

SOA Watch Info

Shut Down the School of Assassins!



The School that the U.S. Army has tried to hide...

What is the School of Assassins?

Columbus, GA - Contrary to the Bush administration's "War on Terrorism" propaganda and the President's statement that "every known terrorist training camp must be shut down", the United States government has been training terrorists at a camp in Georgia for years - and is still at it. The Fort Benning based School of the Americas (SOA), renamed in 2001 the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation" (WHINSEC), has been pumping out assassins, dictators and death squad leaders for the dirty work in Latin America since 1946.

The SOA, frequently dubbed the "School of Assassins," has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned.

The SOA/ WHINSEC has trained over 64,000 Latin American soldiers in courses such as counterinsurgency, psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. Graduates of the school have been consistently linked to human rights violations and to the suppression of popular movements in the Americas.

Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared", massacred, and forced into refuge by those trained at the *School of Assassins*.

In 1996, the Pentagon was forced to release training manuals that were used at the School of the Americas. These manuals advocated the use of torture, extortion and execution. The New York Times reported, "America can now read for themselves some of the noxious lessons the United States Army taught thousands of Latin Americans."

These SOA training manuals advocate targeting those who...

- support "union organizing or recruiting"
- distribute "propaganda in favor of the interest of workers"
- "sympathize with demonstrations or strikes"
- make "accusations that the government has failed to meet the basic needs of the people"

The purpose of the School of the Americas is, and has always been, to control the economic and political systems of Latin America by aiding and influencing Latin American militaries. Countries with the worst human rights record have consistently sent the most soldiers to be trained at the SOA. For example: Bolivia during the reign of terror of General Banzer; Nicaragua during the Somoza family dictatorship; El Salvador during the period of bloodiest repression; and currently Colombia.



About SOA Watch

SOA Watch is an independent grassroots organization that seeks to close the School of the Americas, under whatever name it is called, through vigils and fasts, demonstrations and nonviolent direct action, as well as media and legislative work.

As the truth about the SOA became known to the public, a protest movement to close the school emerged. Last November, thousands of students, union workers, religious activists, veterans and others gathered at the gates of Fort Benning - home of the SOA/ WHINSEC - to make their voices heard and to speak in solidarity against impunity.

Visit SOA Watch on the web:

www.SOAW.org

New Research Findings

Findings made public by SOA Watch in the spring of 2004 provide more detail about the superficialities of reforms at the renamed WHINSEC, the implausibility of real reform in the future, and the continuing pattern of support for human rights abusers in Latin America. These findings include:

- None of the fundamental issues raised around the need to close the SOA has been addressed in the renamed WHINSEC.
- The failure of the U.S. Army to deal seriously with the record of the SOA raises concerns about the quality and emphasis in the multitude of other foreign military training programs.
- Human rights abuses and the problems with civil-military relations are not a thing of the past in Latin America.

While SOA and Pentagon officials would like the public to believe that atrocities have been committed by only a "few" SOA graduates, the reality is the vast majority of officers committing the worst human rights violations throughout Latin America have been soldiers who received their training at the SOA.

The SOA/WHINSEC refuses to institute a serious mechanism to review the performance of the graduates and their adherence to human rights standards. SOA Watch has only scraped the surface. Unless a review process is implemented and more reports are declassified, it will be impossible for the public to ever fully realize the scope of violence that has resulted from the training provided at the SOA. A few examples follow:

United Nations Truth Commission Report:

This report on El Salvador cites over 60 Salvadoran officers as committing the worst atrocities during that country's brutal civil war. Over 2/3 of those named were alumni of the SOA. For example:

- 19 of 26 cited for the assassination of 6 Jesuit priests.
- 10 of 12 cited for the massacre of over 900 at El Mozote.
- 2 of 3 cited for the assassination of Archbishop Romero.
- 3 of 5 cited for the murder of 4 U.S. church women.
- 3 of 3 cited for the murder of union leaders.

"State Terrorism in Colombia"

This Human Rights Watch report is the definitive work on Colombian military officials responsible for violations in that country. Of the 247 cited, 124 were SOA graduates. For example:

- 3 cited for the Trujillo "chainsaw" massacre of 107 villagers.
- 9 cited for the Segovia massacre of 43, many were children.
- 8 cited for the Uraba massacre of 20 striking banana workers.

