

# *School of Americas Watch Moves Annual Protest to Militarized U.S.-Mexico Border*

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Phoenix, October 10 (RHC)-- Hundreds of people, answering the call by the School of Americas Watch for a U.S. Border Convergence, met on both sides of the U.S. and Mexico for a weekend of protests against U.S. militarization and in support of migrant rights.

One of the speakers at the event, Hector Aristizabal from Colombia, told participants: "No one wakes up one day wanting to abandon their language (and) culture (just) to escape violence and poverty."

Aristizabal, a theatrical performer and pioneering psychologist, has survived a civil war, arrest and torture at the hands of the U.S.-backed military in Colombia. He says he knows firsthand the true nature of Washington's far-reaching meddling in countries around the globe giving rise to state terrorism that forces people into exile. As a speaker at the weekend of events, Aristizabal emphasized how "money from the U.S. was used to kill people in Colombia."

The international convergence is taking place between Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora in Mexico. The meetings got underway on Friday, October 7th, and run through today, Monday, with more than 430 human rights, social justice, faith-based, labor, and immigrant rights groups coming together. The gathering "highlights U.S. foreign policy as one of the root causes of migration, and to stage protests and

nonviolent direct action against racism, xenophobia and U.S. militarization at home and abroad."

The group has held an annual protest at Fort Benning, Georgia, for the past 26 years at the gates of the School of the Americas, which has since been closed and reopened as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

The "School of the Assassins," as social movements call it, is a training center for military, law enforcement and civilian officials from Latin America and the Caribbean, specializing in illegal torture tactics.

The protests have been held annually since 1990 to bring attention to the victims of violence inflicted by SOA-trained officials in Latin America.

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