The Slippery Slope
U.S. Military Moves Into Mexico

By S. Brian Willson

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Personal Introduction

On February 9, 1995, while traveling south on curvy, mountainous Chiapas Highway 173, we encountered a long, heavily supplied Mexican military convoy, carrying hundreds of armed soldiers. Among the new uniforms and equipment, I believed I recognized U.S. material, armored personnel carriers among them.

The convoy moved north towards Simojovel, the highland's village we had just left. Later I learned that we had seen the beginning of a major military offensive which ravaged many communities, and whose goal was the capture of Zapatista leaders.

Only a few days earlier, on January 31, 1995, U.S. President Bill Clinton had begun orchestrating the controversial $50 billion bailout of the then collapsing Mexico economy. Though Congress opposed the deal, Clinton was adamant. He bypassed Congress and facilitated the fiscal relief package through other channels: loans from discretionary public sources and from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international funds.

This unprecedented action suggests the high stakes involved in assuring a "healthy," stable Mexican economy so important under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the new corporate global economy that NAFTA promotes and requires. I have come to understand that this kind of economy is defined and driven by various international speculators, domestic wealthy interests, and World Bank and IMF theorists and programs. As I began to see more of Mexico it became apparent that the vast majority of the people are experiencing ever more poverty and misery under this kind of economics.

Mexico has a history of resisting U.S. military aid, a kind of old fashioned notion of maintaining her independence, her sovereignty. So why was the United States now involved in helping the Mexican government chase its own citizens around the jungles of Chiapas? And why was Mexico allowing it to happen?

I returned to Mexico ten months later, in December 1995, to study Spanish and to learn about the lives of the people, to understand what the Mexican government was doing to its poorest citizens. Driving 4400 miles round trip by car, I traveled through eighteen of Mexico's thirty-one states. Arriving in Chiapas, I began four months of language study in San Cristobal de las Casas.

During my stay, I visited a number of ancient Mayan sites and visited more than thirty indigenous communities in the "conflict zone," where the Zapatistas and the Mexican army maintained a tense truce. Twice I flew over

the conflict region in a small Cessna plane, observing much of the scarred jungle and numerous military outposts. I experienced extended visits in four communities, and was fortunate to meet and talk with many citizens of Chiapas-small farmers, business people, anthropologists, church and human rights workers, and various people I met on the streets of San Cristobal.

The impact of the many stories people told me was crushing. My heart ached as it had in war-ravaged Vietnam, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The troops I had seen- troops all over Chiapas during the February 1995 offensive- were operating as a terrorist force. And police and paramilitary units were involved as well. The army's strategy in the 1995 offensive was simple and cruel. Soldiers would enter a Zapatista community and drive the people out and into the mountains with just the clothes on their backs. Soldiers would burn some buildings, destroy crops, damage precious water supplies, then leave. Costs are low, few soldiers are endangered, nothing makes the newspapers in the cities. But small vibrant communities of human beings are devastated. This style of warfare was sickeningly familiar to me. It is another U.S. export and it is called "low intensity" warfare. It has been taught at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas (SOA) in Ft. Benning, Georgia for many years. I was not surprised to find that the Mexican army had been sending officers to the School for many years.

But terror was not limited to the countryside. In February 1995 I had witnessed the aftermath of an attack on a human rights office in San Cristobal - equipment, supplies for the countryside, and documents strewn around and destroyed. The staff was filled with terror, so afraid to go home that they slept in our hotel rooms that night.

The attack was carried out by non-uniformed goons in unmarked cars. Such paramilitary squads have also routinely attacked and smashed efforts by indigenous people throughout Chiapas to establish alternative economic cooperatives such as for weaving or organic products.

Poor people in the villages of Chiapas are also subjected to a mighty, oppressive everyday military presence. The army is everywhere. Convoys rumble through villages, with soldiers pointing machine guns at children and their mothers. Military helicopters fly low over villages, sometimes with the machine guns visible through the open doors. These villages are very simple. They have no automobiles, scarce food supplies, minimal health resources, inadequate educational services, and few material possessions. It is tragic that so much costly military is being used to preserve such deep poverty.

In the face of all this, the survival of spirit among the Mayan people of Chiapas is wonderful to witness. This spirit has survived throughout the 500 years of the Conquest. The people remember how to play music, sing, laugh, and dance. They find hope in the worst of circumstances, in the hardest of times. I was welcomed at a number of joyful fiestas. The people remember how to celebrate.

All of these experiences strengthened my resolve to investigate the U.S. military involvement in Mexico. As a military officer in Vietnam, and during my many travels in Latin America, I have been anguished by the obvious correlation between the extent of U.S. economic and military involvement in a country and the misery and poverty of that country's people.

My commitment is to do everything I can to prevent that horrible pattern from being repeated in Mexico. I am participating in this effort with the courageous military veterans of the Bill Motto Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #5888, Santa Cruz, California, who have consistently questioned the legality and morality of U.S. foreign policy and have advocated for a just and honest society at home in the United States.

-S. Brian Willson March 1997

Foreword

The Bill Motto VFW Post #5888 adopted the following resolution at their first regularly scheduled meeting in 1997-New Years night:

> CEASE U.S. MILITARY AND SECURITY AID OF ANY KIND TO MEXICO WHILE SUPPORTING GENUINE DEMOCRATIZATION AND SELF DETERMINATION FOR ALL PEOPLES OF THE MEXICAN SOCIETY

Members of the Post are deeply concerned about the influence and role of the United States government that might be worsening the lives of the Mexican people and interfering with their national sovereignty. The U.S. has been increasingly providing military and security assistance to assure the Mexican government's capacity to maintain the kind of political "stability" necessary to sustain confidence in the corporate profitability of Mexico's NAFTA-driven "free market" economics. This normally means, in effect, the preservation of poverty for the majority of the people.

Section I describes the extent and nature of U.S. military and security assistance to Mexico as could be discovered from available sources and eyewitnesses.

Section II unmasks the drug war which to date serves as the primary pretext or cover for the military aid.

Section III delineates the extent of poverty and misery in Mexico and how the NAFTA-driven economy is aggravating the plight for the majority of Mexico's people.

Section IV reports the escalating militarization of the domestic Mexican society and the corresponding rise of repression against the people who are determined to struggle for genuine democratization and justice for their country.

In a nutshell, this report portrays a very familiar, sad story. A people's uprising--growing out of widespread injustices and continual poverty not only unaddressed but actually promoted by their government--is met by harsher repression from that government. Paramilitary forces protecting wealthy interests assist in the repression with total impunity. The stability of the corporate economy is threatened by the uprising. The "health" of the economy is considered the primary national security interest of both Mexico and the United States. Social and economic justice are given mere lip service. The ecology is further destroyed. Nonetheless, as national security interests are seen as threatened by the cries of the poor, the United States government increases aid to Mexico to thwart and eliminate the threat through counterinsurgency and "low intensive" warfare operations. The repression of the people becomes ever more institutionalized. The people are forced to continually struggle for survival and dignity. More and more repression is necessary to maintain "stability" for the economy. U.S. military aid is increased. And the cycle goes on and on!

The U.S. is sliding perilously down the slippery slope of tragic intervention with a policy that is unconscionable and immoral. People are suffering and they cry out for help, saying enough is enough. The cries become wails. Will the United States feel the cries enough to transform its policy? Or will it continue to be an arrogant imperial power exacted at the expense of justice and dignity for the people and for the earth herself?

Section I:
United States Militarization of Mexico

As Mexico moves ever closer to the "neoliberal," "First World" economic model advocated/mandated by the Western corporate vision, security linkages between Mexico and the United States become nearly inseparable.

Historically low levels of U.S. military and security assistance to Mexico began to change during the early 1980s as Mexico implemented virtually all of the "structural adjustment" policies mandated as a condition for financial relief from its debt crisis. Much of the aid to Mexico's military and police agencies has been provided under the auspices of anti-drug campaigns, even before the 1980s.

