

What is the SOA?

The School of the Americas (SOA), in 2001 renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation," is a 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. 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.

for more information: www.soaw.org <http://www.soaw.org/sub.php?id=24>

La Escuela de las Americas, La Escuela de Asesinos

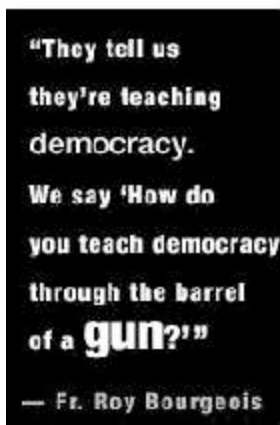
La Escuela de las Américas, ahora llamado el Instituto de Cooperación para la Seguridad Hemisférica (SOA/WHINSEC por sus siglas en inglés) fue establecida en Panamá en 1946, y luego trasladada a Fort Benning, Georgia en 1984. El presidente de Panamá, Jorge Illueca, describió a la SOA como "una base para la desestabilización en América Latina," y uno de los principales diarios panameños la apodó "La Escuela de Asesinos." La historia apoya estas acusaciones.



Cientos de miles de latinoamericanos han sido torturados, violados, asesinados, desaparecidos, masacrados y obligados a refugiarse por soldados y oficiales entrenados en esa Escuela. Los egresados de la SOA persiguen a los educadores, organizadores de sindicatos, trabajadores religiosos, líderes estudiantiles, y a los pobres y campesinos que luchan por los derechos de los damnificados.

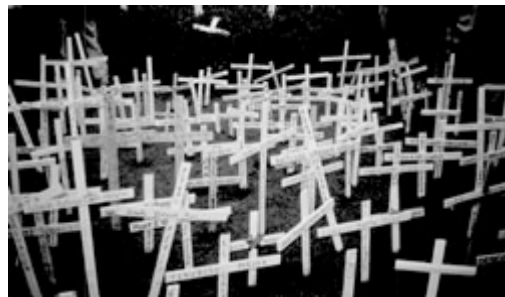
A lo largo de sus más de sesenta años de existencia, la SOA ha entrenado a más de 61.000 soldados latinoamericanos en cursos como técnicas de combate, tácticas de comando, inteligencia militar, y técnicas de tortura. Estos graduados han dejado un largo rastro de sangre y sufrimiento en los países donde han regresado. Hoy día, la Escuela de las Américas entrena casi mil de soldados y policía cada año.

"Una institución que esta tan lejos de los valores americanos... debe ser clausurada sin vacilación." -- New York Times



About the School of the Americas / Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation

The US Army School of Americas (SOA), based in Fort Benning, Georgia, trains Latin American security personnel in combat, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics. [SOA graduates](#) are responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in Latin America. In 1996 the Pentagon was forced to release [training manuals](#) used at the school that advocated torture, extortion and execution. Among the SOA's nearly 60,000 graduates are notorious dictators Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia. Lower-level SOA graduates have participated in human rights abuses that include the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the El Mozote Massacre of 900 civilians. (See [Grads in the News](#)).



In an attempt to deflect public criticism and disassociate the school from its dubious reputation, the SOA was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in 2001. The name change was a result of a Department of Defense proposal included in the Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal 2001, at a time when SOA opponents were poised to win a congressional vote on legislation that would have dismantled the school. The name-change measure passed when the House of Representatives defeated a bi-partisan amendment to close the SOA and conduct a congressional investigation by a narrow ten-vote margin. (See [Talking Points](#), [Critique of New School](#), [Vote Roll Call](#).)

In a media interview, Georgia Senator and SOA supporter the late Paul Coverdell characterized the DOD proposal as a "cosmetic" change that would ensure that the SOA could continue its mission and operation. Critics of the SOA concur.

SOA Watch is a nonviolent grassroots movement that works through creative protest and resistance, legislative and media work to stand in solidarity with the people of Latin America, to close the SOA/WHINSEC and to change oppressive U.S. foreign policy that institutions like the SOA represent. We are grateful to our sisters and brothers throughout Latin America and the the Caribbean for their inspiration and the invitation to join them in their struggle for economic and social justice.