

The Free Trade Area of the Americas and the School of Assassins maintaining the status quo for the elites

The School of the Americas

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 56 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 visit www.soaw.org

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreement aims to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) throughout the entire Western Hemisphere. Implementation of the FTAA -- which is expected to be adopted no later than 2005 -- would empower corporations to restrict governments from setting labor and environmental standards.

Effectively, it would enhance corporate control at the expense of citizens and the environment throughout the Americas. Initiated in 1994 by the 34 countries of North and South America (excluding Cuba), the FTAA would create the worlds largest free market zone - affecting 650 million people and \$9 trillion in capital.

Governmental FTAA talks have been accompanied by the business sector every step of the way.

For more information visit www.stopftaa.org

People over Profits

The power of multinational corporations has grown tremendously. According to CorpWatch, fifty-one of the world's top 100 economies are corporations. For example, Shell's revenues are greater than Venezuela's gross domestic product. Resistance to corporate rule that is based only on profits and disregards life and the environment is spreading.

1998: The effort of grassroots activists all over the world stopped the implementation of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

2000: As the public water system in Cochabamba, Bolivia was privatized and the price of water immediately doubled, thousands of citizens took to the streets and forced the government to end its corrupt deal with the Bechtel Corporation.

2002: Argentineans resist IMF policies.

The resistance will not stop as long as the injustice continues...

SOA trains the military muscle to enforce exploitative economic policies

A recent Pentagon report to Congress states that combat training at the SOA supports US policy towards Latin America which "Seek[s] to develop stable, free market democracies throughout the region."

The mission of the US Southern Command (encompassing the SOA) includes "...protecting the supply of strategic natural resources and access to the markets."

From its beginning, the mission of the SOA has been to train soldiers to protect the interests of multinational corporations and maintain the economic status quo for the few rich and powerful in the US and their cohorts in Latin America. SOA graduates use their skills consistently against community organizers, unionists and others who are a potential threat to corporate interest.



Economic oppression and military repression are flip sides of the same coin. The economic terrorism inflicted on the poor that accompanies corporate globalization could not stand without the repressive military apparatus that brutalizes people who rise up to resist. Those who oppose the globalization of greed and those who work to end US training of repressive foreign armies are joined in one effort.

SOA-Style Union Busting in Colombia and Throughout Latin America

Over 10,000 Colombian soldiers have been trained at the SOA. Their names consistently top the lists of perpetrators in human rights reports from and about Colombia.

- **Banana workers murdered:** 20 striking banana workers were brutally murdered. Eight of the 11 Colombian military officers cited for the slayings were SOA grads.
- **Workers assassinated:** SOA trained Capt. Tomas Monroy Roncanico was convicted of detaining six workers and slitting their throats.
- **Union members targeted:** Unionists Maria Gomez and Miguel Quintanilla were two of the labor leaders targeted for torture and murder by members of the Colombian Air Force. SOA grad, Juan Raffael Bustillo, commanded the troops cited.
- **Labor leader assassinated:** The assassination of Union leader Manuel Gustavo Chacon Sarmiento in broad daylight incited five days of strikes and confrontations between military and civilians. SOA-trained Capt. Genen Dario Jimenez Leon was cited in the assassination.

SOA Used to Beat Down Opposition to NAFTA in Mexico

The example of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) shows that “free” trade agreements, such as the pending FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) will sharpen social inequalities and provoke resistance.

Hours after NAFTA went into effect, indigenous communities in Mexico rose up to say **“Ya Basta! – Enough is Enough!”**

The Mexican military responded swiftly and forcefully with troops, helicopters and artillery to squash the resistance.

At least 18 high-level Mexican officers involved in the ongoing civilian-targeted warfare campaign in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca were trained at the School of the Americas.

The voices, of and for the poor, represented by the Zapatistas and others threaten the elites.

Corresponding to the growing economic justice movement in Mexico, the numbers of Mexican soldiers being trained at the SOA rapidly escalated.

The **Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC)** is an association of national and local US-based grassroots Latin America and Caribbean solidarity groups. For more information, fact sheets and the LASC strategy papers, visit us on the web at

www.LASolidarity.org

CALL TO ACTION

Mobilization against Military and Economic U.S. Intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean - Globalize Liberation not Corporate Greed

Concerned citizen from all over North America will converge from November 19-21, 2003 in Miami, Florida to voice their opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement (FTAA) and from November 21-23 in Ft. Benning, Georgia to speak out against the School of the Americas (SOA). Miami will be the host of the FTAA ministerial meeting, which brings together the trade ministers of the hemisphere to launch the final stages of the FTAA negotiations. Fort Benning is the home of the School of the Americas, where the training of repressive Latin American troops is taking place. Grassroots groups across the USA and Canada are doing educational work as well as nonviolent direct action trainings in preparation for the protests in Miami, Florida and Fort Benning, Georgia.



SHUT THEM DOWN!

Miami, Florida - Nov. 19-21, 2003

Fort Benning, Georgia - Nov. 21-23, 2003