Between 1982-1990, Mexico leased or purchased more military goods and services from the United States under all categories of assistance (Foreign Military Sales/FMS, Commercial Sales, Excess Defense Sales, and International Military Education and Training program/IMET) than it did in the previous 30 years.1 Sales or leases of military materials from the U.S. to Mexico totaled only $29.5 million from 1950-1978. In contrast the U.S. provided more than $500 million under all categories of military assistance from l982-1990.2

Now that Mexico is part of NAFTA, and Mexico is experiencing new demands for democratization and justice from its Indigenous and poor which threaten the tranquillity of the investment community, the security ties between the U.S. and Mexico have become very tight indeed. On October 23, 1995, then U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry visited Mexico's military high command, accompanied by then General Barry McCaffrey, head of the U.S. Southern Command and now U.S. President Bill Clinton's drug czar. Perry touted the emergence of a new security agreement that complemented the already political and commercial cooperation. Perry was quoted, "When it comes to stability and security our destinies are inextricably linked.3

A report published by the Federation of American Scientists revealed that between 1984-1993 Mexico obtained 10 times more U.S. arms than it accumulated between l950-1983.4 U.S. military aid provided to Mexico during the period 1982-1990 included F-5 aircraft, Bell 212 helicopters, C-130 transport planes and other aircraft, excess jeeps and light trucks, various communications equipment, and spare parts for U.S.-origin vehicles, planes and naval craft. In addition Mexico leased UH-1H helicopters.5 And the U.S. sold or licensed $750 million worth of military equipment to Mexico's various security forces between l982-l992, according to researcher Peter Lumsdaine with the Resource Center for Nonviolence, Santa Cruz, California.

EXPANSION OF AID UNDER THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

From 1988-1992 the U.S. exported over $214 million in military equipment to Mexico's army and police, some 16 times more than Mexico's second place arms supplier, France.6 But it hasn't just been military assistance that has defined the new relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. Under U.S. President Bush, then CIA director William Webster warned in 1989 of increasing unrest and coup plotting in Latin American countries, and declared that in a post-Cold War era a bipartisan policy was necessary to support covert actions, including election support of friendly candidates, in the region. He particularly identified Mexico as an object of "far more attention than it has been in the past."7

A U.S. Department of Defense report for fiscal year 1992 declared that the U.S. wanted from Mexico a "secure, stable, and friendly" neighbor who would look increasingly to the United States for directions and dependency relating to military and international policies. This included an "apolitical" military.8 An earlier DOD report described the intention of U.S. military programs to Mexico as "expanding U.S. influence in the Mexican military."9

An October 1989, U.S. State Department Bulletin identified Mexico's then (pre-NAFTA) strategic interests to the U.S.: a 2,000-mile common border that is the primary entry point for drugs coming to feed the U.S. demand, and the fact that Mexico is the second most important source of strategic raw materials , especially petroleum, strontium, fluorspa, and antimony.

Prior to the critical date, January 1, 1994 (when NAFTA became effective and the Zapatista uprising occurred), modernization of Mexico's security forces was becoming ever more obvious. In the early 1990s the U.S. began

supplying a number of helicopters, both to the Mexican Attorney General's office which has had jurisdiction over the drug war, and to the Mexican armed forces. A 1994 Mexican Attorney General report identified an aerial fleet that included a variety of 47 U.S.-made Bell helicopters and 13 Cessna observation planes. A number of Mexican mechanics were authorized to be trained in the U.S. to maintain the new helicopters. In addition, the Mexican armed forces by early 1994 possessed 48 helicopters, at least 20 of which were U.S. Bell helicopters, and 6 were sophisticated Blackhawk transports, as well as a number of smaller observation planes.10 Thus by early 1994, Mexico had at least 95 helicopters.

Assistance in 1993 included millions of dollars worth of U.S. Huey and Bell helicopters along with C-130 Hercules transport planes which were used against the Zapatistas during the January 1994 uprising.11

A La Jornada article (Aug. 21, 1995) printed a chronological list of military equipment and sophisticated armaments acquired by the Mexican government from 1988-1994. The list included over 7,000 bulletproof U.S. Hummer armored troop transport vehicles, 78 helicopters, 78 fixed wing planes, 1,615 machine guns, nearly 3,300 flame throwers, 360,000 grenades, and 266 electric prods. The latter have been traditionally used as part of interrogations/torture sessions by repressive regimes. The list included 1500 other types of military vehicles, 1,000 parachutes, and hundreds of thousands of articles of field equipment such as combat rations, helmets, flack vests, canteens, night vision equipment, etc.

INTENSIFICATION UNDER PRESIDENT CLINTON AFTER NAFTA

After January 1, 1994, the stakes in Mexico dramatically increased. NAFTA had become law but the indigenous uprising calling for genuine democracy and justice throughout Mexico immediately sent chills of fear through the hearts and minds of politicians, economists, and investors.

Two months before Mexico's tense 1994 summer elections were to be held, President Clinton hurriedly issued export licenses for $64 million in additional military equipment under the Direct Commercial Sales programs, plus $14 million for aerial forces that included 4 satellite-guided UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, for a total of $78 million to bolster Mexico's security forces.12

Several Associated Press reporters witnessed 23 tanks and nearly 300 tons of war material being unloaded on the Vera Cruz docks in l994. In the spring of 1994 there were additional reports of anti-riot vehicles and armored cars with water cannons being transported across the U.S.-Mexican border.13

TELLING STATEMENTS: INSENSITIVITY TO SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND HINTS AT MILITARY INTERVENTION

Political leaders in both the United States and Mexico had been seriously alarmed by the Zapatista uprising and its threat to the political "stability" necessary for the profitability of the new "free" market economics.

Evidence is mounting that the United States government is foreseeing intervention scenarios into Mexico. A 1994 Pentagon briefing paper declassified under the FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act) said it was "conceivable that deployment of U.S. troops to Mexico would be received favorably if the Mexican government were to confront the threat of being overthrown as a result of widespread economic and social chaos." Cooperation of Mexican authorities with U.S. intelligence is cited as necessary to identify threats to Mexico's internal stability.14

Donald E. Schultz, professor of National Security at the U.S. Army's War College has declared: "A hostile government could put the U.S. investments in Mexico in danger, jeopardize access to oil, produce a flood of

political refugees and economic migrants to the north. And under such circumstances the United States would feel obligated to militarize the southern border."15

A U.S. contingency plan to contain possible larger waves of immigrants provides military logistical support to the United States Border Patrol, training exercises by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), detention of immigrants at deactivated U.S. military bases, and construction of more concrete barricades along the border.16

Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has recently written a book, The Next War (co-authored with Peter Schweizer), in which he suggests that war with Mexico is a possible scenario in the year 2003. He cites the reasons: out-of-control massive migrations to the United States driven by domestic and social unrest. He concludes that poor U.S. human intelligence (HUMINT) despite superior satellite intelligence prevents the U.S. from sufficiently understanding the political minds and policies of Mexico. His scenario outlines need for a rapid 3-pronged military invasion, nicknamed "Operation Aztec," to control domestic unrest and to stem the influx of millions of immigrants to the United States. Weinberger's prediction of an invasion follows a failed bid by 60,000 U.S. troops at the border designed to militarily stop the waves of immigrants.17

There is evidence that in fact the United States lacks adequate "human intelligence" and genuine understanding about the history and the depth of unrest in Mexico. Former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Mexico on behalf of President Clinton on May 7, 1996, at which time Christopher lauded that the May 5 peace agreement signed in Guatemala "was the last internal conflict in Latin America."18 He made no mention of the active conflicts in Chiapas, Mexico, nor did he discuss active insurgencies in Peru and Colombia.

The Wall Street Journal reported that "none of the Clinton administration's top foreign policymakers have concentrated intensely on Mexico." Further, the Journal quoted Riordan Roett, Latin American chair of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies: "There's no one with a real brief on Mexico . . . The real Mexico watchers are at the Treasury Department."19 It is not surprising that experts on economics are directing the Clinton administration's policies with Mexico. However, these "experts" undoubtedly do not understand the relationship of social conditions to long-term political stability necessary for sustained economic health.