"US State Dept Report on Human Rights in Colombia"

The 1998 report cites SOA graduates as being responsible for carrying out an illegal raid on a human rights office in 1998, for the 1997 massacre of more than 30 civilians in Mapiripan, as well as many other atrocities.

For more information about these findings, visit www.SOAW.org.

Amnesty International Calls for Suspension and Investigation

A 2002 report released by Amnesty International, "Unmatched Power, Unmet Principles," calls for a suspension of training at the SOA/WHINSEC and for an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the school. Amnesty refutes the claim that the WHINSEC is a new institution, stating WHINSEC "is essentially the same school as SOA, with the same primary mission conveying military skills to members of Latin American armed forces."

Changes at the school "do not absolve the US government of responsibility for identifying and prosecuting those responsible for past human rights violations perpetrated by the SOA."

"The independent commission of inquiry should recommend appropriate reparations for any violations of human rights to which training at SOA contributed, including criminal prosecutions, redress for victims and their families, and a public apology."



amnesty international

Latin America rejects the SOA

In February 2004 **Venezuelan** Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel announced that all training of Venezuelan soldiers at the School of the Americas would be immediately ceased.

In April 2006, the governments of Uruguay and Argentina followed suit and also announced that they would send no more soldiers to be trained at the School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC)

What the U.S. government does not want you to know:

**YOUR TAX DOLLARS
SUPPORT TORTURE,
RAPE AND MURDER IN
LATIN AMERICA**



Join us in our campaign to close down the SOA/WHINSEC and put an end to military intervention and violence in Latin America

Vigil and Nonviolent Direct Action to Close the SOA November 16-18, 2007

On the weekend of November 16-18, thousands will gather at the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia for the Vigil and the Nonviolent Direct Action to Close the School of the Americas.

Take a Stand for Justice!

The weekend will include a massive rally, nonviolent direct action training, workshops, benefit concerts, puppet shows, teach-ins and more

For more information about the Vigil and/or to receive an organizing packet, please contact SOA Watch at (202) 234 3440 and visit www.soaw.org



The SOA Watch Prisoners of Conscience

Nonviolent Direct Action has been the backbone of the movement to close the SOA. Countless actions have taken place in the U.S., Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Austria, France, Germany and other countries.

Thousands have fasted, vigiled and put their bodies on the line to speak out against the violence perpetrated by the SOA and US foreign policy.

Since civil disobedience protests against the SOA began in 1990, over 220 people have served federal prison sentences, collectively totaling more than 95 years in federal prison. Others have been subjected to federal probation.

Their sentences – ranging from one month to two years in prison - are an attempt to silence the movement to close the SOA and to prevent others from speaking out.

“If... the machine of government... is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law.”

- Henry David Thoreau

School of Dictators & Death Squad Leaders

Although the US claims to be the defender of democracy, the military often supports rogue nations free of all democratic process. The SOA consistently produced soldiers and officers to bolster fascist governments and death squads, sometimes even training men who would overthrow democratically elected governments. In total, the School has produced at least eleven Latin American dictators. SOA graduates and guest instructors include:

- **General Hernan Jose Guzman Rodriguez**

He protected and aided the Colombian paramilitary death squad “MAS,” which was responsible for the deaths of at least 149 people. He commanded the soldiers who detained, tortured, gang raped, and executed Yolanda Acevado Carvajal.

- **General Hector Gramajo**

Architect of genocidal policies from 1980-1991 which resulted in the rape, murder, torture and displacement of hundreds of thousands of indigenous people in Guatemala. After US courts found him guilty of numerous war crimes, Gramajo was a guest speaker at an SOA graduation ceremony, as an “honored guest.”

- **Colonel Pablo Belmar**

He was directly implicated in the torture and murder of UN official Carmelo Soria, whose neck was broken while being tortured by Chilean DINA personnel.

- **Gen. Hugo Banzer Suarez**

Banzer was a brutal military dictator who achieved power in Bolivia through a violent coup. He developed the “Banzer Plan” to silence outspoken members of the church; the plan became a blueprint for repression throughout Latin America.

- **General Rios Montt**

Author of the “scorched earth” policy in Guatemala, which resulted in over 625 indigenous villages being completely eliminated. He gained power by orchestrating a bloody coup and led the country during some of its most repressive years.

