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Insurrection: An Analysis Of The Chiapas Uprising
CSC 1995

SUBJECT AREA - History

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Insurrection: An Analysis of the Chiapas Uprising

Author: Major Grady G. Reese, US Army

Problem or Research Question: Within the conceptual framework of the strategic/operational/tactical levels of war, how did the combatants fight the campaign?

Discussion:

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) limited its objectives to the betterment of the Indian condition. The desired end-state was an Indian community with a greater share of the national wealth. Not wanting to necessarily overthrow the central government, the Zapatistas were deliberate in designing their strategy to force the government into negotiations. Their military operations supported the strategic objectives until they made the error of trying to capture Rancho Nuevo. The EZLN leadership timed the campaign well. The greatest strategic error was to underestimate the readiness of the government to negotiate. At the point that the government declared a unilateral cease-fire, the EZLN lost the strategic initiative.

The EZLN recognized the advantages of the environment. The area is remote with an underdeveloped infrastructure. Transportation is poor and the terrain is rugged. The Indian population is resentful and disillusioned with the central government. For the Indians, the government no longer holds the promise of the Revolution of 1910. Unfortunately for the EZLN, it was unable to tap the resentment of the people to create a popular uprising.

For its part, the Mexican government was able to achieve the best end-state that it could realistically attain. It recognized the political, economic, and psychological elements at work and designed its strategy to minimize the damage of the insurrection. Its efforts were successful. The violence was contained to Chiapas. Moreover, the national elections were fairly uneventful and the PRI maintained its pre-eminent position in the political structure.

The military performed well in supporting the national strategy. It mobilized and deployed rapidly. It used combined arms in joint operations and quickly gained the initiative. The success of operations in the field allowed

the government to pursue a negotiated settlement from a position of relative strength.

Conclusion:

Both the Mexican government and the leadership of the Zapatista rebels recognized the importance of fighting the campaign on each of the three levels of war. Both analyzed the opposing centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities. Both designed and adjusted their strategies, operations, and tactics based upon their judgements. Both sides came close to achieving their desired end-states.

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CHAPTER 1 THE UPRISING

As the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect in the early morning hours of 1 January 1994, rebels of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) attacked four major towns in the Mexican state of Chiapas. The EZLN, a previously unheard of group claiming to represent the Indians of southern Mexico, achieved strategic and operational surprise. Within hours, it had secured its initial military objectives.

The action was restricted to that portion of the country east of the Rio Grijalva to the Lacandon jungle or forest. The rebels moved west from their bases in the Lacandon jungle to seize those key towns with the intent of conducting a phased withdrawal back to their bases before the Mexican Army could decisively engage them. They would seize additional towns during their withdrawal to create a false perception that they retained the offensive and the initiative.

Following normal procedures for situations of domestic unrest, the Mexican government responded at the lowest level first with local and national police. Once the Interior and Defense Ministers decided to commit federal troops, the military responded quickly. Within a space of 10 days, it deployed

approximately 17,000 troops to the area of operations, fixed the rebels in the west at San Cristobal, and turned the Zapatistas' flank in the southeast. It moved north to cut off their escape routes and lines of communication. As the armed forces were positioning themselves to defeat the guerrillas in detail, the operation ended with a declaration of a unilateral cease-fire by President Salinas and the offer of a negotiated settlement.

Although led by middle class, educated insurgents from outside the region, the rebels were made up largely of Indians from Chiapas. Their actions reflected a disillusionment with the failure of the government to fulfill the promises of the Revolution of 1910. In spite of the promise of land redistribution and equality for all, the Indians still lived in a state of de facto servitude providing menial labor on large farms and ranches. Indeed, the lot of the Indian in southern Mexico was no better in 1994 than it was in 1910.

This paper will examine the actions of both the EZLN and the Mexican government in terms of two insurgency models. The first, proposed by Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, postulates that the legitimacy of the ruling government is the center of gravity at the strategic level of war. The aim of the insurgents should be to eliminate the legitimacy of the government. Conversely, the government has to defend its legitimacy. Such conflicts will involve military combat at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war; however, neither side should have as its primary aim the military defeat of the other.¹ In this case, the Zapatistas used military action to gain an international forum from which they attacked the legitimacy of the government. Likewise, the government used military action not as the main effort of counterinsurgency, but as a complementary element of national power in concert with the political, economic, and psychological elements to shore up its own legitimacy.

The second model, proposed by Bard O'Neill, examines insurgency in terms of a struggle between the ruling government and the insurgent group where the insurgents use political resources and violence to attack the legitimacy of the political system. The end may not be to destroy the government's legitimacy, but to change the political system. O'Neill calls such groups "reformist" because they do not attempt to overthrow the ruling parties. They are merely trying to gain a greater voice in the political process.²

The EZLN is a reformist group. It has limited objectives. It does not desire to overthrow the government of Mexico. Rather, it is fighting for a greater share of the resources of the nation. It is trying to obtain for the

indigenous populations their fair share of the promises of the Revolution.

The Chiapas uprising provides a perfect model to examine the interrelationships of the levels of war. Both the rebels and the armed forces fought their campaigns at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Each side assessed its own center of gravity and critical vulnerabilities as well as those of its opposition.

Although the insurgents were outmaneuvered and outgunned at the tactical and operational levels, they won the campaign by successfully manipulating the political and psychological elements of national power. On the other hand, the Mexican government understood that it could not win the campaign at the strategic level.

The Salinas administration knew that successes in national military strategy could not overcome the overwhelming pressures it faced in the economic, psychological, and political arena. The military could and did perform well at the operational level which allowed the government the opportunity of entering negotiations prior to achieving what would have been a pyrrhic victory. The government was able to enter into negotiations with the rebels in a position of parity, if not one of slight advantage.

CHAPTER 2 THE BATTLEFIELD

The environment of Chiapas is ideally suited to support an insurgency. According to Bard O'Neill, success or failure of an insurgency depends in large part on the ability of the insurgents to develop a strategy that uses both the physical and human aspects of the environment to advantage.³ Chiapas combines a rugged, mountainous landscape with a racially and economically subjugated group within the widely dispersed population.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

For an insurgency, ideal terrain limits the mobility of government forces and provides a high degree of security for base camps.⁴ The government usually has the advantage in terms of equipment and materiel. By limiting the mobility of government forces, the terrain puts the insurgent and the soldier on an even basis. The government cannot readily move against an insurgent attack, allowing the insurgent to keep the initiative in the use of offense and mass. Inherent in the restriction of mobility is the restriction of maximum effective use of sophisticated equipment. Limited line of sight visibility in mountains and jungles limits use of direct fire weapons and sophisticated optics at their maximum effective ranges.

The terrain restrictions allow an insurgent group to

establish secure base camps from which it can plan, recruit and train. once they begin to conduct operations, the insurgents require secure base camps to plan further operations, to consolidate units and equipment, and to rest. Without a secure base, the insurgents cannot escalate operations and increase the size of the force.⁵ They risk losing the initiative and momentum.

The rugged topography of Chiapas suits the insurgent's requirements perfectly [see Appendix B]. The state is split in the southern third by a valley running from the northwest to southeast. Surrounding the valley is the Sierra de Madre del Sur mountain range. This mountain range extends 250 kilometers in length and 75 kilometers in width. Elevations in the mountains range from 2550 to almost 8000 feet. Ridge lines channelize traffic from the northwest to the southeast. The capital, Tuxtla Gutierrez is in the center of the valley formed by the Rio Grijalva. The two major roads in the state, highways 190 and 200, follow the mountain ranges. The transportation infrastructure is poorly developed. The mountainous terrain lends itself well to hydroelectric power generation. Indeed, Chiapas provides 60 percent of the electrical needs of the entire country.

Much of the area is considered impenetrable jungle, especially the Lacandon jungle area in the central eastern part of Chiapas. The state is located at the southern and eastern end of the country, bordering on the Istmo de Tehuantepec in the west and Guatemala in the east. The areas affected by the uprising are primarily the north slope of the valley to the Guatemalan border and the northern highlands.⁷

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As important to an insurgency as the physical terrain, the population of the region largely determines ultimate success or failure. The demography, social structure, economics, and political culture and system of Chiapas are characteristic of O'Neill's model. The Indians of Chiapas display the appropriate ingredients of popular disaffection. They are poor and disenfranchised, occupying the lowest rung on the social ladder. The political system offers them no opportunities to alter the state of their existence.