Recently the San Francisco Chronicle quoted a U.S. Senate staff member who regularly deals with the State Department: "I don't think the administration is focusing at all on Mexico's underlying social problems . . . They reacted [to the EPR] just by focusing on stability."20 The EPR (Revolutionary Popular Army) erupted as a new insurgent group in the summer of 1996 in seven of Mexico's southern states.

Col. Rex Applegate, who for 15 years worked as a sales representative for U.S. military and police equipment companies in Mexico, has stated that a modern revolution in Mexico would be a disaster for the United States. He confirms the conclusion that "vital" U.S. security interests require an economically and politically stable Mexico. He identified U.S. concerns about Haiti and Cuba as "pale by comparison" to the seriousness of assuring Mexico's "stability."21

The now famous Chase Bank memo of January 13, 1995, "Political Update On Mexico," communicated to its clients in the United States and Mexico the urgent concern regarding the Zapatista insurgency in Mexico. "The government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy," the memo declares. The threat to the investor interests and elite in Mexico is by extension a threat to corresponding U.S. economic (and therefore political) interests. This memo articulates the real object of U.S. military and economic aid to Mexico: maintenance of political stability no matter the severity of the methods or threat to Mexico's sovereignty so that investor confidence in profitability can be virtually guaranteed. The war on drugs is clearly not the primary object of U.S. military aid to Mexico. It is simply a

convenient cover.

COUNTERINSURGENCY

By the end of January 1995, shortly after the leak of the Chase Bank memo, U.S. President Clinton was orchestrating the $50 billion bailout of the collapsing Mexican economy. On February 9, the Mexican military launched their surprise offensive into the Zapatista region, breaking a year-long truce. The army has occupied the territory since, assuring that every one of the hundreds of Zapatista communities are watched/surrounded constantly.

United States complicity in this occupation, this containment, has become more apparent, especially as it provides Mexico with more military equipment and surveillance and intelligence support.

A U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General's report reveals that the United States military has spent millions of dollars over the past few years in increased surveillance and interdiction efforts in Mexico without any reduction in the flow of drugs into the U.S. The report discloses that the portion of the federal drug budget designated for military surveillance has quadrupled over the past 5 years.22

It is common to use the excuse of fighting the drug war in order to mount counterinsurgency operations. There is a fine line that distinguishes the 2 goals. Col. Warren D. Hall, Staff Judge Advocate to Gen. Barry McCaffrey when he was SOUTHCOM Commander, admitted as much in an internal memo:

> It is unrealistic to expect the military to limit use of the equipment to operations against narcotraffickers . . . The light infantry skills U.S. Special Operations forces teach during counter drug deployments . . . can be used by . . . armed forces in their counterinsurgency as well.

Hall also admitted that U.S.-supplied equipment "may be used in counterinsurgency operations during which human rights violations might occur."23

A June 1996 U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) report offers evidence that the Mexican government misused U.S. military equipment intended for drug interdiction. Instead, the report indicates that U.S. helicopters were used to transport Mexican troops to the January 1994 uprising areas in violation of the transfer agreement. Many indigenous campesinos were killed during those operations.24 The GAO also suggested that the U.S. was complicit in the misuse through very casual oversight.

Though the United States has dispatched military aid to Mexico under the pretext of fighting the drug war, that officially articulated line may be eroding. The U.S. State Department in 1996 assured the Zedillo Presidency in Mexico that arms shipments did not have to be exclusively used in anti-drug operations. The State Department informed the Mexican government that the U.S. "aviation advisors" would only inspect the location and condition of the helicopters once a year and would always provide advance notice of their visits.25

However, a September 20, 1996 letter to then Secretary of State Warren Christopher from 15 U.S. Congresspersons cited abuses of U.S.-provided helicopters to Mexico. Human rights violations and counterinsurgency operations are identified as violating bilateral transfer agreements. The Congressional letter requests close monitoring of the use of helicopters in Mexico. Apparently, in response to that letter, the State Department has informed Mexico of a more stringent plan to monitor use of helicopters-regular visits without prior notice.26 The seriousness of this oversight remains to be seen as pressures mount to contain the several insurgencies in Mexico.

Meanwhile, U.S. military aid and surveillance continues more pervasive and sophisticated. U.S. spy planes,

called "Condors," equipped with infrared sensors and silent flight capacity, have been utilized in southern Mexico since May 1994 and are being used to detect EZLN command posts.27 By 1996 the Mexican government acknowledged that for the first time it is allowing U.S. security agencies to fly over Mexican territory.28 Satellite images and aerial photography can identify the remotest centers of population.

There is evidence that the United States is urging Mexico to develop extensive computerized data banks to aid in monitoring domestic security efforts. The U.S. State Department recently allocated $250,000 for computer equipment, training and software for development of information systems.29

Advances in electronic and satellite surveillance have been identified as one of the most critical, post-Cold War devices for the Pentagon in its ongoing efforts to monitor conflicts and to expedite military intervention when "needed."30 It is known that the United States shared electronic intercept data and other satellite information about Chiapas with the Mexican government after the 1994 uprising.31

It is now known that prior to the Mexican army's February 9, 1995 invasion into and occupation of the Zapatista communities, U.S. intelligence services actively assisted in determining the alleged identity of Zapatista leader Subcommandante Marcos.32

There have been reports, though as yet unconfirmed by the sometimes less than vigilant U.S. press, of U.S. advisors present in Chiapas. A Major John Kevin Kord and Lt. Col. Alan Hassan Sanchez were identified by a Chiapas news organ, El Norte (Feb. 12, 1995). A U.S. Lt. Col. Propp was identified as part of a covert operating unit by La Brecha de Uruguay (Oct. 28, 1995), which also alleges that the U.S. Army is acting as intermediary in bringing Argentinean mercenaries to work with paramilitary groups in Chiapas. Zapatista commanders have reported sightings of men working with the Mexican military and paramilitary groups who wear U.S. military insignia.33

In September 1996, the Mexican daily, El Financiero, obtained 264 secret documents from the Pentagon under the FOIA. These files disclosed that Mexico has been receiving support from military advisors from the United States, Guatemala, Argentina, and Israel in its efforts to repress the active indigenous organizations and their solidarity networks. Presence of U.S. military advisors during the February 1995 are suggested in the papers.34

Throughout 1995, there were occasional news reports of movement of more equipment from the United States to Mexico. The New York Times (May 23, 1995) reported that Mexico's U.S.-supplied military helicopter fleet could be nearly doubled to almost 200 by Pentagon transfers, including several dozen state of the art Blackhawk choppers. In September there were reports of Mexico's purchase of $7 million worth of U.S. radars plus additional money for acquisition of 12 more Huey helicopters.35 On December 5, 1995, 25 military vehicles from the U.S. were observed crossing the Mexican border at Ciudad Juarez.36

THE 1996 MILITARY AGREEMENT BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES

On April 23, 1996, Mexico's Defense Chief, General Enrique Cervantes Aquirre, visited then U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry in Washington, D.C. where Aquirre received a full honors arrival ceremony. It was only the second official visit ever of a Mexican Defense Secretary to the United States.37

A major agreement was signed that included transfer of an additional $50 million worth of military equipment and training. The list of equipment includes 73 Huey helicopters to the Mexican Air Force along with spare parts, pilot training and maintenance equipment. In addition 30 Huey helicopters were to be given to the Mexican Attorney General's office specifically for the drug war, even though at the time of agreement the State Department had indicated that these helicopters need not be used exclusively in the war on drugs.38

The 1996 military aid package also included four C-26 reconnaissance planes, 500 more armored personnel carriers adding to their existing fleet of well over 7,000, sophisticated night vision and electronic command and control equipment, global positioning satellite equipment, additional radar units, plus supplementary supplies of semi-automatic rifles, grenades, ammunition, flame throwers, gas masks, field rations, etc.39 The aid package also authorized the training of Mexican soldiers in counter narcotics tactics at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.40 The first 20 Huey choppers were shipped in cargo planes from Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas, in November 1996.41

The new EPR insurgency that erupted during the Summer in seven southern Mexican states caused more nervousness and renewed U.S. resolve to assure its repression.

