

For 19 Years, School of Americas Watch has been shining a light on the US Army's School of the Americas.

WHAT IS THE SOA?

The School of the Americas (SOA) is a U. S. Army combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Initially established in Panama in 1946, it was kicked out of that country in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. Former Panamanian President, Jorge Illueca, stated that the School of the Americas was the “biggest base for destabilization in Latin America.” The SOA, frequently dubbed the “**School of Assassins,**” has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned.

Over its 59 years, the SOA has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. **These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people to make it safe for multi-national corporations to exploit their labor and resources.**

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 refugee by those trained at the

School of Assassins.

In 2001, because of enormous public pressure to close SOA, the US Army closed it but reopened it 60 day later under a new name, the “Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation” (WHISEC). We say, “new name, same shame!” because the school continues its shameful policies.



ANNUAL VIGIL TO CLOSE THE SOA

Founded in 1990, the School of Americas Watch conducts annual vigils at Ft. Benning, recently with over 20,000 persons. These vigil include the commemoration of the thousands of victims of SOA graduates as well as a procession onto the base to reclaim it for the human community, not death dealing activities.

Over the years, numerous members of the vigil have been arrested and sentenced for up to six months in federal prison. These 237 defenders of human rights have, in total, been incarcerated for over 95 years. Many call them

“Prisoners of Conscience.” In addition, 51 persons have been sentenced to various periods of court supervised probation.

On Saturday and Sunday, November 22-23, thousands will gather, once again, at the gate of Ft. Benning to call for the closure of the USA's own terrorist training camp. Staff members of 8th Day Center for Justice, who have long been part of SOA Watch and have themselves spent time in prison for their nonviolent civil resistance at Ft. Benning, will be part of this gathering.

More info: www.soaw.org



On April 10, 2006, twenty nine SOA Watch human rights advocates from around the United States were incarcerated for one to six months sentences for their acts of nonviolent civil disobedience opposing the controversial U.S. Army's School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC). They joined four others already serving prison time for the same action.



Note: Other peace leaflets produced by 8th Day Center can be found at www.8thdaycenter.org/resources/leaflets.html You may wish to use them for your own vigils, in classrooms, etc.

ACTIONS

1. If you or someone you know plans to journey to Ft. Benning for the vigil, join the 8th Day Center contingent during the procession. We will meet on the left side of the gathering place, just inside the police barricade, Sunday, at 8:15 AM. Look for the 8th Day Center banner.
2. Become part of the Illinois SOA Watch. Contact 8th Day at 312-641-5151. For other locales, visit <http://www.soaw.org/groups.php>
3. Sign the "Petition to Obama: An Executive Order to Close SOA/WHISEC" at <http://www.soaw.org/article.php?id=1701>

8th Day Center for Justice
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for Social Change*



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Local contact:

President-elect Obama said:
"This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were....It can't happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice.
(Chicago, 11/04/08)

CLOSE THE U.S.A. TERRORIST TRAINING CAMP

