



## Conference Tackles Militarism

*The following is a brief introduction to our special conference issue and Chuck Kaufman's opening plenary speech. (Kaufman is a National Co-Coordinator with AFGJ.)*

**T**he Latin America Solidarity Coalition organized a conference on April 8-10 in Washington, DC to build a stronger movement to end US militarism and the militarization of relations with Latin America. Eight-two groups co-sponsored the conference, which was attended by 350 activists from throughout the US. Plenary speakers from Colombia, Mexico, Haiti and Honduras were joined by leaders of US solidarity organizations.

Forty-seven workshops were also offered on topics ranging from coups to research skills to strategy caucuses for specific sectors. Several articles (and the photos) in this issue are based on talks or workshop presentations at the conference.

Alliance for Global Justice National Co-Coordinator Chuck Kaufman gave the opening plenary speech setting the stage for the conference. We have reprinted it here because its message reverberates beyond the confines of the three day conference.

**Kaufman's plenary address:** We are

convening this conference tonight to build a stronger movement to end US militarism and the militarization of relations with Latin America. It is the culmination of a lot of people's work and a year-long process.

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Chuck Kaufman speaks at the opening plenary of the LASC conference. (Photo: Kathy Hoyt)

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# Goalith Staggered: The Story of SOAW in Costa Rica & the Wikileaks Revelations

By Carol Marujo, Ed.D., Rita Calvert & Isabel Macdonald (All members of the Friends Peace center in Costa Rica)

“Imagine the response of the U.S. Embassy and the military when they heard of the Arias promise. WHINSEC brass must have shouted in anger about the public reaction if word got out. For a moment, Goliath staggered. As WikiLeaks draws away the curtain of secrecy, this truth is precious to remember...”

-Nicole Sault, Ph.D., Member of Friends Peace Center and SOA Watch

did not initially include Costa Rica, because it had abolished its army in 1948.

Rita Calvert, living in Costa Rica, had met Father Bourgeois many years earlier when she was the Director of the Dallas Peace Center. She had participated in vigils at the gates of Fort Benning, and had even been arrested for crossing the line, the act of nonviolent, civil disobedience aimed at revealing the true nature of the “School of the Dictators.” Rita discovered that Costa Rica had been sending its police to SOA/WHINSEC for decades. She invited Father Roy and Lisa to go to Costa Rica in hopes of convincing the government to stop using SOA/WHINSEC for police training. With support from the Friends (Quaker) Peace Center and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, she coordinated their visit.

Father Roy and Lisa came to Costa Rica for four days in May 2007. They traveled throughout the central part of the country and spoke passionately to many groups of Costa Ricans

In 2006 Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of School of the Americas Watch, and Lisa Sullivan, SOA Watch Director for Latin America, set off on a journey that took them to many countries to ask heads of state to do what the U.S Congress has refused to do – cut their ties to the infamous School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. With twenty-four years of protests to try to persuade Congress to shut down the SOA, the vote had become closer each time. But the school stayed open after the Pentagon promised to teach respect for human rights and changed the name to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC).

So SOA Watch decided to meet directly with the Latin American leaders to remind them of the atrocities committed by SOA graduates and ask them to stop sending their military to the school. The itinerary

and foreign residents in schools, churches, universities and other venues. Most of the listeners did not know about the U.S. Army school that trained Latin American military to torture and kill civilians, nor did they know that over 2,600 Costa Rican police have been trained there over the years. At a meeting in the rural town of Atenas, Father Roy addressed a group of high school students and adults. After the talk, he was surrounded by students eager to talk with him. One tall young woman said to him in an earnest voice, “Your words have motivated me to serve the poor. Look at me and remember my face.”

On the last full day of their visit, then-President Oscar Arias and Minister of Security, Fernando Berrocal, met with Father Roy and Lisa Sullivan together with Rita Calvert and Isabel Macdonald of the Friends Peace

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**PHOTO  
HIGHLIGHT:**

Left: SOAW D.C. march Sunday after the LASC conference. (Photo: Graham)

Right: Son Cosita Seria played Jarocho music at the LASC conference. (Photo: Kathy Hoyt)



## Using Our Heads

*By John Lindsay-Poland (Lindsay-Poland is a research and advocacy director for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He led a workshop on research skills at the Latin America Solidarity Coalition Conference and was also a plenary speaker.)*

**W**hen we are conscious of living in an unjust world, what more do we need to know before we act?

A lot, usually. Without risking the “paralysis of analysis,” I think we need to understand the terrain and forces around us that will shape the outcome of our efforts. If we are to demilitarize life and land, we need to know about militarism, potential allies, history, potential obstacles and how the money flows.

And these things are not static: they change over time, so it’s helpful to know how and in what direction they are changing. How much is the Pentagon investing in recruiting women, immigrants, people of color, low-income whites, medical professionals? What corporations in our area benefit from the war in Afghanistan and how much do ordinary people pay for the war in taxes? How much and what kinds of militarization have branched out from the Defense Department to Homeland Security, DEA, ICE and other agencies? What is the role of non-governmental organizations in wars and militarism?

In short, we need to do research.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation is undertaking a project to increase the capacity of our movement – broadly speaking - to do research that serves activism to overcome militarism.

We aim to provide tools for learning, space for exchanging skills such as webinars and ‘cyber-camps’ and hopefully

opportunities to distribute the findings of research on militarism.

Research can both help us to make strategic choices about how and where we direct our energies, and its findings can be public tools for agitating, informing and persuading. When we are good enough and persistent in research, journalists come to us for stories.

Research produces information, but information by itself is not necessarily of any strategic use. If I give you an Excel file with thousands of lines of raw data on Pentagon contracts being carried out in, say, Colombia, with no interpretation, that file may well remain inert on your hard drive. It will be of greater value if I connect that information to context, to other information and observe relationships between things.

