

PLANE

Continued from Page A1

say, 'See you later, folks,' " Hogan said. "It becomes sensitive type of negotiations to get the aircraft back."

An official in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs acknowledged Friday that he is aware of the situation involving Bergner's stolen aircraft, but he declined to discuss it.

The craft was reported stolen Jan. 22 after being lured to the airport in Kingsville, Texas — about 100 miles north of the Mexican border — under the apparent guise of a charter flight back to Peoria.

Bergner officials had left the jet at the Greater Peoria Airport when they moved their corporate headquarters to Milwaukee two years ago. Byerly Aviation had been authorized to accept charters to offset the expense of the aircraft.

The Gulfstream Commander 1000 is among the most valuable aircrafts ever reported stolen to the Aviation Crime Prevention Institute in Maryland.

An FBI spokesman in Texas, where police theorize that the air-

craft was heisted by international drug traffickers, indicated this week that investigators were unaware of the jet's reported discovery in Mexico.

Hogan explained that the insurance company is trying to keep a "low profile" until the craft is returned to the United States.

He said his company received word of the aircraft's whereabouts late this summer from Mexican diplomats in Washington, D.C. The reports have been confirmed, he added, through "sources within the Mexican political community and aviation community."

Hogan said the insurance company knows nothing about who stole the aircraft or how it ended up south of the border. He also said there have been conflicting reports about whether the craft has been damaged.

"We have been given very little information," he said, "and all we really know is that it's been found."

Officials at the Mexican Consulate General's office and the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., could not be reached for comment.

Earl Cunion, vice chairman of Bergner's, said his company no longer is involved in efforts to recover the craft.