

LITTLE GOLANO^{*}

General Information

99 years ago, the bloody War of 1910 between the U.S. and Mexico ended with the two countries signing a treaty including a cessation of hostilities and delineating the border between the two countries in the San Golano River area. According to the treaty, Mexico kept all areas south of the San Golano River, and the U.S. retained all lands north of the river (control of the river itself was not discussed in the treaty). The exception to this rule was an area south of the river, of about 100 square kilometers, known as “Little Golano.” Both sides had laid claim to Little Golano before the war, and recurrent clashes between Mexican villagers and American ranch owners and prospectors had served as one of the war’s major triggers. This disputed territory, it was decided, would remain under U.S. control for 100 years, after which time it would revert to Mexico.

Since then, the U.S. has developed Little Golano in various ways. A huge biotechnological industrial park was constructed, and the town of Golan Falls was built along both riverbanks. Further down the river, the natural mating grounds of the Tuli Turtle at Yifi Point were declared a nature preserve, and many ecotourism projects including lodges and expedition operators have developed between Yifi Point and Golan Falls.

Six months from now, the handover date set down in the treaty will arrive. Despite requests through diplomatic channels from the Mexican government over the past decade, several U.S. administrations have refrained from taking a clear stance on the issue of the Little Golano region. So far, no federal agency has been set up to deal with the issue. State Department spokespeople have been vague on the issue and have recently replied to journalists’ questions with phrases such as “if this should come about” or “the proposed handover.”

Increasingly, news channels are airing in-depth features on Little Golano. Schoolchildren in Mexican villages near Little Golano are shown preparing banners and decorations for the handover celebrations, and their parents speak longingly about returning to their ancestral homes. Reruns are shown of the Mexican President’s recent election campaign speeches, in which he focused on the handover as an issue of national pride and promised to make sure the U.S. respected its commitment.

On the U.S. side, protests are shown taking place in front of the White House calling for the U.S. to remain in Little Golano. Many of the protestors belong to environmental groups, concerned that the ex-

^{*} Noam Ebner & Yael Efron, *Little Golano: An International Conflict Management Simulation* (2011). This role-play was awarded first prize at the 2009 E-PARCC Competition for Collaborative Governance at Syracuse University. Available at: <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/research/article/little-golano>
Its adaptation to the public international law classes at ZAC was created by Munin and Efron.

tensive conservation efforts conducted in Little Golano will be swept aside by a wave of Mexican farmers pouring into the area and cultivating it. Also protesting the pullout is an umbrella organization called “U.S. First,” which was set up to oppose the pullout by coordinating the activities of many right-wing, conservative, and patriotism-oriented organizations. Both movements enjoy public support in the U.S.

Tension is steadily rising between the two nations, and the cooperation that characterized U.S.-Mexican relations throughout the 1980s and 1990s is deteriorating. Tourists from the U.S. are encountering harassment and a general “go home” sentiment in Mexican cities. In the U.S., anti-Hispanic hate crime is on the rise. Heated exchanges between Mexico and the U.S. in the United Nations have become a day-to-day event, and both countries anxiously upped their military training, fearing an outburst of hatred as the date for the handing over of Little Golano, stated in treaty, approaches.

Under pressure from the UN Secretary-General, both countries have agreed to send senior-level negotiators to bilateral talks in Geneva, Switzerland.

Instructions for the U.S. Negotiating Team

You are the United States Undersecretary for International Affairs. Along with your two colleagues, your job is to engage the Mexican negotiating team in such a way as to serve the U.S.'s best interests. The following is a summary of a briefing session held in Washington, D.C.

General

Little Golano was never, until recently, an important issue on the political agenda. The war on terror, U.S. troops on Middle Eastern grounds, and the economy have tended to sideline everything else. While official U.S. policymakers never rejected the treaty, facts on the ground have made it increasingly difficult to even imagine literal compliance with it. An estimated 30,000 American citizens live in the disputed region, have set down roots, and established livelihoods. The town of Golan Falls, built along both sides of the San Golano River, is a strongly unified community. The townspeople are working the media, appealing to the President and the rest of the nation not to abandon them. The President, well aware of his ratings in the polls, shudders at the thought of evacuating U.S. citizens from the area and of victorious Mexican peasants burning U.S. flags in the town hall.

