

## MEXICO

Modern Mexico was born in the revolution of 1911, when ordinary Mexicans, led by Emiliano Zapata in the south and Pancho Villa (Doroteo Arango) in the north, fought a fierce and bloody war to overthrow the corrupt regime of Porfirio Diaz. The "Institutional Revolutionary Party" (PRI) still claims direct descent from that revolution, despite the fact that it long ago abandoned radicalism. Poverty and economic backwardness plagued the young republic until the advent of the Second World War wrought fundamental changes in nearly every aspect of Mexican life.

Mexico's participation in WWII created a second "Mexican Revolution". The war not only radically changed the economy, but the country's political, social, and cultural institutions as well. Filling wartime production commitments meant shortages in various commodities. These shortages meant that local industrialization had to be accelerated to alleviate them. Even before Mexico entered the war, it supplied many necessary raw materials to its neighbor and most important trading partner, the United States. In November 1941, the two nations signed a general agreement that resolved most of their outstanding quarrels and a reciprocal-trade treaty was outlined. The Americans agreed to maintain and stabilize the Mexican peso. They also agreed to purchase Mexican silver at world market prices and to provide long-term loans to buttress Mexico's economy.

Military aid agreements were aimed primarily at professionalizing the Mexican Army and getting it out of politics. The industrialization created by the war soon became Mexico's primary political force. Increasingly, the military faded into the background as arbiters of national policy. The new prosperity also produced a huge "baby boom" that overwhelmed all previous records for population growth. Many peasants began moving off the land and into Mexico's cities, creating a new urban culture. Mexico City soon became one of the world's great metropolitan centers, suffering all the problems that accompany such rapid development.

Pre-war Mexican economic policy had always stressed "Land Reform", distributing the country's limited agricultural land area among many small peasant farms. Now the nation's leaders turned toward the development of new resources. Massive hydroelectric projects were undertaken to furnish inexpensive power, open new land to agriculture, provide flood control, and become the nuclei of regional agricultural-industrial complexes. The nationalized oil industry became a major producer of natural gas and petrochemicals in an effort to meet burgeoning domestic needs. Economic integration was accomplished by the extension of railroad, highway, and airline networks to nearly all regions.

Post-war Mexico was marked by a political continuity unprecedented in its history. Beginning in 1946, the peaceful constitutional transfer of presidential power from one civilian regime to the next, once rare, became commonplace. The PRI became a fixture of Mexican politics and a symbol of that continuity. Electoral reform laws broadened the political base, but opposition parties grew slowly as the PRI dominated the political power mechanisms of the state. By the 1980s, only the conservative National Action Party (PAN) constituted any kind of a threat to the PRI. It was only a minor threat, however, with strength limited to a few northern states.

Mexico's rapid economic growth in the 1970s was financed with international loans totaling almost US\$80 billion. Money for repayment was expected to come from huge oil reserves discovered in 1976 in Tabasco and Chiapas. But in the early 1980s, there was a sharp fall in oil prices and the expected windfall never materialized. High unemployment and underemployment, an unfavorable balance of trade, and alarming inflation staggered the economy. The peso plummeted. President José López Portillo, elected in 1976, nationalized the country's banks and imposed strict foreign-currency controls to achieve some economic stability. Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, who was elected to succeed López Portillo in 1982, established a program of rigid economic austerity.

Meanwhile, increased traffic in narcotics and illegal immigrants forced the US to tighten border control and restrict immigration. The Mexico City earthquake in September 1985 and Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 cost thousands of lives and further weakened the already tottering economy. In 1992, President Salinas, seeking relief from ever-increasing financial difficulties, negotiated the "North American Free Trade Agreement" (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada. This included a major effort by the Mexican government toward economic reforms. However, these reforms did not reach down to the grass-roots level. Radical groups sprang up demanding equal political and economic opportunity for all Mexicans, especially "Indios".

