

Armed Struggle and Militarization in Chiapas

Background

Militarization is not a new phenomenon for Chiapas. Nevertheless, the federal army's presence dramatically increased after the 1994 Zapatista uprising with approximately one-third of all Mexican troops now stationed in Chiapas. Indigenous communities continue to suffer from harassment, forced displacement and other problems that result from living in a state of low-intensity warfare. The rise of paramilitary groups has also been a major force for intimidation and violence against both Zapatista and non-Zapatista communities.

Learning Objectives

Provide participants with an overview of the ideologies and strategies behind the use of arms for guerilla movements as well as the U.S. and Mexican governments within the context of the Chiapas conflict. The group concludes the workshop with a discussion on theories of non-violence and possible alternatives.

Preparation

Participant research

Directions

This workshop is research-based. All participants are assigned a topic on which they should research and prepare a 10-minute presentation. The use of visual aids is highly recommended. Each participant will share her/his section allowing approximately 5 minutes to address any subsequent questions from other group members.

Topics:

1. Militarization in Chiapas: History of domestic military interventions in Mexico, justifications and effects on the state.
2. Militarization-U.S. Influence in Chiapas
3. Militarization Strategies that are “bajo el agua,” meaning illegal strategies such as the use of paramilitary groups, the arms trade, desaparecidos.
4. Militarization of the Resistance: Guerilla groups that have taken up arms. Why? What does this mean for their struggle?
5. Theories of non-violence.

Guiding Questions

- What are the justifications for these strategies?
- How do you personally feel about armed struggle?
- What are possible alternatives and responses?

Texts

- Report from the Centro de Analisis Politico de Investigaciones Sociales y Economias (CAPISE): La Ocupación Militar en Chiapas: El Dilema del Prisionero

<http://www.laneta.apc.org/capise/espa/inicio.html>

- The Mexican Army: A Key Factor in the Conflict in Chiapas (SIPAZ)

http://www.sipaz.org/fini_eng.htm

- Women and Low Intensity Warfare (SIPAZ)

http://www.sipaz.org/fini_eng.htm

Maps

- Chiapas state map indicating areas of increased military presence (CAPISE)

- Similar map-poster size (CAPISE)

Both available at <http://www.laneta.apc.org/capise/espa/inicio.html>