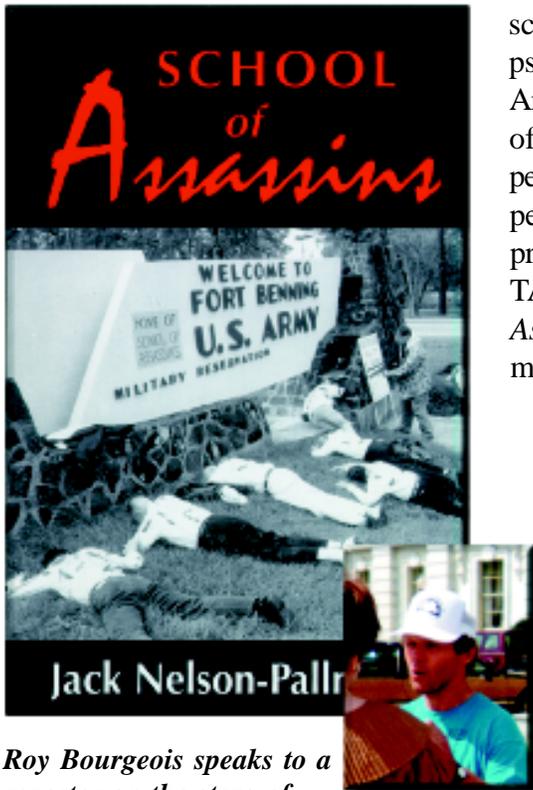


The Post-Cold War USARSA (1990-2000):

Col. William A. DePalo, Jr. was picked by the TRADOC Commander, Gen. Max Thurman, to place USARSA in the vanguard of TRADOC schools. He assumed command on January 6, 1989 and his influence was soon felt. Col. DePalo took control of the selection of quality U.S. personnel to serve on USARSA's staff and faculty. This resulted in a 100% selection rate for promotion of eligible Captains to Major and their subsequent assignment to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff Course at Fort Leavenworth. He instituted the Course Mission Training Plan (CMTP) process in which he was briefed on each course and personally approved its composition prior to execution. Col. DePalo had full support from the TRADOC Commander, and the school was reaping the benefits.

On January 11, 1990, the acronym "USARSA" was shortened to "SOA," or School of the Americas. The rationale for the change was to emphasize its hemispheric orientation and the level of the Latin American contribution to the school's mission. In hindsight, eliminating the words "U.S. Army" from the school's title would provide future detractors of the school an avenue to psychologically separate "SOA" from its core association with the U.S. Army. Almost immediately following the change, a group known as "School of the Americas Watch" (SOA Watch), headed by Maryknoll priest and peace activist Roy Bourgeois, began grassroots organizing of activists in the peace and justice community to pressure Congress and engage in a noisy protest movement to have the SOA closed. SOA Watch trumpeted the old TASS theme of an "Academy of Torture" through a book titled *School of Assassins*, by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer. The Maryknoll organization actively marketed both the book and several videos through their media organs.



Roy Bourgeois speaks to a reporter on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

date all special-operations-type training and focus more on the principle threats to regional security.⁵³

The Department of Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict (DSOLIC) was established in 1989 and taught courses dealing with military intelligence, psychological operations, commando and counternarcotics operations, sapper (combat engineer) skills, and two cadet courses. The initiation of the Counternarcotics Operations Course and Presidential Order 660 allowed the renewed training of Latin American police personnel at the school.

Col. DePalo assumed command of an organization that was spread across Fort Benning as the school awaited renovation of its headquarters in the historic "Old Infantry School." However, through strong leadership, competent staff work, and professional instructors, the SOA continued to train significant numbers of Latin American students despite frequent shifts in facilities on the post. In response to the U.S. Southern Command's assessment of the future impact of the burgeoning illegal-drug trade would have on the Latin American militaries, Col. DePalo ordered the development of the Counternarcotics Operations Course and established a third training department to consolidate



USARSA students learn demolition techniques useful in counternarcotics operations and clearing mines from areas of past conflict.

The renamed Department of Tactics and Combined Arms taught the traditional military courses such as the Officer Advanced and Basic Courses, Training Management, Cadet Branch Orientations for Infantry, Artillery, and Cavalry, and the Basic Noncommissioned-Officer Course. This department was also responsible for the instruction imparted in the El Salvador Officer Candidate Course in conjunction with U.S. support of the armed forces of El Salvador in their brutal civil conflict.⁵⁴ The third department, renamed to be the Department of Joint and Combined Operations to align with Fort Leavenworth's terminology, presented the Officer Training Management Course, the Joint-Operations Course, and SOA's flagship course, the year-long Command and General Staff Officer Course.