Demography

For an insurgency to conduct sustained combat operations against a government, an underdeveloped rural population is the ideal. Chiapas has a population of 3.2 million to 3.6 million inhabitants, widely dispersed throughout the state. Approximately 60 percent of the population lives outside of the major cities and towns. of the state's 16,400 towns and villages, 99 percent are classified "rural."⁸

Social Structure

Chiapas fits the insurgent model of a societal cleavage along racial, ethnic, and religious lines. The social structure of the state is vertically striated along white/mestizo/Indian ethnic lines. The vertical division has created a horizontal division of class as the Indians are denied the opportunity to improve their economic standing by the political system. Approximately 14 percent of the population is Indian. Chiapas has nine Indian tribes, all offshoots of the Mayas. Each has its own language, culture, and religion.⁹

The social structure of rural Chiapas is still based on the hacienda. Wealthy white landowners and ranchers own the majority of the land. The Indians, through lack of opportunity, are forced into virtual servitude as tenant farmers. To maintain order, each wealthy landowner maintains a private army called "La Guarda Blanca." The judicial system and governmental institutions support the wealthy white landowners. The result is a system in which the Indians occupy the lowest position in the social order and have no reasonable expectation of improving their lot in life or that of their children.¹⁰

Economics

While it provides 60 percent of the country's electricity and 28 percent of its natural gas, Chiapas is the second poorest state in the country. The primary source of revenue is agriculture, to include cattle ranching. Nineteen percent of the population has no measurable income and works in conditions of servitude, usually as tenant farmers. While 60 percent of the homes have running water, 92 percent of the Indian's homes do not. While 69 percent of all houses have electricity, only 25 percent of the Indian's houses do.¹¹

In preparation for the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Salinas administration successfully passed an amendment to Article 27 of the federal constitution. This amendment allowed the government to sell the communal lands of the Indians to encourage commercial development. As a result, the Indians would be displaced and further disadvantaged.¹²

Political Culture

Out of 80 million Mexicans, Indians make up less than ten percent of the population.¹³ Given that the Indians have become a disparaged race occupying the bottom rung on the socio-economic ladder, it is ironic that Mexico is extremely proud of its Indian heritage and history, especially that of the Aztec and Mayan nations.

As a result of their disparagement by the ruling elites, the Mayans harbor a deep-seated hostility toward the government.

This animosity is readily apparent in a review of their history. During the Spanish Conquest and the first century of independence, over 100 Indian uprisings and revolts occurred.¹⁴ As today, most addressed regional complaints against the government and did not have broad support.

Much of the Indian hostility toward the central government resulted from the policies of the president at the time of the Mexican Revolution, Porfirio Diaz, and his Ivy League-educated advisors, the "Cientificos." The Cientificos felt that the Indians were inferior and not capable of developing. Rather than have the Indians impede the development of the rest of the nation, the Cientificos advocated the elimination of all Indians.¹⁵

In spite of the promises of land reform since the 1910 Revolution, the Indian campesinos have received very little land from the government. Peasants in Chiapas and other states have sporadically occupied large landholdings to force the redistribution of land promised them under the Constitution of 1917. Most incidents have been short-lived as the Mexican Army has usually retaken the land.¹⁶

Ironically, the majority of the Indian population did not join the EZLN in its uprising, rather they eschewed violence to achieve the desired reforms. In the Almond and Verba model used by O'Neill, they were "Parochials" in that they avoided participation in political activity in spite of their status.¹⁷ However, their reluctance was not based upon lack of awareness of the workings of the political system, but upon a resigned awareness that violence would be counterproductive and only lead to further repression, if not from the government, then from the private armies of the landowners.¹⁸

Political System

As mentioned above, the de facto political structure in Chiapas is based upon race and wealth. Therefore, the judicial, executive, and legislative arms of the state and of the locally-based elements of the federal government serve to support the status quo in spite of the formal ideals dictated by the constitution. They reinforce the ascendancy of the wealthy landowners and the subjugation of the Indians. For those participating in the political system, it is a zero sum game. Greater participation in government or other social gains by the Indians would threaten the status quo by taking away from the power or wealth of an established party. No party is willing to give up power, status, or wealth.¹⁹

External Influences

There is a large population of Guatemalan refugees in

Chiapas near Guadalupe Tepeyac. The Indians in the provinces of Chiapas and Campeche are vulnerable to an infusion of leftist ideology from Guatemalan Indians fleeing persecution in Guatemala. The situation has been exacerbated by great numbers of refugees from throughout Central America attempting to migrate to the United States. The Guatemalan insurgent group, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) is said to use the refugee camps as a recruiting ground and base of operations for operations in Guatemala.²⁰

The Mexican government has established a de facto "clear zone" to control the refugee populations within their territories without disrupting normal cross-border commerce. The border between Chiapas and Guatemala is very lightly guarded. The Suchiate River between Ciudad de Hidalgo and Tecun Uman is a popular site for illegal border crossings because it is only 50 centimeters deep and can be easily forded.²¹

CHAPTER 3

THE 1910 REVOLUTION AND THE ISSUE OF LEGITIMACY

To fully understand the Zapatista uprising, one must first examine the role of the Revolution of 1910 in modern Mexican society, especially with regard to the issue of governmental legitimacy. The 1910 Revolution had such a significant impact upon Mexico that even today it dominates Mexican life and thought. The Revolution approached Clausewitz's ideal of "total war." Every facet of society was mobilized. The entire social structure of the country was dramatically altered. In one of the few instances in history, women and children were fully integrated into the armies and fought side by side with the men. The population was more than decimated by both intense fighting and starvation resulting from the destruction of crops. As many as two million people (one quarter of the population) may have died during the Revolution.²² The impact of such a cost on society can be likened to that of World War I on England and France. It should be no surprise that the expectations of the people today are deeply rooted in the promises and ideals of the Revolution.

The Indians and Zapata

The Indians in the south were united behind Emiliano Zapata in a quest to regain communal land that they had lost to the large haciendas. The absorption of Indian lands by the hacendados (large landholders) led to the virtual enslavement of the Indians, since, in order to survive, they were forced to work as laborers on the haciendas to survive. Spurred by promises of land reform by Francisco Madero, Diaz's opponent, Zapata led his forces against the regime, defeating government

forces in the south. Although Zapata was ultimately defeated in internecine fighting among the Revolution's leaders, the ideal of agrarian reform became a pillar of the Revolution.²³

Zapata's most notable contribution to the ideology of the Revolution was the Plan of Ayala. The key provisos in the Plan dictated the return of Indian lands that had been expropriated and the seizure of one third of the hacienda lands for redistribution to the peasants. This proviso was designed to break the hold of the wealthy landowners on the peasants. Additionally, it provided for the seizure of all property of any of the elite who opposed the Plan. The desire for agrarian reform was so strong that it kept the original Zapatistas fighting until real reform was initiated by President Lazaro Cardenas (1935-1940), long after Zapata's death.²⁴ Those ideals are the roots of today's Zapatista movement.

Cardenas

The part played in the Revolution by Lazaro Cardenas, president from 1934 to 1940, has widespread, implications in Mexican society today. An Indian from Michoacan, he was the first to conduct the significant agrarian reform promised in the Constitution of 1917. His administration redistributed 41 million acres as opposed to 17 million by all of his predecessors. He greatly revitalized the ejido system which was based on the Indian principles of communal ownership. The organization of the ejidos into the National Confederation of Farmers (CNA) as a branch of the PRI has kept the farmers under the control of the Party while guaranteeing the rural peasant a voice in the government.²⁵ Unfortunately, land redistribution has dwindled to such a point that the hacienda system once again is the rule and Indians a subjugated class of tenant farmers.

The Constitution of 1917

Out of the conflict of diverging forces, the revolutionaries created a new constitution-that would institutionalize the Revolution. It would come to embody the ideals that today every Mexican demands as basic rights. Of particular significance, Article 27 invalidated the seizure of all private lands since 1876 and provided for their return to the people. This provision contained more symbolism than substance. With various interests being excluded and shielded, Article 27 actually applied to only a fraction of the peasants seeking restitution. However, in spite of its inherent weaknesses, it has become a symbol for the Mexican people of their right to own land.²⁶ Very few provisions of the Constitution of 1917 have had as significant of an impact upon the people of Mexico.

The Constitution of 1917 served as a unifying instrument that provided-the structure to rebuild the nation. As an

egalitarian device, it eliminated much of the old caste and status framework. Additionally, it provided for workers, rights and for basic civil liberties.²⁷ This constitution is the document by which the separate factions and interests of the Revolution became unified.

