

U.S. will train Latin American militaries

By [Global Research](#)

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Editorial Note

This article published in US Today reveals Washington's plans to repeal a 2002 ban, which prevented Latin American countries from receiving military aid and training if they "refused to promise immunity from prosecution to U.S. servicemembers who might get hauled before the International Criminal Court".

The title of the USA Today article is in some respects misleading. The US never waived in its resolve to train the Latin American military.

The infamous School of the Americas (SOA), which was renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation," has trained generations of Latin American officers.

"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." (see <http://www.soaw.org/new/type.php?type=8>)

Global Research, 12 November 2006

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Ban lifted to offset trend toward Left
by Barbara Slavin

USA TODAY, 10 November 2006

Concern about leftist victories in Latin America has prompted President Bush to quietly grant a waiver that allows the United States to resume training militaries from 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The administration hopes the training will forge links with countries in the region and blunt a leftward trend. Daniel Ortega, an adversary of the United States in the region during the 1980s, was elected president in Nicaragua this week. Bolivians chose another leftist, Evo Morales, last year.

A military training ban was originally designed to pressure countries into exempting U.S. soldiers from war crimes trials.

The 2002 U.S. law bars countries from receiving military aid and training if they refuse to promise immunity from prosecution to U.S. servicemembers who might get hauled before the International Criminal Court. The law allows presidential waivers.

The White House lifted the ban on 21 countries, about half in Latin America or the Caribbean, through a presidential memorandum Oct. 2 to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The training is conducted in the USA.

A ban on giving countries weapons remains. Commercial arms sales are not affected, said Jose Ruiz, a U.S. Southern Command spokesman.

The training ban had resulted in a loss of U.S. influence in the region. The issue gained urgency after a string of leftist candidates came to power in Latin America.

On a trip to the region this year, Rice said that the impact of the ban had been “the same as shooting ourselves in the foot.”

China stepped into the gap. Ruiz said China “has approached every country in our area of responsibility” and has exchanged senior military officials with Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Cuba and provided military aid and training to Jamaica and Venezuela.

The ban remains in effect for some countries. Venezuela, whose fiery President Hugo Chávez is a critic of the Bush administration, remains ineligible because it is on a State Department list of countries alleged to have permitted the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Chávez is up for re-election in December and leads in the polls. Cuba is also off-limits because of a long-standing U.S. embargo against Fidel Castro’s regime.

Ruiz said efforts are being made to transfer money this year to begin training foreign officers from eligible countries.

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