To develop *esprit de corps* and professional pride in SOA, Col. DePalo asked for and received, in April 1990,

42 parachute positions to conduct airborne operations for students and cadre and have wing exchanges with visiting airborne-qualified soldiers.⁵⁵ The school has since conducted a decade of airborne operations with the militaries of Latin America.

Under TRADOC guidance, the theme of national development carried to Fort Benning from Panama was supplanted by more traditional military subjects. Three primary training vectors were established: Joint and Combined Operations, Low-Intensity Conflict, and Noncommissioned-Officer Professional Development.⁵⁶ Gone were the Resource Management Course, the Engineer Management Course, and the Basic Medical and Preventive Medicine Courses. They were replaced with the Strategic Military Intelligence Course, the Sapper Course, the Sniper Course, and the aforementioned Counternarcotics Operations Course.⁵⁷ The Basic Medical Course was reinstated in 1991 as the Combat Medic Course and three progressive noncommissioned-officer professional-development courses were created.⁵⁸



Under Col. DePalo's watch, the SOA trained nearly 3,000 students.⁵⁹ He handed over the reins of the school to Col. Jose R. Feliciano on May 3, 1991. The school's future looked bright, even in the face of a dramatic decline in U.S.

defense and foreign-assistance spending following the fall of the Soviet Union. A new presidential administration was in power and determined to reap domestic economic benefit from the supposed "peace dividend." The funding for military activities, to include the Department of State funds to send students to the SOA, was slashed to a fraction of its 1989 level. Col. Feliciano, a consummate trainer well known in the TRADOC community, had the dual mission of keeping the SOA in the training vanguard and maintaining positive relations with Latin America despite a growing sense of abandonment by the new administration.

Col. Feliciano recognized the need to capitalize on the changes already introduced and to develop an even larger impact for the SOA in serving Latin American training needs. In December 1991, the school celebrated the activation of the SOA Helicopter School Battalion (HSB), located at Fort



Flight students at the HSB, Fort Rucker, familiarize themselves with night vision goggles.

Rucker, Alabama.⁶⁰ The organization had struggled for existence since 1984, but now with the SOA's hemispheric footprint and strategic overwatch, helicopter-flight and maintenance training could be expanded past the original mission to train El Salvadoran helicopter pilots and mechanics. The revised and updated training at the SOA remained much the same. However, because of the success he had achieved with a mobile training team responsible for teaching resource management while he was the Commander of the U.S. Military Group in Honduras, Col. Feliciano instituted a 4-week Resource Management Course for the 1993 Academic Year. An Executive/Field-Grade Level Logistics Course was also created during that year.⁶¹ Both courses were designed to improve the transparency of financial administration and civilian control of Latin American militaries.



Dr. Russell Ramsey with two distinguished graduates of USARSA's Democratic Sustainment Course.

Col. Feliciano concentrated much of his time traveling in Latin America to building better relationships and promoting the SOA over other military-training programs. It was this action in September 1991 that brought 132 Chilean military-academy cadets to the SOA for the first time since 1976.⁶² It was also under his watch that in 1992, the SOA recorded its highest student load in spite of dwindling resources. That year, the SOA trained 1567 students at Fort Benning and 186 students at the Helicopter School Battalion.⁶³

However, while the SOA was achieving significant success in its mission to: *“develop and conduct for the armed forces of Latin America, the most doctrinally sound, relevant, and cost-effective training programs possible; promote military professionalism; foster greater cooperation among the multinational military forces; and expand the Latin American armed forces’ knowledge of U.S. customs and traditions,”*⁶⁴ SOA Watch was turning up the pressure. Demonstrations in Washington and at Fort Benning began drawing more participants. From the 1996 revelations of the “Torture Manuals” on, thousands would gather at Benning’s main gate each November, ultimately crossing the post boundary in violation of the law. Some two dozen repeat trespassers and individuals who had damaged government property or resisted arrest were prosecuted in 1997 and sen-



One of the protestors during a rally held outside the main gate of Fort Benning, Georgia.

tenced to short prison terms. Opinion pieces began appearing in the national press profiling the imprisoned activists and denouncing the SOA and the U.S. policies it was executing. Ironically, it was during this time period when, in response to USSOUTHCOM guidance, the SOA began to expand its human-rights training program to attack the very concerns that lay at the heart of the protest movement. The school had always discussed with its students the laws of war and other statutory rules that govern military operations in wartime. However, a segment on international human-rights law had been developed and added to each course by the end of 1993.⁶⁵ The movement against the SOA was growing, but TRADOC and the Department of the Army, concerned about other major transitional issues facing the Army after the Cold War, did not yet feel the need to respond.