### People's Armies

On New Year's Day, 1994, a major uprising erupted in the state of Chiapas, near Mexico's border with Guatemala. The uprising was led by the "Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional" (EZLN). Widely supported by local peasants and Indians, they seized a number of towns and villages in an effort to bring world attention to their political and economic agenda. This included land reform, economic opportunity, and relief for Chiapas' desperately poor native population. The timing of this revolt was important. Mexico had just instituted a major austerity program to encourage US acceptance of the NAFTA agreement. The Chiapas rebellion highlighted the shortcomings of the regime. The corrupting effect of one-party rule, Mexico's unequal economic relationship with the US, and the wide gap between rich and poor were all exposed to worldwide scrutiny.

It took a major effort by Mexico's armed forces to contain the rebellion. The Zapatistas had occupied six major towns, including Ocosingo with a population of over 30,000. It was days before the rebels withdrew into the hills, undefeated. Two hundred and fifty people were dead. Despite the allocation of considerable military resources, Chiapas remains a powder keg. Over 95% of the population are Indians. Though poorly represented politically, these are almost unanimously opposed to NAFTA and believe Mexico City is exploiting them. The state has been burdened with some 16,000 refugees from neighboring Guatemala, where the longest insurgency in Latin America continues to fester. To add to all this, Chiapas is the most neglected state in Mexico when it comes to public works and basic infrastructure. Good roads are scarce and electricity is widely unavailable. Safe drinking water is almost non-existent!

There were guerilla attacks in 1996 as well. But these were not the work of the EZLN. Zapatista activity had been largely contained within Chiapas. The new incidents were effecting a much larger area. In a national address on September 1st, President Zedillo revealed the existence of a new group, the "Ejercito Popular Revolucionario" (EPR). Originally, federal authorities did not take the EPR seriously. But after more than a dozen raids on military and police outposts, public buildings, and power stations in six states, they began to take notice. The EPR showed itself to be skillful in the use of public media. It arranged several interviews with the national press, some from safe houses within Mexico City itself! It declared its aim as being the overthrow of Mexico's political establishment and a reversal of national economic policy. Zedillo warned that the EPR was a highly disciplined and organized terrorist organization and announced troop redeployments to defend possible targets. Among these deployments was the transfer of two airborne battalions to Oaxaca to assist local security forces in that region.

On December 22nd, 1997, seventy gunmen walked through the streets of Acteal, a small village in Chiapas. They fired indiscriminately for five hours, driving the townspeople to a nearby river where they were gunned down without mercy. Nine men, twenty-one women, and fifteen children were slaughtered. The assassins were supporters of the PRI. According to survivors, some were wearing state police uniforms with the insignia removed. President Zedillo called the attack "an absurd criminal act". An investigation of the atrocity led to the arrest of forty-six men, all from the nearby town of Chenalho. One was the mayor of the town. The rest were local Mayan Indians, and poor subsistence farmers like the people of Acteal. Violence in the area continues. Over 8,500 residents have been forced to flee since 1997. In 1999, a former Mexican Army captain was granted asylum in the US on human rights grounds. Jesus Valles-Bahena claims he faced persecution for refusing to kill captured Zapatistas. The judge in the case said that the testimony of expert witnesses showed that Mexican security forces have used torture and murder in Chiapas in their efforts to quell the Zapatista movement.

#### The Army of Mexico

The current deployment of Mexican forces was established in 1924, shortly after the revolution. There are a total of thirty-nine military zones generally corresponding to the country's thirty-one states and the federal district (Mexico City). Each zone contains one or more infantry battalions. There may also be at least one cavalry regiment and various combat support or logistics units. The military zones are grouped into twelve military "regions". Modernization has been slow and uncoordinated. Most of Mexico's cavalry regiments still rode horses until 1981, but have been re-equipped with motor transport since. One "horsed" cavalry regiment remains, however. The Mexican army has four primary missions. These are the defense of the homeland against foreign invasion, the elimination of threats to internal security, disaster relief, and anti-drug operations. The distribution of forces throughout the country reflects these missions.

The 1994 EZLN uprising in Chiapas pointed out serious weaknesses in army training, tactics, and doctrine. The fighting, which took place in the VII Military Region, primarily involved the 31st and 36th Military Zones. These two zones contained a total of four infantry battalions, a mechanized cavalry regiment, and part of a motorized one. Later, an elite paratroop battalion was ordered in as well. The first armored reinforcements to arrive were equipped with obsolete US M3 and M5 "Stuart" tanks and M8 armored cars. In the early part of the uprising, the army appeared satisfied simply to prevent the rebels moving north toward Mexico City and wait for air support. Once the uprising was contained, several escape routes were left open, allowing rebel forces to withdraw unmolested. By the time the army dispatched helicopters to pursue them, it was too late.

