

"██████ ██████████ everything ██████████ is ██████████ fine ██████████ love. ██████████
██████ your ██████████ government."

The Pentagon is Fighting Hard to Keep SOA/ WHINSEC Secrecy

Obama Administration Continues to Refuse the Release of Names of SOA/WHINSEC Graduates: Appeals SOA Watch Court Victory

16 July 2013

Human rights activists and SOA Watch took the U.S. government to court over its refusal to release the names of the trainers at the SOA/WHINSEC - and WON! In a landmark case, United States District Judge Phyllis J. Hamilton from the Northern District of California ruled in April 2013, that the Pentagon had no grounds for refusing to release these names ([click here to read the judgment](#)).

Now, two months later, the U.S. government is appealing the ruling and fighting to keep information about the SOA/WHINSEC secret, because this school has been connected to the training of torturers, death squads and military dictators throughout the Americas. The decision to file an appeal and not accept the ruling of Judge Hamilton unmask's President Obama's claim that his administration would be the most transparent in history as just one more lie. SOA Watch and human rights defenders will continue to fight against the denial of access to information and against government secrecy surrounding the SOA/WHINSEC.

Background: The SOA made headlines in 1996 when the Pentagon released training manuals used at the school that advocated torture, extortion and execution. Hundreds of SOA alumni have been implicated in human rights abuses and the formation of death squads, 11 Latin American military dictators, including Jorge Videla of Argentina, Hugo Banzer of Bolivia, General Rios Montt of Guatemala, attended the school. SOA graduates led the 2002 coup in Venezuela, and the 2009 coup in Honduras, and continue to be involved in repression in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico and throughout Latin America.

By having public access to the records of the SOA/WHINSEC from 1946 to 2004, SOA Watch compiled [the names, course, rank, country of origin, and dates attended for every soldier and instructor](#) at the SOA, renamed WHINSEC in 2001. After researchers exposed cases of known human rights abusers attending WHINSEC (despite claims that the "new" school was committed to human rights), and shared [this research](#) with Congressional decision-makers, the Pentagon altered its approach to public access of information and refused to disclose any future information about students or teachers at WHINSEC.

"The Pentagon knows that releasing the names of who is being trained at the notorious school, would lead to more disclosures about the atrocities that they are committing. The Pentagon is fighting hard to keep that

information secret.” said SOA Watch founder Father Roy Bourgeois. “The SOA/ WHINSEC is their flagship training school, and their way of controlling the militaries, and thus the people of the Americas. Justice will prevail and the school will be shut down.”

The case will go to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, a U.S. federal court with appellate jurisdiction over the Northern District of California. **SOA Watch is going to ask the Ninth Circuit Court to uphold the value of transparency, and the public's right to know, over the Pentagon's secrecy.**

Meanwhile, Anonymous, the loosely associated network of hacktivists, who gained fame as digital Internet Freedom Fighters, issued a [Video Call to Action](#) against the School of the Americas. The [2 minute video](#), with the hashtag #OpSOA calls on the Anonymous Collective to “*expose the graduates and instructors of the SOA/ WHINSEC, and others who are responsible for their atrocities.*” The movement to close the School of the Americas is made up of people from many backgrounds and represents a positive alternative to the system of violence and domination, and we are grateful for the support from the hacktivist community. With the increasing secrecy by the Obama administration, and their blatant disregard for the rare Congressional and Judicial calls for transparency, whistle-blowers like Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden, and hacktivists like Anonymous have played an important role in uncovering the truth about government abuses that affect all of us.

SOA Watch will continue to take this fight for justice and transparency to the halls of Congress, through the judicial system (all the way up to the Supreme Court if we have to), to the media, and into the internet, but first and foremost into the streets. **To win, we need to build a grassroots movement that is too powerful to be ignored. Take action against militarization on [August 9, 2013](#) in your community, and join the [November Vigil](#) at the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia from November 22-24, 2013.** We need to change the culture of secrecy, violence and domination, and create a culture of justice and peace in order to make the existence of places like the School of the Americas impossible.

Venceremos!