Col. Feliciano directed that a team develop a plan to convert the U.S. Army-controlled SOA into a more visible Department of Defense-level institute that would have broad appeal and high-level support. A detailed concept paper was developed and on June 8, 1992 was sent to the Chief of Staff of the Army through the Combined Arms Command and the Commander, TRADOC.⁶⁶ The Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (ODCSOPS) briefed the concept to the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Gordon Sullivan, on January 12, 1993.⁶⁷ Gen. Sullivan recommended forwarding the concept to the Joint Staff for consideration.⁶⁸ However the Chief of Staff of TRADOC, Maj. Gen. John P. Herrling, recommended scrapping the proposal in a return letter to ODCSOPS. He was concerned that the designated executive agent (TRADOC) would not be able to meet the combined demand for Spanish-speaking and subject-qualified instructors and cited no significant benefits to TRADOC in this atmosphere of dwindling resources.⁶⁹ The initial proposal died on April 14, 1993, one month after Col. Feliciano had handed the SOA over to Col. Jose M. Alvarez. However, the initiative regained momentum in 1994 and 1996, but was again rejected by higher headquarters in the wake of restructuring the Unified Command Plan delineating the roles of both Atlantic and Southern Commands. The reaction by TRADOC and the other services to the SOA’s plan to convert it-

self into a higher-level institute, whose foreign-policy mission would be much better understood and received, foreshadowed the difficulties of the coming years. Col. Alvarez' assignment to the SOA would also have a major impact on the future existence of the school.

The SOA did not skip a beat in conducting training in 1993. That year 1,190 students would be trained at Fort Benning. An additional 215 were trained at the Helicopter School Battalion.⁷⁰ The SOA also added the Civil-Military Affairs Course to be taught in June 1993.⁷¹ The school had been adapting its curriculum since 1990 in response to USSOUTHCOM directives concerning Latin American training needs and changes to U.S. policies and standards for international military education and training.

Under Col. Alvarez' guidance, the mandatory law-of-war training was strengthened in October 1993 when the school implemented a human-rights training program for all U.S. and Latin American instructors. Each instructor received 16 hours of human-rights instruction to prepare them to occupy the platform and discuss human-rights issues when they arose.⁷² This program has since matured to what it is today: the most complete instructional program in the law of war and international humanitarian law available to any international student attending military training or education in the United States.

Not until November 1994 did the White House publish a new National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, which could be used to gauge the SOA's new role in Latin American-U.S. military engagement. Coinciding with the massive drawdown of U.S. forces following the Cold War, the growing debate on the school consumed critical

political capital needed by the Army to preserve other military capabilities in the face of expectations of a "peace dividend." Col. Alvarez' honeymoon was over on August 9, 1993 when an article written by Douglas Waller appeared in Newsweek denouncing the School of the Americas and characterizing Col. Alvarez as "running a school for dictators."

The media had finally sniffed a scandal, picking up the banner and giving SOA Watch a national voice. A small group of protesters gathered at Fort Benning's gate to reenact atrocities from El Salvador's civil war, gaining more media attention for the cause. Congressman Joe Kennedy (D-MA) responded to intense pressure from Catholic constituents by

bringing to the floor of the House of Representatives a bill to close the School of the Americas. A full House vote against the school later in 1994 was defeated 175 to 217, but momentum against the SOA was increasing.



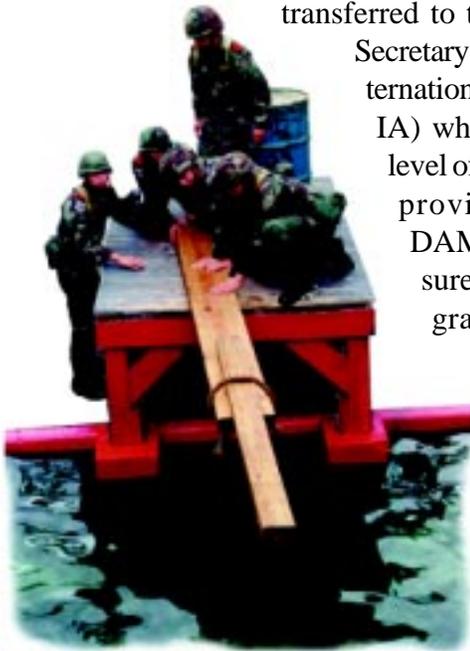
Aviation flight training at the HSB.(Above)



Realistic medical training during a tactical field exercise.(Right)

The political fight had begun when the Army staff received word that Representative Kennedy was to sponsor a bill against the SOA. TRADOC's reaction was to insert another layer of general-officer supervision over the school. On September 13, 1994, the TRADOC Commander placed the SOA under the control of the Infantry Center Commander, giving the school direct general-officer-level support, but ultimately making USARSA's voice even harder to hear in Washington.⁷³ Col. Alvarez, however, was prepared to raise the issue to the level at which the SOA could be understood in terms other than dollars and cents as was the current situation with TRADOC.

