

Some of the century's worst terrorists trained in U.S.

Worry about terrorism in America before fighting in the Middle East.

I'd like to thank President Bush for bringing to my attention the very real threat that terrorists pose to the people of the Western Hemisphere. By listening to his speeches, I have been filled with a sense of utter fear and hatred for all the evils of the world. I admit I was skeptical at first. Surely

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terrorists could not be that big of a threat to the West. However, after some intense research, I have learned of an astonishing terrorist network that threatens daily the stability and safety of America.

I would like to take this opportunity to share my findings and to let our campus know about an enormous terrorist training camp right in our own backyard!

Yes folks, it's the School of the Americas. What's that? You are now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation? Aww, you're such a kidder. We knew it

was you all along, good ol' SOA. Is the SOA a threat to America? Well, if you define America as the United States, then probably not. If, however, you choose to define America the same way every other nation in the Western Hemisphere does, using the name to include both the North and South continents, then the SOA is, as former Panamanian President Jorge Illueca called it, "the biggest base for destabilization in Latin America."

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Oh wait! That's right! It's located in Fort Benning, Ga., and is funded and staffed by the United States government.

Well, I'm sure it is at least a very noble institution dedicated to the ideals of democracy, self-determination and human rights. It certainly would not be a training camp for Latin American soldiers, teaching them counterinsurgency techniques, psychological warfare and interrogation tactics (a nice way of saying torture).

And graduates of the SOA, mostly Latin American soldiers, would certainly not target educators, union organizers, religious workers and social welfare workers.

The fact is that since 1946, graduates of the School of the Americas have tortured, raped, assassinated and

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dislocated hundreds of thousands of Latin American citizens. Below, I have gleaned some examples from several Latin American countries of how SOA graduates have operated.

From 1976 to 1983, Argentina suffered its "Dirty War," a period of dictatorship, political upheavals, military coups and unprecedented human rights violations. The two most prominent military dictators and human rights violators of the time were, you guessed it, SOA graduates Roberto Viola and Leopoldo Galtieri. Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Esquivel, imprisoned and tortured in Argentina for 14 months, blamed "the world's so-called leader in democracy, the United States" for the bloodshed and abuse.

Chile, 1973: Pinochet's bloody political coup. We all remember Pinochet and his terrifying human rights violations. No, he wasn't an SOA graduate, but he was certainly

supported by the SOA. The heads of his secret police, his officers who tortured and murdered a U.N. official, and men in charge of operating three of his most heinous concentration camps for political prisoners were all SOA graduates, and many were also instructors at the SOA.

In fact, in 1991, visitors to the School of the Americas (remember that's in Georgia and run by the U.S. Department of Defense) could view a letter from Pinochet and a ceremonial saber he donated to the school. Isn't that sweet?

My last example, though there are frighteningly many more, is Colombia. Sadly, this is not a history lesson but a study of current events. Colombia has had over 10,000 soldiers trained at the SOA, more than any other Latin American country.

Now, however, SOA graduates are being funded by "Plan Colombia," a \$1.3 billion pledge by the United States in the form of military equipment and chemicals to "protect U.S. interests and investments." Supposedly, it is part of an anti-drug program to dispense chemicals on the coca plant to cripple the drug cartel.

The problem is that the indiscriminate use of the herbicide also destroyed food and medicinal crops and contaminated drinking water.

Ironically, the coca fields flourished and drastically expanded. Our support of the Colombian military has allowed

the United States to maintain control of gold, silver, and oil industries in Colombia.

At the same time, over 300,000 Colombians are being forced to emigrate from their homes. The Colombian military, funded by the U.S. and trained by the School of the Americas, has increased its violence against the poor peasant farmers who make up the majority of the population.

Under the auspices of the "drug war," SOA graduates have formed paramilitary death squads and engaged in kidnapping, murdering and torturing human rights workers, union organizers and any one else who questions the authority of the dictatorial Colombian government.

We wouldn't want democracy, self-determination or human rights to get in the way of America's "interests and investments," now would we?

So, yes, I support the War on Terrorism, but only after Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld rid themselves of this blatant hypocrisy. If you truly want peace and human rights, Mr. Bush, then close the School of the Americas.

If any student is interested, the annual protest march on Fort Benning, Ga. is this weekend. I know some Wake Forest students are planning to go. To learn more about U.S. sponsored terrorism, visit www.soaw.org.

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Bush has U.S. interests in mind

Hussein and other terrorists will remain a threat to the U.S. until they are dealt with.

Arguably the most popular political topic for protestors right now is the war in Iraq. I must say, it sickens me each time I hear about another protest imploring President Bush to leave Saddam Hussein alone. I can only hope that the president, along with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and

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company, remains strong in his resolve to protect our country.

