

Priests to Purify Site After Bush Visit

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GUATEMALA CITY -- Mayan priests will purify a sacred archaeological site to eliminate "bad spirits" after President Bush visits next week, an official with close ties to the group said Thursday.

"That a person like (Bush), with the persecution of our migrant brothers in the United States, with the wars he has provoked, is going to walk in our sacred lands, is an offense for the Mayan people and their culture," Juan Tiney, the director of a Mayan nongovernmental organization with close ties to Mayan religious and political leaders, said Thursday.

Bush's seven-day tour of Latin America includes a stopover beginning late Sunday in Guatemala. On Monday morning he is scheduled to visit the archaeological site Iximche on the high western plateau in a region of the Central American country populated mostly by Mayans.

Tiney said the "spirit guides of the Mayan community" decided it would be necessary to cleanse the sacred site of "bad spirits" after Bush's visit so that their ancestors could rest in peace. He also said the rites _ which entail chanting and burning incense, herbs and candles _ would prepare the site for the third summit of Latin American Indians March 26-30.

Bush's trip has already has sparked protests elsewhere in Latin America, including protests and clashes with police in [Brazil](#) hours before his arrival. In Bogota, Colombia, which Bush will visit on Sunday, 200 masked students battled 300 riot police with rocks and small homemade explosives.

The tour is aimed at challenging a widespread perception that the United States has neglected the region and at combatting the rising influence of Venezuelan leftist President Hugo Chavez, who has called Bush "history's greatest killer" and "the devil."

Iximche, 30 miles west of the capital of Guatemala City, was founded as the capital of the Kaqchiqueles kingdom before the Spanish conquest in 1524.