Trips to Latin America were curtailed, and trips to Washington D.C. were scheduled in their place. On April 15, 1994, the Army's Directorate of Strategy, Plans, and Policy (DAMO-SS) established the SOA Inter-Agency Working Group. Responsibility for the working group was



Honduran Military Academy cadets test their leadership and problem solving skills on the leadership reaction course.

Southern Command, and other agencies involved in policy formulation and execution. A TRADOC representative occasionally attended.⁷⁴

The group achieved significant success in developing a solid front of support in the Executive Branch for the school and in informing Congress of the value of such an institution. During the following two years, the group proved its worth by heading off the 1995 vote and convincing key congressional members that the 1996 vote should be with-

drawn.⁷⁵ The reaction to this victory by the then Secretary of the Army for International Affairs (DUSA-IA) when this Secretary-level office was created to provide oversight of DAMO-SS and to ensure interagency integration at the Army level. Meetings were initially held quarterly with representatives from the Department of State, U.S.A.I.D, the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, U.S.

drawn.⁷⁵ The reaction to this victory by the then Secretary of the Army, Togo West, surprised even those inside the Washington Beltway. On November 4, 1996, Secretary West issued an order to concentrate the political battle in his office.⁷⁶ The order gave his Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs (DUSA-IA) authority to “exercise sole secretariat responsibility on my behalf.” The memorandum ordered the DUSA-IA to “disband the task force” and “do not independently generate position papers or advocacy pieces designed to influence outside audiences, including Congress, the media, and the general public.” If that was not clear enough, the memorandum directed the “suspension of all other U.S. Army activities involving the advocacy or investigation of facts and circumstances of past instruction involving the controversial manuals pending completion of the DOD Inspector General review.”⁷⁷ This order effectively stopped SOA and the U.S. Army from communicating with Congress and the public and correcting the misinformation generated by opponents of the school. It appeared that the SOA was not perceived, even by those dressed in Army greens, as a U.S. Army institution, and as such, worthy of a strong defense.

The results of this policy were reflected in the next three Congressional votes on House amendments to cut off funding for the SOA. In 1997 and 1998, the amendments were narrowly defeated by votes of 217 to 210 and 212 to 201, respectively. Votes were largely cast along partisan lines, with Democrats, ironically, voting overwhelmingly against the Clinton Administration’s repeated endorsements of the school.⁷⁸ It was only through the high-level Inter-



The Secretary of the Army, Togo West visits USARSA with Gen. Fred Franks, the Commander of TRADOC, to discuss issues with Col. Alvarez.

Agency contacts established by Col. Alvarez that the school was able to retaliate using its own internal assets, within the limits established by Secretary West's order. If these relationships had not been established, the school would have long since closed, unfairly tarnishing the U.S. Army and all the soldiers and civilians at the school who had performed their duties lawfully and faithfully since 1949.

Col. Jose M. Alvarez' chapter with the U.S. Army School of the Americas ended on January 13, 1995 in an emotional change of command ceremony. Col. Roy R. Trumble took command that afternoon of an institution bloodied before public opinion by leftist theatrics, Congressional gamesmanship, and half-hearted support for USARSA's mission from higher headquarters.

The political fighting had deeply distressed the staff and faculty of the SOA. Over 200 loyal American soldiers and civilian employees who were dedicating the best of their service to improving the militaries of the region for good ends felt they had been systematically defamed and seemingly abandoned by their senior leaders. Col. Trumble's optimism, energy, and affable personality helped lighten the heavy air throughout the hallways of Ridgway Hall. His long experience in Latin America as a special-forces officer gave him instant credibility with the Latin Americans. Col. Trumble was well suited for the task of running the U.S. Army School of the Americas, but the political fights had yet to cease.

Latin America was coming out of the shadows again as the 1994 National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement was implemented. In September 1995, the Department of Defense issued the U.S. Security Strategy for the Americas in support of the White House's earlier national strategy. The school's staff eagerly awaited a copy in order to analyze any possible changes to the curriculum that might be addressed in the new strategies. In a report back to the ODCSOPS, the SOA linked 32 of its courses to one or more of the listed strategic objectives and immediately began to develop the Peace Operations and Democratic-Sustainment Courses to support specific tenets of the



Col. Trumble addresses the soldiers of USARSA in a colorful military ceremony.

DOD strategy.⁷⁹ Of the eight strategic objectives in the report, six were directly supported by the SOA's instruction. Those six strategic objectives were to support democracy, foster the peaceful resolution of disputes,

support counterdrug efforts, promote anti-terrorism measures, create sustainable development, and expand defense cooperation.⁸⁰ The school now had an updated validation of its worth in the U.S. foreign-policy arena.

