

## Natural Disaster Zones

**H**urricanes, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes have plagued the inhabitants of Latin America for centuries. Such natural phenomena have become normal and recurring events in the lives of many Latin Americans. The inhabitants of central Mexico, the eastern coast of Central America, and the Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean have had to endure the more natural disasters than have the other regions since they are subject to all three phenomena.

The hurricane zone covers all of Mexico, Central America, the West Indies, and the coastal areas of Venezuela and Colombia. Due to the destructive power of their high winds, hurricanes can seriously damage both coastal and inland areas. As an example, in the early fall of 1988 Hurricane Gilbert moved through the Caribbean, causing extensive damage on several islands including Jamaica, then continued on a destructive path up the coast of Mexico. At the end of its journey, it moved inland and caused a great deal of damage to the city of Monterrey, Mexico, which is 200 miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

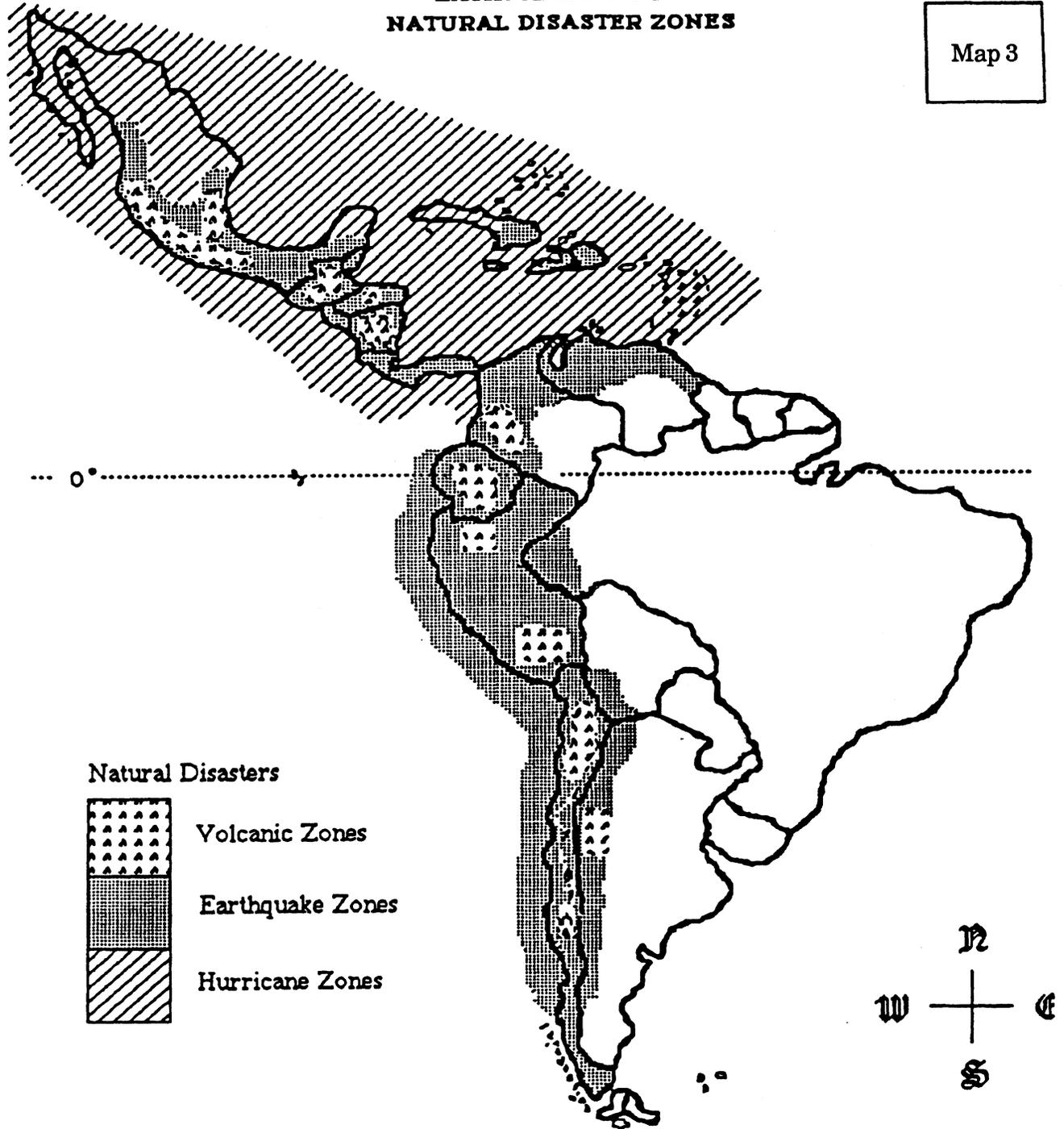
The volcanic zone basically follows the mountain chains, which extend from Mexico to Chile. The central and southern regions of the Sierra Madres and all of the Central American Highlands are volcanically active, and volcanic activity occurs in most of the Andes.

The earthquake zone also follows the mountain chains. Starting in the northeastern regions of Mexico, the earthquake zone extends down to Panama. The West Indies are included in this zone, with the exception of eastern Cuba and parts of the Bahamas. In South America, the earthquake zone follows the Andes perfectly.

Please note that earthquakes happen not only on land but also under the oceans and seas that surround the earthquake zones. Some of these earthquakes can cause even more damage than tremors on land because undersea geographic configurations can amplify the earthquake's shock waves. The extremely destructive Mexico City earthquake in September of 1985, which killed many people and caused extensive damage to many sections of the city, had its epicenter in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Acapulco, Mexico.

LATIN AMERICA'S  
NATURAL DISASTER ZONES

Map 3



Courtesy of:

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