

## **Ricardo Dominguez**

### **Digital Zapatismo**

Zapatismo has infected the political body of Mexico's "perfect dictatorship" since January 1, 1994. This polyspacial movement for a radical democracy based on the Mayan legacies of dialogue ripped into the electronic fabric not as InfoWar — but as virtual actions for real peace in the communities of Chiapas. As of September 1997 reports of the Mexican military training and arming paramilitary groups with the intent of moving the "low-intensity" war to higher level began to circulate in the Zapatista Network. It took the massacres at Acteal to focus the world on the constant tragedy that was already known.

As demonstrations took place around the world in remembrance of the Acteal dead on January 1 and 2nd, the Mexican military with the full support of the PRI government began the next stage of the war against peace. As the West stumbled about in celebration of a new year, the first reports reached out across the net and slapped us awake once more with the brutal reality of the neo-liberal agenda.

### **Beta Actions**

This time Zapatista Networks responded with a new level of electronic civil disobedience beyond the passing of information and emailing presidents. On Sunday the 18th of January 1998 a call for NetStriking for Zapata (from Anonymous Digital Coalition) came in via email with the following instructions:

In solidarity with the Zapatista movement we welcome all netsurfers with ideals of justice, freedom, solidarity and liberty within their hearts, to a virtual sit-in. On January 29, 1998 from 4:00 p.m. GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) to 5:00 p.m. (on the following five web sites, symbols of Mexican neoliberalism):

Bolsa Mexicana de Valores: <http://www.bmv.com.mx>  
Grupo Financiero Bital: <http://www.bital.com.mx>  
Grupo Financiero Bancomer: <http://www.bancomer.com.mx>  
Banco de Mexico: <http://www.banxico.org.mx>  
Banamex: <http://www.banamex.com>

Technical instructions: Connect with your browser to the above mentioned web sites and push the "reload" button several times for an hour (with an interval of a few seconds in between).

This virtual sit-in not only brought the possibilities of direct electronic actions to the forefront of the Zapatista networks, it also initiated a more focused analysis of what methods of electronic civil disobedience might work. Several questions were brought up on the issues of net traffic, ISPs, and small international pipes. Speculations on the technological implications of these actions began to focus on questions of Who is most likely to be damaged by this move? The Mexican target banks or the Internet Service Providers, ISPs, who route data to these banks? As these discussions were taking place on February 4, 1998 a group of Mexican digital activists hacked into a Mexican government home page on the Internet and placed pro-Zapatista slogans on the front pages of the site.

On April 10, 1998 the NYZapatistas in conjunction with the The Electronic Disturbance Theater sent out this call for action:

Flood Net: Tactical Version 1.0

<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/zapsTactical/zaps.html>

In solidarity with the Zapatistas we call on all net surfers to use the automated features of Flood Net (Tactical Version 1.0) on 10th of April for 24hrs.

We will be Flooding President Zedillo's site <http://www.presidencia.gob.mx/>

You could connect with your browser to a targeted web site and push the "reload" button several times for an hour (with an interval of a few seconds in between)

OR

Just keep your browser tuned to the Flood Net: Tactical Version 1.0 URL, where a Java Applet will hit reload for you.

You can also send them email using the automail system at: <http://www.newhumans.com/chiapas/automail.html>

For more information on the action: <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/wray/eed.html>

The Flood Net URL hit Zedillo's site a total of 8141 times. Many reported that Zedillo's site was no longer responding. A second mirror site was put into action on the afternoon of the 10th at: <http://cadre.sjsu.edu/beestal/zapsTactical/zaps.html>

At this time we do not have the stats on this URL. It is also difficult to say how many hits it took for Zedillo's site no longer to respond. More research is needed in defining the specific numbers needed to move the gesture from a symbolic position to a *direct* action-effect.

### **Counter Attacks**

We also know that during the time of the action someone from Mexico attempted to remotely break into server at Thing.net several times and failed. Machine *t3s31.data.net.mx* (<http://www.data.net.mx/>) tried to get access on three Thing.net machines on April 9th and 10th. One of the members of the NYZapatistas who posted information about the Flood Net action on his Homepage was also hit with a spam of over 3000 emails, some of them containing odd subject headings, such as We Are Watching You.

### **Beyond Soft Hacking**

Digital Zapatismo has always been an open system of sprawling networks — this has been the force multiplier of the movement. It has used digital cultures' most basic system of exchange, e-mail between people, to disturb the Informatic State. Now that we know that they are using, as we always suspected, hyper-surveillance filters to regain control of the network, we must begin to invent other methods of Electronic Civil Disobedience:

1. Continue building alternative networks with more access and bandwidth.
2. Deep programming: Creating Spiders, Bots, and other (minor network agents) to move against specific URLs without interrupting the Server.
3. Offshore spamming engines for massive e-mail actions.
4. Virtual proximity capabilities: Thing Connector 3.0. A simple access systems for Real Time intercontinental electronic communication. This type of system would disable the possibility of surveillance.

5. A Satellite: Giving us autonomy from controlled networks and backbones.

6. Jamming Chips: Jamming of microchips by groups could systematically disrupt wide areas of sensitive networks. These groups could slip basic disturbances into the chips bought by the U.S military-entertainment complex from foreign countries. Many of these elements are part of a wide range of defensive and offensive weapon systems that could induce a general dysfunction in performance at a pre-set time.

### **Theatres of Disturbance**

The Zapatista Networks, in the spirit of Chiapas, are developing methods of electronic disturbance as sites of invention and political action for peace. At this point in time it is difficult to know how much of a disturbance these acts of electronic civil disobedience specifically cause. What we do know is that since Jan 1, 1994 the analysis of the Digital Zapatismo has been at the top of the list of the Military and Intelligence research agenda. We hope that both coordinated and uncoordinated actions can, like the Lilliputians, constrain this violent giant by many tiny bonds. For now all we can do is continue to forge ahead and always remember that all of this electronic activism is about a real community in search of a real peace. A community that has been calling for a world makes all worlds possible.