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Document Title: Light Weapons in Chiapas: Negative Consequences and Difficult Solutions

Publication, Report or Conference Title: A Periodic Paper

Publication Date: June 1998

Just two days before Christmas 1997, the attention of the world was focused on the small town of Acteal, in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, where 45 people, mainly women and children, had been massacred by a group armed with assault rifles and other sophisticated weapons. An analysis of this massacre, the events leading up to it and those which followed, reveal an all too familiar pattern: civilian casualties, disrupted development and the collapse of mechanisms for peacefully resolving conflicts which accompany the proliferation and misuse of sophisticated light weapons of war.

As with similar events in Algeria, Albania, Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Chechnya, and other conflict areas, such armed violence always has basic causes rooted in poverty, discrimination, repression, and political, ethnic and religious rivalries. But what makes the massacre in Chiapas also like the others is the increased proliferation and availability to all parties to conflict those weapons designed for responsible police and military forces - assault rifles, hand grenades, etc. - weapons now being used to kill and injure innocent civilians. The tragedy in Chiapas is yet another case that illustrates a growing global trend that features the indiscriminate and unlawful use of sophisticated light weapons designed for legitimate military forces, their illicit acquisition, serious negative consequences for those civilians deliberately targeted or caught in the crossfire, and the difficulties in implementing arms control and disarmament policies once this has occurred.

Types of Weapons

All accounts of this massacre demonstrate that the weapons used were selected so that the massacre could be executed as quickly and as definitively as possible. Assault rifles, both AK-47 and M-16 were in evidence, as well as smaller caliber rifles. The assailants also killed some of their victims with knives and machetes. But when the victims, who were praying in a church when attacked, began to run, it was the assault rifles that gunned them down and made the toll much higher than it would have been. The assault rifles were also a deterrent to those who would have run away.

Source of weapons

The weapons were illicitly acquired, by any definition of the term. Witnesses speaking to media and the Mexican government inquiry tell of paramilitary groups forcing them to pay a tax for the purchase of ammunition and weapons. A local official has been charged with murder and assault for delivering these weapons to the group committing the massacre. Witnesses also gave evidence of an overall buildup of weapons in this region using similar techniques. No credible reports have yet surfaced as to the source of these weapons, although many have intimated that such sophisticated weapons only exist in the Mexican armed forces. At a minimum this case illustrates a growing global problem, the insecure storage and lack of accountability of weapons issued to formal military and police forces.

Negative effects

The situation in Chiapas illustrates the four major consequences of the proliferation, ready availability and excess accumulation of weapons in a society.

- First, it is the civilians who suffer. While casualties to the police, paramilitary groups and their guerrilla opponents in this region were occurring in the lead up to the massacre, it was mainly civilians who were killed and wounded with these weapons. Further, doctors at the scene report that the assailants used expanding bullets, causing wounds that border on the inhumane.
- Second, the presence of these weapons and the armed environment they create, brought economic, social and political development in this very poor region to a stand-still.
 - Witness describe a situation in which their opponents stood guard over narrow mountain paths, effectively preventing them from getting their crops to market or obtained needed provisions. In such terrain, it only takes one or two assault rifles and enough ammunition to discourage such economic activities. There is also evidence that heavily armed bands disrupted the coffee harvest, in some cases using the proceeds to buy more weapons and ammunition. Aid agencies also found it difficult to operate in this environment.
 - The normal social relations so critical for this society became very disrupted. Any social organization became suspect, and organizations that were purportedly formed for social purposes became a cover for armed groups bent on violence.
 - Needless to say, anything approaching normal political development becomes severely hampered when weapons are so available and used as the final arbiter of disputes. Witnesses made it clear that such an environment had produced minimal loyalty to

the legitimate local government. This is particularly true in light of the evidence that this government did little to control the acquisition and use of these weapons by all factions in the conflict, and individual citizens as well. Some observers note that while at the national level democracy is on the move, it is not reflected in regions such as Chiapas.