Although the 1910 Revolution fell short of the expectations of the peasant class, it still figures significantly in the people's toleration of today's economic woes. The Revolution itself is a symbol of reform after centuries of exploitation. Along with the French and Russian revolutions, the Mexican people see it as one of the three greatest social revolutions in world history. This reverence for the Revolution is a key stabilizing element in the Mexican political situation. As long as the people associate the PRI with the Revolution, the Party will retain its base of popular support. For that reason, the PRI pointedly reminds them that it is the "Party of the Revolution" and that it has provided the only government to help them through such reforms as land redistribution and social egalitarianism. A shrewd but key tactic used by the PRI to keep the hopes of the people alive is the fostering of the belief that the Revolution is not over, rather it is ongoing. Tomorrow brings the promise of additional reform.²⁸

The danger to the PRI is a loss of identification as the "Party of the Revolution." The Revolution confers legitimacy. The Mexican people are willing to tolerate much adversity as long as they believe that the government still embodies the ideals of the Revolution.²⁹ NAFTA and the amendment of Article 27 threaten those beliefs in the minds of the Indians. They fear losing their tribal lands to progressive and modern agriculture. The loss of land threatens not only their livelihood, but their cultural identity.

The Zapatistas are a product of those fears. In turn, the EZLN uses the issues raised by NAFTA and Article 27 to undercut the foundations of legitimacy. The Zapatistas challenge the legitimacy of the government, saying that it has abandoned the Revolution and the Indians.

CHAPTER 4 THE INSURGENTS

PHILOSOPHY

The EZLN is a reformist movement whose goal is to achieve land and social reform for the Indians. A reformist group has limited aims, usually a greater share of national wealth. Additionally, a reformist group considers the established government discriminatory and illegitimate; therefore, achieving reform through the participation in the political process is

impossible.³⁰ True to form, the EZLN does not seek to overthrow the current government, rather it seeks greater representation in the allocation of national and state resources. It believes that the government discriminates against the Indians. In the opinion of the rebel leadership, the government has abandoned the ideals of the 1910 Revolution; therefore, it is illegitimate.

Initially, the group's rhetoric was pluralist, if not socialist. It called for all Mexicans to rise up against the government and march on Mexico City. It called for a return to the democratic foundations of the country, claiming that the ruling party had become a dictatorship disguised as a democracy. The EZLN accused the government of committing genocide against the Indians.³¹ This allegation not-so -subtly links the PRI with the Científicos of the Porfiriato, thereby challenging the government's legitimacy.

Although it is primarily an Indian movement, the group's early rhetoric was extremely nationalistic. It identified the Army and the government as the enemies while exhorting the Mexicans as a people to unite in support of its cause. One of the six points of the EZLN's declaration of war went so far as to brand soldiers as traitors who had been trained outside Mexico.³²

The EZLN quickly published statements denying links to other guerrilla movements, liberation theologians, or narcotraffickers, revealing its reformist nature. One theory holds that the Guatemalans who participated in the revolt did so out of loyalty to the Mayan race and not as representatives of the URNG.³³ Leaders emphatically denied that their objectives was to establish a socialist state. After the first days of the insurrection, the majority of their rhetoric focused on local grievances such as land reform, an end to electoral fraud, and increased social services for the Indians. Specifically, the group opposed the implementation of NAFTA because they feared that it would lead to increased exploitation and privatization of communal lands. ³⁴

Early in negotiations with the government, the EZLN focused its rhetoric on autonomy and the improvement of Indian living conditions. The rebels demanded (and were granted) additional government investment to include electrification of the villages, bilingual education, and improved housing. Significantly, they required the aid be distributed through the Indians themselves, rather than through the established political system. The rebels were also demanding the amendment of Articles 4 and 27 of the

Constitution to give all-Indian groups autonomy and to regain protection of tribal lands. The only demand that exceeded a regional or ethnic dimension was for the resignation of President Salinas.³⁵

Organization

The EZLN started in 1983 with a nucleus of five non-Indians, at least some of whom came from a middle class background.³⁶ The EZLN had a fairly sophisticated structure. The rebels were armed with an assortment of weapons, to include AK-47s, AR-15s, M-1 carbines, and Mini-14 automatic weapons, in addition to assorted hunting rifles, shotguns, and pistols. They were organized into local cells with an overall committee to direct operations. The basic element was the squad which "...consists of one sergeant, one corporal, one radio operator, one health provider [medic], and 20 militants [soldiers]." They restricted their radio communications to a period from midnight to 0600 and used equipment that had 23 to 40 channels [possibly citizen band radios]. The communications base station was allegedly in Las Margaritas. The EZLN had at least 16 training camps, 11 of which were clustered around Las Margaritas and Ocosingo. There were two in Sabanillas, one in Altamirano, two in Larrainzar, and one in Chanel.³⁷

STRATEGIC

The grand strategy was to attack the legitimacy of the government. The Zapatistas' goal was to gain greater autonomy for the indigenous groups. They saw the will of the people of Mexico as the center of gravity. The legitimacy of the government was the critical vulnerability. Realizing that it could not defeat the government militarily, the EZLN hoped to force a negotiated settlement by turning the national will against the government. The intent was to create a schism between the people and the government. As explained earlier in this paper, the ties between the government and the 1910 Revolution are the basis of governmental legitimacy. The EZLN intended to sever those ties and undermine the support of the people of Mexico for the government.³⁸

Political

The objectives of the uprising were political. The military action of occupying key cities in the region was designed to apply political pressure against the government.³⁹ The rebels launched their attack to coincide with the national election year in order to maximize the pressure. The initial socialist rhetoric was intended to gain the support of the country's intelligentsia and left wing political parties. The EZLN hoped to use those organizations along with the human rights organizations and the Catholic Church to force the

government to negotiate. In this regard, the rebels were extremely successful. Recognizing a potential vulnerability upon which they could capitalize in the upcoming national elections, the opposition parties used the opportunity to attack the government's social policies.

Economic

The rebels launched their attacks on the day NAFTA went into effect. The timing was an instrument of economic warfare. The rebels intended to nullify the effects of NAFTA by creating an international perception of instability. International corporations, especially in the United States, would dampen their enthusiasm for investing large amounts of capital in Mexico until the situation stabilized.⁴⁰ Knowing that the government was relying upon the infusion of foreign capital to bolster the economy before the elections, the government would be under great pressure to meet the rebels' demands quickly.

Psychological

On the psychological front, the Zapatistas attempted to mobilize three populations; the Indians of southern Mexico, the general population of Chiapas, and the general population of Mexico. To challenge the government's claim of being the standard-bearer of the Revolution, the Indians invoked the name of Emiliano Zapata, the leader who had organized the indigenous peoples against the regime of Porfirio Diaz. By using his name, they recalled the promises of land redistribution under the Plan of Ayala and Article 27 of the constitution. Likewise, by accusing the government of genocide, the rebels linked the Salinas administration with Porfirio Diaz and his Cientificos.

Simultaneously with the insurrection, they launched a sophisticated propaganda campaign. They issued statements and gave exhaustive interviews all of which were designed to justify their actions and to gain popular support.⁴¹ They distributed a professional, two-color, 20 page brochure detailing its revolutionary program of land reform and equal opportunity.⁴²

Although the EZLN did garner the support of the intelligentsia and liberal sector of the country and of the rural indigenous peoples, it did not gain the support of the majority of the population of Chiapas. The inhabitants of the occupied cities did not rise up and join the guerrillas. In fact, they were against the use of force to redress their grievances. The EZLN attributed the lack of support to racism in that the majority of inhabitants of the cities were white or mestizo.⁴³ The EZLN had nominally more success in gaining the support of the people in the rural areas. Even though the majority of those who abandoned their homes

and villages sought refuge away from the fighting, many joined the rebels in the jungle.⁴⁴

The EZLN attempted to gain the support of the international community by emphasizing executions and atrocities committed by the Army while minimizing its own. It found a willing ally in the myriad of human rights organizations that descended upon the area (within a week, representatives of over 130 local, national, and international human rights organizations were in Chiapas). While the government was universally excoriated for the alleged execution of five rebels and the strafing of noncombatants, very few organizations condemned the EZLN for its alleged execution of at least 24 policemen and the rape of a female civilian.⁴⁵

The EZLN sought to involve the Guatemalan Nobel Prize recipient, Rigoberta Menchu. By warning that the Mexican government would use the uprising to repress the Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas, the EZLN hoped to isolate the government in the international arena. Additionally, it demanded that she and the local bishop and activist liberation theologian, Samuel Ruiz, act as mediators.⁴⁶ The degree of its success is shown by the magnitude of the pro Zapatista demonstrations in Mexico City. While the EZLN never garnered more than 2,000 to 3,000 active supporters in Chiapas, over 100,000 protesters marched on the National Palace in Mexico City on 12 January.⁴⁷

Ironically, the lack of support of the Indians did not hamper their cause while national and international support were critical in achieving it. President Salinas was pressured to resolve the crisis quickly. To pursue a prolonged counterinsurgency strategy would cost a great deal of political capital. Human rights organizations were already present en masse and were turning international and domestic opinion against the government. With the 1994 national elections imminent and American businesses waiting on the sidelines to provide investment capital to the country under NAFTA, Salinas declared a unilateral ceasefire and asked for negotiations.

