

SECTION: VERACRUZ (Page 6A)

Air pollution monitoring project underway

- They will analyze pollutants from Mexico City

Scientists will conduct flights over the region with 6 aircraft.

Wednesday March 8, 2006, Veracruz / Ingrid Ruiz Rivera / Imagen

The **MILAGRO** Project (Megacity Initiative: Local and Global Research Observations), an investment worth 20 to 30 million dollars, began its activities in what is considered a megacity due to its extensive population and pollution levels, Mexico City.

Scientists Sasha Madronich, director of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado, and Luisa Molina from the Molina Center, indicated that the goal of the project is to study the transformation and transport of atmospheric pollutants generated by megacities using the Mexico City Metropolitan Area as a case study.

They will analyze the impact of pollutants at a local, regional and global level by conducting measurements of aerosol gases, meteorological parameters, radiation through ground and air based equipment, aircraft and satellites and with the use of meteorological and air quality models. The goal is to gather large amounts of data, until now unknown, about the chemical and physical atmospheric processes of a megacity and its impacts at local, regional and global levels.

Luisa Molina explained that the studies would be conducted by scientists that will use six aircraft equipped with a variety of specialized instruments for scientific research to monitor the region. Five will be based out of Veracruz and one out of Houston, Texas.

ATMOSPHERIC INFORMATION

She indicated that the measurements obtained with this equipment will provide atmospheric information over a vast region at different altitudes going from the Mexico City Metropolitan Area to the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The instruments installed on the satellites will study the atmosphere to cover an even bigger geographical area.

According to Claudio Torres Nachón, director of the State Council for Environmental Protection (COEPA) the project is comprised by more than 120 participating institutions dedicated to scientific research, the environment, the ecosystem, etc, not only from Mexico but the world over.

The monitoring activities began March 1st and the results will be available a year from now.



CONDITIONS

The Mexico City Metropolitan Area was chosen as a case study for the **Milagro** campaign for the following reasons:

- Tropical latitude similar to other megacities
- Reliable emissions inventories and air quality studies
- Previous first-rate scientific collaboration
- Excellent logistical infrastructure
- Information and data from prior campaigns, the most recent one in 2003.

OVER-POLLUTED

- Air pollution is one of the main environmental problems in urban areas, particularly in megacities (cities with more than 10 million residents).
- Population growth and increasing levels of industrialization have resulted in a higher demand for energy, greater use of fossil fuels, and more emission of pollutants into the atmosphere.
- As a result, air pollution has become not only one of the central environmental problems of the century, but also presents serious health consequences to people and economic costs to society.
- The air pollution problem in megacities is influenced by several factors that include the topography, meteorology, demographic growth, industrial growth and urban expansion.

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AND URBAN EXPANSION

- The Mexico City Metropolitan Area has an estimated population of 18 million people and covers an urbanized area that totals 1,500 km²,