

# The School of the Americas: A History of Human Rights Violations and Military Training



**The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas (American Encounters/Global Interactions)** by Lesley Gill

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English  
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Screen Reader : Supported  
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Word Wise : Enabled  
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The School of the Americas (SOA), now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), is a United States Department of Defense institution that provides military training and education to Latin American military and police personnel. The SOA was established in 1946 at Fort Amador, Panama, and has since trained over 600,000 military and police personnel from 22 countries in the Western Hemisphere.

The SOA has been criticized for its history of human rights violations and its role in training dictators and military officers who have committed atrocities. In 1996, the SOA was linked to the murder of six Jesuit priests and two women in El Salvador by a Salvadoran military unit that had been trained at the school. The SOA was also criticized for its role in training Peruvian

military officers who were involved in the massacre of over 2,000 civilians in the village of Putis in 1984.

In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed a law requiring the SOA to implement a number of reforms, including the establishment of a human rights training program and the screening of students for potential human rights violations. In 2001, the SOA was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in an attempt to distance the school from its history of human rights abuses.

Despite these reforms, the SOA/WHINSEC continues to be criticized for its role in training military and police personnel who have committed human rights violations. In 2015, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued a report that found that the SOA/WHINSEC had failed to adequately address its history of human rights abuses and that the school continued to train military and police personnel who were responsible for human rights violations.

The SOA/WHINSEC remains a controversial institution. Some argue that the school is a necessary tool for promoting security and stability in the Western Hemisphere, while others contend that the school is a breeding ground for human rights abusers. The SOA/WHINSEC's legacy of human rights violations continues to cast a shadow over the school and its mission.

### **Human Rights Violations Linked to the SOA/WHINSEC**

The SOA/WHINSEC has been linked to a number of human rights violations, including:

- The murder of six Jesuit priests and two women in El Salvador in 1989 by a Salvadoran military unit that had been trained at the school.
- The massacre of over 2,000 civilians in the village of Putis in Peru in 1984 by Peruvian military officers who were trained at the school.
- The torture and murder of thousands of civilians in Guatemala by Guatemalan military officers who were trained at the school.
- The disappearance of thousands of civilians in Honduras by Honduran military officers who were trained at the school.

These are just a few examples of the many human rights violations that have been linked to the SOA/WHINSEC. The school has been a training ground for dictators and military officers who have committed atrocities in their own countries.

### **Reforms to the SOA/WHINSEC**

In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed a law requiring the SOA to implement a number of reforms, including:

- The establishment of a human rights training program.
- The screening of students for potential human rights violations.
- The creation of an independent oversight board.

In 2001, the SOA was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in an attempt to distance the school from its history of human rights abuses.

These reforms have been criticized by some for not going far enough. They argue that the human rights training program is inadequate and that the screening of students is not effective. They also contend that the independent oversight board is too closely tied to the U.S. government.

### **The SOA/WHINSEC Today**

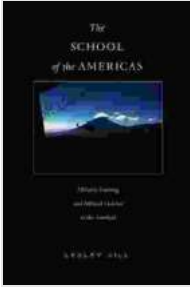
The SOA/WHINSEC continues to be a controversial institution. Some argue that the school is a necessary tool for promoting security and stability in the Western Hemisphere, while others contend that the school is a breeding ground for human rights abusers.

The SOA/WHINSEC's legacy of human rights violations continues to cast a shadow over the school and its mission. It remains to be seen whether the reforms that have been implemented will be sufficient to address the school's history of human rights abuses.

The School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation is a controversial institution with a long history of human rights violations. The school has been linked to the murder, torture, and disappearance of thousands of civilians in Latin America.

Despite reforms that have been implemented, the SOA/WHINSEC continues to be criticized for its role in training military and police personnel who have committed human rights violations. The school's legacy of human rights abuses casts a shadow over its mission and raises serious questions about its future.

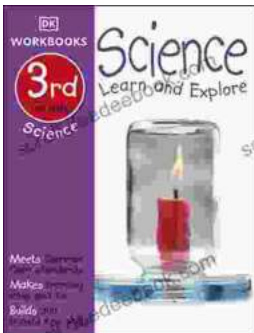
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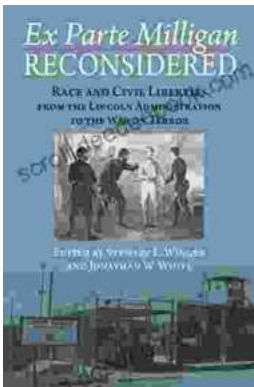
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