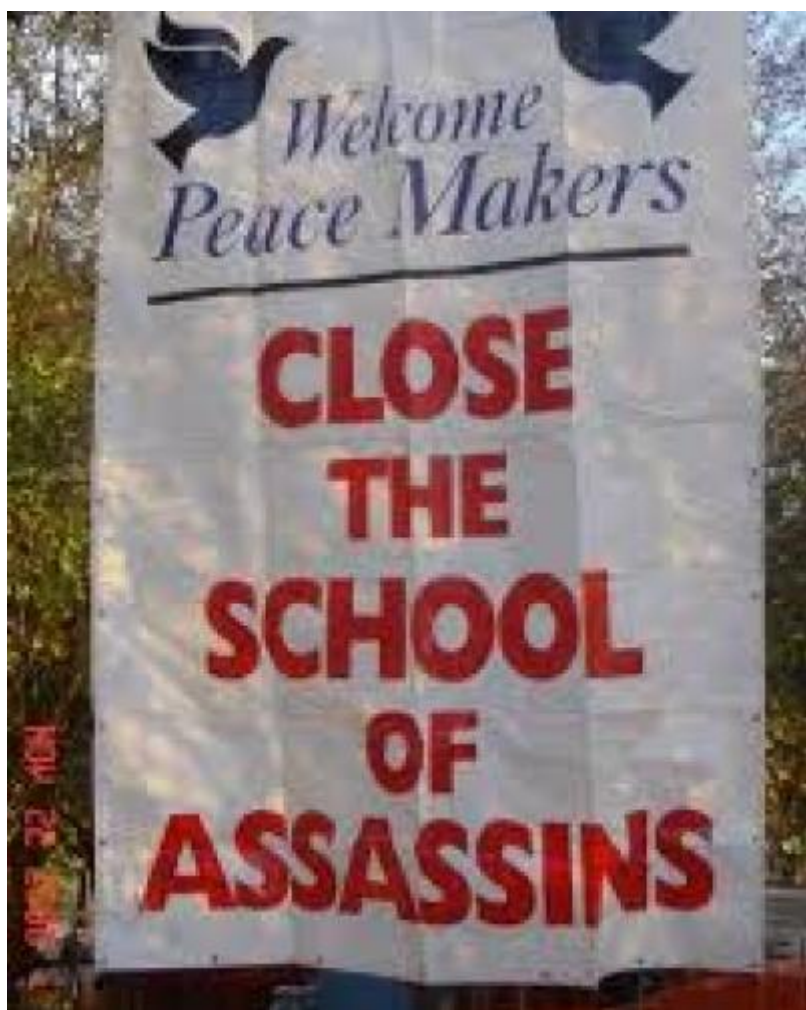


U.S. Democratic Party's New Platform Calls for Closing School of the Americas



Washington, July 20 (RHC)-- In the United States, the Democratic Party's platform committee in Orlando, Florida, has called for the closure of the School of the Americas, a military training institute whose graduates who have committed human rights abuses and carried out coups across Latin America.

The call to close the the School of the Americas, now referred to as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, was led by Macros Rubenstein, one of U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders' delegates. The amendment to the party platform reads: "Our support of democracies and civilian governments in the Western Hemisphere includes our belief that their military and police forces should never be involved in the political process."

The SOA/WHINSEC provides military training to U.S. allies in Latin America, having been created during the Cold War for anti-communist purposes.

The move to shut down the institute was welcomed by human rights groups, which have criticized the institute for training

military personnel that committed human rights abuses, with critics referring to the institution as "the School of Assassins."

The SOA/WHINSEC has been responsible for training a number of Argentinean military leaders who were involved in that country's "dirty war," which saw a military dictatorship hunting down and disappearing thousands of left-wing Argentines.

While the platform is not binding, lobbying group SOA Watch said that it would increase pressure on both the current Barack Obama government and Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. Campaigners have expressed concern over Clinton's policies with respect to Latin America, and in particular her involvement

in the 2009 U.S.-backed coup in Honduras that took place while she was Secretary of State.

"Despite a shocking human rights abuse record, the School of the Americas continues to operate with U.S. taxpayer money. Closing the SOA would send a strong human rights message to Latin America and the world," said SOA Watch founder Father Roy Bourgeois in November.

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