The Mexican Air Force did not use its US F-5E fighters in this operation. Instead, "Pilatus" PC-7 trainers armed with cannon and rockets were used, as well as "Hughes" MD500s armed with machineguns and a few "Hueys". Aircraft hammered suspected guerilla positions continuously throughout the twelve-day engagement with uncertain results. Government air power was clearly effective, however, in delivering supplies and performing medevac operations. By January 8th, thousands of soldiers were engaged in house-to-house searches while armored vehicles and helicopters swept the hills nearby. After holding their ground for five full days the rebels made a disciplined withdrawal back to their highland bases. The death toll was one hundred rebels and one hundred and fifty soldiers. By January 15th, all that was left was the mopping up.

The army was never able to wrest the initiative from the rebels. The rebels acted and the army reacted throughout the uprising. Despite their enormous advantages in both firepower and numbers, the Mexican armed forces had proven themselves unable to contain, defeat, or successfully pursue their opponents. The Zapatistas were armed with an assortment of Russian AKMs, US M-14s, G3s, MAC 10s, shotguns, and hunting rifles. With nothing much more than these basic small arms, they were able to seize an area of considerable size and population and besiege an army battalion at its base outside San Cristobal de Casas. It had become obvious that the Army of Mexico was in severe need of reform.

#### **FOREIGN WEAPONS**

120mm Brandt Mortar, AMX-13/75, AMX-VCI, ERC-90 - FR; All other foreign weapons - US

#### **TABLES OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT MEXICAN FORCES: 2000+**

**Generation: II, Air Superiority Rating: 50, Class: Conscripts, Base Determination Factor: 20%**

Infantry Company:	3xTL2 Infantry(B)/Trucks Optional, 1xTL2 Infantry Support/Truck Optional
Paratroop Company:	3xTL2 Infantry(B)[R], 1xTL2 Infantry Support[R]
Mechanized Infantry Company:	3xTL2 Infantry(B)/AMX-VCI, 1xTL2 Infantry Support/AMX-VCI
Tank Company:	4xAMX-13
Cavalry Squadron:	4xTL2 Infantry[R]/AMX-VCI <u>or</u> 4xTL2 Infantry[R]/Truck
Armored Recon Company:	4xERC-90[R]
Recoilless Rifle Group:	3x106mm M40 RcR/Jeep
Artillery Battery:	1x105mm M2A1(3)/Truck
<u>OR</u> :	1x105mm M102 "Pack" Howitzer(2)
<u>OR</u> :	1x120mm Brandt Mortar(2)/Truck
Infantry Battalion:	1xTL2 Infantry(B) HQ/Truck, 3xInfantry Company, 1x81mm M29 Mortar(2)/Truck Optional
Paratroop Battalion:	1xTL2 Infantry(B) HQ, 3xParatroop Company, 1x81mm M29 Mortar(2), 1xTL2 Infantry(S)
Mechanized Battalion:	1xTL2 Infantry(B) HQ/AMX-VCI, 3xMechanized Infantry Company, 1x81mm/AMX-VCI(2)
Tank Regiment:	3xTank Company
Cavalry Regiment:	1xTL2 Infantry(B) HQ/AMX-VCI <u>or</u> Truck, 3xCavalry Squadron, 1x81mm/AMX-VCI(2)
Armored Recon Regiment:	1xERC-90 HQ, 3xArmored Recon Company, 1x81mm/AMX-VCI(2)
Artillery Regiment:	3xArtillery Battery
Infantry Brigade:	1xTL2 Infantry(B) GHQ, 3xInfantry Battalion, 0-1xArtillery Battery, 0-1xRecoilless Rifle Group
Paratroop Brigade:	1xTL2 Infantry(B) GHQ, 3xParatroop Battalion, 1x81mm M29 Mortar(2), 1xRecoilless Rifle Group

Mechanized Brigade: 1xTL2 Infantry(B) GHQ, 0-1xTank Regiment, 0-2xArmored Recon Regiment, 0-1xInfantry Battalion(Trucks), 1-2xMechanized Battalion, 1xArtillery Regiment, 1xRecoilless Rifle Group

Available Support Units: (One or more of these units or parts thereof, may appear in a particular action at your discretion.)  
Helicopter Transport: 2xUH-60L, 2-3xMi-8, 2-3xMi-17

Air Support: F-5E/F Fighters, "Pilatus" P-7 Armed Trainers, Armed Bell-212s, UH-1H "Hueys"

Notes: 1) Unit compositions are subject to change due to the Mexican Army's current reorganization program.

