

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

**Precedence:** ROUTINE

**Date:** 11/30/2004

**To:** Counterterrorism  
Atlanta

**Attn:** Domestic Terrorism  
Operations Unit  
SAC  
FIG  
JTTF

**From:** Atlanta

Columbus RA

**Contact:** SA [Redacted]

**Approved By:** [Redacted]

b6

b7C

**Drafted By:** [Redacted]

**Case ID #:** 1266D-AT-90739 (Pending) -71

**Title:** SCHOOL OF AMERICAS WATCH;  
CGR- FT. BENNING, GA;  
UNLAWFUL ENTRY ON A  
MILITARY RESERVATION;  
11/19-21/2004

**Synopsis:** A synopsis of the 2004 protest.

**Details:** The annual School of Americas (SOA) protest group event was held on November 19-21, 2004. The estimated protest attendance was 11,000 on Saturday and Sunday.

On Saturday, November 20, 2004 another group held a "GOD Bless Ft. Benning Rally" at the Columbus Civic Center and the grounds adjoining the facility. There was an estimated crowd of 10,000 persons attending this one day event.

The two rally's took place approximately two miles apart on the south-side of Columbus, Georgia. The Columbus civic leadership had issued permits allowing the events to take place at a safe distance from each other. So far this has proven to be a workable solution.

The Columbus Police, Muscogee County Sheriff's office and Muscogee County Marshall's office had approximately 100 uniformed officers at the SOA Rally. Two individuals were arrested and charged with misdemeanor violations.

*Sm*

*266D-AT-90739-71*

*500ec*

To: Counterterrorism Atlanta From: Atlanta  
Re: 266D-AT-90739, 11/30/2004

On Sunday, November 21, 2004 seventeen protestors climbed over or crawled under the fence onto Ft. Benning. They were taken into custody by Department of the Army (DOA) civilian police. The fifteen adults were turned over to the U.S. Marshalls Service and housed at the Muscogee County jail overnight. Two juveniles arrested were released after they were identified.

The fifteen adults were taken before U.S. Magistrate G Mallon Faircloth on Monday, November 22, 2004. They were charged with misdemeanor violations of unlawful entry upon a military reservation. The Georgia State Patrol issued over 200 traffic citations and made numerous arrests.

This year's protest was peaceful as it has been for the most part over the past fifteen years. The only changes of note was the inability of the police to use hand wands to check for metal and weapons. The Eleventh District Court of Appeals had ruled this was a violation of the protestors constitutional rights.

The police also erected a temporary eight foot chain link fence which provided a parallel boundary to Ft. Benning Road, leading up to the post main gate. The fence extended for approximately three blocks and provided a defined area for the protestors to demonstrate. In addition, the fence surrounded the "MAIN GATE" entrance marker for Ft. Benning which has been a flashpoint for protestors to deface.

The SOA Watch leadership have stated they plan to file court actions to have the fencing removed for future rally's.

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# Columbus rebuked over mass searches

By **BILL RANKIN**  
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A federal appeals court has strongly condemned the city of Columbus for using post-Sept. 11 fears to justify forcing protesters of a military training school to undergo mass searches.

By striking down the practice, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta will allow thousands of School of the Americas Watch demonstrators to hold their annual protest next month at Fort Benning without having to be searched with metal detectors.

"We cannot simply suspend or restrict civil liberties until the war on terror is over, because the war on terror is unlikely ever to be truly over," the 11th Circuit said in a ruling issued late Friday. "Sept. 11, 2001, already a day of immeasurable tragedy, cannot be the day liberty perished in this country."

The unanimous ruling by a three-judge panel threw out a



G. MARC BENAVIDEZ / Columbus Ledger-Enquirer

**Josh Eaton, 19, prays while touching the main gate of Fort Benning during the School of the Americas Watch protest in 2003.**

city policy approved shortly before a November 2002 protest against the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning. Every year, demonstrators descend upon the school, once called the School of the Americas.

Columbus officials said they began subjecting all protesters to a metal-detector search because the nation's terror alert level had been raised. If the magnetometer

> Please see **PROTEST, E2**

# Protest: Columbus rebuked for searches

> Continued from E1

indicated the presence of metal, then police could physically search that person.

The School of the Americas Watch, which coordinates the nonviolent protests, challenged the law in court. The group contended the law was unconstitutional because it allowed searches without probable cause or individualized suspicion. The suit also said the searches caused mass delays and congestion.

"This is such great news," the Rev. Roy Bourgeois, the group's founder, said Saturday. "I couldn't understand how they could get away with this. We all thought it was such a grave injustice."

Gerry Weber, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, praised the decision. "It's a groundbreaking decision and a repudiation of the idea that the First

training of Latin American soldiers. A two-day demonstration is held to mark the killings of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador on Nov. 19, 1989.

Some of the killers had attended the former School of the Americas, which moved from Panama to Fort Benning in 1984. The school is funded by the Defense Department and trains military leaders in combat and counterinsurgency techniques.

The School of the Americas Watch will hold its next protest on Nov. 20-21.

In its ruling, the 11th Circuit said it found "troubling" the city of Columbus' arguments that such metal-detector searches should be allowed because of what happened on Sept. 11, 2001.

"While the threat of terrorism is omnipresent, we can-

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By JIM GALLOWAY  
jgalloway@ajc.com  
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