Over the next few years, additional initiatives would strengthen the school's role. On the heels of the National Security Strategy and the DOD Strategy, a proposal was made to expand the North American Free Trade Area to include the Southern Cone in efforts to promote continued Latin American economic development. The Defense Department held a series of Defense Ministerial meetings in 1995 and 1997 to reinvigorate hemispheric cooperation and outline emerging missions for the military forces of the region.⁸¹ Following the release of the 1997 version, National Security Strategy for the Next Century, a third Defense Ministerial was held in 1999 at Santiago, Chile. And finally, in 1999, the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Southern Command issued his Theater Engagement Plan, highlighting the U.S. Army School of the Americas as one of his tools to achieve the nation's foreign-policy goals. Amazingly, the SOA continued to find itself arguing with its own higher headquarters about the need and value of the school, and again, the communication network that Col. Alvarez had established would serve Col. Trumble in marshalling required support from above.



A member of the Colombian National Police is camouflaged before a counternarcotics exercise. The introduction of women into Latin America's armed forces and police was evident in USARSA's changing student demographics during the nineties.

The issue came to a head on August 22, 1996 when the TRADOC Commander, Gen. William Hartzog, arrived at Fort Benning to discuss the SOA's future with Maj. Gen. Carl Ernst, the Fort Benning Commander, and Col. Trumble. The planned itinerary was shelved, and a private meeting was conducted between the three principals. No minutes exist to document the conversations, but the hours-long meeting ended with Col. Trumble remaining as commandant for two additional years and Maj. Gen. Ernst given the explicit mission to provide general-officer leadership in supporting the school. By the end of his tour, Maj. Gen. Ernst was acting as the chief advocate of the school in front of the many congressional representatives and staff members coming to visit Fort Benning and the SOA.

Col. Trumble arrived at the school just in time to see a drastic reduction of funding impact international military student training. Col. Trumble immediately ordered a complete scrub of all expenses in order to lower tuition costs and, consequently, boost student enrollment. By November 1995, the analysis was complete, and Col. Trumble

guided innovative methods to ensure quality training while substantially reducing the associated costs.⁸² However, the damage caused by the contraction of funding to the student enrollment was already evident. For 1995, the SOA would train a record low of 615 students.⁸³

The Department of the Army developed a reactive public-affairs plan in February 1995, but the “burden of proof” remained on the school to defend against the increasingly sensationalized accusations appearing in the national media.⁸⁴ The U.S. Army staff busied itself by answering letters that were mailed directly to the White House and, in conjunction with a reinvigorated Office of Congressional Legislative Liaison, developed an aggressive schedule of congressional staff visits to SOA. Two amendments to close the school had been defeated, and student projections were rising to about 1000 as the changes in course costs took effect. The Peace Operations and Democratic-Sustainment Courses were developed, and the U.S. Military Groups were filling the student quotas.⁸⁵

The human-rights program was also strengthened under the expert knowledge of a U.S. Army Judge Advocate General officer recently assigned to the school to serve as its human-rights and law-of-war instructor. A distinguished Board of Visitors consisting of retired general officers, academics, diplomats, and a human-rights lawyer was established in 1996 by Gen. Hartzog to give him external and independent advice concerning the school. The group met in May 1996 and again in December providing the General with positive feedback and suggestions as to how to improve the SOA.⁸⁶ Col. Trumble's presence at the school was felt and seen as he walked the hallways, visited both field and classroom training, and traveled throughout Latin America.

The dark cloud of innuendo and mistrust covered the SOA again in June 1996 when a Presidential Intelligence Oversight Board report on CIA activities in Guatemala mentioned the separate 1991 report on intelligence manuals used at the SOA and U.S. Southern Command.⁸⁷ The building conspiracy against the SOA now had what it considered a “smoking gun” to prove the U.S. Government was actively teaching Latin American militaries to repress, through illegal means, subversive elements in their societies. On October 17, 1996, the Department of Defense notified the SOA that it would immediately begin an in-depth three-part investigation.⁸⁸ The first report was issued on February 21, 1997 and confirmed the findings of the initial 1991 report absolving the SOA of any wrongdoing. The second report was to

focus on the training at the SOA and not be so swift in its release.

Report Number PO 98-601, Evaluation Report on the Training of Foreign Military Personnel – Phase II: School of the Americas, was released on November 14, 1997. The report reviewed the allegations of misdoing and factually refuted the charges that the SOA trains Latin Americans in illegal tactics, techniques, or procedures.⁸⁹ However, the official gag order had been in place for a year without responding to mounds of negative press floating around the halls of Congress. It appeared to the political decisionmakers that the U.S. Army did not have anything good to say about the School of the Americas, as they did not initially respond to their inquiries. The detractors had succeeded in creating the perception that the SOA was something other than a U.S. Army unit carrying out its mission properly and under supervision. Their increasing success was reflected in the 1997, 1998, and 1999 votes to cut off funding to the SOA. The School of the Americas, it seemed, was going to be the Army's "sacrificial lamb" to appease the critics of the U.S. policy of containment of Communism in Latin America. On

January 5, 1998, the "SOA" returned to its original acronym, "USARSA," and tried to recover with the public its intimate association with the U.S. Army.