#### **ANTI-GOVERNMENT INSURGENT FORCES: 2000+**

**Generation: I/II, Air Superiority Rating: 00, Class: Conscripts/Professionals, Base Determination Factor: 25%**

Insurgent Command: 1-10xTL1 or TL2 Infantry(C) or (D), 0-3xTL1 or TL2 Infantry Support  
Reconnaissance Command: 1-5xTL1 or TL2 Infantry[R]  
"Elite" Commando Group: 1-3xTL1 or TL2 Infantry[S]  
Insurgent "Brigade": 1xTL2 Infantry(C) HQ/Truck, 1-4xCommando, 0-1x"Elite" Commando Group

Notes: 1) All unit compositions are subject to change due to the informal nature of insurgent forces.  
2) Motor Transport may be provided at twice the normal point cost.  
3) No more than one "Command" in any action may be "Professionals".

#### **TACTICAL NOTES**

The Mexican Army is still largely organized and equipped for WWII. But they will most likely find themselves fighting local rebels, not conventional opponents. Therefore, scenarios depicting Mexican counter-insurgency operations will largely consist of rebel ambushes of road convoys, rebel attacks on army base camps, or Mexican Army assaults on rebel strongholds. Mexican troops lack combat experience, and this should show in low cohesion and difficulty in integrating the various combat arms in a coordinated effort. Keep in mind, the scenarios you design may very well turn out to be prophetic. This should add a certain spice as well as a certain chill to your gaming.

#### **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

A Mexican Indian civil-rights group has accused the government of backing paramilitary gangs in several states. They maintain these gangs are murdering Indian leaders as part of a campaign to quell Indian opposition movements in Guerrero, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Hidalgo. Mexico's nine million Indians have become increasingly politically active and are a major source of concern for security forces. The "National Indigenous Council" (CNI) points to the disappearance of several dozen local Indian leaders in one year alone. A CNI spokesman claimed these disappearances are part of a larger government conspiracy to exterminate Mexico's Indians because, "We are beginning to demand our rights".

Mexican national politics was shaken to the core in July 2000, when Vicente Fox, of the "National Action Party" , was elected president. Fox not only won, but won handily. His victory has been hailed by conservatives as a mandate for fundamental changes in Mexican national policy. One independent Mexican senator was quoted as saying, "This is our first constitutional transition of power since the Aztecs. We have never before transferred power from one group to another by peaceful means. Either you killed your enemy or organized a revolution." Even the most pessimistic analyst would have to agree. Mexico's chance for developing true democratic pluralism has finally arrived.

Severe disciplinary problems have plagued the Mexican army recently. Charges of sedition and insubordination were filed against six former army officers in 1999. The charges state that these officers were identified as participating in protest demonstrations in Mexico City on December 18th, 1998. In speeches made at these demonstrations, they called the Mexican military justice system unfair and antiquated and demanded major reform. They were sentenced to long prison terms in a court martial that received wide press coverage. At least twenty soldiers were dismissed in 1999 for substituting flour for illegal cocaine that was supposed to be destroyed in anti-drug operations in the north. Desertions have also increased recently, especially among ethnic Indian conscripts.

Mexico is in the midst of a major military reorganization. The mobile field force currently consists of three independent infantry brigades, four armored brigades, two light infantry brigades, an engineer brigade, and a paratroop/airmobile brigade. The exact status of the army's remaining twenty regiments of various types, and seventy-seven or so independent infantry battalions cannot be verified at this time. Ultimately, many of these will be grouped into five or six army corps. The official Mexican military website states that the army is entirely made up of volunteers, but this is not the case. At the present time, just under half the army (60,000 men) is made up of draftees.