- Third, Chiapas reflects the growing reality that the proliferation of weapons leads to the militarization of society, in which disputes are increasingly resolved by force of arms. The Director of the Mexican government's Human Rights Commission, surveying the scene 6 days after the massacre, noted the importance of lowered weapons availability and visibility for conflict resolution. She said "caches of arms had been unearthed, adding that she hoped that fewer guns, combined with the arrests of suspects, would provide a new atmosphere for peace talks between local towns that had broken down just before the massacre." She is confirming the reality that while it is the root causes that must be addressed, that process cannot begin, let alone be effective, in the presence of an armed society.
- The fourth negative consequence of an armed environment is that citizens who would not normally acquire weapons feel that they have to do so for security. The Chiapas story is replete with testimony of tremendous pressure on individuals and groups to arm. Such pressure is at once understandable yet tragic, as it only results in more weapons being present in the society. This increases the availability since it creates more weapons to be stolen, not to mention the increased likelihood for misuse. It is a tragic irony of the Chiapas case that this pressure to arm was resisted by the group whose members were massacred on 22 December.

Policy Choices

The arming of Chiapas also demonstrates the difficulty in dealing with the proliferation of weapons once it has occurred. On the one hand, it is noteworthy that the government recognized that there were too many arms in the region, calling for the decommissioning or disarmament of all weapons in the area. This is often the first response of those who wish the violence to decrease in the short run. But on the other hand, the Chiapas case demonstrates the difficulties involved, since the "disarmers" are the same military forces who have been looking for Zapatista arms for four years. To this point they appear to be overlooking citizens and groups loyal to one side to the conflict. The predictable result is a hostile response by the population, who view the disarmament as very one-sided, since many of the weapons known to be in the possession of paramilitary groups remain uncollected. This is not to say that there is not an effective way to lower the presence and misuse of arms. Rather, the hurried

response of the government did not allow such techniques to be put into operation.

Chiapas Massacre Chronology

December 22, 1997

Several dozen gunmen armed with AK 47's, some armed with expanding bullets, .22 caliber rifles and machetes and wearing uniforms and masks, killed 45 Tzotzil Indians, in the village of Chenalho, town of Acteal in the state of Chiapas. Fifteen children were also injured in the incident. The survivors claimed that the aggressors were members of the pro-government indigenous community.

Rev. Gonzalo Ituarte called the state security chief at 11:30 am to relay reports of killings from panicked Chenalho residents. There are state police and army outposts within a mile of the village, but nobody was sent to the scene. [La Nacion Digital, San Jose, Costa Rica, 23 and 24 December 1997; Julia Preston "Mexican Gunmen Slay 45 in Southern Indian Village," New York Times , pp. A1, 24 December 1997; Ian Fisher, "16 Are Charged in Massacre in Village in Southern Mexico," New York Times, 27 December 1997; "Town Mayor is Arrested in Massacre," San Jose Mercury News, pp. A1, 28 December 1997; Henry Tricks, "Mexican Mayor Accused of Links with Gunmen," Financial Times, pp. 1, 29 December 1997; Julia Preston, "Mexican Governor Resigns in Aftermath of Indians' Massacre," New York Times, 8 January 1998]

December 23, 1997

A low level state justice and a top personal aide to Governor Ruiz Ferro arrived at the site of the massacre before dawn. The bodies of those killed were piled into a truck and removed. According to the Human Rights Commission, no effort was made to gather evidence or assess the state of the victims. [Julia Preston, "Mexico Accuses Policeman of Helping Arm Mass Killers," New York Times, pp. A6. 13 January 1998]

December 24, 1997

It was reported that 30 people have been killed this year in Chenalho between pro-government factions and Zapatista supporters. At least 10 of the deaths occurred in November. [Julia Preston, "Mexican Gunmen Slay 45 In Southern Indian Village," New York Times, pp.A1, 24 December 1997; Caroline Brothers, "Va Chiapas al Abismo?," La Nacion Digital, 3 January 1998]

December 26, 1997

Mexican authorities arrested and charged 16 people for involvement in the December 22 massacre of 45 Tzotzil Indians in the village of Chenalho. In addition, 24 more people were detained under investigation, including 2 minors. Those arrested were Tzotzil Indians like their victims. [Ian Fisher, "16 are Charged in Massacre in Village in Southern Mexico," New York Times, pp. A1, 27 December 1997; "Town Mayor is Arrested in Massacre," San Jose Mercury News, pp.1A, 28 December 1997]

December 27, 1997

The mayor of the Chenalho municipality, which includes Acteal where the killings took place, Jacinto Arias Cruz and 23 other supporters were charged with homicide for the December 22 massacre. An official from the Attorney General's office said that the mayor provided the weapons involved in the incident and tried to cover up the massacre. This arrest brought the total number arrested to 40.

