

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

November 18, 1969

Dear Mr. President:

I was pleased to receive your letter of November 6 giving me your reactions to my October 31 speech, and I appreciated your thoughtfulness in sending it.

As I stated in my speech, I believe deeply that we in this hemisphere now share a historic opportunity to move forward together toward a fuller life for all our peoples. I believe also that Mexico and the United States, sharing as we do a common border, have a particularly close and constructive relationship and particular reason to maintain it.

It is in this spirit, Mr. President, that I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to refer to some points you raised at our September meeting at Amistad Dam. As you recall, you mentioned several matters of special concern to you, and I promised to look into them. I have done so, and I wanted to respond to your expressions of concern.

With reference to "in-bond" stores, I want to assure you that we shall search diligently and sincerely for ways to alleviate the problem these stores cause Mexico. I have instructed the Commissioner of Customs to be prepared to discuss this matter at his next meeting with your Director General of Customs, in accordance with the procedure agreed to in the last meeting of the Mexico-United States Trade Committee. With reference to arms sales to Mexico, I have directed that license applications for exports to Mexico receive the most careful scrutiny. Our Commissioner of Customs will also be prepared to discuss the problem of arms smuggling with your Director General of Customs at their next meeting. I am glad that a representative of my Government was able to discuss the bracero problem with officials of your Government in Mexico City. I have asked that everything consistent with our laws be done to meet your Government's specific concerns.

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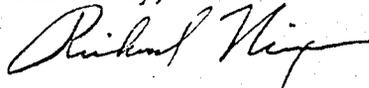
At Amistad Dam, you also mentioned your interest in obtaining additional equipment for use in your narcotics eradication programs. We are prepared to provide such assistance. I suggest that the talks of the joint U.S. -Mexican working group on narcotics now going on in Mexico City be the forum for working out details in this regard.

In this connection, Mr. President, I want to express my personal regret for the friction which Operation Intercept has caused in the relations between our two countries. Operation Intercept was conceived as one element in a major campaign to combat the traffic in narcotics from whatever source. It was not intended to single out Mexico, nor to give offense to Mexico. I want to give you my personal assurances on this point. When it became apparent to me that this operation was being viewed by your Government as an affront to the Mexican people, and that it was causing economic hardship for border communities, I asked that the intensity of inspection be reduced to a point where the major frictions and irritations which the operation had caused in our relations with Mexico could be eliminated.

My concern about the narcotics problem remains grave, however, and I am very pleased that agreement was reached between our two Governments last month to establish a joint working group. I am confident that the working group will find means to strengthen our cooperation in the common fight against drugs.

With warmest personal regards to you and Mrs. Diaz Ordaz.

Sincerely,



His Excellency  
Gustavo Diaz Ordaz  
President of the United Mexican States  
Mexico, D.F.