Check the SOA Watch website for updated info, including prison addresses and release dates for those incarcerated:

www.SOAW.org



What you can do:

As you may know, the midterm elections of 2006 were a huge victory for SOA Watch. 35 of our opponents lost their seats in the House giving us an incredible opportunity for legislative success in the 110th Congress! **Contact your members of Congress and urge them to support HR 1707!** Tell them that you don't want your tax dollars to be used for the training of repressive foreign militaries. Urge them to support HR 1707 to close the *School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation*. To find out who your representative is and to obtain talking points, visit our webpage www.SOAW.org

The Honorable (name)
US House of
Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable (name)
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

Write letters! Send them to your local newspapers. Write opinion pieces and editorials.

Educate yourself and others. Order resources (see right), hold a public video showing and invite speakers.

Organize with others in your area. Visit the SOA Watch website to find out about local groups in your town or region who are working to close the SOA/WHINSEC.

To receive more information as well as regular updates, contact the SOA Watch office at (202) 234 3440 or info@soaw.org

To receive regular email updates from SOA Watch, send a request email to info@soaw.org

What others say about the SOA

"If the SOA published a register of alumni, it would be a scary catalogue of the most notorious military assassins and human rights violators... Attempts to recast the school as an anti-narcotics center are so much hokum."

- *Chicago Tribune*

"We can't expect this terrorist training camp to reform itself: after all, it refuses even to acknowledge that it has a past, let alone to learn from it."

- *The Guardian, UK*

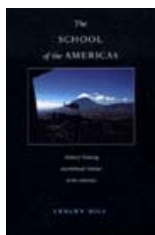
"An institution so clearly out of tune with American values ... should be shut down without delay."

- *New York Times*

"SOA graduates have been hostile to workers and union organizers ... creating an environment in Latin America that is hostile to many of the democratic values and freedoms we take for granted..."

- *Basil Hargrove, President, Canadian Auto Workers Union*

Educational Resources



The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas, paperback (296 pages) by Lesley Gill, Duke University Press, fall 2004 after interviews with

Military personnel from several Latin American nations, American University anthropology professor Lesley Gill has written a groundbreaking analysis of how SOA/WHINSEC trainees view their role in fighting drugs and "subversives." Gill details her interviews with SOA/WHINSEC students and staff as well as SOA Watch activists in this well-documented, eye-opening resource. **\$20.00**

Convictions: Prisoners of Conscience, video (20 minutes) directed by Robert Richter, Maryknoll World Productions, fall 2004. Richter brings to life the thoughts and challenges of those who faced arrest in November of 2003 for demonstrating against the SOA/WHINSEC on the grounds of Fort Benning. This moving video is

excellent for organizing groups to attend the Vigil and supporting future prisoners of conscience. **\$15.00**



Disturbing the Peace: The Story of Father Roy Bourgeois and the Movement to Close the School of the Americas paperback (240 pages) by

James Hodge and Linda Cooper, with a foreword by Martin Sheen, Orbis Books, fall 2004. After years as a Naval officer in Vietnam and as a missionary in Bolivia, Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois was imprisoned for challenging the United States government's actions in Latin America. *Disturbing the Peace* chronicles the many activists that built the SOA Watch movement and presents new research on the actions of SOA graduates. With personal stories of how Father Roy learned the reality of oppression in Latin America, *Disturbing the Peace* is an excellent book for lending to family and friends. **\$20.00**

SUPPORT SOA WATCH AND HELP SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF ASSASSINS!

The movement to close the SOA is possible because of the financial support from concerned individuals across the country.

Please consider a gift* to SOA Watch to support the organizing work (media, legislative, outreach, events, trainings etc.).

- Enclosed is a gift* of \$ _____ to support the work of SOA Watch.
- Please send me _____ copies of the book **The School of the Americas** (\$20)
- Please send me _____ copies of the book **Disturbing the Peace** (\$20)
- Please send me _____ copies of the video **Convictions: Prisoners of Conscience** (\$15)

Name: _____

Address (Street, City, ZIP): _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Please clip and return to **SOA Watch ~ PO Box 4566 ~ Washington, DC 20017** *Donations to SOA Watch are not tax-deductible