Military

The Zapatistas' military operations were designed not to defeat the Mexican Army, but to avoid being beaten by the Army. The EZLN occupied cities, making much of the fact through propaganda, then moved to other towns to repeat the process before the Army could react.⁴⁸ The major strategic error of the EZLN was to fail to foresee the rapid shift from armed confrontation to negotiation. The Mexican government achieved strategic surprise by declaring a unilateral cease-fire. The Zapatistas had planned on a prolonged campaign and had not foreseen the eventuality that they would be maneuvered

into early negotiations. As a result, the EZLN was unprepared to conduct negotiations and lost the strategic initiative.⁴⁹

OPERATIONAL

The EZLN had prepared for a war of attrition. Knowing that it could not defeat the Army in a conventional battle, it tried to fight the campaign in such a manner so as to preserve its own forces while inflicting as many casualties upon the Army as possible. The EZLN's operational plan was to seize the state's key cities and conduct a phased withdrawal to the Lacandona jungle where it had its bases. EZLN columns would withdraw without becoming decisively engaged and seize other towns and villages on their withdrawal routes. The intent was to create the impression that the rebels were more successful and active than they really were. The plan included conducting supporting attacks against the Army base at Rancho Nuevo to keep those forces from countering the EZLN offensive and deny the government the use of that garrison as the base of operations for which it was ideally suited.⁵⁰ The campaign was designed to support the movement's strategy of attacking the state psychologically through propaganda while maintaining low casualties so that it could continue the campaign for an extended period. With regard to supporting the group's propaganda effort, it succeeded remarkably well. However, when the Zapatistas attempted to adjust their plan to the situation on the battlefield, they lost their focus on the strategic objectives and became involved in a costly battle with the Army.

Before dawn on the first of January, the rebels realized that they had not been successful in synchronizing their attacks. The rebel leadership lost its grasp of its own unit dispositions and those of the Army. The rebels had fallen victim to the fog and friction of war. Expecting an immediate response from the Army, they now feared that their columns would be defeated in detail while attempting to withdraw. The EZLN decided to slow its withdrawal from San Cristobal and divert those forces to augment the rebel column already near Rancho Nuevo to make a major effort to seize the 31st Military Region garrison there. The goal was to capture additional weaponry and to fix government forces in place in order to buy time to organize the withdrawal from the objective areas. The attack on Rancho Nuevo would allow the Zapatistas the opportunity to determine the dispositions of not only the government forces, but their own as well. Finally, a victory at Rancho Nuevo would greatly enhance their propaganda effort.⁵¹ The supporting attack had become the major effort. The Army successfully reinforced its garrison at Rancho Nuevo. The Mexican Army

units fought well, even when key company-level leaders became casualties. Although the rebels were successful in denying the Army the initiative by pinning down the government forces in Rancho Nuevo, they were never able to capture it.⁵²

In its attack on Rancho Nuevo, the EZLN committed a serious error. By concentrating their largest force against 31st Military Zone garrison, the rebels strayed from their strategic objective of minimizing contact and casualties. They sustained their highest casualties in this battle. More importantly, their withdrawal from Rancho Nuevo was poorly executed and disrupted the operations of two other guerrilla columns; one between San Cristobal and Rancho Nuevo and one between Altamirano and San Cristobal.⁵³

The EZLN violated Clausewitz's principle that the means must always support the end. The operation needed only to divert government troops from EZLN objectives to delay a counterattack while the rebels withdrew. Instead, the EZLN made the attack a major effort with the result that it needlessly sustained casualties and disrupted adjacent operations, endangering two other rebel columns.

The Zapatistas became involved in one other pitched battle during the campaign. While the Zapatistas were engaging the government forces at Rancho Nuevo to delay reinforcement from Tuxtla Gutierrez in the west, the Army was not only reinforcing Rancho Nuevo, but maneuvering to envelop the rebels from the east. Government forces controlled the eastern portion of the area of operations and were establishing a security cordon to isolate the battlefield. The Army quickly occupied Comitán, Las Margaritas, and Altamirano. Its forces were advancing on Ocosingo and had retaken Chanal. The escape route for the rebel columns in San Cristobal and Rancho Nuevo was in danger of being cut. In this case, the EZLN had to engage government troops in direct combat or risk losing a sizeable portion of its forces. Ordinarily such combat violated their strategic precepts; however, Ocosingo was crucial to their withdrawal. The rebel columns in Ocosingo engaged the Army for the entire campaign. Although they readily withdrew from the municipal buildings, they fought house to house to tie down the Army troops. President Salinas declared a cease-fire before the envelopment was completed and the rebel columns destroyed.

TACTICAL

Realizing that they did not have sufficient strength to seize and hold entire towns, the rebels seized the municipal buildings in the cities they targeted. When threatened or

attacked by the Army, they would attempt to exfiltrate the area while continuing to harass the government forces with sniper fire and ambushes. In some cases, they took over private homes to use as ambush positions to attack government troops. They used stay-behind forces extensively to delay Army forces.

The EZLN displayed good tactical acumen by delaying the Army's pursuit during the rebels' withdrawal. Along the San Cristobal to Ocosingo axis, the Zapatistas established company sized ambushes to slow the Army advance. Initially, the Army would rely on helicopter transport to vertically envelop the ambushing force; however, the EZLN had prepared secondary ambushes to entrap the helicopters.⁵⁴

The rebels achieved only limited success in delaying the Army's pursuit and relieving pressure on the withdrawal. For an irregular force, it fought well; however, the loss of momentum on the first day and the resulting error in committing the bulk of its forces at Rancho Nuevo and San Cristobal endangered the entire operation. If President Salinas had not declared a cease fire so quickly, the guerrillas would have been cut off and defeated in detail.

CHAPTER 5 THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT AND ARMY

ORGANIZATION

The Army is made up of 130,000 troops, 60,000 of whom are conscripts. It is organized into two light infantry brigades, one mechanized infantry brigade, and three armor regiments. These are stationed in garrisons in each of the country's military zones. Each garrison is organized for combined arms operations with motorized cavalry, infantry, and artillery.⁵⁵ Chiapas has three military zones, the 31st in Rancho Nuevo, the 36th in Tapachula, and the 38th in Comitán. Above the military zones, there are nine military regions. VII Military Region, commanded during the uprising by General Miguel Angel Godinez Bravo, is responsible for the states of Chiapas and Yucatán. Its headquarters is in Tuxtla Guitierrez.⁵⁶

Most of the Army's 71 infantry battalions are scattered throughout the country as independent garrisons. Most military zones have at least two battalions of 300 men each. Additionally, most military zones have a motorized cavalry regiment or an artillery regiment. Each military zone has its own engineer, air defense, support and service support units. The 31st Military Zone at Rancho Nuevo which bore the brunt of the fighting, probably consisted of two infantry battalions (one of which was the 83rd Infantry

Battalion) and a portion of a cavalry regiment. In addition to its garrison at Tapachula, the 36th Military Zone had operational control over the 24th Motorized Cavalry Regiment based at Comitán de Domínguez.⁵⁸

STRATEGIC

The Mexican government is often criticized for reacting too slowly to the uprising. That criticism is unjustified. Two key facts impact upon the speed with which the Army responded. First, the attack happened on New Year's Day when the troops were not necessarily in their barracks and the military was not on alert. Second, seizure of municipal buildings in the outlying states as a form of protest is not uncommon. In fact, on the same day the EZLN attacked, other groups were occupying the municipal buildings of 11 other towns in Mexico state.⁵⁹ The Mexican government followed its standard operating procedures for reacting to such occurrences.⁶⁰

To avoid overreacting to the provocation, the federal government first moved to isolate the uprising and waited for local and state authorities to react to the situation.⁶¹ Once it became clear that federal troops would be needed to meet the threat, the government committed the Army. Within a week, the federal government had assessed the situation, mobilized and deployed approximately 17,000 troops to a remote area of the country, and occupied all of the EZLN's initial objectives.

The government was successful in isolating the violence. The uprising did not spread to the adjacent states. Apart from a few sympathetic bombings in Acapulco and Mexico City and demonstrations primarily in Mexico City, the rest of the country -remained calm.⁶²

Political

Politically, the government knew that it could not win, it could only minimize the damage. NAFTA had just gone into effect and many American and Canadian companies that had been gearing up to expand into Mexico were now waiting to see how the situation would be resolved. The ruling party, the PRI, was facing a difficult national election later in the year and could not afford the negative publicity of a protracted insurgency in its hinterlands. The government needed to defuse the insurrection so that sufficient foreign capital would arrive to bolster the economy prior to the elections. Also, the government had to restore order without appearing too repressive. If it could not achieve the former, the opposition parties would paint the PRI as impotent. If it could not accomplish the latter, the opposition would paint it as dictatorial and genocidal, which was extremely plausible given the almost immediate presence of representatives from over 130 non-governmental human rights

organizations.