Under a growing cloud of controversy and doubt, Col. Trumble, having overseen the training of over 2,500 students, lamented in his change of command speech on July 17, 1998 that the civilian and military leadership had momentarily lost faith in their citizen soldiers and that this should never happen again. This mission was handed to Col. Glenn R. Weidner, a field artilleryman and foreign-area officer with extensive experience in security assistance and peacekeeping assignments in Latin America.

On September 27, 1998, the local newspaper welcomed the West Point-educated commandant as a peacemaker who could bring new dialog to the raging public debate.⁹⁰ Col. Weidner had been preparing for command of USARSA while serving as a Senior Fellow at Harvard's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs studying the development of the Inter-American System. While at Harvard, he researched the concerted efforts by all the na-

A Dynamic Staff & Faculty

The participation of Latin American officers and noncommissioned officers among USARSA's staff and faculty was key to accomplishing the mission of the school. Military and police representatives from all Latin American countries served as guest instructors for one to two year terms. Prior to assuming teaching duties, both the U.S. and guest instructors first passed the U.S. Army-mandated Instructor Training Course to Training and Doctrine Command standards. This course prepared individuals to create lesson plans and teach U.S military subject matter using performance-oriented training techniques. Also included, since 1993, was a sixteen-hour class on international humanitarian law and human rights to ensure each instructor was prepared to discuss these important issues as they arose in the classroom or during field training. Those who served as guest instructors provided the depth and experience that made USARSA the premier institution in the hemisphere in promoting inter-regional and multilateral dialog among the region's military professionals.

The position of Deputy Commandant also was key to promoting a shared approach to USARSA's program. Since the mid sixties a Latin American colonel filled the Deputy Commandant position. During a two-year term, the Deputy Commandant served as the head of the Latin American Advisory Committee, the chief of the editorial board for the school's professional magazine, and provided key advice to the Commandant in matters dealing with U.S. and Latin American military affairs and cross-cultural relations. While in Panama, most Deputy Commandants were selected from the Panamanian National Guard or from selected countries the U.S. was particularly interested in influencing militarily. However, when USARSA moved to the United States, the political nature of the selection was ended. Countries were then selected in alphabetical order skipping those countries that had already filled the position under past policies.

As with USARSA's students, the vast majority of guest instructors and Deputy Commandants returned to their countries and completed long, distinguished, and honorable careers. These individuals were originally selected by their respective countries because of their proven abilities and future potential, and as such many attained positions of national leadership while in active service or after retirement. Without these distinguished individuals, USARSA would not have been able to make so effective a contribution to regional stability, cooperation, and peace.

tions in the Western Hemisphere, including the U.S., to create an Inter-American system of mutual cooperation in matters dealing with diplomacy, defense, and trade. The thesis he developed underscored opportunities for multilateral and cooperative approaches within the existing institutions of the Inter-American system as alternatives to unilateral actions based on Cold War paradigms. These principles would characterize his influence on the curriculum and the environment at USARSA.

Col. Weidner's initial opportunity to debate the opposition actually came before he took command. On May 2, 1998, Col. Weidner joined a USARSA team at West Point, New York for a scheduled debate with a team headed by the Father Superior of the Maryknoll Order, the missionary order of the founding critic of USARSA.⁹¹ Confronted with the admission that USARSA's opponents knew that the school did not teach torture or murder but would protest out of solidarity with the "revolution of the poor," Col. Weidner was struck by the moral hypocrisy of this position, given the prominence such allegations received in Maryknoll literature. This meeting convinced him of the need to change the Army's policy with respect to the public defense of the school and its personnel. He developed materials for dissemination to public-affairs offices and Army organizations located throughout the country, and obtained headquarters approval to participate in print interviews, television and radio talk shows, broadcast news events, and special appearances throughout the United States. In March 2000, he successfully debated Jack Nelson Pallmeyer in Cleveland and Roy Bourgeois at Dickinson College in Carlisle Pennsylvania, despite audiences that had been prepared to be hostile.

