

CONSENT CALENDAR SR 02

2015 OREGON-IDAHO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

1 **TITLE: CLOSE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS**

2 **SPONSORING GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL: Methodist Federation for Social Action**

3 **SPOKESPERSON: Jan Nelson**

4 **SPOKESPERSON'S ADDRESS: 1845 High St SE, Salem OR 97302**

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6 **SPOKESPERSON'S TELEPHONE: 503-364-0312**

7 **This petition is a renewal of an existing Standing Resolution (minor revision)**

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9 **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATION: YES 24, NO 0, ABSTAIN 0**

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12 **Text of the Standing Resolution as it would appear in the Conference Journal:**

13 **The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference** continues to support the endeavor to close the
14 Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly School of the Americas or
15 SOA) located on the U.S. Army Base at Fort Benning, Georgia. The SOA trains Latin American
16 personnel in inhumane, oppressive tactics such as torture, assassination and kidnapping, to
17 control their populations. This resolution is consistent with the Social Principles P164(A),
18 which clearly oppose the kinds of actions taken by graduates of the Western Hemispheric
19 Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC).

20 Congregations and individuals are encouraged to bring this matter to the attention of the
21 entire conference membership through appropriate action(s), including publicizing the issue
22 in conference, district and local newsletters, conducting education events and especially
23 expressing their will to the President and Members of Congress.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

26 **What will this action accomplish?**

27 Congregations and individuals will increase awareness of this ongoing issue with the goal of
28 convincing the US government to close or fundamentally change the nature of the training
29 they offer to police and military personnel of allied countries.

31 **Why is it important?**

32 Each year, foreign soldiers and police officers from over 150 countries receive training from
33 the US government. This training is undertaken with minimal oversight and little assessment
34 of the effects of such instruction on human rights around the world.

35 The US Army School of the Americas (SOA) provided such training to soldiers from Latin
36 America from 1946 to 2000. Several graduates from the SOA returned to their home
37 countries and committed human rights abuses, including the murders of priests, women,
38 and children. In 1996, it was discovered that training manuals at the SOA advocated such
39 practices as torture, extortion, kidnapping, and execution. In response to these egregious
40 acts, The United Methodist Church called for the closing of the SOA in 2000. In 2001, under
41 pressure from advocacy groups, the name of the institution was changed to the Western

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1 Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) and the curriculum was reformed
2 to include more human rights and democracy training. However, no US army or government
3 officials have been held accountable for the development and use of training manuals
4 advocating practices in clear violation of domestic and international laws.

5 WHINSEC-SOA is symbolic of a much larger issue. It is one of many institutions providing
6 foreign military training in the US, most of which provide substantially less human rights
7 instruction than WHINSEC-SOA. Tens of thousands of students come to the US to study at
8 approximately 275 US military institutions. Tens of thousands more receive training from US
9 forces in their home countries. Time and again, the US has provided training to forces
10 directly responsible for human rights abuses, in countries such as Indonesia, East Timor,
11 Rwanda, and Colombia. Such training has helped to prop up large militaries that are often
12 used to suppress government opposition groups and thwart legitimate democratic activity —
13 all in the name of counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism. US military training of
14 Mujahideen forces in Afghanistan (which included Taliban forces) is but one example of how
15 the troops we train today may become the forces (or train the forces) we face tomorrow.
16 Such cases demonstrate how important it is that any US military training plans consider the
17 political realities and level of existing human rights protections in the host country. Being a
18 good neighbor does not mean providing bombs and sniper training to economically
19 depressed countries in Latin America. Our neighbors need humanitarian aid, civil society
20 support, and judicial reforms.

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23 **How will it be carried out? By whom?**

24 Individuals, congregations and the conference Peace with Justice coordinator will advocate
25 with elected officials to carry out this reform.

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27 **How much will it cost? Where will the money come from?**

28 There is no monetary cost for these actions.

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