James Jones, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and former president of the New York Stock Exchange, told the Mexican press on September 9, 1996 that the United States was prepared to offer Mexico additional military aid, intelligence, training, and exchange of information to fight the "terrorists" in Mexico. "All the Mexican government needs to do is ask. Whatever they need, we will certainly support," Jones was quoted as saying.42

MILITARY TRAINING

One of the primary sources of U.S. military assistance since World War II has been through the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET). The IMET provides "professional" military training for selected foreign military personnel both at U.S. and overseas facilities.

Mexico sends more military personnel to U.S. training programs than to those of any other country, greatly enhancing U.S. influence over the Mexican military. Until recently, IMET has been the major source of direct U.S. military assistance to Mexico. Many of the IMET programs include, in addition to professional military education, maintenance courses at U.S. schools and training in anti-drug efforts.43

From 1950-1978 only 906 Mexican military personnel participated in military training programs, an average of about 31 Mexicans per year. However, from 1984-1992, the U.S. trained at least 512 Mexican military students, an average of 57 per year, nearly a doubling of the rate at which Mexico was sending students for U.S. training.44

The infamous SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS (SOA), founded in 1946 in Panama but moved to Ft. Benning, Georgia in 1984, has trained 600 Mexican military officers from 1946-1994. It is believed that approximately 500 military and police from Mexico studied at the SOA in 1995-1996 for "drug training." Mexico also furnishes a number of instructors at the SOA.45

Since the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico has taken the lead in the number of Latin American military personnel receiving U.S. military training.46 A number of Mexican generals have been identified who have been trained at the SOA. Many of them are leading the counterinsurgency operations against the Indigenous in Oaxaca, Chiapas, and other southern Mexican states.47

The Pentagon finally admitted in 1996 that training over the years at the SOA included practices such as execution of suspected insurgents, extortion, physical abuse, coercion, and false imprisonment.48 For years various groups of campesinos, human rights and church workers, among others, have been identifying various military personnel carrying out brutal acts of repression throughout Latin America. Research has now revealed that a number of the nearly 60,000 graduates participated in some of the worst human rights crimes and massacres in the post-WWII period. Its nickname has become School Of Assassins.

PRESENCE OF FBI AND CIA

Of course the CIA has field stations in elmost every U.S. Embassy in the world. Ex-CIA agent, Phil Agee, wrote in his book, Inside the Company, that for years Mexico City's CIA station has been the largest in Latin America. Agee used to work out of the Mexico City CIA office. Former CIA officers Ralph McGehee and John Stockwell also identify a major CIA presence along the Mexican-Guatemalan border. In addition to field agents, the CIA working with other intelligence operatives utilize radar stations and fly-over satellite intelligence.49 In San Cristobal there have been reports of CIA field agents' presence at different hotels since 1994, including a Mr. Symington of the famous Missouri Symington family.

Since President Reagan, the FBI has been authorized to operate in foreign countries to protect the rights and interests of U.S. citizens. They now have offices in a number of countries, including Mexico, where it has one of its largest foreign offices with approximately 10 staff. Allegedly the FBI agents develop strategies against "organized" crimes,50 and actively train Mexican police and intelligence forces.51

The FBI has about 200 agents assigned to the southwest border and recently requested funds to add 54 more agents to their border presence.52

In November 1996 a U.S. health volunteer was present in Oaxaca City where a local demonstration was distributing leaflets.53 The leaflets were being distributed by people from towns in the region of Los Loxicha, Oaxaca, who were protesting a series of repressive actions carried out against them by the Mexican police and army, and various paramilitary forces. The leaflet identified the latest "incursion" against them as having occurred on November 7 when men identified as United States FBI agents participated as advisors in a terror campaign against their communities. The leaflet describes a series of violent arrests and searches without warrants, torture and beatings of suspects, presence of police and goon squads wearing ski masks, disappearances and murders, robberies committed by police, death threats by shooting, use of attack dogs, and the menacing use of low hovering helicopters. A reign of terror is portrayed wherein physical and psychological repression are used by Mexican military and security forces with the advice of FBI agents against the poor Indigenous who live in "extreme poverty."

The people of the communities from the region of Los Loxicha articulated in the leaflet that they are not "terrorists" or members of the EPR insurgent group. They stressed that they are simply organizing themselves together for relief from poverty and repression. They also explain that the local people expelled the corrupt political bosses from their communities about 10 years ago, but that the expelled bosses continue to operate in the region with the proceeds from narcotics trafficking.54

CONCLUSION

The United States and Mexico are now inextricably connected, not just for political and economic issues, but for the necessary military and security alliances. These are necessary to maintain the political "stability" that is in turn necessary to assure economic profitability. The tragedy is that the new global corporate colonialism that NAFTA promotes and legally requires, deepens and expands the amount of poverty and misery that effects the majority of the Mexican people.

Transnational and transborder corporations now have the power to force national governments to defend corporate interests whenever such interests are in conflict with those of the people whose interest the governments have been elected to protect. With Mexico, the United States is again sliding down the slippery slope of intervention into the sovereignty of another nation of people. The military and security aid from the U.S. will preserve the interests of the elite at the expense of the people. This is again an unconscionable and immoral policy that threatens to drag the U.S. into another shameful quagmire.

To Section II: Unmasking the Drug War

Section I Endnotes

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Section II:
Unmasking the Drug War

INDIGENOUS INSURGENTS NOT INVOLVED IN DRUG TRAFFICKING

The Mexican government and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) have each declared that the Indigenous groups involved in the uprisings, though often labeled by some as "terrorists," or "guerrilla

insurgents," are not suspected of participation in the narcotics trade.1

Thus when observers note the number of military troops and amount of military equipment, much of it from the United States, in and around Indigenous communities in Chiapas and other southern states, it cannot be rationalized as needed for combating the narcotic trafficking. Generally the Clinton administration insists that U.S. aid funds anti-drug, not counterinsurgency efforts. As noted in Section I, it is "unrealistic" to believe that anti-drug operations will be kept separate from counterinsurgency tactics.

In the fall of 1996, U.S. President Clinton sent an additional $112 million in military equipment (including helicopters, surveillance aircraft, patrol boats, troop gear, ammunition, training and technical assistance) to Colombian, Peruvian, Venezuelan, and Mexican militaries.2 Thus under the guise of the drug war, the Clinton administration is beefing up repressive security forces responsible for numerous human rights abuses, including Mexico. In a short period of time, U.S. military aid is being tripled to fight the drug war in Latin America.3

In Clinton's latest anti-drug budget of $15.l billion, he proposes creation of an anti-narcotics base in Panama to augment the U.S. military's role throughout the region. In fiscal year (FY) 1997, Clinton requested $213 million for the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Account, primarily to arm and train military and police forces in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Mexico.4

In the past year the U.S. and Mexican governments have created a high-level task force and a series of working groups to plan "coordinated and urgent" action to curtail drug trafficking.5 However, recent revelations about the extent of Mexico's corrupt anti-narcotics effort makes a mockery of any working group between the two countries. The recent arrest and detention of Mexico's drug czar, General Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo (director of National Institute To Combat Drugs/INCD), exposes how deeply the leaders of Mexico's drug cartels have penetrated the highest ranks of Mexico's anti-narcotics and political institutions. The trade is facilitated by participation of wealthy families, mostly in central (Morelos, Jalisco) and northern states (Sonora, Sinaloa, Durango, Chihuahua, and Tamaulipas) and the border cities of Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez.6 Historically Mexico's drug trade has been centered in the tri-state area of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua.7

These states are far north from the areas of active Indigenous insurgencies. Mexico's INCD issued a report covering the period, Nov. 16, 1995-April 30, 1996, in which the Institute identified the 10 Mexican states in which the most drugs had been found and destroyed. The southern state of conflict-ridden Chiapas was not mentioned.