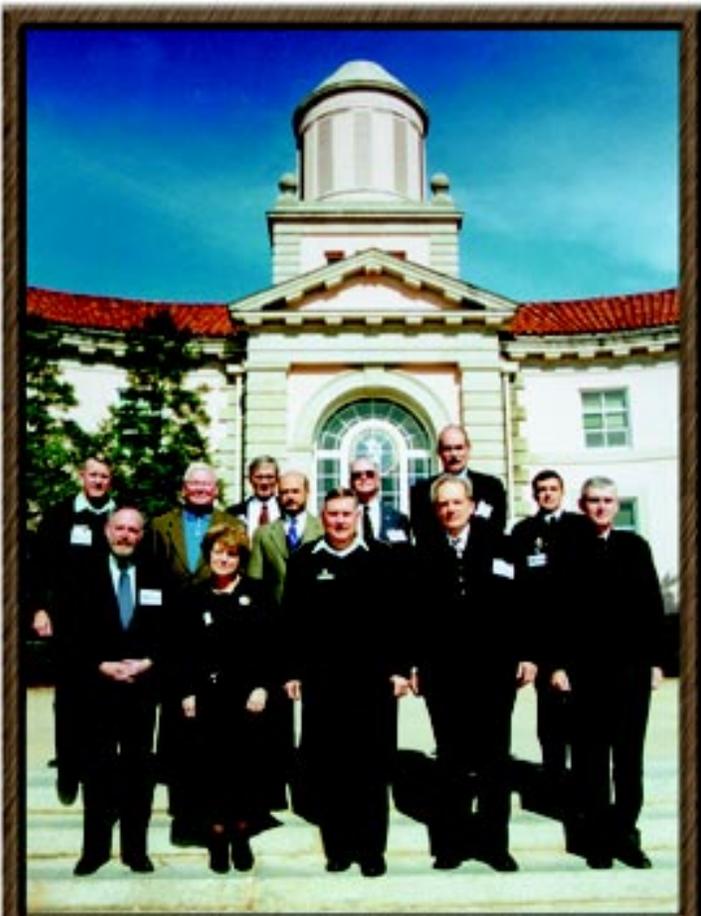
Col. Weidner's impact on USARSA, though, is not wholly measured by his abilities as a winning debater, but also by his highly respected reputation as a U.S. Army foreign-area officer. His prior experience in security-assistance offices in U.S. Embassies abroad, as a U.S. Southern Command general-staff officer, and as the Commander of the U.S. contingent of the highly successful peace mission to Peru and Ecuador in 1995 equipped him to bring a new level of excellence to USARSA's curricular offerings in the context of post-Cold War requirements. His fluency in Spanish and region-wide reputation allowed him to build ever



Mr. Hugh Thompson and Mr. Larry Colburn discuss Human Rights and their role they played to stop the atrocities committed at My Lai during the Vietnam War.

stronger relationships and support for USARSA with the counterpart countries of Latin America.

Col. Weidner directed an expanded approach to human-rights training, incorporating ethical as well as practical and legal considerations into the basic block, and balancing the human-rights portion of the curriculum with the duties and responsibilities of professional soldiers. Under Col. Weidner's command, the first Human-Rights Train-the-Trainer Courses were conducted at USARSA, capitalizing on the demand generated by past years' mobile training teams that had traveled to Latin America to impart that instruction. Human-rights and the law-of-war training also benefited when Col. Weidner instituted a developmental and Socratic approach to teaching this subject matter. Classroom training and field scenarios began to walk the students through progressively complex applications of the legal, moral, and ethical aspects of the laws of war and human-rights law. Case studies were introduced to drive unfettered dialog concerning these issues by students and instructors. USARSA even developed and published a textbook of background readings targeted at various course levels to accompany the enhanced human-rights-training methodology. Other military agencies, both U.S. and Latin American, requested the text and associated lesson plans to improve their respective human-rights training programs. Through this multifaceted exposure, the militaries of Latin America now have human rights interwoven into their professional military lexicon.



Front row, left to right: Mr. Steve Schneebaum, Dr. Johanna Mendelsohn, Gen. John Abrams, Ambassador(R) Luigi Einaudi, and Col. Glenn Weidner. Back row, left to right: Gen. John LeMoyne, Gen.(R) Paul Gorman, Mr. Jack Speedy, Dr. Louis Goodman, Ambassador(R) David Passage, Dr. David Palmer, and Col. Patricio Haro Ayerve.

Contrary to the critics' charge that there is no adequate external evaluation, the USARSA Board of Visitors (BOV) is a Subcommittee of the Army Education Advisory Committee chartered to provide the Secretary of the Army and the Army's senior leadership with external expert and continuous advice on Army educational programs. From its inception in 1996, the BOV members have been selected from fields of education for their expertise in Latin American studies, foreign affairs, human rights international law and national security affairs. This distinguished group of highly qualified individuals provides multifaceted advice to both the USARSA Commandant and the TRADOC Commander concerning roles, missions, and future endeavors. Specific recommendations focus on training methodology and on improving the school's efficiency and its impact on its student population.