In a worst case scenario, foreign investment would not occur, the government would be branded as just another Latin American repressive regime, the people would become disenchanted with the unfulfilled promises of NAFTA, and the PRI would face a serious challenge to its continued rule. The best case scenario would produce a political defeat in which the government restored stability by granting significant concessions to the rebels, but at the cost of appearing impotent.

The government designed its strategy around the best case scenario. The strategic goals of the Mexican government were to achieve a quick end to the uprising. In the military arena, the Army would move as quickly as possible to retake the occupied towns and maneuver to threaten the Zapatistas with the destruction of its forces in the field. If the Army could accomplish this, the government hoped to minimize the appearance of impotence.

The single effective political move by the government was the declaration of a unilateral cease-fire and issuance of a request for negotiations. By 12 January, the Army had turned the EZLN's flank in the east and had effectively cut off its combatant forces from their bases, threatening to defeat them in detail. By issuing his cease-fire at this point, President Salinas was being magnanimous in not destroying the rebels. Already having the operational initiative, the government achieved political surprise and regained the initiative on that front also. The EZLN could not continue military action without losing the moral high ground that it sought. The rebels had no deliberative structure to handle the negotiations. Even though they were in disarray and completely unprepared to begin negotiations, the rebels would have risked abandoning their goals by rejecting negotiations on the terms offered by the government.

Psychological

The government conducted a propaganda campaign to paint EZLN rebels as criminals to deny political legitimacy to the movement. In his New Year's message to the country on 7 January, President Salinas stated that "There is no Indian uprising in Chiapas. There is an action by a violent armed group against the peaceful state of the communities...."⁶³ President Salinas tried to divide the EZLN from its base of support by delineating between the guerrillas and the Indians who rejected them or were coerced into participating. Further, he tried to erode support for the rebels by immediately granting 30 land titles to Indians in Chiapas with a promise of 6,500 to soon follow. On 4 January, he sent the Social Development Secretary to the state to

develop new assistance programs.⁶⁴ The government intent was to show that it was already moving to address the complaints of the EZLN so armed insurrection was not necessary.

By negotiating with those he had already labeled criminals, Salinas risked a degree of his own legitimacy; however, the need for a speedy resolution to the crisis necessitated negotiation. To minimize the risk, the government portrayed itself as reasonable and even compassionate in its dealings with the rebels. It tried to transfer the strength of its military position to the psychological front by appearing merciful and magnanimous.

The government recognized the potential of the damage that could be caused by the allegations of human rights violations and acted quickly to minimize it. On 5 January, as soon as the first allegations were made, President Salinas sent the president of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) to Chiapas to investigate all accusations against the government.⁶⁵ The CNDH and Attorney General acted quickly. They launched an investigation of the allegations that the Air Force had bombed and strafed civilians. By the end of February, it had resolved 404 of the 427 reports of disappearances. It had started cases in 56 homicides and 25 incidents of abuse of authority. In spite of this effort, political opposition parties and human rights groups conducted enormous demonstrations in Mexico City, leading to the loss of popular support for the government.

Military

The government executed a standing operations plan to counter a popular insurrection, National Defense Plan II (DNII). DNII was a general operations plan. It was the blueprint for action anywhere in the country. It was not focused on Chiapas. The objective of this plan was to isolate the battlefield. of paramount importance was the prevention of an insurrection from spreading to the rest of the country. The plan relied upon a rapid military response to contain the threat. Once the threat was contained, the military would systematically move to defeat the insurrectionists.⁶⁸

The Mexican government fought the strategic war in three phases. The first was the military occupation of the EZLN's initial objectives. Without that, the government would lose face. Attempts at negotiation would appear to be reflections of weakness. The second phase was to maneuver to gain advantage over the rebels in the field. By achieving a battlefield advantage, the government could negotiate from a position of strength. It could appear generous rather than defeated when granting concessions. Once that was accomplished, the government shifted priority of effort to the diplomatic arena. President

Salinas, declaration of a unilateral cease-fire and offer of negotiations achieved political strategic surprise. The EZLN was completely unprepared for this development. The resulting delays bought the government time to consolidate and reinforce both at the national political level and on the battlefield.

To their credit, the Mexican Armed Forces performed very well. They mobilized and deployed quickly. They achieved their desired end state in the field within the context of the nation's political objectives. They made the shift in strategy with ease. They maintained their role under the constitution by responding to a threat against the government. Finally, they showed that they were clearly under the control of the civil government.⁶⁹

OPERATIONAL

By the time the government decided to commit the military on 2 January, the Army had a good idea of the EZLN dispositions, if not the strengths of the rebel columns. The majority of the area of operations fell inside of a 150 square kilometers triangle formed by San Cristobal, Comitán, and Ocosingo. San Cristobal was the forward position of the rebels, the farthest point from their bases in the Lacandon jungle. The Army believed that the EZLN center of gravity was its bases in the Lacandon jungle. The critical vulnerability was its lines of communications (LOCs). Whoever controlled the highway from Comitán to Ocosingo would control the Zapatistas' LOCs.

The VII Military Region headquarters in Tuxtla Gutiérrez devised a three phase plan to achieve the national military strategy to fight the insurrection.⁷⁰ The first phase was the reinforcement of the 31st Military Zone garrison in Rancho Nuevo. If the garrison could be relieved, the post could be used for a forward operating base to conduct sustained combat operations against the rebels. If not, it was crucial to national prestige that the garrison not fall to the rebels. The defeat of roughly a brigade of Mexican troops would be disastrous on the national psychological front. Whether or not the forces could break out of their perimeter, a pitched battle there would engage a significant amount of the rebel forces while the Army attacked on other fronts.

The second phase of the operation had two objectives. The first was to cut off the rebels from their withdrawal routes and lines of communication. Forces from the 36th Military Zone in Tapachula on the Pacific coast drove north to Comitán, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, and Ocosingo. On 4 January, two infantry battalions retook the municipal buildings in Ocosingo. EZLN forces in Ocosingo continued to fight government troops until the cease-fire; however, the government has effectively isolated

the battlefield. The rebels were cut off and in a position to be defeated in detail.

The second objective of this phase was the retaking of rebel-held towns. The priority of effort was to the towns initially seized on 1 January by the Zapatistas. Retaking the towns was not difficult; however, harassing fires from snipers and stay-behind forces kept the troops from truly securing them during the entire campaign. To increase the psychological impact, the government declared victory as soon as the municipal buildings were reoccupied. This painted a not too accurate picture in that while the Army controlled the municipal buildings and had the initiative, the towns were not completely secure and the troops were still being engaged by the rebels.

The forces that achieved the first objective also achieved this objective in the towns of Ocosingo, Las Margaritas and Altamirano. By 12 January, the Army had cordoned the triangle and occupied all of the contested towns except for Guadalupe Tepeyac deep in the highlands. By the time the cease-fire was declared, the Army had advanced to within 30 kilometers of Guadalupe Tepeyac and was massing forces to assault the town.

The third phase of the operation was the pursuit of rebel forces into the Lancandona jungle to locate and destroy their bases. This phase was well under way when President Salinas declared the cease-fire. The military made good use of combined arms by using armor and mechanized infantry on the roads and light infantry in the jungles. The Air Force flew close air support missions, rocketing and strafing rebel positions. Helicopters acted as spotters for the ground forces and transported quick-reaction troops to vertically envelop the enemy.⁷¹

At the operational level of war, the Mexican Armed Forces performed well. In a very short period of time, they deployed significant ground and air combat forces to a remote region of the country. The military fixed the bulk of the rebel force around Rancho Nuevo, turned the rebels, flank and cut them off from their lines of communication. It successfully integrated not only ground combined arms assets, but both rotary and fixed wing aircraft. The military could easily have annihilated the Rebel forces had combat operations continued.

The operation had two major shortcomings. The first was a difficulty in exercising command and control. The military attributes this to communications failure.⁷² Second, the Army is alleged to have committed numerous human rights violations by torturing and executing prisoners.

