Nicaragua to no longer send troops to School of the Americas

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Nicaragua will no longer send troops to the controversial School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga., the country's president announced Tuesday in a meeting with activists from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Daniel Ortega, president of Nicaragua, met with Maryknoll Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of School of Americas Watch, and 20 other activists who demanded removal of Nicaraguan troops from the institute, according to a news release from SOA Watch, an organization that has sought the closure of the institute since 1990.

"The SOA is an ethical and moral anathema," Ortega told the group, according to the news release. "All of the countries of Latin America have been victims of its graduates. The SOA is a symbol of death, a symbol of terror. We have been gradually reducing our numbers of troops at the SOA, sending only five last year and none this year. We have now entered a new phase and we will NOT continue to send troops to the SOA. This is the least that we can do. We have been its victims."

Nicaragua joins Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela and Bolivia in the decision to cut ties with the institute, now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Bourgeois' activist group plans to send a "high level delegation" to meet with the Obama administration Sept. 17 to argue for the school's complete closure, the release states.

The institute is U.S. Army training school for soldiers from Latin American countries. Some of its graduates have been linked to human rights violations.

NCR will continue to follow news revolving around the institute.

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