



Thursday, March 9, 2006.

Scientific Flights set out to measure pollution in Mexico City

The Mario Molina Center (CMM) together with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and more than one hundred other Mexican and foreign institutions, announced that five scientific aircraft have initiated flight activities to measure atmospheric pollution aimed to help design public policies on pollution and climate change.



The airplanes that took to the air on Sunday, and the deployment of aerostatic tethered balloons the following Monday constitute the first phase of the *Megacity Initiative: Local and Global Research Observations* known as **Milagro**. The data collected is intended to measure atmospheric conditions and will be added to the trace patterns outlined by the satellites and above mentioned aircraft.

Luisa T. Molina and Sasha Madronich, scientists from the Molina Center and the National Center for Atmospheric Research respectively, indicated that the initial results from the pollution study will be available a year from now and are expected to be a valuable resource in the design of public policies to revert the situation.

At the press conference that included 120 participating scientific institutions from Mexico, the United States and Europe, Dr. Madronich explained that the five scientific aircraft employed to study and characterize atmospheric pollution from the Mexico City Metropolitan Area would be based out of the International Heriberto Jara Corona Airport located at the port of Veracruz.

Madronich indicated that this region is one of 20 listed as world “megacities” that in itself is of no great consequence to the world’s pollution and climate change predicaments, but joined together as a group it may detonate a snowball effect on a much larger scale.

The scientist explained that “there is no way in which we can prove that Mexico City is the most polluted city in the world, as has been indicated in some

instances, but we can substantiate that it is one of the most polluted. Other cities that harbor comparable pollution conditions would be New Delhi, India, or Lagos, Nigeria”.

Luisa Molina, scientist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology stated that the **Milagro** Project is a pioneering environmental effort, the first of its kind worldwide. The Mexico City Metropolitan Area was chosen due to the existence of prior studies by different institutions such as the Metropolitan Environmental Commission (CAM), the Mario Molina Center (CMM) and several universities.

“Therefore, we are not starting from scratch but are building on an established background. Furthermore, there are reports that indicate that in the past 3 years pollution has decreased due to actions taken by the governments of Mexico City and the states of Mexico and Hidalgo. This information will also be corroborated by our current studies” stated the scientist.

The first tethered balloons were deployed –two each day during March- to measure climate, humidity, atmospheric density and geographical location at the port of Veracruz and in Mexico City.