In April 1996 the International Drug Enforcement Conference was held in Mexico City. Officials from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as from the United States were present. The head of Colombia's Narcotic Security Administration identified Mexican drug mafiosos who provide South American cartels major assistance in trafficking drugs to the U.S. through use of secret runways and coastal ports. He identified the locations of these runways and ports in Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, and the state of Tamaulipas, all in northern Mexico near the border. Nonetheless, at the same conference, Harold Wankel, then operations chief of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), revealed the presence of U.S. anti-drug teams in Chiapas, 2,000 miles south of the U.S.-Mexican border, the area where the Indigenous communities are active in insurgencies but are not suspected of involvement in the drug trade.8 There are at least 46 DEA agents operating in Mexico,9 the largest foreign operation of the DEA.

The presence of DEA teams within Mexico is consistent with U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey's 1996 declaration of the need to increase the U.S. anti-narcotic effort within Mexican territory.10 However McCaffrey also admitted that the anti-narcotics programs in the Andes region have made little difference in interrupting the flow of drugs.11 Central and northern regions of Mexico might be appropriate for anti-drug efforts. However, Chiapas is not!

Four main drug mafiosos have been identified in Mexico, all with major operations in northern regions connected to the 2,000 mile common Mexican-U.S. border.12 The narcotics economy has become part of everyday life in northern, not southern Mexico. The underground economy built on decades of smuggling contraband, people and drugs to the United States, has become so intertwined with the region's legitimate wealth that the two are nearly indistinguishable. The extent and depth of corruption can be understood since drugs funnel as much as $30 billion/year into the Mexican economy, more than the country's top two legitimate exports (including oil) combined. Drug-based corruption is so institutionalized that normal government channels are simply not able to clean it up. There is too much money at stake. An average policeman in Mexico might be paid the equivalent of $335 per month by the government. A drug operative can pay the equivalent of $1,000 dollars a week, or $4,000/month, for protection.13

FIGHTING DRUGS MUCH LESS IMPORTANT THAN PRESERVING MEXICO'S ECONOMY

President Clinton's recent recertification of Mexico as a cooperative ally in fighting drugs despite the extensive corruption of the anti-narcotics efforts reveals a deeper truth about the genuine interest the U.S. has with Mexico. Preserving "stability" and confidence in the Mexican economic system is far more important than combating the drug trade.

Reports of corruption in Mexico's anti-drug efforts over the years have received little attention prior to the recent shocking arrest of Mexico's drug czar. U.S. officials involved on the war on drugs admit that the Mexican drug traffickers' political patrons are seldom targets of law enforcement officials in either country even though they play an important role in drug trafficking.14 Since the DEA in Mexico feel they get little support if they scrutinize the activities of Mexican political officials, there is reluctance to invest time and money in pursuing corrupt Mexican officials.15 There is a definite conclusion that the Clinton administration considers the war against drugs less important than fostering commerce.16 There is not one single law enforcement institution in Mexico with whom the DEA has a trusting relationship.17

Anonymous U.S. officials admit that the United States has consistently given trade and other economic and political interests more weight than forcing Mexico to stop the flow of drugs.18 A retired high ranking DEA official declared that that drugs have never been the number one issue as it relates to Mexico."19 Robert Nieves, former DEA chief of international operations, acknowledged recently that the drug issue "ranks somewhere below the North American Free Trade Agreement, economic bailout and other bilateral trade and commerce issues."20

If Clinton had chosen to withhold certification from Mexico it might have effected economic relations. The true purpose of U.S. aid to Mexico was exposed in the Chase Bank memo discussed in Section I above: "The Zapatistas must be eliminated." NAFTA, free trade and unfettered corporate capitalism are the genuinely important political values. The Clinton presidency has promoted this imperative. Any event or activity perceived as a threat to the ruling elite and their profitable enterprises is by extension a threat to U.S. economic interests.

Insurgency in Mexico is the most urgent challenge. Therefore counterinsurgency is the most important response from the perspective of the elite and their governments. Thus the reason that the Mexican military is so abundantly present with their U.S.-supplied armored personnel carriers, helicopters, and other military equipment in the Indigenous communities is to contain and destroy Indigenous organizations (counterinsurgency) who are seeking genuine democracy and justice. The military presence is clearly not intended to destroy drug trafficking because that is not even suspected among the Indigenous insurgents. However, the Mexican army with the aid of materials and equipment from the United States is preserving centuries old patterns of poverty and repression.

CORRUPTION WITHIN THE MEXICAN MILITARY IN THE DRUG WAR

The recent revelations of corruption in the Mexican drug fighting bureaucracy only exacerbate mounting evidence that officials of the PRI ruling government and the Mexican armed forces are directly involved in the planning, planting, harvesting, and selling of drugs.21 Students of Mexico and its military claim that for years senior officers are often allowed to enrich themselves with a variety of often illegal activities, including drug trafficking. This corruption assists in the military personnel remaining subservient to the politicians. Further, these students cite unstated agreements between the government and the military assures the military officers will not be prosecuted by civilian authorities for their illegal or extra-official activities.22 Drug related corruption within the military is just as tempting as it is to civilian officials, especially to relatively poorly paid officers and troops.23

A conversation with a journalist in the state of Oaxaca in May 1996 disclosed that the Mexican army historically has owned large plots of land on which the army has grown much of its food. The journalist claimed it was common knowledge among many Mexicans that the army grows and sells drugs, including marijuana, from these lands, or protects others who grow on army property. The army, it is claimed, has financed much of its military operations from the proceeds, and many officers reportedly have become rich from drug sales. This same journalist reported that a high ranking popular Mexican Army general is serving a lengthy prison sentence for having revealed the extent of Mexican military drug involvement.24

Numerous discussions with local residents in southern Mexico consistently revealed that the reported drug activity as claimed by the Mexican government corresponds closely with the arrival of large units of military after the January 1994 uprising, and especially after the army's invasion of much of eastern Chiapas on February 9, 1995. The New York Times reported conclusive evidence was available linking the Mexican government and army to international narcotics trading which has been systematically covered up or deliberately ignored in order to protect the stability and good name of Mexico's ruling PRI government.25

In November 1996 representatives of SIPAZ (Servicio Internacional para la Paz/International Service For Peace) were told by a pastoral worker with the Catholic church in the municipality of Ocosingo that he believed the introduction of drugs into the conflict area to be part of a low-intensity warfare strategy conducted by the Mexican Army. He reported having heard numerous accounts from campesinos in the remote areas with similar stories. Army personnel apparently stop campesino farmers and harass and intimidate them by accusing them of being Zapatistas, of being poor because they are lazy. As each campesino becomes more fearful, the army personnel tells him he needs to be productive and that the army can offer marijuana seeds that he can grow and sell for money. If the army succeeds in "convincing" him to grow the marijuana, the army returns later to purchase it.26

Though the Mexican General in charge of the Chiapas region has publicly declared that the Indigenous in the area are not suspected of drug trafficking, increasingly the alleged presence of marijuana becomes the pretext for an army raid of a community at which time houses are searched and ransacked, and the residents threatened.27 Another pastoral worker who has worked for long years in the region reported that he never heard of any reports of any drugs in the area before the army militarized the territory beginning February 9, 1995.28

Furthermore, in the Zapatista conflict zone of eastern Chiapas, the communities have strict rules against all drugs and alcohol. There are signs along the roads declaring prohibition of drugs and alcohol. Additionally, the Zapatistas conduct their own searches of all vehicles and passengers passing through their villages. Any alcohol is immediately poured out on the road. Drugs are confiscated and destroyed.

CONCLUSION

Whatever the arguments made to stem the narcotics trade, several realities must be understood: (1) the huge market for drug consumption is among the inhabitants residing within the U.S.; (2) the Indigenous insurgents in Mexico are explicitly not suspected of involvement with drug trafficking; (3) U.S. military and drug aid to Mexico is being significantly used against the poor (the so-called insurgents) in counterinsurgency operations, rather than in the war against drugs, in defiance of U.S. articulated intentions; and (4) the amount of money involved in the drug trade, escalated in price because of its black market value due to legal prohibition, makes systemic corruption inevitable.