Human rights organizations claim that the Air Force indiscriminately attacked noncombatants while attempting to provide close air support.⁷³

TACTICAL

From what little is known of the tactical battle, the Army appears to have performed well. It was aggressive, seizing and keeping the initiative. It pursued rebel forces well. It used organic mortars to provide fire support and incorporated close air support effectively. The Army used combined arms concepts in cleared rural and urban areas, integrating armor, mechanized infantry and dismounted infantry. In the jungle and forested regions, the Army pursued with infantry, using aircraft to vertically envelop the rebels with quick-reaction forces and to locate and engage rebel forces.

A failure of the Army at the tactical level was the reliance on the same tactic so often that they became predictable. When engaging the rebels, the Army would fix them in place with ground forces and vertically envelop them using rotary wing aircraft. The rebels adjusted to this by establishing multiple ambush sites. The first would target the Army patrol on the ground and subsequent sites would target the helicopters of the quick reaction force. After the loss of several helicopters, the Army became less aggressive in its pursuit and relied more on fire support.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Both the Mexican government and the leadership of the Zapatista rebels recognized the importance of fighting the campaign on each of the three levels of war. Both analyzed the opposing centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities. Both designed and adjusted their strategies, operations, and tactics based upon their judgements. Both sides came close to achieving their planned end-states.

The EZLN recognized the advantages of the environment. The area is remote with an underdeveloped infrastructure. Transportation is poor and the terrain is rugged. The Indian population is resentful and disillusioned with the central government. For the Indians, the government no longer holds the promise of the Revolution of 1910. Unfortunately for the EZLN, it was unable to tap the resentment of the people to create a popular uprising.

The EZLN limited its objectives to the betterment of the Indian condition in Chiapas. The desired end-state was an Indian community with a greater share of the national wealth. Not wanting to necessarily overthrow the central government, the Zapatistas were deliberate in designing their strategy to

force from the government economic and development assistance. They timed their insurrection superbly to place maximum pressure on the government by coinciding with the effective date of NAFTA and the beginning of the campaign season for the national elections.

The tactics of the Zapatistas were well planned and executed. They made good use of the terrain to ambush and harass the Army. With a few notable exceptions, they recognized the limitations of their relative lack of firepower and did not become decisively engaged.

The rebels' military operations supported the strategic objectives until they made the error of trying to capture Rancho Nuevo. At that point, they contradicted their own strategy and risked the annihilation of their western forces. Additionally, by underestimating the rapidity with which the military would respond, they left their lines of communication unprotected. The government readily took advantage of the fact and forced the EZLN into direct combat at Ocosingo to prevent being cut off from their sanctuaries in the Lancandona jungle.

The greatest strategic error was to underestimate the flexibility and agility of the government. It was not prepared for the rapid introduction of forces into the area of operations, nor was it prepared when the government shifted from a military focus of effort to a political/diplomatic focus. At the point that the government declared a unilateral cease-fire, the EZLN lost the strategic initiative and was unprepared to react.

For its part, the Mexican government was able to achieve the best end-state that it could realistically attain. It recognized the political, economic, and psychological elements at work and designed its strategy to minimize the damage of the insurrection. Its efforts were successful. The violence was contained to Chiapas. The national elections were fairly uneventful and the PRI maintained its pre-eminent position in the political structure.

The Mexican government displayed a high degree of sophistication in dealing with the threat. It correctly analyzed the situation to determine the most favorable end-state and devised its strategies, operations, and tactics to achieve it, fighting the campaign at all levels of war. Unlike the Russians with their recent experience in Chechnya, the government recognized the consequences of using overwhelming military force to achieve its objectives. It realized that although such actions would win the campaign on the operational level, it would ultimately lose in the psychological and political arenas on the strategic level.

The government understood the psychological and political impact of allegations of human rights violations. Recognizing the

effectiveness of human rights groups as a force multiplier for the opposition, the government realized that, regardless of the veracity of the accusations, it would lose popular and international support. Military victory on the ground at the operational level would be nullified by a political and psychological-loss at the grand strategy level. The best end-state would be at least partial loss of support. Therefore, to minimize the negative impact, it acted quickly to investigate allegations made against the Mexican military. Although it was not able to prevent an unfavorable result, it did prevent the political and psychological defeat it feared.

The military performed well in supporting the national strategy. The military strategy supported the grand strategy of the government. The Armed Forces correctly assessed the intent and disposition of the EZLN along with the centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities on all of the levels of war. It mobilized and deployed rapidly with no warning. It used combined arms in joint operations and quickly gained the initiative. The success of operations in the field allowed the government to pursue a negotiated political settlement from a position of relative strength.

The actions of the rebels in Chiapas reflect the postulations of both the Manwaring and Prisk and the O'Neill models of insurgency. With regard to the former, the insurgents planned their actions at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war in a complementary fashion focusing on the desired end-state. The primary aim was not to defeat the Army on the field of battle, but to defeat the government politically and psychologically. Likewise, the military fought the campaign in such a manner that it complemented the political, economic, and psychological elements of national power in supporting the national strategy.

As a reformist movement, this insurgency comports well with the O'Neill model. The objectives of the rebels were limited to greater autonomy and representation in the political process. The Zapatistas did not intend to overthrow the established government.

The student of insurgency is left with a troubling question: "Why did not the Indian population rise up in support of the EZLN?" The demographic environment appears to be ideal. The preconditions are abundant. The Indians live in virtual servitude and abject poverty. Not only do they not have any hope of improving their lot in life, they have no realistic expectation that their children would fare better.

The newly elected President, Ponce Zedillo, is facing an economy that has foundered with the destabilization of the currency and a new round of Zapatista attacks. This

time the pressures are different. National elections are not imminent and international business concerns are calling for firm resolve on the part of the government. It remains to be seen if the government will employ the same restraint in settling the current dispute. Likewise, it remains to be seen if the Zapatistas will repeat the tactics and strategy that brought them political success in the previous campaign or if they will be compelled to adapt to a new reality.

APPENDIX A THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE UPRISING

The following is a chronology of the events as they unfolded. This information was derived by reviewing hundreds of conflicting press reports and represents the author's best efforts at reconciling the disparate accounts. By correlating the events and local maps and analyzing the results, the author derived his interpretation of the operational plans for the opposing forces.

D-230+ (22 May 1993)

Approximately 40 EZLN guerrillas kill two soldiers in a meeting engagement. The Army deploys 3,000 troops to hunt down the guerrillas. In this same area, the 830th Infantry Battalion finds six training camps allegedly belonging to the URNG, capturing 10 guerrillas and 28 light and heavy weapons.⁷⁵

D-1 (Friday, 31 December 1993)

EZLN forces attack the RSS-6 exploration brigade of the Mexican Petroleum Corporation's (PEMEX) Ocosingo facility, capturing 1.566 metric tons of dynamite, 10,440 detonators, and a truck.⁷⁶

D-DAY (Saturday, 1 January 1994)

Just after midnight, the EZLN launches attacks against the municipal offices of four major population centers. At 0100, rebels attack San Cristobal de las Casas (population 89,251), securing it by 0200. At 0300, they attack Las Margaritas (86,635) and secure it by 0400. At 0700, EZLN forces initiate attacks against Altamirano (16,980) and Ocosingo (120,687), but are not able to secure their objectives until 1600. Guerrillas seize the radio station in Ocosingo and begin to make propaganda broadcasts. Using the demolitions they captured from the PEMEX facility on 31 December, they destroy two bridges at the approaches to Ocosingo to impede an Army counterattack.⁷⁷ The EZLN seizes the villages of Huixtan and Chanal.⁷⁸ Twenty four policemen are killed in the takeover or executed shortly thereafter. Estimates of EZLN strength vary wildly from a low of 200-300 and to a high of 2,000.⁷⁹

State officials order police to avoid confrontation with EZLN. The military remains 20 kilometers outside of downtown San Cristobal and conducts aerial reconnaissance.⁸⁰

D+1 (Sunday, 2 January 1994)

State officials direct the police to establish a dialogue with the rebels in order to defuse the crisis.⁸¹ All military personnel in VII Military Region are restricted to their bases to allow state officials an opportunity to resolve the situation. ⁸²

The EZLN withdraws from San Cristobal. Its forces surround and attack the 31st Military Zone garrison at Rancho Nuevo.⁸³ Guerrillas ambush an Army patrol near Rancho Nuevo at 0700, killing two officers and three noncommissioned officers. Two officers, one NCO, and one soldier are wounded. In spite of the casualties, the patrol counterattacks, repelling the EZLN force and capturing nine rebels and various shotguns, grenades, and rifles, to include two AR-15s.⁸⁴

The federal government authorizes the military to defend its bases and to secure those areas not under rebel control.⁸⁵