Soldiers are currently being deployed as part of both federal and state police forces and 2,600 patrol the streets of Mexico City wearing standard police uniforms. Drug enforcement continues to be a major mission for the army, with 28,000 soldiers deployed in anti-smuggling and other drug related operations. More than 16,000 troops have been deployed to Chiapas in an effort to prevent further uprisings there. These troops were used when a major riot involving thousands of people engulfed the area around the public market in San Cristobal de Las Casas on the evening of March 7th, 2002. Local police were powerless for at least three hours. Army troops and armored vehicles had to be dispatched before things returned to normal.

The army is in urgent need of modern equipment. But even this is a source of controversy. The press has claimed that certain military purchases have broken international arms agreements. In an unusual move, the Mexican Defense Secretariat has published a list of all recent military acquisitions to silence criticism. In June 2000, the Air force ordered its second Mi-26 heavy lift helicopter from Russia. In addition, twenty-four Vietnam era UH-1H "Huey" helicopters are now in Mexican hands. Twelve are in operational condition and are leased from the US for five years. The other twelve, which are inoperable, were given to Mexico without charge as a source of spare parts. These helicopters will be used to increase troop mobility in anti-drug units and counter-insurgency operations.

#### The Shape of Things to Come

Mexico has not actually fought a war since the revolution of 1911. There have been some limited actions against local political uprisings, but nothing of a sustained nature. The possibility exists for this to change overnight. The Chiapas revolt was only a preview of what may happen sometime in the next few years. The country is rapidly approaching a severe internal crisis over Indian rights and a deep-seated resentment over the lopsided distribution of government services. States like Oaxaca and Chiapas, with large ethnic Indian populations, receive little health, educational, or economic assistance. This makes them fertile ground for groups like the Zapatistas and the EPR. All the necessary ingredients are present: 1) There is a large, restless, disenfranchised, ethnic population. 2) This population lives in areas that are largely undeveloped with poor roads and limited communications. 3) Armed political opposition groups are active in these areas and have strong support among the local population. It may already be too late to avert a disastrous regional conflict that could tear the very fabric of Mexican society to shreds.

#### **2002 MEXICAN ARSENAL**

Vehicles: 136xAMX-13 Tanks, 40xM8, 41xMak-1 & 123xERC-90 Scout Vehicles, 34xM2A1 Halftracks, 22 "Buffalo" LVTs, 95xBDX, 270xAMX-VCI (several variants), 40xVBL M-11, 40xHWK-11 40xVCR-TT, 25xMowag "Roland" APCs  
AT Weapons: 6x"Milan" ATGMs, 96x106mm M40 RcRs, 25x37mm M3 Anti-Tank Guns,  
Artillery: 46x105mm M2A1 Towed Howitzers, 24x105mm M102 "Pack" Howitzers, 34x120mm, 330x81mm, 1,561x60mm Mortars  
Anti-Aircraft: 12.7mm (twin) Hotchkiss & .50 cal Browning (quad) AAMGs, 20x20mm Oerlikon & ?x40mm Bofors AA Guns  
Combat Aircraft: 10xF-5E/F, 37x"Pilatus" P-7 (armed trainers), 65x Cessna C-182 "Skylane" for anti-drug patrol  
Helicopters: 6xUH-60L "Blackhawk", 12xBell UH-1H, 24xBell-212(armed), 11xMi-8, 23xMi-17, 2xMi-26  
Small Arms: .30 cal M1, 5.56mm HK-33, & M16A1 Rifles, .45 cal M1921, M1A1, Mendoza & HK-53 Submachineguns, .30 cal M1919, Mendoza B-1933, Madsen M-1934, 7.62mm Mendoza, RM-2, MAG, HK-21A1, & .50 cal M2 Machineguns, 40mm HK19 Grenade Launchers, 1,191x Blindicide & 20+IMI B-300 ATGLs

Notes: 1) Mexico is known to possess "Hughes" MD500 helicopters. However, they have not included them in recent equipment lists.  
2) Mexico continues to maintain US M3 and M5 "Stuart" tanks in storage.  
3) The Bell -212 helicopter is the civilian version of the UH-1N "Huey".

#### **POINTS OF CONTACT**

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