

What Happened?: Evaluating the Records of Colombian WHINSEC Graduates

In June 2012, Ambassador John Maisto asked the commander of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), until 2001 known as the School of the Americas, whether any graduates of WHINSEC have been accused of human rights violations. The school's commander, Col. Glen Huber, said there have been none that they knew of.

Thousands of Latin American soldiers have attended WHINSEC since it opened in 2001. A review of WHINSEC graduates' records is limited by the Defense Department's refusal to release names of instructors or graduates since 2003. The names of about 1,900 Latin American graduates in WHINSEC's first three years have been disclosed. The large majority were young cadets who have very little military service subsequent to their time in Georgia. Most took courses lasting only two or three weeks. WHINSEC public relations director Lee Rials observes that those staying at the school longer are more meaningfully "graduates" of WHINSEC.

The Latin American officers staying longest at WHINSEC are those who serve as instructors, who generally stay a year, and those taking the command and general staff course. In its first three years (2001-2003), according to the list of names released by WHINSEC, there were 88 Latin American instructors at the school, and 107 Latin American officers took the Command and General Staff course. Twenty-one of the instructors were from Colombia, including an assistant commandant of the school, more than from any other nation, while eight Colombians took the Command and General Staff course.¹ There is extensive information available on Colombian military officers and Army human rights violations, thus providing an important test case for the WHINSEC commander's claim.

Who were these 29 Colombian military instructors and command students, and what were their human rights records before and after spending a year at WHINSEC?

Major Alvaro Quijano Becerra and **Captain Wilmere Manuel Mora Daza** both served as instructors in Democracy Sustainment at WHINSEC in 2003-2004.² Quijano and Mora were reported in the Colombian media and charged by the National Counternarcotics Unit of the Prosecutor General's Office with collaborating with paramilitary drug traffickers near Cali in 2007, by leaking operational information to the trafficking organization.³

¹ Fifteen were from Venezuela, the nation with the next largest number of instructors.

² All data on WHINSEC attendance from data compiled by School of the Americas Watch, based on Freedom of Information Act disclosures by WHINSEC.

³ "Los Infiltrados," *Semana*, 4 August 2007, downloaded at <http://www.semana.com/nacion/infiltrados/105403-3.aspx>; Toby Muse, Associated Press, "US trained Colombian soldiers jailed for working with cartel, says human rights group," 18 August 2007; "A juicio 9 militares por supuestos vínculos con Diego León Montoya, alias 'Don Diego,'" *El Tiempo*, 11 June 2008, downloaded at <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-4257403>.

Mauricio Ordoñez Galindo taught the cadet leadership course in 2001-02. He later became commander of the GAULA anti-kidnapping unit in Cali, Valle Department. He was charged in 2009 along with eight other soldiers with the killing of four civilians in Cali in January 2007, who were then alleged to be kidnappers. He was sentenced in 2011 to 46 years in prison for his role in the killings.⁴

Jaime Lasprilla Villamizar taught the Captains Career course and what was then called the General Staff and Command course. When he returned to Colombia, he rose in the ranks, and as colonel commanded the Ninth Brigade in the Department of Huila, in 2006 and 2007. While he was with the Ninth Brigade, troops under his command reportedly committed at least 58 extrajudicial executions, one of the highest levels in Colombia.⁵ You cannot have that many extrajudicial killings without a level of planning that requires commander responsibility, at the very least by omission. However, he has not been charged with responsibility for any of these killings, consistent with a 97% rate of impunity for reported extrajudicial killings in Colombia. Subsequent to his time in Huila, by this a time a brigadier general, he became commander in 2009 of Task Force Omega, a critical command not only for the Colombian armed forces, but for U.S. strategy in Colombia.

Major Marcos Pinto Lizarazo taught logistics and resource management at WHINSEC in 2001-02. He subsequently commanded the Girardot Battalion, Fourth Brigade, in Antioquia Department in late 2006, when several extrajudicial killings were reportedly committed by troops in his battalion. Two years later, in 2008, he was commander of the Magdalena Battalion, Ninth Brigade, in Huila Department, a year when 27 extrajudicial killings were attributed directly to members of the battalion under his command - more than any other battalion in Colombia. In 2012 he is a colonel commanding the Eighth Brigade.