To Section III: Poverty and Misery-Aggravation by NAFTA

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Section III:
Poverty and Misery-Aggravation by NAFTA

POVERTY AND MISERY IN MEXICO

Since 1982 when Mexico agreed to begin "structural adjustment," privatization and deregulation have contributed to ever more concentration of income and wealth. The massive transfer of resources from the salaried workforce to the owners and controllers of capital, and from public control and accountability to a small number of private elite, has proven the "trickle up" rather than trickle down reality. Over the past decade the preexisting gap between rich and poor in Mexico has continued to widen: Receipt of National Income1 1984 1992 Richest 20% 48.4% 54.2% Poorest 20% 5% 4.3%

Under President Salinas (1988-1994) the number of billionaires rose from 2 to 24, while nearly 20% of the

population (over 17 million people) subsisted on less than the equivalent of $350 per person per year. The assets of one of the richest men in Mexico ($6 billion) actually totals more than the annual income of the poorest 17 million people combined.2

Half of Mexico's 93 million people continue to live at or below the poverty level.3

Malnutrition now afflicts from 40-65% of the population, with the worst cases generally found in the impoverished Indigenous communities, where it approaches 85%. Infant deaths due to malnutrition tripled during the period of economic restructuring, 1980-l992.4

The diet of 50% of all of Mexico's inhabitants falls below the minimum daily nutritional standard (2340 calories) established by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Each year 158,000 Mexican children under 5 years of age die from diseases related to malnutrition. This means that 433 children die every day in Mexico for lack of nutritious food.5

Meanwhile about 20-25% of the Mexican population comprise the business oriented, western thinking residents, living in an extension of the U.S. economy. This aspect of the population, some 18-23 million people, thrive on the NAFTA-driven economy. This suggests that the remaining 70-75 million Mexicans are either below poverty or in a marginal zone.6

As stated above, the number of billionaires under President Salinas rose from 2 to 24. But 20 of the world's richest 100 people now live in Mexico,7 even though Mexico has but 1.5% of the world's population. Twenty-four of the wealthiest Mexicans in 1994 together had more wealth than the poorest 25 million.8

The state of Chiapas has a population of about 3.5 million living in 111 municipalities. About 1 million are considered Indigenous. Half do not have potable water. Two thirds have no sewage. Seventy two of every 100 children do not finish the first grade. Demographically, Chiapas is considered the poorest of all of Mexico's 31 states.9 However a mere 20 of Chiapas' families own 18.4 million acres while the majority of Indigenous campesinos own less than 2 acres each.10

However, in terms of resources, Chiapas is considered by many to be the richest of Mexico's states. Mexico's national oil company, PEMEX, has nearly 100 wells in Chiapas and has expectations that the vast reserves of natural gas under Chiapas soil will provide Mexico a cleaner fossil fuel future. More than half of all hydroelectric power comes from Chiapas while only a third of the local houses have electricity. Thirty five percent of Mexico's coffee and significant amounts of beef, wood, honey, corn, and sorghum also come from Chiapas.11

AGGRAVATION BY NAFTA AND NEOLIBERAL ECONOMICS

Religion of Neoliberalism and Corporate Colonialism 12

The recent passages of the Uruguay Round of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) with its associated WTO (World Trade Organization), and of NAFTA, are being celebrated by most of the world's political leaders and all transborder corporations as a kind of global religious (profits as never before) rebirth. This rising tide of mandated global development (cp. colonialism or imperialism) is literally controlled by the efforts of a small group of private financial institutional decision makers. Their goal is to make money in massive quantities, no matter that it is accomplished at the expense of most people, all cultures, other species, and the viability of the planet's ecosystem for human inhabitability.

It is corporate colonialism that enforces total financial invasion and total surrender of local sovereignty. "Third

World" countries are under obligation to accept virtually all investments from abroad, offer "national" treatment to any foreign corporation that establishes itself within its borders, eliminate tariffs and import quotas on all goods, especially agricultural produce, and abolish all nontariff barriers to "free" trade such as regulations designed to protect health, labor or the environment, but which might increase corporate costs. This is neoliberal economics. It simply intensifies capitalist ideologies such as the primacy of economic growth and the necessary "free" market. Voracious consumerism is virtually a patriotic requirement assured by an aggressive advocacy of a uniform, homogenous worldwide development model faithfully reflecting the western materialist vision. One of the principles includes the idea that all countries, no matter their historical and cultural uniquenesses and diversities, must sign on to the same global economic model and praise it in unison. Monoculture or global homogenization is the net result, along with escalated depletion of the planet's finite resources and toxification of the planet's ecology.

Compliance of Mexico with Neoliberalism-"Structural Adjustment"

Mexico has implemented virtually all of the "structural adjustment" requirements mandated by the World Bank and the IMF in order to receive the necessary line of credit to be relieved from her debt crisis of the early 1980s: dramatic reduction in public/social expenditures such as for education and health care, elimination of internal subsidies, trade "liberalization" removing protective tariffs so as to boost imports of cheap foods from the U.S., restriction of credit, privatization of most state enterprises, abandonment of traditional assistance with marketing and distribution of locally produced and grown products, currency devaluation, removal of "barriers" to foreign investment such as workers' safety laws and environmental regulations, imposition of "competitive" wages, and "downsizing" employment.

Such a dramatic new program in Mexico has produced what is now clearly the effects of this model everywhere: jobless economic growth with development of a labor surplus of contingent workers. This has marginalized larger numbers of Mexican people into the informal economy and deeper poverty. Two thirds of the economically active population of 34.1 million live below poverty. The number living in extreme poverty rose from 14 million in 1988 to 22 million today.13

End of Land Reform in Preparation For NAFTA 14

In 1992, President Salinas formally ended the promise of land reform when he engineered amendment of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, repudiating one of the founding ideals of the Mexican Republic. In order that Mexico's national economy be acceptable to NAFTA, Mexico had to offer its resources, including land, as a playing field for greater agricultural "efficiency," especially through infusion of money from international speculators to promote export crops of the sort promised under NAFTA. Thus Article 27 was repudiated, withdrawing the main promise to and hope of campesinos for acquiring and keeping land. The result: 25 million Mexican citizens effectively disenfranchised.

Salinas' amendment to the Constitution also legalized the private sale of the ejido land-the plots that made up the communal farming system established after the Mexican Revolution. The legal possibility of transferring title is a virtual guarantee that the best ejido land will eventually be sold to the highest bidder from the wealthy, leaving the poor more desperate than ever. Prior to Salinas' amendment 70% of all Mexican farmers worked on ejido land, much of it supporting subsistence rather than commercial farming. But millions, perhaps 5 million Mexicans, still do not have any land. The cheap U.S. food now imported into Mexico benefits Mexico's solid middle class of 8 million. But for the vast majority of the small farmers they can neither compete with the cheap foreign food nor afford to buy it for themselves. For them the end is near. According to the National Union of Regional Autonomous Peasant Organizations (UNORCA), a Mexican campesino umbrella group, up to 80% of rural Mexican producers are now caught in this dead-end bind.15 Economists predict that as many as 10 million farmers could be displaced by the year 2004.16

Knockout Blow To Ancient Self-Sufficiency

The end result of a NAFTA-driven economy is a final knockout blow to the ancient self-sufficient, small corn farming economy of Mexico's indigenous communities. Indigenous land, more than ever, is vulnerable to corporate and elite buy outs and foreign competition from the United States. Landless refugees everywhere!

The "inexpensive" U.S. corn freely imported is in truth heavily subsidized by farming practices that cause depleted topsoils, depleted and poisoned aquifers; practices that use herbicides and pesticides, poisoning water, soil, plants, animals, as well as humans; and practices that consume tremendous quantities of dwindling reserves of oil. As well as not being charged for the depletion and poisoning of natural resources, these farming operations receive tax breaks and financial subsidies from the U.S. government. Ironically, Mexico assists in keeping U.S. corn "inexpensive" by exporting its own dwindling reserves of oil and genetic crop variants which the U.S. requires to preserve its corn monoculture.17

As one U.S. Treasury official declared at an off-the-record briefing: "They [Mexico] gave us their financial system"18 when they agreed to NAFTA.

