

The School of the Americas and Guatemala

Graduates of the School of the Americas (SOA) have committed some of the most egregious human rights abuses in Guatemala's bloody history, including **torture, murder, disappearances, displacement, and genocide**. In fact, the military's gruesome history still haunts Guatemalan civil society. Many of those responsible for the country's worst acts against humanity continue to hold positions of power in the government and military.

Each year, U.S. human rights groups lobby for a continued ban on military aid, which has been in place since 1990, in order to curb military control in Guatemala. However, the struggle for human rights will persevere until corruption and impunity end and civilian control is restored.

According to documents provided by the SOA under the Freedom of Information Act the **School of the Americas trained over 1500 Guatemalans** between 1946-1995. (No training occurred at the SOA between 1978-83 because US military aid was cut off under President Carter and reinstated under President Reagan).

Genocide Charges against SOA graduate Efraín Ríos Montt

On June 6, 2001 massacre survivors from 11 Mayan communities in the Guatemalan highlands filed a lawsuit against SOA graduate, former dictator of Guatemala, and now president of Congress, **Efraín Ríos Montt**. The charges are for genocide of the Mayan population under Ríos Montt's brutal dictatorship in the early 1980's. Ríos Montt is responsible for the destruction of hundreds of Mayan villages in a "scorched earth" policy similar to US tactics in Vietnam, leaving at least 19,843 people dead and over one million internally displaced, most of them Mayan civilians. Six out of nine cabinet officials under Ríos Montt were graduates of the SOA.

Genocide Charges Against SOA Graduate Fernando Romeo Lucas García

In June 2000, the Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH) assisted 10 communities in filing a genocide lawsuit against former dictator and SOA graduate **Lucas García**. Along with his brother Benedicto Lucas García, also an SOA graduate, and former Army Chief of staff, Lucas García masterminded the paramilitary civil defense controls (PAC) responsible for thousands of atrocities against Mayan civilians, leaving at least 6,469 dead. Four of eight military officials in the cabinet of Lucas García were graduates of the SOA.

The Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) estimates that over **200,000** mainly indigenous people were killed by State forces in the 36-year internal war, with an estimated **132,000 massacred** between 1980-1983 **under García and Montt**.

The CEH report specifically cites the School of the Americas and its counterinsurgency training in connection with these massacres. The CEH states that the National Security

Doctrine taught at the SOA broadened the definition of counterinsurgency by identifying all opponents as adversaries and helped spreading "techniques of persecution...within a growing atmosphere of State terror."

SOA graduate convicted in the 1998 Assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi

Another SOA graduate **Byron Lima Estrada**, former head of the notorious G-2 military intelligence unit and former member of the controversial presidential special security (EMP), along with two other military officers, was found guilty in co-authoring the 1998 assassination of Bishop Gerardi. Bishop Gerardi was killed 2 days after releasing the REHMI report, which identified the military as the major perpetrator of human rights violations during the 36-year civil war.

SOA Graduates and the assassinations of Mack, DeVine, and Bámaca

The **1998 REHMI report** and SOA Watch also cite SOA graduates for some of the most notorious human rights violations, including the murder of anthropologist Myrna Mack, the cover-up of the murder of US citizen Michael DeVine, and the torture and murder of Efraín Bámaca, husband of US lawyer, Jennifer Harbury.

According to SOA Watch, General Edgar Godoy Gaitán, Major Juan Guillermo Oliva, and General Luis Francisco Ortega Menaldo are all implicated in the 1991 assassination of Myrna Mack. Colonel Luis Felipe Miranda Trejo is implicated in the murder of Michael DeVine. Colonel Julio Roberto Alpírez ordered the assassination of DeVine six months after graduating from SOA and also supervised the prolonged torture and extrajudicial execution of Efraín Bámaca. Major Mario Sosa Orellana and Lt. Julio Alberto Soto Bilbao are also implicated in the torture and execution of Bámaca.

SOA Grads in the Guatemalan military intelligence agency (D-2 or G-2)

Three top leaders and many officials of the fearsome Guatemalan intelligence agency D-2 (also known as G-2) were SOA graduates. In a chapter titled "D-2: The Very Name of Fear," the Guatemala Nunca Mas Report (also known as REHMI report) states that Guatemalan military intelligence played "a central role in the conduct of military operations, in massacres, extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances and torture" (Vol. 2, p.65). SOA graduates featured in the report include three D-2 directors, Francisco Ortega Menaldo, Cesar Augusto Cabrera Mejia, Manuel Callejas y Callejas. Additional SOA graduates in leadership positions include Federico Sobalvarro Meza, Cesar Quinteros Alvarado, Luis Felipe Caballeros Meza, Harry Ponce, Francisco Edgar Dominguez Lopez, Eduardo Ochoa Barrios, Domingo Velasquez Axpuc and Jose Manuel Rivas Rios. (Guatemala Nunca Mas)

*The School of the Americas closed in December 2000 and reopened in January 2001 under a new clean name that no one would associate with the SOA. The School is now called Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC).

Complete list of SOA graduates 1944-1996, accessed at www.soaw.org/soag.html on July 17, 2001, at Guatemala A-Z.

T. Christian Miller, *Guatemalans to Sue Top Lawmaker Over Genocide*, Los Angeles Times, June 6, 2001.

P. Ball, P. Kobrak, and H.F. Spierer, *State Violence in Guatemala, 1960-1996: A Quantitative Reflection*, accessed at <http://hrdata.aaas.org/ciidh/qr/english/index.html> on July 17, 2001, at Appendix A1, "Number of killings and disappearances by year, 1959-1995."

Notorious Graduates: Guatemala, accessed at <http://www.soaw.org/Graduates/guat-not.html> on July 17, 2001.

T. Christian Miller, *Guatemalans to Sue Top Lawmaker Over Genocide*, Los Angeles Times, June 6, 2001.

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CEH, *Guatemala: Memory of Silence, Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification. Conclusions and Recommendations*.
<http://hrdata.aaas.org/ceh/report/english/>

US Army School of the Americas Cited by Guatemalan Truth Commission Report, accessed at <http://www.soaw.org/Articles/current%20info/country%20information/tcpressrelease.html> on July 17, 2001.

T. Christian Miller, *Guatemala Panel Convicts 4 in 1998 Killing of Bishop*, Los Angeles Times, June 9, 2001.

US Army School of the Americas Cited in Guatemalan Truth Commission Report, accessed at <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/guatemala/hr/TruthCommissionSOA.html> on July 17, 2001.

Notorious Graduates: Guatemala, accessed at <http://www.soaw.org/Graduates/guat-not.html> on July 17, 2001.

Ibid.

<http://www-benning.army.mil/whisc>