MILITARIZATION & RESISTANCE AT THE MEXICO/GUATEMALA BORDER

JULY 2019

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THIS IS THE MEXICO/GUATEMALA BORDER:

IT'S A PLACE WHERE...

→ PEOPLE CROSS REGULARLY AND SEASONALLY TO WORK, BUY, & SELL

→ MOST OF THE POPULATION ON BOTH SIDES ARE INDIGENOUS MAYAN GROUPS

→ MOST OF THE NORTHWARD MIGRATION ROUTES PASS
IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASED MIGRATION NORTH FROM CENTRAL AMERICA,

A CARAVAN IN SOUTHERN MEXICO, OCT. 2018 (GUILLERMO ARIAS)

THE US GOVERNMENT HAS ATTEMPTED TO DETER MIGRANTS WITH INHUMANE POLICIES AT ITS SOUTHERN BORDER:

AND THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES TO MILITARIZE THE MEXICO/GUATEMALA BORDER IN ORDER TO STEM THE FLOW OF MIGRATION BEFORE IT REACHES THE U.S.

(2,500 MILES FURTHER SOUTH)

IN MAY 2019,

ACTING SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY KEVIN MCALEENAN & GUATEMALAN INTERIOR MINISTER ENRIQUE DEGENHART SIGNED AN AGREEMENT FOR MORE COOPERATION ON SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE, INCLUDING THE SENDING OF DHS AGENTS TO THE MEXICO/GUATEMALA BORDER.
At the same time, but separately... U.S. Soldiers arrived in Huehuetenango, Quate as part of the U.S. Military Program "Beyond the Horizon," a "humanitarian assistance" project.

Don't worry, we're just building schools!

The confusion between these two events and the lack of clear information about what the U.S. Military is doing in Guatemala caused alarm.

No communities were consulted about either plan.

Then, in June, Mexican President Lopez Obrador ordered the newly-formed National Guard to the border with Guatemala in response to US threats of tariffs.

Here are just a few other plans & policies that laid the groundwork for this militarization:

Alan Bersin, Obama's Border Czar: "The Guatemalan border with Chiapas is now our southern border."

2012
THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE 2007

US security aid $$ to Mexico for anti-drug trade ops & creating a “21st century border” between US & Mexico (A.K.A. biometrics, x-ray, drones, new checkpoints, etc.)

ALLIANCE FOR PROSPERITY 2014

US-backed aid program from the Inter-American Development Bank, intended to stop migration & restructure under Trump to focus on ensuring security for investment from US-based private companies.

On both sides of the Mexico/Guatemalan border, there is a history of military repression & state terror against majority indigenous populations.

1. Violent crackdowns on the Zapatista rebellion of the 1990s in Chiapas
2. Guatemalan internal armed conflict (1960-1996) over 600 massacres committed by the military
3. General strikes in the Americas

Guatemalan President Álvaro Colom

In that context... the presence of US troops in coordination with Guatemalan military, US DHS agents, & Mexican National Guard.

1. Re-terrorizes survivors of genocide & state violence
2. Violates Guatemala’s 1996 peace accords
3. Fits into the US’s strategy of violently enforcing neoliberal economic policy

Safe Third Country

All while the US pushes its border further & further south, shrinking its historic responsibility for the root causes of migration.

Climate change

Extractive mega-projects

Free trade deals

Remain in Mexico!
IN JULY 2019,

COMMUNITIES IN HUEHNETENANGO PROTESTED THE PRESENCE OF US TROOPS ON THEIR LAND. THEY CONNECTED THE MILITARIZATION TO RESOURCE EXTRACTION PROJECTS AND OTHER US COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, AND DEMANDED

Petition of Zaculeu
1. IMMEDIATE RETREAT OF FOREIGN MILITARY
2. ANNULMENT OF THE MAY VS/USA TREATY AGREEMENT

"We the people want to live in peace!"  
photo: NISGUA

FURTHER READING
* "Migration as Reparations"  
  - Joseph Neumir, NACLA
* "US: 20 Years of Immigrant Abuses"  
  - Human Rights Watch
* "Petition of Zaculeu"  
  - ABH, on NISGUA.org
* "US migrant crisis: Trump seeks to curb Central American asylum claims"  
  - BBC
* "Talking and Teaching about the Fall 2018 Migrant Caravan"  
  - Re-Imagining Migration

SOURCES
* "Serious Concerns in the Face of Huehuetenango Militarization"  
  - NISGUA
* "The Alliance for Prosperity will Intensify the Central American Refugee Crisis"  
  - Democracy Now!
* "US agents’ deployment to stem Guatemalan migration raises alarm"  
  - Sarah Coffin, Aljazeera
* "Mexico’s other border"  
  - WOLA report
* "Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007-2020"  
  - Congressional Research Service