

School of ASSASSINS

(WHISC)

& FTAA

(Free Trade Area of the Americas)

Partners in Exploitation & Murder

What is WHISC?

The US Army School of the Americas (SOA), recently renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC) and placed under the direction of the Department of Defense, is a combat training school for Latin American Soldiers. The School is currently located at Ft. Benning, GA. During its 55-year history, the SOA has readied over 60,000 Latin American troops in commando tactics, military intelligence, psychological operations, and advanced combat skills. SOA graduates have been responsible for massacres, torture, and assassinations throughout Latin America.

The SOA: Military Muscle to Enforce Free Trade

In April 2001, 34 heads of state from North, Central and South America gathered to discuss the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). If this agreement is put into effect, the economically crippling, corporate-friendly policies of NAFTA will spread to include all countries in the Western Hemisphere with the exception of Cuba. Inevitably, the SOA will be key in making sure these new policies are enforced.

The United States' main goal in the FTAA process is to secure economic and political hegemony over the Western Hemisphere through the FTAA. Latin American soldiers trained at the SOA have a crucial role in this project. In official SOA publications "economic development along free market principles" is identified as the "primary foreign policy goal of the U.S." in Latin America. The SOA strategy is "to prepare military and police forces to respond to current threats to the achievement of these goals". Historically, threats to the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals have included teachers, students, labor leaders, clergy, and unarmed peasants. Graduates of the SOA have been provided with the tools to "respond" to these "threats" militarily, resulting in mass bloodshed for those in Latin America who strive for economic justice by openly opposing U.S. foreign policy goals.

Occidental Oil and U'wa land: One example of the sinister partnership

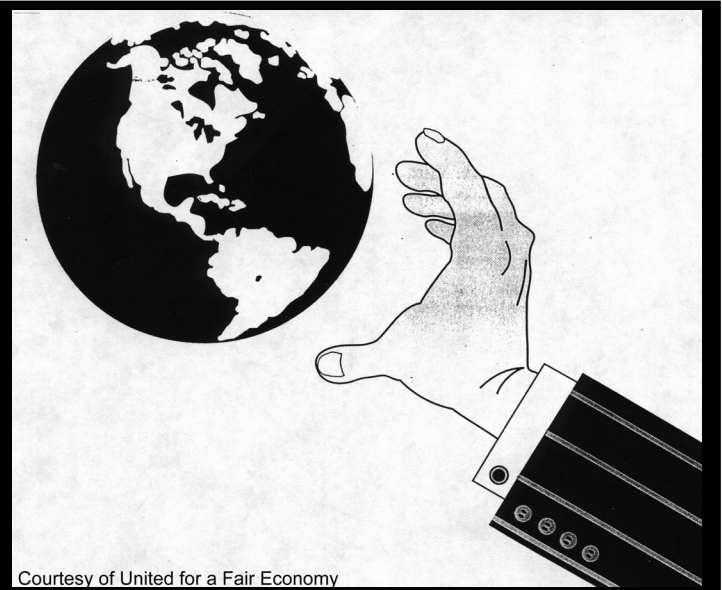
Under the guise of fighting the "war on drugs", U.S. involvement in Colombia has reached new heights. Recently the U.S. government began to implement "Plan Colombia", providing \$1.3 billion of aid to a government with seemingly no regard for basic human rights.

Along with an increased involvement in Colombia has come an increase in U.S. corporate involvement. For years, a California-based petroleum corporation called Occidental Oil has been seeking the right to drill for oil on the sacred tribal lands of the indigenous U'wa people. Last year Occidental was successful in obtaining a permit from the Colombian government to drill in a 500 meter zone surrounding the Gibraltar well, leaving the U'wa in a state of environmental and economic devastation. As if this wasn't enough, Occidental is now seeking a new drilling permit that will allow them to further invade and destroy the U'wa tribal lands.

The Colombian military has already made attempts to evict the tribe from their homes, attempts which will no doubt intensify if a new permit is obtained. Indigenous opposition to these measures has been met with brutality and violence from the Colombian military and other forces, already resulting in the deaths of 3 U'wa children during a non-violent demonstration as well as the murders of 3 U.S. activists.

The WHISC (SOA) provides the military muscle Occidental Petroleum Corporation needs to violently remove the U'wa opposition, in order to ensure that they maintain the right to exploit tribal lands. The FTAA, which eases the ability of multinational corporations to operate in developing countries, will mean more corporations like U.S.-based Occidental Petroleum using U.S.-trained troops to evict indigenous people and exploit the natural resources of other countries.

For info on the U'wa, see: www.ran.org



Courtesy of United for a Fair Economy