It was reported that armed gangs had held hundreds of Indian villagers in "near slavery" for months; seizing harvests, imposing fines and harassing those suspected of sympathizing with leftist rebels. The gunmen waited for the villagers to plant and care for their harvests, then took them. Residents were reported to have had to pay fines of up to \$600 to live unharmed.

Armed troops, church workers and volunteers escorted 1,500 Tzotzil Indians from 3 villages in the area to Polho in the state of Chiapas. The soldiers lined the roadways and occupied Los Chorros to prevent the return of the gangs which are armed with automatic weapons.

The 44 adults and 3 minors accused of involvement in the December 22 massacre were placed in prison. They were charged first degree murder, for the carrying of arms used for exclusive military use, stealing, and other crimes. ["Town Mayor is Arrested in Massacre," San Jose Mercury News, pp. A1, 28 December 1997; Mark Stevenson, "Chiapas Harassment Went Unchallenged," San Jose Mercury News, pp. A11, 29 December 1997; "Masacre Mancha de Sangre al PRI," La Nacion Digital, San Jose, Costa Rica, 29 December 1997]

December 28, 1997

Local politicians and the leader of the Mexican National Human Rights Commission toured the encampment in Polho where upwards of 1,500 people from nearby villages have fled. They claim that they were being harassed by armed gangs.

Mireille Roccatti, the human rights director, said "caches of arms had been unearthed, adding that she hoped the fewer guns, combined with the arrests of suspects, would provide a new atmosphere of peace talks between local towns that had been broken down just before the massacre."

Since March, according to residents of Acteal, PRI supporters in Los Chorros, where most of those charged in the massacre live, began receiving automatic weapons from a "mysterious source," mounting nighttime patrols, and harassing residents that supported the Zapatistas. [Mark Stevenson, "Mexico Charges Mayor," Associated Press, 28 December 1997; Ian Fisher, "Governing Party in Mexico Denies Any Role in the Massacre of 45 Indians Last Week," New York Times, 29 December 1997]

December 29, 1997

Federal police and soldiers helped evacuate 60 people from Puebla, Chiapas, near Acteal. They joined the upwards of 5,000 villagers who have left their villages since 27 December. The villagers were seeking safety from armed gangs they say are affiliated with PRI, and who held them in near slavery for months. [Mark Stevenson, "Troops Help Mexican Villagers Leave," Associated Press, 30 December 1997; "Masacre Mancha de Sangre al PRI," La Nacion Digital, 29 December 29, 1997]

December 30, 1997

Fleeing residents of Puebla reported that they had been terrorized since September by gunmen who demanded a war tax of \$1.25 every few weeks. A villager said that in September, PRI activists distributed guns to allies in all the villages in the area--at least one AK-47 per village, plus other weapons. [Mark Stevenson, "Troops Help Mexican Villagers Leave," Associated Press, 30 December 1997]

January 1, 1998

The Mexican army discovered 14 arms, 25 explosives, 3 hand grenades, 9 tear gas shells, and radio communication and medical equipment in the community of Yalhibtik (Yalchiptic), Chiapas. The Ministry of Interior claims the weapons belong to the Zapatistas. The Zapatistas, however, deny that the weapons belong to them.

It was announced that one of the men who participated in the massacre had identified the chief of the operation and that he had bought 18 rifles and AK-47 before the killings. He said that they buried their weapons after the massacre. Authorities unearthed an AK-47 and 10,000 bullets with the help of one of the accused killers. ["Va Chiapas al Abismo?" La Nacion Digital, San Jose, Costa Rica, 3 January 1998; "Cambio en Gabinete Mexicano," La Nacion Digital, San Jose, Costa Rica, 4 January 1998; "Expectativas y Tension en Mexico," La Nacion Digital, San Jose, Costa Rica, 5 January 1998]

January 3, 1998

Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo announced that the Secretary of Interior, Emilio Chuayffet, would be replaced by Francisco Labastida Ochoa. Ochoa said the massacre on December 22 was the fifteenth act of violence in the township in 70 days.

The army has denied occupation of Zapatista strongholds. Zapatistas claim that the government has planted weapons in the area and used it as an excuse to sweep the area.

