1999 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 51

May 6, 1999 – Introduced by Representatives POCAN, BERCEAU, BOCK, BOYLE, COLON, HUBER, KRUG, J. LEHMAN, MILLER, PLOUFF, RHOADES, VRAKAS and YOUNG, cosponsored by Senators BURKE and RISSER. Referred to Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs.

Relating to: memorializing Congress to close the School of the Americas.

Whereas, the School of the Americas was established in Panama in 1946 and is presently located in Fort Benning, Georgia; and

Whereas, the School of the Americas has trained over 59,000 troops from Latin America and the Caribbean since its inception in 1946 and currently trains 900 to 2,000 such soldiers per year at Fort Benning, Georgia, at an annual cost to the American taxpayers of nearly $20,000,000; and

Whereas, it has been admitted that training manuals used for years by the School of the Americas have advocated execution, false imprisonment, physical abuse and other forms of torture; and

Whereas, many School of the Americas graduates have been involved in a wide range of human rights abuses; and

Whereas, 2 of the 3 Salvadoran officers cited as being responsible for the 1980 assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero were School of the Americas graduates, including death squad founder and leader Robert D'Aubuisson; and

Whereas, 10 of the 12 officers cited as being involved in the massacre of 900 civilians at El Mozote in El Salvador graduated from the School of the Americas; and

Whereas, 19 of the 26 officers cited in the November 1989 murder of 6 Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in San Salvador, El Salvador, were School of the Americas graduates; and

Whereas, over half of the human rights violations and torture that occurred in Colombia by military officials in this decade was performed by officials trained by the School of the Americas; and

Whereas, Guatemalan Colonel Julio Roberto Alpirez, a CIA agent who was implicated in the killings of U.S. citizen Michael Devine and Efraim Bamaca, husband of U.S. lawyer Jennifer Harbury, is a School of the Americas graduate; and

Whereas, the editorial boards of the *Atlanta Constitution, Bangor Daily News, Boston Globe, The Capital Times, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Des Moines Register, New York Times, San Antonio Express–News* and *Syracuse Post–Standard,* among others, have called for the closure of the School of the Americas; and

Whereas, the *Washington Post,* in its November 26, 1997, edition, stated, "over these years [the School of the Americas] is a school of horrors, a school of assassins, operating in our back yard with U.S. taxpayer money"; and

Whereas, the California Chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has passed a resolution urging the closure of the School of the Americas, and the national organization is deliberating the same resolution; and

Whereas, there is growing opposition to the School of the Americas in the U.S. house of representatives; and

Whereas, in September 1998 the U.S. house of representatives came within 11 votes (201–212) of passing an amendment to the 1998 foreign aid appropriations bill that would have cut $1,500,000 from the school's funding; and

Whereas, the U.S. house of representatives' vote represents a sharp contrast to votes in 1993 and 1994, when the school's reputation was not as widely known and when amendments to cut the school's funding were defeated by 82–vote and 42–vote margins; and

Whereas, among Wisconsin's 1998 delegation to Congress there was unanimous support of an amendment to the appropriations bill that would significantly cut the school's funding, 4 Republicans and 5 Democrats voting in favor of the amendment and none voting against it; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That the Wisconsin legislature urges the President and the Congress of the United States to support the closure of the United States Army School of the Americas; and, be it further

Resolved, That the assembly chief clerk shall provide copies of this joint resolution to President Clinton and to each member of this state's congressional delegation.

(END)