Attacks against the garrison at Rancho Nuevo continue throughout the day. The EZLN frees 120 inmates from the San Cristobal prison in the suburb of Chiberos and is engaged by Army elements.⁸⁶ The rebels withdraw from San Cristobal de las Casas, but they continue to occupy Ocosingo, Altamirano, Chanal, and Las Margaritas. They burn down the municipal building in Ocosingo, but maintain their positions in the town and continue to operate the radio station.⁸⁷ Ten guerrillas and soldiers are reported killed in what the government and press describe as heavy fighting.⁸⁸

After withdrawing from San Cristobal, the rebels surround two military posts approximately 10 kilometers away [one is probably Rancho Nuevo and the other is probably an Army reconnaissance patrol].⁸⁹

Rebels conduct resupply by air at the Ocosingo airport while the inhabitants steal from the EZLN stockpiles.⁹⁰ Army and EZLN forces fight at least seven skirmishes around Ocosingo during the day.⁹¹

The EZLN seizes the towns of Oxchuc, Huixtan, and Guadalupe Tepeyac.⁹² It controls the highway between Altamirano and San Cristobal and operates several roadblocks from which it controls access to Ocosingo.⁹³

Army forces move from Palenque to reinforce the VII Military Region are engaged by rebels in Ocosingo.⁹⁴ Army and EZLN forces of unknown strength fight in Los Altos de Chiapas.⁹⁵

D+2 (Monday, 3 January 1994)

Reinforcements begin to arrive in the 31st and 36th Military Zones. The armor forces are believed to be from the IX Military Region in Acapulco armed with M-3 and M-5 Stuart tanks and M-8 armored cars. Two Army and one Air Force airborne infantry battalions deploy from the Brigada de Fusileros

Paracaidistas Jose Maria Moruelos y Pavon in the I Military region (the Mexican Federal District). The Mexican Air Force deploys Pilatus PC-7 fixed wing aircraft for close air support as well as Bell 206s and 212s, and Hughes MD500MG helicopters. Additionally, it deploys its five IAI Aravas and nine C-130As for airlift.⁹⁶ The armed forces are using the military airport at Tuxtla Gutierrez as a base of operations.⁹⁷

EZLN forces attack Rancho Nuevo again, but are repelled. The

Army reinforces the garrison at Rancho Nuevo and begins to expand its operations from that base.

The rebels abandon Las Margaritas and the Army occupies the town unopposed.⁹⁸ Army units retake Ocosingo, but fighting continues in the outskirts as the EZLN makes repeated counterattacks. By 1300, EZLN resistance dwindles to harassing sniper fire.⁹⁹ EZLN rebels withdraw from Chanal and Army troops take Comitán unopposed. The EZLN still holds Altamirano, Oxchuc, Huixtán, and Cuxujlá in addition to occupying Guadeloupe Tepeyac.¹⁰⁰

Army and EZLN forces continue to clash in Los Altos de Chiapas.¹⁰¹

Approximately 40 EZLN rebels kidnap former Chiapas governor Absalon Castellanos Dominguez in Comitán along with his wife and brother.¹⁰²

D+3 (Tuesday, 4 January 1994)

The rebels withdraw from Oxchuc; however, angry civilians capture six rebels and turn them over to the Army after binding them and beating them up.¹⁰³ A rebel column advances to within 16 kilometers of the state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez while withdrawing from Ocosingo. Both sides establish blocking positions on the highway linking the two towns and the rebel column turns away.¹⁰⁴

Approximately 5,000 soldiers reinforced with 27 tanks, two armored vehicles, 18 all-terrain vehicles [probably HUMVEEs] and support vehicles move into San Cristobal. They engage an EZLN force on the highway linking San Cristobal with Ocosingo. Three fixed-wing aircraft and a helicopter fly close air support missions in support of this engagement [the helicopter was probably used to spot enemy locations and to direct fires]. Allegedly, the rebels were using the highway to withdraw to Ocosingo." The Army's 17 and 73 Infantry Battalions retake Ocosingo, to include the radio station; however, Army forces are still receiving harassing fires from EZLN troops.¹⁰⁶

In heavy fighting, the rebels abandon Altamirano before daylight, withdrawing into the mountains. The Army pursues as far as San Juan Chamula. EZLN stay-behind forces continue to harass government troops in Altamirano.¹⁰⁷

Army and EZLN forces continue to clash in Los Altos de

Chiapas.108

D+4 (Wednesday, 5 January 1994)

The Army has retaken San Cristobal, Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, and Altamirano; the rebels are maintaining harassing fires on the troops.109

At approximately 1140, an Army squad near San Cristobal is surrounded by rebels. The Army attempts to relieve it by dispatching air assault forces, but the helicopters receive too much ground fire. Air Force aircraft fly close air support to break the encirclement. The squad is relieved by additional Army forces. A Bell 212 receives 12 rounds in the fuselage and has a hydraulic failure.110 Air Force aircraft fly close air support missions south of San Cristobal during scattered skirmishes between Army and EZLN forces.111 An Army helicopter is shot down by rebels during a firefight around Ocosingo.112 EZLN guerrillas have barricaded themselves in houses and Army patrols are trying to find and eliminate them.113

Army and EZLN forces continued to clash in Los Altos de Chiapas.114

D+5 (Thursday, 6 January 1994)

The EZLN captures Tenejapa, approximately 40 kilometers from San Cristobal.115

The Army cordons a triangular area between San Cristobal, Ocosingo, and Las Margaritas and launches an offensive to clear the area of EZLN forces. Federal troops occupy Huixtan, Oxchuc, and Altamirano, all of which had already been abandoned by the rebels.116 Army troops seize the town of Chanal from the EZLN.117 At 0700, the Army engages a rebel force on Maria Auxiliadora Hill, eight kilometers southeast of San Cristobal, with mortars and close air support.118

Army and EZLN forces continue to clash in Los Altos de Chiapas in the towns of El Corralito, San Isidro, El Ocotal, San Antonio de los Bajos, Corazon de Maria, and ocosingo.119

The Army conducts combined arms and joint operations against the EZLN. While pursuing a rebel column that was en route to destroy a microwave tower on Huitepec Hill, the Army employs infantry, armored vehicles, tanks, helicopters, and Pilatus fixed wing aircraft to engage the guerrillas. The Mexican Air Force flies close air support missions against targets near Corralito and San Antonio de los Banos in the southeastern portion of the mountains.120

D+6 (Friday, 7 January 1994)

The Army increases the intensity of its attack on the EZLN column near Huitepec Hill. The EZLN reportedly damages three fixed wing aircraft and two helicopters in the engagement. The Army commits approximately a company of infantry (transported in

10 trucks), a company of armor (12 tanks of undetermined type), and various "artillery-equipped jeeps" (most likely jeeps or HUMVEES armed with recoilless rifles).121

Army and EZLN forces continue to clash in Los Altos de Chiapas.122

D+7 (Saturday, 8 January 1994)

Army and EZLN forces continue to clash in Los Altos de Chiapas.123

The government initiates efforts to restore civil services to recaptured cities. The rebels had cut off electricity, water, sewage, and gas.124

D+8 (Sunday, 9 January 1994)

EZLN forces again attack the Army garrison at Rancho Nuevo without success. Army and EZLN forces continue to clash in Los Altos de Chiapas.125

The Army attacks guerrilla positions around Ocosingo and Tenejapa.126 Additionally, the Army captures a Mexican priest, Isidro Guillermo Badillo Brana, at the border between Chiapas and Tabasco who was allegedly leading a rebel group.127

D+9 (Monday, 10 January 1994)

The EZLN releases the 80-100 hostages it had taken in Guadeloupe Tepeyac as the guerrillas are preparing to withdraw from the town. Most of the hostages are doctors and nurses at the Social Security Hospital. The former governor of Chiapas, Absalon Castellanos Dominguez, is reportedly being held in the town.128

The Mexican Army recovers a PEMEX pickup truck in Guadeloupe Tepeyac taken in the raid in which the EZLN captured the 1.5 tons of dynamite.129

The Army is preparing to assault Guadeloupe Tepeyac. It has massed 15,000 [number not verified] troops to include paratroopers, 40 tanks, fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.130

The Army is pursuing the EZLN in the Lancandona jungle and is searching for the group's headquarters. Troop positions and roadblocks are constantly being reinforced as additional troops arrive. The Army emplaces armor forces at the approaches to San Cristobal, reinforcing the infantry. official reports estimate 200 soldiers, rebels, and civilians have been killed thus far and 1,000 injured.131

D+10 (Tuesday, 11 January 1994)

During the morning, EZLN forces retake the town of Chanal, 50 Kilometers east of San Cristobal. The Army advances to within 75 kilometers of Guadeloupe Tepeyac where the EZLN has reportedly prepared significant obstacles.132

D+11 (Wednesday, 12 January 1994)