Ochoa called for full-scale disarmament in the state of Chiapas. According to a 1995 amnesty law, the rebels claim they are permitted to keep their weapons until a peace settlement is reached. ["Rebel Army Rises from Dead After

Massacre in Chiapas," Financial Times, 11 January 1998; "Cambio en Gabinete Mexicano, "La Nacion Digital, San Jose, Costa Rica, 4 January 1998; Economist, 10 January 1998; La Nacion Digital, 3 January 1998]

January 5, 1998

In a communiqué, Subcomandante Marcos of The Zapatista rebel movement, accused the government of starting a military offensive against Zapatista communities. He warned that fighting with army troops could break out any time, and that Zapatista forces would not give up their weapons as demanded by the government. [Julia Preston, "Mexican Governor Resigns in Aftermath of Indians' Massacre," New York Times, 8 January 1998]

January 7, 1998

Cesar Ruiz Ferro, Governor of the state of Chiapas, resigned. He was accused of neglecting actions in the area of Acteal where the massacre took place. His chief of staff and top security official were under investigation for possible criminal negligence in the attack.

It was found that in the weeks before the December 22 killings, Governor Ruiz Ferro authorized a grant of \$500,000 to a pro-government organization known as Justice and Peace. Church groups have accused this group of organizing paramilitary squads. [Julia Preston, "Mexican Governor Resigns in Aftermath of Indians' Massacre, "New York Times, 8 January 1998.]

January 11, 1998

Federal prosecutors have charged a police commander, Felipe Vazquez Espinosa, with stockpiling AK-47 assault rifles and other weapons for the December 22nd massacre, as well as ordering his men to use state police trucks to gather the weapons. His confession is the first in tying Chiapas state authority to the massacre. Vazquez Espinosa said he was following orders from his superiors. In his confession he said that people with illegal weapons that were affiliated with PRI were not to be arrested. ["Mexico Cop Confesses in Massacre, "New York Times on the Web, 12 January 1998; Julia Preston, "Mexico Accuses Policeman of Helping Arm Mass Killers," New York Times, pp. A6, 13 January 1998; Molly Moore, "Mexico Holds Aide in Massacre: Commander Accused of Stockpiling Arms," Washington Post, pp. A10, 13 January 1998]

January 12, 1998

Police killed a woman and injured two children in Ocosingo, Chiapas when they opened fire on a group of demonstrators. The woman was part of an anti-government protest that was remembering the 1994 cease fire between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government.

It was reported that senior Catholic church leaders in Chiapas repeatedly called the Secretary of State, Homero Tovilla Cristiani, (the second highest official in the

state of Chiapas) to report the shooting in Chenalho on December 22nd. He responded that there was nothing to be alarmed about.

The Human Rights Commission said that it had collected "incontrovertible evidence" that officials knew early on December 22 of the violence in Chenalho. There was also an allegation by a forensic specialists that three of the victims did not die immediately from gunshot wounds. The Human Rights Commission concluded that those villagers might have been saved if the police had acted more quickly, and that they may have been alive when state officials took them away on December 23. [Julia Preston, "Mexico Accuses Policeman of Helping Arm Mass Killers," New York Times, A6, 13 January 1998]

January 13, 1998

The Mexican army arrested 29 members of the police force in Ocosingo, Chiapas who opened fire on the anti-government march on January 12. [Julia Preston, "Mexico Army to Arrest Chiapas Police," New York Times, 14 January 1998]

January 23, 1998

The first extensive report of the December 22nd massacre was released by the Attorney General, Jorge Madrazo Cuellar. It was reported that top justice officials in the area of the massacre had demolished the crime scene. The then Governor, Julio Cesar Ruiz Ferro, did not respond to pleas for help due to escalating violence from Indians community leaders in the weeks before the killings. The main motive behind the killings, based on 328 witness statements, was vengeance.