Political and Diplomatic Considerations

If these negotiations do not seem to lead in a direction that serves U.S. interests, you would be willing to refuse to comply voluntarily with the treaty and submit the issue to the International Court of Justice. While not sure if you'd win, you estimate it would take the ICJ at least five years to decide the issue. This would have the effect creating the perception that you are not giving up without a fight. You know the Mexicans might not be able to afford that delay – much as they would like to get a chance to rake the U.S. over the coals at the ICJ.

On the other hand, working out a negotiated solution serving American interests and not seen as capitulation to Mexican pressure would be a diplomatic achievement that could strengthen the President's position, promote the U.S.'s public image, and contribute to keeping your party in power in the upcoming election.

Security Issues

While choosing the makeup of the negotiating team, the President decided not to include a representative from the Department of Defense, not wanting the Mexicans to perceive that he was looking towards an escalation. However, the team includes a representative from the Department of Homeland Security, and security issues were detailed in the briefing you all received.

The administration views the ever-rising wave of illegal immigration from Mexico as a first-class security concern. In all U.S.-Mexico border states, unemployment and crime are on the rise, and more and more resources need to be expended just to keep the streets safe and local government functioning. In addition, the immigrant-smuggling channels are being used to smuggle drugs and weapons into the U.S. It is only a matter of time before terrorists use these channels to enter the country.

Little Golano serves as a buffer zone in a very vulnerable region. The San Golano River is at its lowest here and is easily fordable. Without U.S. presence on both sides of the river, you fear the area might become an open backdoor into the U.S. You fear Mexico might try to divert part of the river's water southwards for agricultural use, lowering the water level even more and making it easier to cross.

Ordinarily, the U.S. would not be concerned at all by the threat of military action by Mexico to seize the region by force. However, the U.S. military is nearly over-tasked as it is, and it would certainly be spread thin if it became necessary to dedicate considerable resources to a new front with Mexico. Additionally, open hostilities might lead Mexico to turn a blind eye to terrorists taking advantage of the opportunity to enter the U.S. Keep the Mexican delegation away from considering this option.

Economic Aspects

The Little Golano Biotechnological Industrial Park (BIP) is situated on the south bank of the river. The park is powered by electricity produced from the river itself at the adjacent power plant, which also provides power for the entire town. The river also supplies many of the elements necessary for the different experiments and production processes carried out in the BIP. If the U.S. government were to compensate the BIP's owners for the loss of the park, or for the cost of resituating it elsewhere, it would cost between one and two billion dollars. The BIP employs over 4,000 workers and shutting down would have huge repercussions.

The BIP's main purpose, however, remains a secret known only to the park's owners and the top levels of the U.S. government. The San Golano River is home to a unique underwater weed, not found anywhere else on the planet. While much research remains to be done, and at least several years remain before drugs derived from the weed can be approved and marketed, scientists believe that a serum derived from this weed enables the human body to successfully defend itself against viruses from Influenza to HIV, and ultimately ensure the survival of mankind. The prestige and financial reward for developing this serum are incalculable. The Pentagon views this serum as the ultimate answer to the threat posed by bioterrorists equipped with vials of smallpox or SARS; enabling its production is seen as a major security concern.

Environmental groups, worried about the Mexicans polluting the San Golano River, are exerting heavy political pressure on the President. The BIP's owners and the Pentagon, concerned that river pollution harms the weed or alters its properties, are also exerting similar pressure.

About 100,000 tourists from the U.S. and abroad visit the region's natural parks and ecotourism projects, generating an estimated 50 million dollars in annual revenue and supporting over a thousand jobs.

While nobody thinks that this situation can be defused simply by buying the Mexicans off, the President has authorized you to use up to 3 billion dollars, for whatever purposes you deem necessary, in order to achieve a good outcome.

Take time to prepare yourselves, individually and as a team. When you feel ready, go to the conference room to meet with your Mexican counterparts.

Good luck!!!

Instructions for the Mexican Negotiating Team

You are the Mexican Assistant Minister for International Affairs. Along with your two colleagues, your job is to engage the U.S. negotiating team in such a way as to serve Mexico's best interests. The following is a summary of a briefing session held in Mexico City before your departure for Geneva.

General:

This is a crucial moment in Mexican history. One hundred years ago, Mexico forced the U.S. to admit that the Little Golano region was truly Mexican, but in order to spare bloodshed on both sides, Mexico had agreed to wait a century before regaining control of the area. You now fear that this moment of historic justice might be denied due to U.S. greed; you fear your government may have been too naïve in simply believing the U.S. would respect its treaty agreements.