In a very short period of time, Mexico now is importing increasing amounts of its food, 33% in 1996. The National Council of Agropecuario (CNA) reported that in 1996, Mexico imported 43% of its corn, 74% of its beans, 32% of its flour, and 36% of its milk.19 This would have been unthinkable just a few short years ago.

A quick note here about the maquilization of the Mexican economy is in order. Maquilization "frees" up trade barriers while relentlessly cheapening labor power. Though maquila employment is rapidly rising it is dramatically lowering real incomes of the population. But, also, the maquila is not being integrated into the Mexican economy. Inputs bought from Mexican suppliers has declined dramatically. And the value of maquila exports over the first 8 months of 1996 included very little that was actually produced in Mexico, And the non-maquila employment has been falling, as this sector looks abroad (export-oriented) for their customers forcing the domestic market to increasingly do without.20

CONCLUSION

Without an income generating strategy for the poor and working class of Mexico the economy will create ever more instability for the nation as a whole. Without land and a genuine domestic productive capacity for the benefit of Mexican citizens, more and more people's lives are worsening. And without a genuine democratic system facilitating authentic participation by the people about the future policies of their country, there are no avenues open for change, short of radical dissent, whether violent or nonviolent.21

The commodification, deregulation, and privatization under the new global corporate economy is significantly impacting all aspects of planet life. Global capital that can move instantaneously by the computerized information age can bargain down virtually all parties, including nation state governments and their efforts to protect the rights and living standards of their citizens. In effect, sovereignty has come to an end. Self reliance is a threat to neoliberalism's requirement that people become totally dependent on the values of commodity accumulation, and that national economies accept the inevitable new religion of exponential economic growth and export trade rather than an economy for local needs. Corporate colonialism's only value is the maximization of profits.

The Zapatistas understand all of this. That is why they resist this model and seek to engage all of Mexico, indeed the world, in a dialogue about "neoliberalism."

To Section IV: Militarization and Repression In Mexico

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Section IV:
Militarization and Repression In Mexico

THE VOLATILE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MEXICO TODAY

Mexico's "structural adjustment" policies (see Section III) since the early 1980s have resulted in massive increases in the extent and depth of poverty while wealth is ever more concentrated. According to the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), there is an inverse relationship between investment and employment in Mexico. The more investment, the less jobs. Thus the socio-economic conditions of ever greater numbers of Mexican citizens are creating a ticking time bomb as they desperately seek relief from misery and repression.

The pervasive power of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has been slipping since the rise of the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) in 1987, and PRI's near loss in the 1988 Presidential elections to PRD candidate, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, a former leader within the PRI. The rise of the PRD has been instrumental in the parallel rise of the conservative, long marginalized National Action Party (PAN), which has overtaken the PRD as the nation's second electoral force.

The ascent to power of the technocratic faction within the PRI initially led by ex-president Carlos Salinas (l988-l994) and continued by current President Ernesto Zedillo, has caused deep divisions within the old PRI power structures. This technocratic faction is part of the "neoliberal" program that requires close consultations with international financial institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and U.S. Treasury. This erosion of Mexican sovereignty under a NAFTA-driven economy has angered both progressive and reactionary factions within the PRI itself.

So as the socio-economic conditions worsen, and the PRI weakens, there is a dramatic and pervasive

mobilization of the civil society from below far larger than the Zapatista uprising. This mobilization challenges the neoliberal, corporate capitalist policies being imposed from above by the technocratic faction of the PRI ruling government and its new alliance with the United States.

MILITARIZATION OF THE MEXICAN SOCIETY IN RESPONSE TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Mexican government possessed large amounts of information as early as 1992 that "guerrilla" insurgency groups were organizing in Chiapas and other regions in southern Mexico. But the Salinas administration did not want known the possibilities of insurrection because it did not want to damage its image of a stable, emerging "First World" nation. Maintaining this image was critical to the final ratification by the U.S. of NAFTA.1

However, since the January 1, 1994 Zapatista uprising, the militarization of the Mexican society has been dramatic and public. Mexico's military budget was increased by more than 40 after the Chiapas uprising.2

The Mexican army invasion and occupation of much of eastern Chiapas in February 1995 sent more than 25,000 Indigenous fleeing to deeper mountainous areas for safety. U.S. supplied and financed military hardware and support was extensively used by the Mexican military in this offensive that broke a year long cease fire.3 (See Section I.)

The Mexican militarization process includes conspicuous deployment of soldiers in cities, towns, on highways, and in the mountains in a number of southern states. Many police, public safety, and other civic functions are being transferred to military officials as part of an expanding counterinsurgency strategy. Military expenditures for arms, transportation, and training are continually increasing. Mexico is training more of its military personnel in foreign military schools, including at the SOA in Georgia, United States. Mexican troop strength has increased to 180,000, and perhaps to well over 200,000, since l994.4

The Mexican military has created a special Rainbow Task Force trained in counterinsurgency operations,5 and has been spending considerable amounts on Navstar GPS guidance systems, a critical weapon in satellite warfare as part of space age counterinsurgency.6 In September 1996, the Mexican daily, El Financiero, obtained a file of 264 secret documents from the Pentagon under the FOIA, confirming that Mexico has been receiving support from military advisors from several countries, including the United States. (See COUNTERINSURGENCY in Section I above.)

It has been reported that mercenaries from Argentina were sent to Mexico's 31st Military Zone in Chiapas in July 1994 to assist the army perfect its counterinsurgency tactics. These same Argentinean advisors apparently had earlier worked with the CIA training U.S.-backed Contra terrorists in Honduras.7 And Israeli soldiers have apparently been training police forces in the state of Jalisco.8 Presence of U.S. advisors training counterinsurgency and paramilitary groups in southern Mexico was reported in l995.9

President Zedillo requested in 1995 a sophisticated array of military equipment worth $237 million to reinforce capacities of the army and Attorney General's office allegedly for the drug war. However, as was discussed in Section I above, drug training and military equipment are equally applicable to counterinsurgency operations. This 1995 military package included $82 million for 3 additional radar sites, $140 million for 10 night helicopters and 2 night fixed wing aircraft along with 12,000 M-16 automatic rifles, and $15 million for a satellite network and remote stations for 52 connection sites.10

The sophistication of counterinsurgency operations is part of a radical change of Mexican military doctrine toward a "national security" focus where intelligence gathering and counterintelligence are becoming far more important. This enables the Mexican government to identify the strength and activities of insurgents (internal

"enemies"), to plan strategic patrols in conflict zones, and to train troops in gathering information on "subversive" and insurgent groups.11

Mexico's future under a NAFTA-driven economy rests on the capability of Mexico's army to maintain internal security while simultaneously suppressing the present and almost inevitable increasing future threats of insurrection. Potential for sabotage and disruption of Mexico's resources are enormous, including Mexico City's vulnerable water supply and power sources, according to Col. Rex Applegate.12 Other vulnerable resources cited by Col. Applegate are 16,000 miles of railroads, 146,000 miles of roads, 100 airfields with scheduled flights, 50,000 miles of oil pipeline, and 8,000 miles of gas lines. Mexico's petroleum and petrochemical operations in Vera Cruz, Tabasco, and Chiapas, are other resources requiring serious priority for an army that is becoming increasingly distracted by multiple insurgencies.13 Thus sophisticated surveillance and counterinsurgency have become indispensable as Mexico seeks to become a "stable" and equal "free" trading partner with the U.S. and Canada.

