

Nicaragua Out of the SOA!

In anticipation of a vote this summer in the House of Representatives to close the School of Americas (now called Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), the Nicaragua Network and School of Americas Watch have initiated a petition asking Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega to join five other Latin American countries and announce that he will withdraw Nicaragua from the infamous army training school. In 2007 similar legislation would have passed with a change of only 6 votes. The English translation of the letter is below. To sign the petition, go to: www.nicanet.org.

TO: The Honorable President of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega

FROM: The Undersigned Progressive People of the United States and Friends of Peace Around the World

As you are aware, since 1990 progressive people in the United States have struggled to close the Army School of the Americas (now named the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.) This year we are close to victory and we appeal to you to give your solidarity support to our efforts by pulling Nicaragua out of the SOA.

As you know, prior to the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution, no army sent more troops to be trained at the SOA than Somoza's National Guard. In 1996 the Pentagon was forced to admit that torture was taught at the SOA when the training manuals were revealed to the public. Withdrawal from the SOA is a way of honoring the thousands of lives lost in Nicaragua at the hands of National Guard who trained at this institute and who led the contra attacks against the Nicaraguan people.



Fr. Roy Bourgeois and Lisa Sullivan talked with Daniel Ortega in Feb. 2008 about ending the sending of Nicaraguan officers to the School of the Americas.

For 20 years after the Triumph Nicaragua did not send troops to the SOA. We were disappointed when, under the Bolaños government, Nicaragua's military officers again began attending SOA training at Ft. Benning, GA. In 2008 Nicaragua sent 78 officers to the SOA.

Five countries have announced their withdrawal from the SOA: Venezuela (2004), Argentina (2006), Uruguay (2006), Costa Rica (2007) and Bolivia (2008).

The announcement of Nicaragua's withdrawal could be the final step to close the doors of the SOA. In 2007 a vote in Congress to close the school lost by only 6 votes. Another congressional vote to de-fund the school will take place this year, with a new line-up of members. Our hope is that the withdrawal of a 6th country will give the necessary momentum to close the school.

During the 1980s Nicaraguans often told North Americans that what they could best do to support the Revolution was to change the US government. With respect for Nicaragua's sovereignty and right to self-determination, we appeal to you to help us accomplish that task by publically ending Nicaragua's involvement in the SOA.

Signed, Your Name