Julio Novoa Ruiz taught the captains career and general command courses at WHINSEC in 2003-04. He was subsequently chief of staff for the 12th Mobile Brigade, operating in Meta Department, in 2006, a year when 12 extrajudicial killings were reportedly committed by members of the 12th Mobile Brigade. (The brigade also was vetted and received U.S. assistance in 2006, but assistance was suspended the following year, apparently because of human rights concerns.)

LTC Juan Pablo Rodríguez Barragán attended the general staff and command course at WHINSEC in 2001. Promoted to colonel, he commanded the Ninth Brigade

⁴ *El Herald*, September 16, 2011, "9 militares condenados a 46 años de prisión por homicidio agravado," <http://www.elheraldo.co/nacional/9-militares-condenados-a-46-a-os-de-primi-n-por-homicidio-agravado-37923>

⁵ Data on reported extrajudicial executions is drawn from a database compiled by the Human Rights Observatory of the Colombia-Europe-United States Coordination, which convenes a Working Group on Extrajudicial Executions with 20 human rights organizations, which has assembled information on extrajudicial executions, drawing on a database created by the Attorney General Office National Human Rights Unit, Inspector General's Office database, Ejecutiva de la Justicia Penal Militar, (May 7, 2009, response to petition), the database of the Jesuit Center for Investigation and Popular Education (as reported in the publication *Noche y Niebla*), and their own casework.

in 2004, when six civilians were reportedly killed by Army troops in the brigade's jurisdiction. He subsequently in 2006 commanded the 18th Brigade in Arauca, where Army troops reportedly committed nine extrajudicial killings that year. While he was commander of the Fourth Brigade in Antioquia in 2008, Army troops reportedly carried out 32 civilian killings in the brigade's jurisdiction.

Lt. Colonel Hernán Giraldo Restrepo took the command and general staff course at WHINSEC in 2001. He was chief of staff for the Second Brigade in 2004, and subsequently commanded the 10th Brigade from late 2004 to at least June 2006. In February 2005, 10th Brigade troops killed 14-year-old Wiwa indigenous Noemí Pacheco Zabatá, who was pregnant, pulling her and her Kankuamo indigenous partner Hermes Carrillo from their beds at two in the morning and killing them. Col. Giraldo Restrepo declared publicly that they were guerrillas killed in combat. In fact, they were civilians, and the Bogota Superior Court found four Army soldiers guilty of homicide, sentencing them to more than 30 years in prison for a clear case of "false positives."⁶ At the end of 2008, promoted to brigadier general, Giraldo became commander of the 17th Brigade, with jurisdiction in Urabá, and was promoted to command the Army's 7th Division in 2011.

Major Juan Ramírez Trujillo took the command and general staff course at WHINSEC in 2002. In late 2006, he became commander of the 4th Artillery (BAJES) Battalion in eastern Antioquia.⁷ On January 12, 2007, Army troops belonging to the BAJES battalion under Ramírez's command reportedly carried out the extrajudicial killing of five civilians. The Colombian Attorney General's Human Rights Unit opened a formal investigation in 2008.⁸ In July 2012, Colonel Ramírez Trujillo is commander of the Ninth Brigade in Huila.

José Octavio Duque Lopez had a successful career as a military engineer, a profession about which he has published several works, and he was deputy commander of WHINSEC in 2004-06. Before his invitation to Georgia, Duque López commanded the Bejarano Battalion of the 17th Brigade in the Urabá region from January to November 1999.⁹ During that period, on April 4, 1999, paramilitaries passed by an Army checkpoint within the battalion's area of operation on the road to San José de Apartadó – sole vehicular access into the community, usually patrolled by the Army – and murdered three members of the Peace Community of

⁶ "Aplazadas excusas públicas del Ejército a comunidad indígena de Valledupar," *Semana*, accessed at: <http://m.semana.com/nacion/aplazadas-excusas-publicas-del-ejercito-comunidad-indigena-valledupar/179055-3.aspx>; "Murió pareja de guerrilleros en combate con el Ejército," *El Pilón*, February 10, 2005, p.16, cited in Fundación Cultura Democrática, *Cuando la Madre Tierra Lloró: Crisis en Derechos Humanos y Humanitaria en la Sierra Nevada de Gonawindúa (Santa Marta)*, 2009, p. 225.

