



Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Militarization in Guatemala

The military played a deadly role in the internal armed conflict in Guatemala. The UN Historical Clarification Commission found that 93% of the violence committed during the war was committed by the Army and other state forces. Today, the country has been re-militarized and the army continues to participate in the repression of peaceful protest and social movements.

U.S. Ban on Military Funding

Military assistance to Guatemala was first restricted by U.S. Congress in 1977. In 1990, Congress banned all Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Guatemala following the murder of U.S. citizen Michael Devine by a Guatemalan soldier.

The current language of the military ban says that funding is to be reconsidered if the army:

1. has a narrowly defined mission focused on border security and external threats,
2. is implementing a reform strategy that has broad support within Guatemalan society,
3. is respecting human rights,
4. is cooperating with civilian investigations and prosecutions of cases involving current and retired officers and with the CICIG,
5. and is publicly disclosing all military archives pertaining to the internal armed conflict.

Considering the ongoing impunity for past violations and current patterns of remilitarization, the U.S. restrictions on military aid remain important.



Truth about human rights violations remains hidden

- The vast majority of abuses committed by the army during the internal armed conflict **have not been prosecuted.**
- Despite judicial orders, key military documents from the 1980s relating to human rights abuses **have not been declassified** or handed over the courts.

The military plays a significant role in law enforcement, leading to increased violence

- On October 4, 2012, **soldiers fired on indigenous protesters killing 6 and injuring over 30 more.** The soldiers have not yet been tried and the charges were reduced to “manslaughter.”
- **New military bases** have been opened, including five new bases or outposts in 2012, particularly in regions with strong community resistance to large-scale “development” projects.
- The state has increasingly resorted to **martial law**, limiting the rights of citizens and granting exceptional powers to the military. In 2012 and 2013, the Guatemalan government **declared 1 state of prevention, 10 states of emergency, and 2 states of siege.**
- The army has regularly **participated in forced evictions**, including the eviction of almost 800 families in the Polochic Valley in March 2011 when one community member was killed.
- In 2007, **soldiers participated in the gang rape of 11 indigenous women** in the community of Lote 8, El Estor during a forced eviction

Members of the military are involved in drug trafficking and criminal structures

- Numerous Kaibiles (special forces) have been linked to “**Los Zetas**,” a powerful Mexican drug-trafficking group.
- According to the U.S. defense contractor CNA’s 2011 report, there is “an abundance of evidence that criminal organizations engaged in drug trafficking have penetrated even the highest levels of the Guatemalan military and police.”

Guatemala and the School of Americas—Notorious Attendees

The U.S. has supported militaries throughout Latin America through the School of Americas (now WHINSEC), a combat training school in Ft. Benning, GA. The SOA played a key role in the three brutal military dictatorships that ruled Guatemala from 1978 to 1986. Below are just a few of the SOA graduates from Guatemala.



Efraín Ríos Montt: former dictator convicted of genocide & war crimes

The former dictator of Guatemala who came to power after a coup in 1982, Montt attended the SOA in 1950. Two truth commissions documented widespread human rights abuses by his regime including rape, torture, executions and acts of genocide against the indigenous population through a scorched earth campaign. In May 2013, Montt was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity involving the forced displacement of 29,000 people, the deaths of 1,771 in 11 massacres, as well as acts of torture and sexual violence in the department of El Quiché. He was sentenced to 80 years in prison in Guatemalan courts. However, the verdict was later annulled and his trial is not set to resume until January 2015.

Otto Pérez Molina: former military general and current president

Pérez Molina attended the Command and General Staff College at the SOA in 1985. In 2012, Pérez Molina became the first former military officer to hold presidential office since the return to democracy in 1986. He pledged to use his military experience and an “iron fist” to fight drug trafficking and reduce violent crime. After being promoted to major in 1982, Pérez Molina was stationed in the Quiché region where he was head of the Kaibil training center. In a testimony during the genocide trial against Ríos Montt, a former army engineer accused Pérez Molina of commanding soldiers who burned down homes and killed civilians. Later in his military career, Pérez Molina worked for military intelligence, an institution that “played a decisive role in the militarization of the country,” according to the Commission for Historical Clarification. Additionally, a case was filed against Pérez Molina for allegedly participating in the forced disappearance, torture and death of guerilla leader Efraín Bámaca. The case was illegally shelved as soon as Pérez Molina was elected.

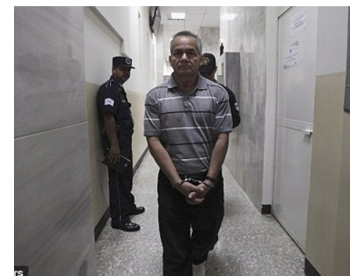


Byron Disrael Lima Estrada: involved in killing of Bishop Gerardi

Lima Estrada attended the SOA in the 1960s and went on to a 30-year military career. He served as a senior officer in key operational units during the army's "scorched earth" campaign against the Mayan villages in the northern highlands. According to the National Security Archive, there is evidence that he founded an elite unit used to carry out political executions. In January 2000, Lima Estrada was arrested for his involvement in the murder of Bishop Juan José Gerardi. Gerardi was killed in April 1998, just two days after releasing a report that documented the Guatemalan military's role in human rights abuses committed during the internal armed conflict.

Pedro Pimentel Ríos: Convicted for Dos Erres Massacre

Pimentel Ríos was an instructor at the SOA beginning in 1982, shortly after the Dos Erres massacre in which 201 people were brutally killed. During his army career in Guatemala, Pimentel Ríos was a member of the Kaibiles, the unit that carried out massacres and other abuses during the internal armed conflict. In 2012, he was extradited from the U.S. to Guatemala, where he was convicted and sentenced to 6,060 years for his involvement in the Dos Erres massacre.



Sources: Commission for Historical Clarification, *Guatemala: Memory of Silence* (1999); Statistics presented by Commissioner Dinah Shelton during a hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, October 28, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z81hmaUcolk>; <http://www.cna.org/research/2011/criminal-organizations-illicit-trafficking>; <http://www.soaw.org/about-the-soawhinsec/soawhinsec-grads/notorious-grads/239-notorious-graduates-from-guatemala>; <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchive/NSAEBB/NSAEBB373/index.htm>; <http://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/otto-perez-molina-guatemalan-president-elect-with-%E2%80%9Cblood-on-his-hands%E2%80%9D/>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/05/us-guatemala-riosmontt-idUSBRE93401C20130405>; <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchive/NSAEBB/NSAEBB25/>