The Defense Secretariat announces that the Army had retaken

all of the major towns seized by the EZLN with the exception of Guadeloupe Tepeyac. Army units advance to El Momon, 30 kilometers from Guadeloupe Tepeyac. All combat is now confined to rural areas.133

EZLN and Mexican Army troops fight sporadic battles in the Lancandona jungle.134

President Salinas orders a unilateral cease-fire.135 Prior to the announcement of the cease-fire, the EZLN releases a threatening to take the state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez and calling on the people to rise up. The attack does not materialize.136

In Mexico City, approximately 100,000 demonstrators protest against the use of force to put down the uprising. The protesters are made up of student groups, human rights groups, opposition political parties, and labor unions.137

D+12 (Thursday, 13 January 1994)

Army troops and EZLN forces continue to have sporadic engagements in the Lancandona jungle. Mexican press reports that the Army is conducting combined arms operations against the guerrillas in San Miguel, Patate Viejo, and Chivi [Chiste?], using armor and air support.138

EZLN forces conduct harassing fire against the 31st Military Zone garrison at Rancho Nuevo.139

D+13 (Friday, 14 January 1994)

In spite of the cease-fire, EZLN guerrillas attack the garrison of the 31st Military Zone at Rancho Nuevo.140 They also fire upon an Army reconnaissance patrol on the road linking Ocosingo and Suchila. No casualties are reported.141

D+14 (Saturday, 15 January 1994)

The Army begins to withdraw from the towns of San Cristobal, Las Margaritas, and Ocosingo, setting up checkpoints on the roads entering each.142 The Army establishes bases outside of Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Ocosingo, Oxchuc, and San Cristobal.143

D+15 (Sunday, 16 January 1994)

The EZLN leadership announces that its forces would honor the unilateral cease-fire declared by the government, but would respond if attacked.144

D+19 (Thursday, 20 January 1994)

The Mexican Chamber of Deputies approves an amnesty for those rebels who cease violent actions surrender their weapons, release all hostages.145

D+36 (Friday, 6 February 1994)

The EZLN and the Coordinating Board of Nongovernment Human Rights Organizations (CONPAZ) agree to establish a security cordon around the negotiations in San Cristobal to act as a buffer between the Mexican Army and the EZLN. CONPAZ represents 11 local human rights organizations

in Chiapas (over 130 groups are now active in the area).146
D+89 (Thursday, 31 March 1994)

After three months, the VII Military Region begins to rotate troops out of the contested areas, bringing in fresh troops to continue the military isolation of the EZLN.147

END STATE

Negotiations are being conducted between the EZLN and the Mexican government. Human rights organizations are providing a security cordon around the negotiation sites for the rebels to guarantee their safety during the deliberations. The Mexican Army is in control of all the cities and villages of Chiapas. However, to minimize the profile of the armed forces, troops have been withdrawn from most urban areas. Instead, the Army has established roadblocks and checkpoints on the roads leading into the contested areas, effecting a cordon sanitaire to isolate the EZLN.

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3. Bard E. O'Neill, 53.
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24. Millon, 40-41, 45, 128.

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67. Ramirez, 7-13.

68. The author produced and analyzed the chronology presented in Appendix A to deduce the strategic, operational and tactical plans and objectives of both combatants.

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74. Ramirez, 7-13 and "Churchmen Analyze Underlying Cause of Revolt," 14.

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106. "Armed Forces Resume Bombing of EZLN Positions," 18 and "Army Recovers Control of Ocosingo" (text), PA0501232294 Paris AFP in Spanish, 2100 GMT (5 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report-Latin America, 6 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-004, 17).
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108. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17.
109. "Government Spokesman Details Situation" (text) PA0601130194 Mexico City XEW Television Network in Spanish, 0435 GMT (6 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 6 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-004, 22) and "Army Recovers Regions Taken by Zapatist Rebels" (text) PA0501151094 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish, 1132 GMT (5 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 6 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-004, 15).
110. "Boletines de Prensa Emitidos por la Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional," 18-19 and "Spokesman, Human Rights Ombudsman Discuss Events" (text) PA0601034394 Mexico City Radio ACIR Network in Spanish, 0124 GMT (6 January 1994) .

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112. "Clashes Continue in Ocosingo" (text) PA0601012894 Mexico City Radio ACIR Network in Spanish, 0030 GMT (6 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 6 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-004, 20).

113. "National Defense Secretariat Updates Bulletin" (text) PA0501172294 Mexico City Radio ACIR Network in Spanish, 1616 GMT (5 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 6 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-001, 16).

114. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17.

115. "EZLN Seizes Tenejapa, Fighting in Other Towns" (text) PA0701011394 Madrid EFE in Spanish, 2250 GMT (6 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 7 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-005, 8).

116. "Indians Asks [sic] for Advance Warnings on Bombings" (text) PA0801222394 Hamburg DPA in Spanish, 1459 GMT (8 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 10 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-006, 18-19) and "Correction to Army Asked for Advance Warning on Bombings" (text) PA1001024594. Corrections published to "Indians Asks [sic] for Advanced Warning on Bombings" in FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 10 January 1994. FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 12 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-008, 11).

117. "Rebels Said to Retake Municipality" (text) PA1101192494 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish, 1836 GMT (11 January 1994). Translation by FBIS. FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 12 January 1994. FBIS-LAT-94-008, 10.

118. "Armed Forces Launch Mortar Attack on Rebels" (text) PA0601154394 Hamburg DPA in Spanish, 1449 GMT (6 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 7 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-005, 6).

119. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17; "Army Continues Pursuing Rebels in Chiapas" (text), PA0601234894 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish, 2201 GMT (6 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 7 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-005, 7-8); and "EZLN Seizes Tenejapa, Fighting in Other Towns," 8.

120. "Indians Asks [sic] for Advanced Warning on Bombings," 18-19, "Correction to Army Asked for Advance Warning on Bombings," 11 and "Army Continues Pursuing Rebels in Chiapas," 7-8.

121. "Indians Asks [sic] for Advance Warning on Bombings," 18-19 and "Correction to Army Asked for Advance Warning on Bombings," 11.

122. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17.

123. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17.

124. "Government Initiates Operation to Aid Civilians" (text) PA0701173194 Madrid EFE in Spanish, 1600 GMT (7 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 10 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-006, 11-12).
125. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17; "Army Resumes Attacks After Reported Assault" (text) PA0901231894 Paris AFP in Spanish, 2144 GMT (9 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 10 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-006, 19-20) ; and "Continued EZLN Attacks on Garrison Reported" (text) PA1001015694 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish, 0106 GMT (10 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 10 January 1994 (FBIS LAT-94-006, 20).
126. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17 and "Army Resumes Attacks After Reported Assault," 19-20.
127. "Army Preparing Large Offensive Against Rebels" (text) PA1001205994 Madrid EFE in Spanish, 1646 GMT (10 January 1994) . Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 11 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-007, 19-20).
128. "Released Hostages Arrive in Las Margaritas" (text) PA1101155894 Mexico City XEW Television Network in Spanish, 1300 GMT (11 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 12 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-008, 9) and "EZLN Releases 80 Social Security Workers" (text) PA1001210294 Madrid EFE in Spanish, 1828 GMT (10 January 1994) . Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 11 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-007, 20).
129. "Pursuit of Rebels Continues in Altos de Chiapas," 17.
130. "Army Preparing Large Offensive Against Rebels," 19.
131. "Army Preparing Large Offensive Against Rebels," 19.
132. "Rebels Said to Retake Municipality," 10.
133. "Defense Secretariat Reports Recapture of Chiapas Towns" (text) PA1201134494 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish, 1301 GMT (12 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 13 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-009, 15-16) and "EZLN Threatens to Occupy Chiapas Capital Prior to Cease-Fire Notice" (text) PA1201195394 Madrid EFE in Spanish, 1914 GMT (12 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 13 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94--009, 13).
134. "Sporadic Clashes Reported Despite Truce" (text) PA1401173694 Madrid AFE in Spanish, 1620 GMT (14 January 1994). Translation by FBIS, FBIS Daily Report--Latin America, 18 January 1994 (FBIS-LAT-94-011, 20).
135. Montes, 140.
136. "EZLN Threatens to Occupy Chiapas Capital Prior to Cease-Fire Notice," 13.
137. "Peace Demonstration Held in Mexico City 12 January," 16.
138. "Sporadic Clashes Reported Despite Truce," 20.

139. Montes, 140.
140. Montes, 140.
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143. "Army Holds News Conference, Urges Political Solution,"
18.
144. "EZLN Leader: Rebels Will Respect Truce" (text)
PA1601174594 Paris AFP in Spanish, 1626 GMT (16 January 1994)
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