Over the last ten years, the Department of Joint and Combined Operations had seen a 270% increase in the number of courses the department was charged with implementing.⁹² This department was responsible for nearly half the number of students trained each year with expectations to grow even further when the proposed International Operational Law and the Inspector General courses were finalized. The School Battalion continued its first-rate training program. The School Battalion revitalized the Small-Unit Tactical-Leader Course to promote military and police interoperability during counternarcotics operations and redeveloped the Information Operations Course to encompass all the modes of successful military campaign plans. Col. Weidner effectively used the Course Implementation Briefings provided by each course director to monitor application of his directives and policies to course design.⁹³ He also formally reconstituted the Department of Evaluation to ensure training was competently and safely conducted and all training-management processes were in accordance with established regulations. The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Southern Command, became more closely involved by certifying the school curriculum as meeting his regional objectives. The Secretary of Defense issued a certification report that USARSA's curriculum was consistent with U.S. values and military training.⁹⁴ The administrative recommendations issued by the DOD IG were implemented and reported as complete.⁹⁵ Numerous delegations from both houses of Congress visited the school, observed firsthand the positive nature of the training, expressed appreciation for the positive work being done by our soldiers, but bemoaned constant constituent pressure to vote against USARSA's continued operation.

Congressional pressure boiled to the top in 1999 when it was announced that the House of Representatives had voted 230-197 in favor of an amendment to prohibit use of Foreign Operations funding at the U.S. Army School of the Americas. The fight had now been pushed to a conference committee with the Senate, which, according to key staffers, was hoping to avoid having to table the issue by keeping such a raucous debate in the House of Representatives. At the behest of the Secretary of the Army, Col. Weidner visited key members to personally brief them on USARSA's accomplishments. A joint committee later voted 8-7 against passing to the Senate a bill that deleted funding USARSA for fiscal year 2000. This was a small victory, but one that signaled future compromises if the U.S. Army wanted to continue with a school dedicated to the professional education and training of our Latin American allies.



Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera.

Glimpses of the coming changes were announced in an article appearing in the *New York Times* on November 19, 1999. Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera called for remodeling the school under a new name with an expanded curriculum and student body to better address post-Cold War security concerns. Secretary Caldera stated that the proposed changes were not meant to placate critics but were directed at the changing political and security climate of the Americas.⁹⁶ The annual debate had become so hyperbolic that most congressional members saw it as detrimental to all parties, and Secretary Caldera took the lead and offered a means to break with a controversial past in order to work constructively for a secure future for all concerned.

The school's activist detractors, however, had no interest in solutions that would leave intact a working relationship with Latin American militaries, and immediately rejected the plan, vowing to redouble their efforts at mass demonstrations, lobbying, and civil disobedience.⁹⁷ When the Secretary's statements were translated into proposed legislation, USARSA was not to be transformed or remodeled, but closed. The legislation in both the Senate and House versions of the Fiscal Year 2001 Defense Authorization Act repealed the past authority for the U.S. Army School of the Americas and authorized the secretary of defense to operate a new institute dedicated to hemispheric security cooperation. It stipulated that democracy, civil authority over the

military, and human-rights instruction be a mandatory part of every course. It enhanced oversight of the institute by stipulating a strengthened role and expanded membership for the Board of Visitors. As such, the legislative proposal directly addressed concerns that had been expressed by both supporters and critics in Congress.

When the issue came before the House for debate, Representative Joseph Moakley (D-MA) offered an amendment closing the School of the Americas and creating a congressional panel to evaluate all military training of foreign nationals. His amendment would have eliminated the portion creating the new institute. This amendment was defeated by a 214-204 margin.⁹⁸ Congress now had proposed a new Institute with no political baggage or controversial history, which would be dedicated to promoting human rights, the rule of law, due process, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society through the education and training of the militaries, police forces, and civilian officials of Latin America.

With pending legislation repealing the authority for USARSA, the School of the Americas prepared for closure. Assisted by Col. Weidner, DUSA-IA guided the development of a plan to ensure the best of USARSA was carried over to the new institute, while providing for better educational opportunities for the U.S. and Latin American students. The plan, according to Secretary Caldera, was not to be seen "as turning our backs on the countries of Latin America."⁹⁹ Col. Weidner would assure that whatever plan was developed, it would never deride the exemplary accomplishments of the U.S. military and civilian personnel who had served at USARSA over the previous 54 years. This was echoing the words of his predecessor, "to keep faith with America's servicemen and women."

The TRADOC Implementation Plan for a smooth transition to a new Department of Defense-level institution was briefed to Secretary Caldera on June 29, 2000. The Secretary approved the plan, directing Col. Weidner to close USARSA by the end of December 2000 and open the new Institute in early 2001. Col. Weidner would be the last Commandant of USARSA, but he would also be the man to spearhead the mission into the next millennium.