

ALERT: Congress Votes on SOA/WHINSEC and ILEA this week
June 19, 2007

This is a big week in Congress! The House of Representatives will vote to cut funding to the School of the Americas (SOA) as part of the Foreign Operations appropriations bill. The bill also includes funding for the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in El Salvador. CISPES has organized a national call-in day for today (June 19) in conjunction with the SOA Watch call-in days, in order to put pressure on Congress to cut funding for the SOA and to do oversight on the ILEA with the ultimate goal of shutting down the US-sponsored police academy in the future. If we win the vote to close the SOA this year it will be a huge victory and a big step forward in our campaign around the San Salvador ILEA!

Please respond to the alert by our partners at SOA Watch (which can be found at www.soaw.org) and use the expanded script and talking points below.

Shut it down!
-CISPES National Office

Congressional Call-in script – Tell Congress to vote to close the SOA and Push for Oversight of the ILEA!

June 19, 2007 National Call-in Day

Background: This week the House of Representatives will vote on the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. Included in this bill is funding for the infamous School of the Americas (SOA, now known as the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation, or WHINSEC) as well as funding for the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), the US-sponsored police schools which recently began operating in El Salvador. The ILEA in El Salvador is functioning like another SOA, under a new name and in a new location. The issue of the ILEA is relatively unknown to most of Congress, and the U.S. government has tried to keep Congress and the U.S. public in the dark about the ILEA since it opened a year and a half ago.

Through calling this week we hope to educate Congress, and to build support for oversight of the ILEA as part of our campaign to shut down the police academy, We also hope to celebrate in our effort to shut down the SOA this year once and for all! Rep. James McGovern (MA) is prepared to present an amendment to cut the funding to the SOA/WHINSEC. With a shift in Congress and over 100 bipartisan cosponsors, this year's House vote is our best chance ever to shut down the SOA.

Call the House Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or call your Oregon Representative directly

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (202) 225-4811/ (503) 231-2300
Rep. Darlene Hooley..... (202) 225-5711/ (503) 557-1324
Rep. David Wu.....(202) 225-0855/ (800) 422-4003
Rep. Peter Defazio.....(202) 225-6416/ (541) 465-6732
Rep. Greg Walden.....(202)225-6730/ (541)776-4646

When you call:

- 1) Ask the operator for your Representative, and then ask to speak to your Representative's foreign affairs legislative assistant, chief of staff or legislative director.
- 2) Tell them you are a constituent and want to know your Rep's position on the McGovern amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, which would cut funding to the School of the Americas/WHINSEC.
- 3) If the Rep. is going to vote for the amendment, thank him/her. Then ask if they have heard of the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) and move on to # 5.
- 4) If the Rep is undecided or against the amendment, urge them to vote in favor of it. Explain to them the horrible history of the SOA in teaching torture and human rights abuse to Latin American military officials. For more SOA talking points, see <http://soaw.org/article.php?id=96>.
- 5) Using the talking points below, explain why the ILEA is another extremely worrisome project of U.S. training of Latin American police forces and why groups in El Salvador are demanding that it be closed. Ask if your Rep. will work with us to get more information from the State Department about the classes, instructors, human rights records of the teachers and students at the ILEA.
- 6) If the Rep. agrees to help work on the ILEA issue, send an email to CISPES (krista@cispes.org) with the name of the person you spoke with and your Rep's name, and we can get that office more details about the ILEA and specific information we need for our campaign.

Talking Points:

* Resurgence of death squad-style threats and murders: In early May 2007 the Archbishop's Legal Aid and Human Rights Defense Office (Tutela

Legal) released a report implicating the Salvadoran National Police (PNC) in eight death squad style assassinations in 2006 alone. CISPES has published a list of recent

repression beginning with the July 2006 murder of the Manzanares couple, the parents of long-time activist “Mariposa”. In many of these cases, the evidence leads us to believe that the police and/or death squads were involved in their disappearances; meanwhile, the calls of family members for investigation have fallen on deaf ears. The ILEA does nothing to remedy the central problem of the high-up corruption and links to death squads within the Salvadoran police.

* The Salvadoran government is militarizing the police, which is a direct violation of the Peace Accords. The separation between police and military in El Salvador has declined dramatically since originally established by Peace Accords in El Salvador. It is now common to have groups of soldiers “patrolling” rural and urban neighborhoods in El Salvador. El Salvador’s National Civilian Police (PNC) was created by the 1992 Peace Accords to do the work of law enforcement in El Salvador. However, the PNC has increasingly been used to violently repress protests in El Salvador, especially the protests against CAFTA, such as those led by market vendors struggling under new-CAFTA imposed intellectual property laws. The addition of the military to these repressive policing tactics violates the Peace Accords and the U.S. government, through the ILEA, should not be collaborating so closely with a police that violates the Peace Accords.

* Salvadoran Government using anti-terrorism law to target social movement organizing: The Salvadoran right wing passed an “anti-terrorism” law in September 2006, followed by an “anti-organized crime” law later that year. The language in these new laws is very vague, leaving them open to interpretation and a wide variety of applications. The anti-terrorism law is similar to the Patriot Act in that it threatens civil liberties supposedly protected by the constitution of El Salvador. The laws criminalize and labels terrorist – with long jail sentences – protest tactics commonly used by Salvadorans. The US Ambassador to El Salvador even expressed explicit support for this law in a speech, condoning the use of police force in protecting US trade interests. Similarly, the stated purpose of the ILEA is also to protect U.S. interests and this is not the kind of training Salvadoran police need.

* El Salvador has become the satellite for U.S. military and police training in Latin America, despite its poor human rights record: El Salvador is already the second largest recipient of military training in Central America, is the host of a U.S. military base and an FBI office. The ILEA has the capacity to train 1500 students per year, more than the current Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and cooperation, also known as the SOA. Salvadorans fear a return to the sort of torture and repression practices used by the graduates of that US-sponsored school in the 1980s. Meanwhile, U.S. officials refuse to acknowledge the corruption, misconduct and human rights violations committed by the PNC, and continue to support the Salvadoran police, both through explicit statements and by sponsoring the ILEA in El Salvador.

* ILEA has a lack of oversight and transparency: Congress has not been given

sufficient information about the ILEA and its activities, and human rights groups that have sought to monitor it have been denied basic documentation, such as course descriptions and names of students and instructors. Though backers of the ILEA promise that only civilians would be trained there, in fact the agreement leaves the possibility of military training open. Such lack of transparency is especially alarming given that the ILEA would offer immunity to all foreign officials involved in designing the curriculum and teaching the courses.

Go here to see the list of COSPONSORS OF H.R. 1702 (102+ Rep. McGovern) (as of 6/12/07): <http://soaw.org/article.php?id=96>

GET INVOLVED!

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