Political and Diplomatic Issues

The Mexican President has promised the nation, time and again, that their patience would pay off, and that the Mexican flag would soon wave in Little Golano once more. In fact, this appeal to national pride enabled his rise to power in the last election.

If the Americans refuse to withdraw, Mexico could always appeal to the International Court of Justice. However, such a procedure could take years to reach a conclusion. The Mexican people expect to see results, and soon. Developers are already planning villages for construction in the area, and Mexican courts have been swamped with litigation concerning rights to plots of land in the area filed by descendants of the villagers and farmers forced off their land a hundred years ago.

Any agreement reached with the U.S. negotiating team must take into account the honor and the needs of the Mexican people, and under no circumstances can it seem as if Mexico is backing down. If any concessions need to be made, it must be done in return for valuable concessions from the Americans.

Mexico had been demanding that the U.S. formally hand over the Little Golano region to Mexico, evacuate all its citizens from the area, and desist from any military operations on the south side of the river. The U.S. has so far avoided stating a clear position on the issue, giving rise to a sense of distrust on your side. Mexico has been enjoying much support in the United Nations over this issue and feels that should it stand strong against the U.S., the world would support it.

Economic Issues

The U.S. has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure in the region. The value of the homes, the roads, the community buildings, and the industrial park is immense. If the U.S. could be persuaded to pack up and leave everything as it is, this would be a perfect outcome from your point of view. Although you could suggest compensating it for the infrastructure or the added value of the development, Mexico's economy is on the brink of collapse; this U.S. pullout is supposed to help it, not push it over the edge.

If possible, you should try and achieve a handover of the Biotechnological Industrial Park (BIP). You can consider offering some degree of joint operation of the park, cashing in on the Americans' experience and expertise; however, you could always bring in outside experts to manage the Park; Japanese conglomerates have already approached you on this issue. One major benefit of the BIP's continued operation is that it can create over 3,000 jobs. Unemployment in that area of northern Mexico is estimated at about 20%; this could be an enormous help in that regard. You estimate that about one third of the

jobs are positions for scientists and other highly trained specialists, but that the rest might be handled by less qualified employees.

Recently, Mexican scientists have discovered a special nutrient, derived from the shell of the Tuli Turtle's eggs, which has the potential to make agricultural crops flourish despite a shortage of water. The Tuli has been declared an endangered species by U.S. conservation groups, and its nesting grounds in the Little Golano region were declared a nature preserve. The nutrient's discovery has been kept secret so far, to prevent the greedy Americans from capitalizing on it and withholding it from Mexico. If some of the waters from the San Golano River would be diverted south into the agricultural areas, the combined effect of the nutrient and the new water system might just pull the entire population of the country above the poverty line.

Two years of drought in a row have cost Mexico nearly four billion dollars, and two outbreaks of avian flu took another two billion dollars. The country is on the verge of economic recession; the Little Golano handover might not only help Mexicans hold their heads up high but might also put money in their pockets.

Security Issues

Stepping up your military training in the areas close to the U.S. border was mainly a show for internal consumption. Not only could Mexico never hope to win even a limited war against the U.S., it could also not afford the total breaking off of relations this would entail with its main trading partner. However, in today's reality where the U.S. Army is spread across the globe, having to hold troops in reserve for a U.S.-Mexico flare up would put a strain on the U.S. military and economy. This might be a good pressure point to lean on.

You know that one of the U.S.'s major concerns is illegal immigration from Mexico. You have mixed interests on this issue. On the one hand, Mexican laborers who find work in the U.S. send money back home to their families, bringing more dollars into the country. On the other hand, it encourages corruption and lawlessness on the Mexican side of the border and does not enhance the country's image. If the Americans cooperate, you can offer them increased cooperation in preventing illegal immigration; if they don't, you can always threaten to stop patrolling your side of the border altogether.

You share one common enemy in the border region: drug smugglers. Mexico is trying to dispel its reputation as an easy conduit for drugs from South America to the U.S. The government's fight against the drug trade is a battle for survival between Mexican democracy and the drug syndicates constantly trying to set up powerbases in Mexico. This common interest might be a good one to raise when looking for ways to cooperate with the U.S.

Take time to prepare yourselves, individually and as a team. When you feel ready, go to the conference room to meet with your U.S. counterparts.

Good Luck!!!