⁷ Announcement at <http://www.septimadivision.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=113641>

⁸ Attorney General's office database of investigations, and Mesa de Derechos Humanos y Protección Humanitaria del Oriente Antioqueño, *Informe sobre la situación de los derechos humanos y el derechos internacional humanitario en el Oriente Antioqueño, 2007*, p. 3, at: http://web.usbmed.edu.co/usbmed/elagora/htm/v8nro2/documentospdf/catedra_abierta/Informe%202007%20Mesa%20DDHH%20Oriente%20antioque%C3%B1o.doc

⁹ The Bejarano is a combat battalion.

<http://www.ejercito.mil.co/wap/index.php?idcategoria=283486>

San José, including its co-founder Anibal Jiménez, and a 16-year-old boy, Daniel Pino, whose stomach was cut open with a machete and bled to death.¹⁰

Gonzalo Herrera Cepeda taught human rights and civil-military operations at WHINSEC in 2003-04. In 2007 and 2008, he was commander of the Navas Battalion in Tame municipality, Arauca.¹¹ During 2007, fifteen reported civilian killings in Tame were attributed to Army soldiers operating in the area, although the unit responsible was not identified.¹² Five were under investigation in 2009 by the Attorney General's Human Rights Units. In 2009, LTC Herrera returned to the United States to take the Command and General Staff course in Fort Leavenworth.

Captain Nelson Vanegas Acosta taught cadet leadership from 2001 to 2003. In 2010 he commanded the "Ambrosio Almeida" Battalion in the Army Special Operations Command, and in July 2012 assumed command of the 6th Mechanized Infantry Battalion in northern Riohacha. He apparently returned to WHINSEC in April 2012, and made a laudatory two-minute video about the Colombian paramilitary demobilization.¹³

Major Liliana Alarcon was instructor of instructors in 2001-02. In December 2003 she was the contact person for a human rights course taught to soldiers in the Eleventh Brigade, where she was apparently deployed.¹⁴ The following year, 2004, the number of extrajudicial killings directly attributed to 11th Brigade troops grew from zero to three, and the following year to seven.¹⁵ Now a colonel, she has been since 2007 a press spokesperson for the Colombian Air Force.

Police Officer Graduates

LTC Francisco Patiño Fonseca attended the general command course in 2002. In June 2002, the Colombian Inspector General's office opened a disciplinary investigation into the misuse of counter-drug funds by Patiño Fonseca and 70 other police officers in the counter-drug police unit.¹⁶ In April 2004 the Colombian Attorney General's office opened a criminal investigation into alleged siphoning of public funds by Patiño Fonseca and two other police officers; the other two were found guilty in September 2004 and Patiño Fonseca was acquitted and found to be "acting within the law."¹⁷ The Inspector General's office dropped charges against

¹⁰ Amnesty International Urgent Action, 64/99, 6 April 1999, accessed at <http://colombiasupport.net/archive/amnestyua/ua6499.html>

¹¹ <http://www.micrositios.net/~costereo/?idcategoria=1867>;

<http://www.ejercito.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=196278>;

<http://www.ingenierosmilitares.mil.co/?idcategoria=283335>

¹² Database of Working Group on Extrajudicial Executions.

¹³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ocosHVMeM>

¹⁴ <http://www.ejercito.mil.co/?idcategoria=315>

¹⁵ Database of Working Group on Extrajudicial Executions.

¹⁶ "Cargos a 71 policías por malversación de fondos," *El Tiempo*, 27 September 2002,

<http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-1328383>

¹⁷ Caracol Noticias, 6 April 2004, <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/investigacion-tres-oficiales-por-supuesta-desviacion-de-recursos/20040406/nota/38983.aspx>;

Patiño Fonseca in 2005.¹⁸ He became national director of the Anti-Narcotics Police in 2009, and director of the Bogotá Metropolitan Police in 2010.