The Mexican government refused to remove the 25,000 soldiers in the area of the December 22nd massacre. The Secretary of Defence claimed they were needed to ensure the peace. The human rights organizations, the Catholic church, and the Democratic Revolution Party had asked for the soldiers removal in order to avoid a major armed conflict in the region. [Julia Preston, "Officials Blamed in Mexico Deaths," Monterey County Herald, pp. A2, 25 January 1998; "Ejercito no Saldra de Chiapas," La Nacion Digital, 23 January 1998]

January 25, 1998

The National Commissioner for the Human Rights reported that "state police were close enough to the scene of the crime to have heard the first shots. It would have taken only five minutes for them to get there; they did not." [Jorge Castaneda, "The Good, The Bad, and The Difference", The Washington Post, 25 January 1998]

February 1, 1998

Zapatista rebels said they had turned down a government proposal for a private meeting with Interior Minister Francisco Labastida.[The Siglo Weekly News, 3 February 1998]

February 11, 1998

Five more police were charged in connection with the massacre. Two others wanted for questioning are at large. A total of 58 people are now being investigated in connection with the massacre. It is not yet known who gave the orders to allow civilians to carry firearms. [Siglo News Weekly, 11 February 1998]

February 12, 1998

In an interview by Sam Dillon from the New York Times, President Zedillo, said, "Some people --not just now, but for a long time-- have acquired arms, and have attempted to do what the authorities should be doing, providing justice... I think that in some occasions we have been too soft for the benefit of negotiations, and I think the dramatic events of December demonstrate that such a policy is no longer convenient." [Zapatismo News Page, 14 February 1998; La Jornada, February 13, 1998]

February 14, 1998

There was increased movement of military vehicles, especially in the area near La Realidad, considered the closest village to the Zapatista headquarters. Between 12 and 13 February more than 40 vehicles have gone into the Lacandon jungle. Among them, four heavy artillery tanks, and armored anti-riot and amphibious vehicles armed with artillery cannons. Soldiers in small tanks crossing through La Realidad were pointing their machine guns at the people. For the past two weeks the federal army established more roadblocks, searched at least nine communities for arms and built up their military equipment in the Lacandon jungle. The roadblocks are to enforce the Federal Law of Firearms and Explosives. ["Military Incursions Continue; Heavy Artillery Enters Lacandon Jungle," Zapatismo News Page, 14 February 1998; Hermann Bellinghausen, "Tanquetas, Vehiculos Anfibios y Blindados con Torretas Artilladas," La Jornada, 14 February 1998]

February 18, 1998

Two senior police commanders were arrested in connection with the massacre in Acteal. It is alleged that Roberto Garcia Rivas, a sector police chief, and his deputy, Roberto Martin Mendez, must have heard the gunfire and did not do anything to stop it. The two men were in charge of 40 policemen. This brings the number of arrests connected with the massacre to 60. ["Mexico Arrests Police over Chiapas Massacre," CNN Interactive, 20 February 1998]

February

23,

1998

Bishop Raul Vera Lopez said in Rome that the presence of the Mexican Army in Chiapas was extremely "heavy" and that the government had not done anything to disarm the paramilitary groups.

March 25, 1998

Local journalists in the area of Tila, Chiapas said that they had a letter from PRI supporters in the area requesting uniforms, communication equipment and arms from the government. The journalists also had a copy of a check for \$450,000 from the government made out to Peace and Justice, the largest paramilitary group in Mexico. [Ewen MacAskill, "Death in the Badlands," The Guardian, United Kingdom, March 25, 1998]

April 8, 1998

A raid involving about 1,500 heavily armed soldiers and police took place in the neighborhood of La Hormiga in San Cristobal de las Casas. The purpose was to "cut off the harmful trade in weapons." Three men were arrested for weapons trafficking. Only two pistols were seized. Suspects of the massacre in Acteal had told police that they had obtained assault rifles in San Cristobal. ["1,500 Soldiers Raid Chiapas Region," Associated Press, April 9, 1998]

April 14, 1998

A former policeman from a town near where the massacre took place was arrested by the federal police for allowing local residents to possess illegal weapons. ["Ex-Mexican Officer Held in Massacre," www.nytimes.com, 14 April 1998]

April 27, 1998

A government supporter was shot and killed by guerrillas in the village of Los Platanos. Two residents were injured. Three policemen sent out to investigate were ambushed and suffered gunshot wounds. ["Latin American Briefs," Associated Press, 27 April 1998]

May 2, 1998

Four people were shot dead by men dressed in black uniforms in Ricon Chamula, 30 miles northwest of San Cristobal de las Casas. ["News From Around Latin America," Associated Press, 4 May 1998]