We are at war right now and we cannot afford to put these anti-war ideas in the back of our leaders' heads, which may cause them to be hesitant or lenient toward our enemies. Hussein will wreak havoc with his weapons of mass destruction if we allow him to continue to develop them. And rest assured, when he does this, he will not hesitate or act leniently. It is survival of the fittest; if we do not bring Saddam down, he will do everything in his power to bring America down. There is no peace with Saddam, just as with al-Qaeda. There is no doubt in my mind that if you were to ask Saddam Hussein or anyone in al-Qaeda to speculate on the only way America will still exist and thrive a few decades from now is over their dead bodies.

I find it funny when certain people question the amount of evidence the United States has concerning the threat that Hussein poses. Of course we cannot prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Iraq is planning to attack America in the future with weapons of mass destruction. Because of this, people like Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle argue that President Bush has no reason to attack Iraq, and that he is only doing so for his own political gain.

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This is ludicrous, coming from the same person who in May was one of the most outspoken critics of the White House's "neglect" of information received before Sept. 11. Daschle tried to make Bush look bad for not acting on some very limited information in that instance. But now, when our evidence against Iraq is far stronger than the pre-Sept. 11 information, Daschle attacks Bush for acting on it. Such is the double standard of partisan politics, and I believe that many people who share Daschle's opinion now shared his opinion back in May. These critics need to take a long look at how they felt about the lack of action before Sept. 11 and reconsider their position on Iraq. Maybe then, they might appreciate the job President Bush and the White House are doing protecting America with pre-emptive action.

People today are too idealistic. And while Sept. 11 opened some eyes, too many people are still naïve. Americans need to realize that the world is not perfect, and world peace is just not possible when you have people like Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, who would rather die than allow the West to live in harmony with them.

I'm sure President Bush is not proud of the fact that some innocent lives will be lost because of the actions he takes to defend America. But his job is to defend the lives of Americans at all costs, and I believe he is taking the necessary actions to do that. We, the American people, need to rally behind our leaders, who are dedicating themselves to defending us. It's time to stop having sympathy for people who want to kill us, and support our nation in eliminating threats like Saddam and al-Qaeda.

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Knowledge is the key to safety

While it may seem impossible that you could be infected, testing is the only way to know.

AIDS Awareness Week is coming up later this month. Just in case this went under your radar, I'll give a few facts about the schedule of events. It runs from Nov. 23 to Dec. 1. The theme this year is, "I care, do you?" The big "red ribbon badge day" is Friday, Nov. 29, but red ribbons are encouraged to be worn throughout the week.

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U-WIRE

Actually, I would say red ribbons are never discouraged, so wear them as much as you'd like.

Now that we're all caught up on the logistics, I'd like to make my own suggestion for how to spend that week. I think that this would be a great opportunity for everyone to go out and get tested for HIV. This may seem like an odd suggestion, and I'm sure it will make more than a few people uncomfortable, but I think it is the most important thing anyone can do to make AIDS Awareness Week successful.

I'm not diminishing the importance of going to talks and rallies to show your support for spreading information about the virus and transmission methods. However, I would ask anyone at these events what they were doing there if they were unsure of their own health status.

The test is free and available on a completely confidential basis from your local health department. There really is no excuse for not getting one done. Just to prove my point, allow me to debunk the most common excuse I would expect my readers might be offering up in their minds.

The No. 1 excuse, I'm sure, is, "but I haven't participated in any risky behavior." I am currently looking at everyone offering up that excuse incredulously. If you have ever had sex then you have participated in a behavior that

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could put you at risk for contracting HIV.

If you have never had unprotected sex, this does not let you off the hook. Even with protection, there is a small chance of contracting the disease. Even though this chance is small, you should get tested because that chance still exists.

If you are involved in a monogamous relationship, this too does not mean you are exempt. I hate to be the cynic here, but the reality is people cheat. It is better to take the test and have peace of mind. Conversely, if your mate is encouraging you to get tested or he or she is going to get tested, this does not mean they are accusing you of anything. Do not pick a fight with your boyfriend or girlfriend for being responsible and getting an HIV test. Instead, go with them. If you have never had sex, then I think we can all rest assured that you have not contracted the virus from anyone else, unless of course you are an IV drug user. If that is the case, get yourself to a testing center immediately and then to a treatment center shortly after. I want to clarify that I am not presuming it is simple to kick a drug habit, but since that is not really what this article is about, I do not want to go into detail about drug recovery processes.

Now back to the virgins, you're not quite off the hook yet. Even if you've never had sex before, my bet is that you know someone who has. Find a friend that you believe is sexually active and ask them to go and take the test with you. Getting tested can be scary, especially the first time, and it can really help to have a friend along. I wouldn't mention to the friend that you're only taking the test for their benefit. Just go along as if you need the test as much as them. You'll be doing your friend a great service.

Bottom line, just go get tested. No matter what the results may be, it is better than living in ignorance.

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