

Stolen airplane stuck in Mexico

By SCOTT WILLIAMS
of the Journal Star

No one is talking about calling in Oliver North yet, but the theft of the P.A. Bergner & Co. corporate jet earlier this year has evolved into a story of international intrigue.

Heisted from a small-town Texas airport in January, the million-dollar aircraft has been reported found in Mexico and in the midst of sensitive cross-border negotiations between the neighboring governments.

An insurance company has long since settled with Bergner's — formerly headquartered in Peoria — by paying the department store chain more than \$1.3 million for the loss of the posh eight-passenger craft.

But the insurer is said to be running into some formidable bureacratic obstacles in its efforts to recover the jet and close the books on the case of one of the most valuable aircrafts ever reported stolen.

U.S. Aviation Underwriters Inc. has been forced to work through diplomatic channels in the U.S. State Department to try to circumvent what one company official describes as trade treaties and political barriers.

Brian Hogan, claims manager in the insurance company's Chicago office, said State Department officials have been working quietly since late summer to retrieve the aircraft.

"You can't just go down there and fill it with gas and

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