May 25, 1998

A center for military training was found in the municipality of Tenejapa in a police and army operation. The houses nearby were searched, including the house an ex-mayor. Five hundred cartridges of .22 and .9 mm caliber, and four .22 caliber rifle barrels were found in his home. In the camp itself, four rifles, caliber .22, and 104 cartridges, as well as radio communication equipment and food was found. [Elio Henriquez & Angeles Mariscal, "Halla un centro de adiestramiento militar el gobierno de Chiapas," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, Mexico, 26 May 1998; "Descubren campamento guerrillero en estado mexicano de Chiapas," La Nacion, www.nacion.co.cr, San Jose, Costa Rica, 26 May 1998]

May 25, 1998

The Honduran government is looking into allegations that retired officials from the army are selling weapons to the Zapatistas. According to the Sub-director of the Criminal Investigation Division of Honduras, two Hondurans that claim to be officials from the Honduran Army were arrested in Mexico. A shipment of weapons was also intercepted. There are also suspicions of them being involved in training the Zapatistas. ["Desde Honduras se suministraria de armas a "zapatistas" en Mexico," La Prensa on the Web, www.laprensahn.com, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 26 May 1998; "Policia investiga presunto abastecimiento a guerrilla zapatista," "Investigan trafico de armas desde Centroamerica para zapatistas," La Nacion, www.nacion.co.cr, San Jose, Costa Rica, 26 May 1998]

May 26, 1998

A soldier from the Mexican Army is alleged to have been responsible for the crime of carrying illegal weapons exclusive to the army and training of some of his relatives and friends in Chenalho in the use of .22 caliber rifles. He is also said to have transported the AK-47 rifles used in the massacre. Several of his relatives and friends participated in the massacre. ["Formal prision a un soldado implicado en el caso Acteal," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, 27 May 1998]

May 27, 1998

According to an article from La Jornada, new paramilitary groups have been seen training in the community of Rio Blanco in the municipality of Las Margaritas and the community of Tenejapa in Ocosingo. These groups together with members of the Mexican Army and Police have visited Zapatista sympathizers homes. About 12 families have fled from Las Margaritas after an armed attack by people from Rio Blanco. A similar number of people fled from Ocosingo. A leader from Ocosingo said "people (from PRI) are armed and threaten all families that are against them." According to the National Mediation Commission, 13,000 Indians from nine different municipalities have left their communities because of their fear of paramilitary groups. [Juan Balboa, "Acoso de paramilitares en Rio Blanco; persisten tension y miedo en Tenejapa," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, Mexico, 28 May 1998]

May 30, 1998

Local and religious leaders in the municipality of Nicolas Ruiz (north of Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of the state) were accused by state government officials of blocking the town with armed men. Tensions built after a group of people were expelled from the town for trying to establish a PRI municipal committee on May 10. The state government warned that it would not tolerate these actions. [Angeles Mariscal, "El poblado Nicolas Ruiz, bajo sitio por catequistas: gobierno estatal," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, 31 May 1998]

June 3, 1998

About one thousand policemen and army personnel carried out a search for thirty three PRI supporters that were allegedly kidnapped in the municipality of Nicolas Ruiz. One hundred and sixty three people were arrested and twenty young men were reported missing after the seven hour operation that involved 60 army and police vehicles, twenty small tanks and two helicopters. Witnesses said they saw a group of masked men guarded by heavily armed policemen sitting in the back of a truck. [Juan Balboa, "Violenta incursion en poblado perredista de Chiapas; 163 detenidos," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, 4 June 1998]

According to a report from the Civilian Mission of National Observers there are 18,000 displaced people as a result of the violence in the north, Altos (Highlands) and the jungle. [Elio Henriquez, "Hay una guerra sucia contra comunidades: observadores nacionales," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, 4 June 1998]

June 4, 1998

About 200 policemen are patrolling the streets of Nicolas Ruiz, mostly populated by PRD and Zapatista supporters.

According to the PRD president of Chiapas, in the past 50 days, at least 4,000 police and army units have been used to dismantle autonomous Zapatista governments. [Juan Balboa, "200 policias mantienen el control del poblado perredista," La Jornada, serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada, Mexico, 5 June 1998]

June 9, 1998

A group of hooded men ambushed a group of PRI militants in the community of Los Platanos in the municipality of El Bosque. One man was killed and five were injured. [Daniel Pensamiento, "Muere priista en emboscada," El Norte, www.infosel.com.mx/elnorte, Monterrey, Mexico, 10 June 1998]