

The SOA Torture Manuals

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 (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is (and has always been) to control the people of Latin America through military repression. Countries with the worst human rights record have consistently sent the most soldiers to be trained at the SOA/ WHINSEC.

Examples include: 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.

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 twelve Latin American dictators. SOA graduates and guest instructors include:

- **Gen. 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.

- **Gen. 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."

The movement to close the SOA is growing

As the truth about the SOA became known to the American public, a protest movement to close the school emerged. Last November, thousands gathered at the gates of Fort Benning – home of the School of Assassins – to make their voices heard and to speak in solidarity with those whose voices have been taken away.

Concerned citizens put their bodies on the line to stop the terror training. 245 Prisoners of Conscience have collectively served 98+ years in federal prisons across the US for protest actions against the SOA. 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.

Several activists are currently incarcerated in county jails and federal prisons across the US for their participation in nonviolent resistance actions on the Fort Benning military base during the November vigil.

Hold Obama accountable

As a candidate for the presidency, Barack Obama proclaimed in 2008 that "I don't want to just end the war, but I want to end the mindset that got us into war in the first place." As President of the United States of America, Barack Obama can issue an executive order to close down the School of the Americas / Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/ WHINSEC).

- **Col. Pablo Belmar**

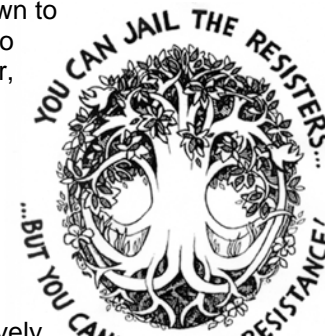
He was directly implicated in the torture and murder of UN official Carmelo Soria, whose neck was broken while being tortured by Chilean DINA personnel.

- **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.



The School of the Americas trains the military muscle to enforce exploitative economic policies

Soldiers at the SOA are trained to protect the interests of U.S. corporations and maintain the economic status quo for the few rich and powerful in the U.S. and their cohorts in Latin America. In official SOA publications "economic development along free market principles" is identified as the "primary foreign policy goal[s] of the U.S." in Latin America. The SOA strategy is "to prepare military and police forces to respond to current threats to the achievement of those goals."

For example, in Mexico, hours after NAFTA went into effect, indigenous communities rose up to say "No!" The Mexican military immediately moved in with troops, helicopters, and artillery. At least 18 of the high-level officers involved in the civilian-targeted warfare campaign are SOA graduates.

In Colombia, the 2000 and 2001 Human Rights Watch reports and a recent U.S. State Department report link SOA-trained soldiers to numerous peasant massacres and the assassinations of labor leaders and striking workers.

In 2000, the Bolivian government sold the public water system of Cochabamba to a private corporation. As a result, the water rates immediately doubled and at times tripled. As thousands took the streets, Bolivian President and former military dictator, SOA graduate Hugo Banzer sent out the armed forces to attack civilians.

Gen. Walter Céspedes Raallo, Military Governor of Cochabamba, is an SOA grad as well. In 1998, while he was Commander of the Joint Task Force in the Chapre coca region, the level of state sponsored violence escalated. Fifteen farmers were killed and others were brutally tortured. Céspedes was indicted for negligent homicide in three of these deaths, but the case is slow to move forward because of death threats against the prosecution and human rights workers

It is no surprise that as state sponsored violence is used to support economic injustices against the people in Latin America; graduates of the "School of Assassins" are consistently at the forefront.



Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/ WHINSEC).

Nationally, hundreds of universities, editorial boards, legislative bodies, veterans, and church groups (including over 300 bishops) continue to advocate for the closure of the school.

Please call or write to President Obama about the SOA/ WHINSEC:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Phone Numbers

Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
FAX: 202-456-2461

Close the School of the Americas (SOA/ WHINSEC)

To learn more and to educate others about the SOA's role as the enforcer of oppressive economic policies, order the SOA Watch video "Guns and Greed" (\$13) and read Lesley Gill's book "The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas" (\$18) (Order from SOA Watch, PO Box 4566, Wash. DC 20017)