

Dear Editor,

[Intro sentence connecting your letter to a recent article, if at all possible]. From November 20-22, I will join thousands in Columbus, Georgia to call for the closure of the controversial School of the Americas, renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC). Graduates of this combat training school for Latin American security personnel continue to be implicated in civilian-targeted killings throughout Latin America. This November we gather for the 25th anniversary of the vigil, which began in November 1990 to commemorate the 1989 SOA graduate-led massacre at the University of Central America in El Salvador.

The SOA/WHINSEC, located at Fort Benning, made headlines in 1996 when the Pentagon released manuals used at the school to teach torture, extortion and execution. Despite this shocking admission and hundreds of documented human rights abuses connected to SOA/WHINSEC-trained soldiers, no independent investigation into the training facility has ever taken place. And since 2004, the Pentagon has refused to release the names of its graduates and instructors.

For hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans, this school is a symbol of torture and failed US foreign policy. It is out of line with the values of everyday Americans, and closing it for good would send a strong human rights message to Latin America and the world. A growing movement of human rights groups, religious clergy and laypeople, students, veterans, unionists and many others will converge in Georgia this November, including a contingent from [your town]. We will demand that this training camp be shut down. Lasting peace and security can only be found if we implement foreign policy that reflects our ideals of justice and democracy.

To learn more about the SOA/WHINSEC and efforts to close it, visit www.SOAW.org or call 202-234-3440.

Sincerely, [your name, address and contact info]