



Powered by Clickability

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Rebels exit jungle ... this time, to canvass

Zapatista leader promises this movement won't be violent

LA GARRUCHA, Mexico (AP) -- Mexico's Zapatista rebels were emerging from their jungle hideout to launch on Sunday a nationwide campaign tour billed as a pacifist alternative to this year's contentious presidential race.

The beginning of the six-month tour was timed to coincide with the anniversary of a brief Zapatista uprising in the name of Indian rights, on New Year's Day 12 years ago. This time, however, the Zapatistas say they will not wield Kalashnikov rifles or declare war.

Instead, the ski mask-wearing, pipe-smoking Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos -- who is adopting a more civilian-sounding title, "Delegate Zero" -- has promised to build a nationalist leftist movement that will "shake this country up from below" during a visit to Mexico's 31 states.

Marcos also has said the Zapatistas won't run for elected office or join Mexico's mainstream political process, which he describes as corrupt and out of touch with the people -- leaving some in Mexico confused about the rebels' intentions.

"What kind of movement is it going to be? That is the million-dollar question," said Miguel Alvarez, head of Serapaz, a pacifist group that helped with negotiations between the government and the Zapatistas. "I guess we'll just have to wait and see."

When the Zapatistas first stormed San Cristobal de las Casas on New Year's Day in 1994, they called for equal rights for Mexico's Indian minority and an end to one-party rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which governed Mexico without interruption for most of the 20th century.

After the PRI's defeat in 2000 at the hands of current President Vicente Fox of the National Action Party, the rebels focused on building a network of Zapatista-run schools and medical clinics in dozens of Indian villages they control in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas.

The Zapatistas say the 2006 tour is a third phase of their revolution.

"A step forward in the struggle is only possible if we unite with other sections of society," the Zapatistas' command council said in a recent statement. "We have to unite with laborers, teachers, students and all the workers in the city and countryside."

"We want to show people that we really have something to offer," said 45-year-old Pedro Bautista on Saturday in the village of La Garrucha, where pickups and buses were waiting to transport Zapatistas 120 kilometers (75 miles) southwest to San Cristobal de las Casas.

Some are speculating Marcos may use the Zapatista tour to leave his life of hiding.

Since the uprising, the self-styled warrior poet -- identified by Mexican authorities in 1995 as former university instructor Rafael Sebastian Guillen -- has led a clandestine life in the jungle, making only a few public appearances.

Earlier this year, Fox floated the idea of giving Marcos a pardon.

"Eleven years is long time to be behind a ski mask," Alvarez said. "Perhaps he wants to come up for some air."

Copyright 2006 The [Associated Press](#). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/americas/12/31/zapatistas.emerge.ap/index.html>

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.