

Observers: Troops moving on rebels

By Mike Tangeman
Catholic News Service

MEXICO CITY — Church sources in Mexico's southern Chiapas state confirmed heavy movement of Mexican troops on Feb. 10 toward the Lacandon Jungle stronghold of the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army.

Military movements — which many believed heralded a new outbreak of fighting between the government and the rebels — followed the Feb. 9 announcement by President Ernesto Zedillo that federal judicial police agents had raided Zapatista safe houses in Vera Cruz state and Mexico City. Eight persons were arrested in those raids and arms and documents allegedly belonging to the rebels were confiscated.

After the suspects were interrogated, federal attorney general Antonio Lozano said late Feb. 9 that police had determined the Zapatista's enigmatic leader, Subcomandante Marcos, to be a 38-year-old former university professor from northern Tamaulipas state named Rafael Sebastian Guillen Vicente.

In Chiapas, Catholic Church personnel in the municipalities of Las Margaritas, Ocoingo and Simojovel reported heavy Mexican army deployments Feb. 10 in the jungle and highlands regions of the state.

"About 7 a.m. there was a lot of troop movement ... about 25 trucks full of soldiers passed through town and headed into the jungle," said Sister Maria del Socorro Gonzalez in a telephone interview with Catholic News Service from Las Margaritas.

"Later, six helicopters passed overhead, all headed into the jungle towards Guadalupe Tepeyac," she said.

Guadalupe Tepeyac, a Lacandon Jun-



AP/Wide World Photos
Zapatista rebels practice maneuvers in Guadalupe Tepeyac, located in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas.

gle town named after the Virgin of Guadalupe and the hill where she appeared to a poor Indian in 1531, lies near Mexico's border with Guatemala and is considered a Zapatista stronghold.

Late on Feb. 10, dozens of trucks carrying troops moved into the highlands town of Simojovel. According to Father Pablo Romo, a Dominican priest who runs the San Cristobal de Las Casas diocesan human rights center, military units also moved into the town of San Andres Larrainzar, not far from San

Cristobal.

Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia of San Cristobal de Las Casas was in Mexico City at the time of the Zedillo announcement, but could not immediately be reached for comment.

In a statement prior to the president's Feb. 9, the nongovernmental National Mediating Commission headed by Bishop Ruiz warned of a "dangerous impasse" in the Chiapas peace process as a result of tensions and mistrust between the government and the rebels.

On Feb. 10, Dominican Father Jorge Trejo of the San Pablo de Polonio Parish in Ocoingo said all was calm there, but that there were reports of troop movements some 100 miles south, deep in the jungle.

"They could not have gotten in there by vehicle," Father Trejo told CNS in a telephone interview, "there are only broken trails and escarpments that far in and they would have to be moving on foot or by horseback."

The military was supposedly searching for the non-Indian leadership of the Zapatistas, whose mostly indigenous rank-and-file battled army troops for 12 days after taking over Chiapas towns on New Year's Day 1994.

Reportedly born into a middle-class family in northern Tamaulipas in 1956, Guillen Vicente is believed to have been educated at a Catholic primary school and attended the secondary school at the Jesuit-run Tampico Cultural Institute.

He is also believed to have attended college in Guadalajara at the Jesuit-run Western Technological Institute of Higher Studies.

Both there and at Mexico City's National Autonomous University, he is believed to have studied journalism and philosophy.

Delegation plans trip to Mexico next month

ROCHESTER — A nine-member delegation from Rochester's Corpus Christi Church plans to visit Tuxla, Mexico, located in the state of Chiapas, from March 5-13.

The delegation will be led by Father Enrique Cadena, associate pastor of Corpus Christi Church, 864 Main St. E.

Pamela Edd, one of the delegation's members, said the trip's purpose is to "introduce retreatants to cultural and spiritual life experience in the community of Tuxla."

Edd said delegation members will live with local families and will visit with individuals and community groups throughout the week to "discover and learn how God is moving among the people as well as within themselves."

She added that the visit will focus on prayer and discernment and how the Corpus Christi community might begin to serve the needs of Tuxla's poor.

CPA leader calls press inspiring

WASHINGTON (CNS) — One of God's best instruments in bringing together the diversity of the church has been an "aggressive, competent Catholic press," according to the president of the Catholic Press Association.

In a message written for Catholic Press Month, celebrated in February, Anthony J. Spence said, "Nowhere else does the richness and diversity of Catholic life come together in such compelling ways as in Catholic magazines, newspapers, books and newsletters."

The Catholic press not only provides the place where "Catholic voices meet, debate and challenge," but it also enables those voices to "find consensus, ultimately celebrating the one faith that binds us all," according to Spence, editor of the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Nashville Diocese.

Spence's column appears in a booklet issued by the CPA to mark the 1995 Catholic Press Month with the theme, "One Faith, Many Voices: Sharing the Voices of Inspiration, Witness, Hope, Faith and Truth." The booklet also includes statements by Archbishop John P. Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Costello of Syracuse, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Communications Committee.

The bishop said Catholic journalists must inform "more deeply in the truth."

Bishop seeks scientific testing on statue

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

ROME — An Italian bishop has decided to seek scientific testing of a liquid coming from a statue of Mary that eyewitnesses said cried tears of blood.

Bishop Girolamo Grillo of Civitavecchia-Tarquini made the decision after preliminary testing by two doctors indicated that the liquid falling from the eyes of the statue could be blood.

"I am still prudent," he told Catholic News Service by phone Feb. 8.

The results showed "a biological liquid similar to blood" but the test could not determine if it was human blood, he said.

The bishop, 64, said he plans to ask a major Italian hospital to thoroughly examine the liquid. If the hospital says it is human blood, then further tests will be done on the statue before deciding whether to form a committee to investigate whether a supernatural phenomenon took place, he added.

Scientific explanations must be exhausted first, he said.

The bishop added that he has scheduled meetings with eyewitnesses who say they saw the statue shed tears of blood and has asked that the statue be given to him for safekeeping during testing.

Initially, Bishop Grillo said he was highly skeptical of the reports of a weeping statue.

"Personally, I don't believe it. There are too many crying Madonnas in Italy right now," he said Feb. 6, before receiving the initial test results.

The statue, owned by the Fabio Gregori family in Civitavecchia who kept it in their backyard, allegedly began shedding blood Feb. 2. Reports of the event drew thousands of people to the Gregori home, 39 miles north of Rome.

Photographs and television footage showed the statue with streaks of crimson-colored liquid falling from its eyes.

The statue was brought to Italy last August by Father Pablo Martin, a parish priest in Civitavecchia, who bought it in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, at the site of alleged Marian apparitions.

Christ's ministry continues through you

... please answer the call

The Thanks Giving Appeal *phone phase* will get under way Feb. 19. If you have yet to make your 1994-95 TGA pledge — now is the time to support our Synod Pastoral Plan Goals through your contribution. Your commitment to TGA will help provide ongoing resources to:

- form Catholics in beliefs, Catholic morality and spirituality throughout life
- advocate for the consistent life ethic
- recognize and value the dignity of women in Church and society
- promote the growth of small Christian communities

Don't miss your calling!



Thanks Giving Appeal
Roman Catholic
Diocese of Rochester

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

for expanding family based treatment program working with emotionally disturbed children 5-14 years old in your home. Liberal stipend, on-going training & 24-hour support services provided.

Call Hillside Children's Center, 654-4417.

EOE.