Marco Antonio Pedreros Rivera took the general command course in 2001. In 2008, by then a general commanding the anti-kidnapping GAULA unit in Antioquia, he resigned at President Uribe's request, charged with collaborating with mafia capo Daniel Rendón Herrera, alias "Don Mario" in removing leaders of his syndicate from a list of wanted criminals.¹⁹ In 2011, the Attorney General's office announced an investigation of General Pedreros for selling Galil 7.62 rifles to ELN guerrillas, while he was police commander in Cucuta, North Santander, which he reportedly ordered to be escorted by police officers during their delivery.²⁰ Paramilitary death squad leader Salvatore Mancuso testified in a U.S. court in 2008 that Pedreros gave the paramilitaries logistical support in the 1990s, when Pedreros was police commander in North Santander, before his year at WHINSEC.²¹

Less information was available on assignments of other WHINSEC Colombian graduates that would permit a review of their human rights conduct. **Air Force Captain Federico Bocanegra Bernal** was an instructor of the counterdrug operations course in 2003-04, and in 2011, as lieutenant colonel, commanded Security and Base Defense Group No. 5 in Antioquia. **Pedro Rodelo Asfora**, who taught a cadet leadership course in 2001-02, was director of anti-narcotics police on the Caribbean coast in 2010 and 2011. **Major Nelson Rincón Laverde**, another police officer, took the general command course in 2003, and in late 2011 commanded the National Police in Casanare Department.

Major Alexander Carmona Mendieta took the command and general staff course in 2001, and by 2011 was a colonel commanding the Second Brigade in Barranquilla. In the interim he commanded an engineering battalion in Bogotá and served as administrative deputy director of the Army's sanitation directorate. **Major Jaime Carvajal Villamizar** took the command and general staff course in 2002, and by 2010 became, as colonel, chief of staff for the Joint Special Operations Command. In 2005 he published an article titled, "National Strategy and Military Strategy: Toward

<http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/por-malos-manijos-de-recursos-donados-por-eeuu-fiscalia-aseguro-a-oficiales--policia-antinarcoticos/20051118/nota/222088.aspx>

¹⁸ http://www.procuraduria.gov.co/html/noticias_2005/noticias_112.htm

¹⁹ "Presidente Uribe le pidió la renuncia al general Pedreros," *Semana*, 26 August 2008, at <http://www.semana.com/on-line/presidente-uribe-pidio-renuncia-general-pedreros/114884-3.aspx>; "Escándalo acabó con Carrera de Pedreros," *El Mundo*, 27 August 2008, <http://www.elmundo.com/portal/resultados/detalles/?idx=93767>; *El Espectador*, March 3, 2009, <http://www.elespectador.com/articulo123427-otro-testigo-valida-hipotesis-de-fiscalia-contravalencia-cossio>

²⁰ Caracol, August 18, 2011, "Investigan presuntos nexos de comandante de Policía de Nariño con ELN," <http://www.caracol1260.com/noticia/investigacion-presuntos-nexos-de-comandante-de-policia-de-narino-con-eln/20110818/nota/1533251.aspx>

²¹ "Los guardados de Mancuso," 22 November 2008, <http://www.verdadabierta.com/nunca-mas/563-los-guardados-de-mancuso>; Caracol, "Mancuso señala a militares de haber trabajado con autodefensas," November 18, 2008, <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/judicial/mancuso-senala-a-militares-de-haber-trabajado-con-autodefensas/20081118/nota/713253.aspx>

the Neutralization of the Terrorist Aggression in Colombia.”²² **Major Germán Puentes Aguilar** taught *four* courses at WHINSEC in 2003-04. Since June 2009 he has been commander of the Caldas Engineering Battalion No. 5. **Major Javier Ayala Amaya** was a human rights instructor in 2001-02, and returned to WHINSEC in 2008. In 2007 he was a human rights advisor to the Colombian Defense Ministry. He is currently teaching in a private university.

Captain Edgar Alberto Rico Pulido taught the cadet leader and counterdrug operations courses in 2003-04. He currently commands the 32nd Infantry “Pedro Justo Berrio” Battalion in the Fourth Brigade in Antioquia. **William Trejos Manrique** was an instructor in 2001-02. In 2010 he was chief of staff for the 22nd Mobile Brigade, and in 2012 is deputy director of the Armed Forces’ department for weapons sales and control. **1st Sergeant Omar Daza Mondragón** was an instructor in 2003-04, and registered as an importer of “justice activities”, located at the armed forces high command in Bogotá, in 2005.

We were unable to obtain information regarding subsequent assignments for Colombian WHINSEC instructors José Contreras Reyes, Leonel Romero Soler, Jairo Herrera Amarillo, or William Cabezas Buila.

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²² *Revista Fuerzas Armadas*, Núm. 194, March 2005, pp. 12-25.