages to several buildings in the affected areas.

Several areas were declared disaster zones and the Mexican Army and Air Force immediately enforced Plan DN-III-E, in support and assistance of the civilian population in case of disasters.



Through this operational-military instrument that points out the general guidelines to the Mexican Army and Air Force agencies, the coordinating centers of the Plan DN-III-E were established, activating shelters, food collection centers, as well as the air operations coordinating center (CCOA) for the control of air operations from different parts of the national territory.

Member countries of the SICOFAA showed their support and solidarity to the Mexican population. Offers of assistance were received from Chile, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, the United States, Honduras, Panama and Peru, who delivered material, food, medicines and provided support with personnel specialized in the evaluation of structural damage to buildings and search and rescue of people.

The United State sent 63 search brigade members, 4 structural engineers and 5 rescue dogs to support the work during the days after the earthquake and 138,000 pounds of non-perishable items.

In total, Mexico received humanitarian aid from 24 nations, which sent 664 tons of donations, according to official data from the Foreign Affairs Secretary. Some of the participating aircraft from friendly countries were the following:

- A C-17 from the United States Air Force.
- A Vulcano Boeing 727 from the Colombian Air Force.
- El Salvador provided a C-47 turbo.
- Ecuador sent an L-100-30 Hercules transport aircraft.
- Costa Rica sent a Beechcraft King Air F90.

In summary, there were a total of 471 sorties with fixed-wing aircraft and 2,221 sorties with rotary wing aircraft transporting personnel, machinery and provisions to the affected areas.

There is no doubt that SICOFAA has increased the sense of unity and mutual support among the American Air Forces, which were demonstrated during the support to the Mexican people in their time of need. Aunque la ayuda recibida se canalizó por diferentes canales diplomáticos de

comunicación, es gratificante saber que contamos con el apoyo internacional y el respaldo de un sistema como el SICOFFA, siempre leal a su lema “unidos aliados”.

Although the help received via different diplomatic channels of communication, it is gratifying to know that we have the international support and the support of a system such as SICO-FAA, always loyal to its motto “Alliens-United”.

The experience gained during the multiple occasions in which the Mexican Army and Air Force have participated in disaster relief, particularly because earthquakes are constant in Mexico, has been consolidated in various procedural manuals and specific plans that regulate this participation, achieving effective and efficient attention to our population, turning it into a doctrine of action, which has been shared in a fraternal manner with various countries of Central America.



The Mexican Air Force will continue to inform our high command at the Ministry of Defense about the benefits obtained by establishing telecommunications and liaison stations with SICO-FAA member countries, to expedite humanitarian aid from friendly countries in the shortest possible time for the benefit of the victims of a natural disaster. □

Picture not available

**Colonel Gabriel García Jiménez, FAPA, DEMA;** graduated from the Air Force Academy, Mexico, as a military pilot. He has served in Operational and Administrative units in the Mexican Air Force, Air Squadrons and as Army and Air Force Attaché at the Mexican Embassy in the United States. Currently, he is the Chief, Fifth Section, Air Staff, Mexican Air Force. Among his decorations are the following: Perseverance Award, 5th, 4th, 3rd, 2d and 1st Class Award for Methodologies in Teaching Inter-American Defense Board Award