Chiapas is almost completely occupied by the military, suggesting consolidation in this state of Mexico's new counterinsurgency strategy. There are approximately 40 military camps in which 25,000 soldiers are housed, with another 40,000 troops in the area. About 80% of the Zapatista communities in the Conflict Zone are daily monitored by military camps, most of which possess helicopter landing pads. In this zone there are 25 infantry and mobilized battalions as well as 2 dozen groups of special operations, supply centers, and construction engineers. This tight consolidation has occurred under the protection of the nearly two-year period of fragile peace assured by the Law of Dialogue and Reconciliation in which peace talks have occurred at San Andres Larrainzar.14

The army has also nearly completed construction of paved highways that encircle and bisect the Zapatista Conflict Zone.15

REIGN OF TERROR WITH IMPUNITY: HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND LOW INTENSITY WARFARE

The military now occupies most of the Lacandon Jungle in eastern Chiapas and the central valleys (cañadas), and is increasingly present in the more northern regions between central Chiapas and Tabasco. Human rights and religious workers report that the official security forces, police units and army, openly tolerate, even seemingly encourage arbitrary road blocks and detentions, intimidation, harassment, theft, violence and murder of local inhabitants by violent paramilitary groups. These groups operate with absolute impunity despite the presence of army and police units.

One of the best indicators of the seriousness of repression being unleashed on various sectors of the Mexican society is the number of human rights violations being reported to official agencies. Of course official reports of human rights violations amount to but a small percentage of the total abuses that occur on a daily basis throughout much of Mexico.

Between January and October 1996, Amnesty International (AI) sent out 60 "urgent appeals" concerning human rights abuses in Mexico, a record number for Latin America.16 For decades Mexico has rejected international criticism of its human rights record as interference in its sovereign affairs. Until 1996, Mexico was the only Latin American nation that had refused entrance to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS). Finally, in July 1996, the OAS human rights delegation was allowed in. They were able to visit the states of Guerrero and Chiapas and found an extensive pattern of abuses that included torture, murders, and regular harassment of human rights monitors by both police and the Mexican military.17

The opposition PRD claims that over 400 of their Party activists have been murdered since 1988, 70 of them in the state of Guerrero since 1993.18

The Mexican army is known for its numerous human rights violations and enjoys full impunity for its actions, according to Carlos M. Salinas, AI's representative for Latin America.19 Recently, a popular Mexican General and former Mexican national Olympic athlete, General Gellardo, reported publicly about a number of human rights abuses committed by the army. He declared the situation serious enough to justify creation of an army human rights ombudsman office. The Mexican government imprisoned this General for a number of alleged violations after he spoke out.20

This army pattern of abuse has existed for some time. Testimony in 1989 by a former Mexican soldier before the Canadian Immigration Board indicated his participation in a secret military unit that murdered at least 60 potential dissidents in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He identified the 2 Mexican officials in charge of this internal army security unit. As late as 1989, these officials served as Mexican Interior Minister and the Chief of Political Intelligence for the Federal District, respectively.21

Observers have concluded that the various Mexican security forces, including the army, have justified violent repression of civilians by fears of armed, "leftist" insurgencies. However, victims of these abuses claim that they are targeted simply because they have spoken out against the PRI's undemocratic and unjust policies. Americas Watch has concluded that the greater threat to Mexico's national security is the undisciplined, corrupt and violent practices of elements of her police and security forces.22

An interview with staff of CONPAZ, a coordinating agency for a number of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) working in Chiapas, revealed a 1995 documented record of the paramilitary, state police, federal police, and army in Chiapas as follows: 300 forced evictions, 1400 illegal detentions, 1200 houses burned, and 605 assassinations of campesinos.

Since 1994, CONPAZ has noted an expansion and sophistication of violence in Chiapas, including the proliferation of violent groups. This trend corresponds with the notable increase since 1994 of foreign assistance to the Mexican armed forces.

On November 7, 1996, the Commission for Follow-Up and Verification (COSEVE), responsible for overseeing the implementation of the San Andres Peace Accords of February 1996, opened their office in San Cristobal. This was a significant development in the peace process. Immediately an outbreak of a pattern of violence occurred throughout Chiapas, believed to be an attempt to thwart any success of peace. Fighting broke out in San Andres Larrainzar, the town which has hosted the historic peace talks between the government and Zapatistas. Groups of campesinos clashed in Amatenange del Valle. In San Cristobal, molotov cocktails were thrown at the door of the church of Santo Domingo and at several restaurants and stores identified as pro-Zapatista. The military and police coordinated attacks against campesinos protesting the NAFTA-induced low price of corn in the municipality of Venustiano Carranzas. Three of the campesinos were killed. It is believed that U.S.-furnished helicopters were utilized as part of the repression of this nonviolent demonstration.23

Some observers fear the beginning of a scorched earth, counterinsurgency policy after the army burned 15 Indigenous homes in Santa Cruz Yucucani.24

According to a November 1996 report of Global Exchange which has an office in San Cristobal, human rights and peace workers believe that the escalated assaults and terror in November came from groups that reach beyond the local interests of San Cristobal or even Chiapas. The terror campaign against CONPAZ included a fire bomb attack on their main office and the abduction of the organization's accountant and his family to a location 50 miles distant where they were tortured and "interrogated" for 2 days. Telephone lines were cut at 4

NGO workers' homes and dozens of telephone death threats were reported by 30 workers from CONPAZ and other peace organizations, creating a climate of fear for any human rights activist in Chiapas.

The evidence suggests, according to NGO representatives, that the attackers are professionals with training in intelligence gathering and covert assaults. They believe this pattern is the work of a military/paramilitary intelligence unit under orders of hard line factions within the Chiapas State and/or Mexican federal government. The November attacks, they profess, required access to internal information and good coordination. Representatives of the Zapatistas at the peace talks with the government have documented that increases in violence correspond chronologically with the periodic peace talks. They assert that the pattern is not a coincidence but instead part of a coordinated effort to derail the peace process and create a continued heightened climate of fear.25

Visitors from the United States and other countries in Chiapas have also noted abusive behaviors on the part of the Mexican military, police units, and paramilitary forces. A California photographer interested in Mayan weaving patterns visited a variety of women's weaving cooperatives in 1996. This photographer discovered that a number of these cooperatives had been destroyed through a pattern of violent break-ins by state police as well as goon squads. Sewing machines, looms, woven articles, yarn, typewriters, and cash have routinely been stolen or destroyed. This sabotage does not end with destruction of physical property. Kidnappings, tortures, and murders have also occurred sending chills of terror through the region against anyone who dares to promote local economic self-sufficiency and autonomy.26

This same photographer was present in a remote Indigenous village with her 24-year-old son in November 1996 when an army convoy entered the community. One of the military trucks, in defiance of the Law of Dialogue and Reconciliation which prohibits military convoys from stopping in Indigenous villages, slammed on its brakes. A ranking officer jumped out of the cab with his automatic weapon pointed at the bystanders. He ordered termination of all note taking and photographs prior to jumping back into the truck and speeding off. Note taking and photographs are protected under the Law of Dialogue. A short time later this same military truck returned and the same officer angrily jumped out pointing his rifle directly at the several Europeans present along with the 2 people from the U.S. The officer then thrust his rifle toward the face of each of the witnesses, loudly asking, "Do you have a problem? Do you have a problem? Do you have a problem?" Some of the soldiers standing in the back of the truck were seen nervously covering their faces as though they didn't want to be identified if something terrible was going to happen. Then, as suddenly as the officer had jumped out of the truck, he jumped into the truck and raced off.27 This represents the kind of tense and dangerous situation experienced by the local Indigenous on a daily basis.

A California college student studying Indigenous health practices had been present in the indigenous community mentioned above in July 1996 when he witnessed a Mexican military helicopter hovering in a menacing way over the village. He reported that automatic weapons were visibly extended from the doors of the chopper, aimed at the fragile buildings made of poles hewn with machetes, as women and children stood frightened next to their small houses.28

CONCLUSION

The Mexican militarization includes a reign of terror consistent with counterinsurgency and "low intensity" warfare, intended to subjugate whole populations into compliance with an ideology and politics against their will, against their autonomy. It is this militarization process and policy of repression that the United States is supporting to assure "stability" for the Mexican NAFTA-driven economy.

Section IV Endnotes

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