

Jail time for SOA activists

Dennis Coday | Jan. 26, 2010 NCR Today

A press release from SOA Watch:

On Monday, January 25, 2010, U.S. Magistrate G. Mallon Faircloth sentenced three human rights advocates to six months in federal prison for carrying a protest against the School of the Americas onto the Fort Benning military base in Georgia. This school, re-named the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, is a controversial U.S. Army training school for Latin American soldiers. ...

The "SOA 4" are:

Nancy Gwin, long-time activist from Syracuse, New York - sentenced to six months in prison

Father Louie Vitale, veteran and priest from Oakland, CA - sentenced to six months in prison

Ken Hayes, SOA Watch Council member from Austin, TX - sentenced to six months in prison

Michael Walli, a member of the Catholic Worker movement from Washington, DC refused to appear for the trial in Georgia. Walli had told the court during his November arraignment that he would not pay any bail and that he would not voluntarily return for the trial. "I walk out and it's goodbye" Walli told Judge Mallon Faircloth. Michael Walli made good on his promise and on Monday, Judge Mallon Faircloth issued a warrant for Michael Walli's arrest.

The "SOA 4" were among the tens of thousands who gathered on November 20-22, 2009 outside the gates of Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia to demand a change in U.S. policy in Latin America and the closure of the SOA/WHINSEC. The group peacefully crossed onto Fort Benning while thousands stood vigil at the gates of the base in memory of those killed by graduates of the institution.

The SOA/WHINSEC, a military training facility for Latin American security personnel, made headlines in 1996 when the Pentagon released training manuals used at the school that advocated torture, extortion and execution.

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