There are some qualities that facilitate activism-oriented research.

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# Pres. Calderon's War: Against Whom?

By Veronica Leyva (Leyva is a Mexico Solidarity Network staffer located in Ciudad Juarez.)

Translated by AFGJ staff.

The militarization of Ciudad Juarez that started in March of 2008 with the so-called "Joint Chihuahua Operation" is part of the supposed "war against narco-trafficking" headed by Mexican President Felipe Calderon. For many people this is

tanks, the trucks transporting soldiers, the detentions and the allegations made against the military by citizens soon formed part of the daily routine. However, the violent crimes, assaults, kidnappings, extortion and executions seemed to increase rather than decrease with the presence of the military.

Everything got worse or stayed the same, because the military presence is just that: a presence. It is symbolic of an incapable authority. Not there, shall we say, to end organized crime, but instead to control it. In the end the presence was simply a symbol of the Mexican President's battle against the cartels that devastated this border city. Here he mounted a military campaign like had never been seen, not just in Ciudad Juarez, but in other parts of the Mexico as well. From when he mounted his campaign up until now, this city has become the image of Mexico that plays out in front of the rest of the world (just as had happened with the murders and disappearances of women). This is the image of a president that confronts organized crime with his army and federal forces.

The military forces entered the scene as an answer to a war that has existed for years between narco cartels. Their objective is to control "the plaza," the most important traffic route for drugs headed to the US. Their gunmen however, do not seem to be intimidated even by the military, nor by federal operations that take place in the city. What has become evident is that in this "war," organized crime's display of power, from a place of privilege, has actually acted to protect them. The highly corrupt government has sold protection to the cartels. This topic has been well-covered in news stories and is thus common knowledge. One need only open the paper to see articles exposing the police and federal agents involved in the kidnappings, murders, extortion and narco-trafficking or about judges that free confessed criminals. This has very significant repercussions for the judicial system. Just 1% of all

crimes committed in this city actually receive sentences.

In August 2010, the news agencies reported that in Ciudad Juarez 250 federal police accused their commanders of corruption and ties to organized crime. The officers said that they had been forced to commit extort. In a letter published by EFE, they refer to the incident saying,

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Veronica Leyva, Mexico Solidarity Network staffer in Ciudad Juarez, gives a speech. (Photo: Peggy Valdes)

simply an instrument through which Calderon attempts to legitimize his position as head of state after his very dubious electoral victory in 2006.

The fact of that matter is that soon after his election, the streets of Ciudad Juarez started to resemble a state of siege. The

# An Introduction to "Secure Communities"

*By Diana Bohn (Bohn is a long-time activist and friend of AFGJ. She is also a member of the Campaign for Labor Rights task force.)*

“Secure Communities” is a Department of Homeland Security program initiated in 2008 to identify immigrants in U.S. jails who are deportable under immigration law. Under Secure Communities, participating jails submit arrestees’ fingerprints to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). As of October 2010, Secure Communities is available in 686 jurisdictions in 33 states. ICE plans to have a Secure Communities present in every state by 2011, and plans to implement Secure Communities in each of the 3,100 state and local jails across the country by 2013.

Under the 'Secure Communities' (S-Comm) program participating entities automatically forward the fingerprints of all people arrested by local police to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and ICE, who then use the fingerprints to target people for detention and deportation. This flawed design puts states and local police agencies at the center of federal immigration enforcement.

Since its inception in 2008, S-Comm, has raised concerns amongst human rights advocates throughout the country that the program will lead to racial profiling on the part of local police and sheriffs’ departments. Such concerns about the program have spawned a nationwide coalition to oppose it.

In 2010, the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), Center for Constitutional Rights and Cardozo Law School Immigration Justice Clinic won a "Freedom of Information Act" lawsuit which forced ICE to produce quarterly reports about who is actually caught by the S-Comm dragnet. The Center for Constitutional Rights reported in August, 2010, that 79% of the people deported due to Secure Communities have had no criminal charges or were picked up for low-level offenses, such as traffic offenses or petty juvenile mischief.

The American Civil Liberties Union reported that, “Determining a person’s immigration status is indisputably complex, and officers who are not trained as immigration agents all too often rely on skin color, foreign-sounding accents or other unlawful and unreliable predictors of immigration status to make unnecessary stops and arrests in the hopes of identifying undocumented immigrants,” ([ACLU of Northern](#)

[California, “Costs and Consequences: The High Price of Policing Immigrant Communities,”](#) 2011).

The city of Hartford, Connecticut, Washington D.C., San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties in California, and the State of Washington all attempted to opt out of S-Comm. By the Fall of 2010, faced with numerous opt-out requests, ICE announced publicly that S-Comm would be a mandatory program, although, states continue to have the option to opt out. Due to its semi-state status, Washington, D.C. has managed to do just that. Other states not enrolled in S-Comm as of spring, 2011, include Washington, North Dakota, Minnesota, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Alaska.

In February, 2011, Assembly Member Tom Amiano, who represents San Francisco in the California Legislature, introduced Assembly Bill (AB) 1081, which would modify the May 8, 2009 memorandum of agreement between the State of California and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security regarding the implementation of ICE’s Secure Communities program.

AB 1081 modifies California’s participation in the program to “authorize a local government to participate in the Secure Communities program only upon the passage of an ordinance or resolution authorizing participation by the legislative body of the local government” and requires such local governments to submit a “a plan to guard against, and monitor, racial profiling associated with the local government’s participation in the program,” including possible exceptions to protect domestic violence victims, juveniles and people suspected, rather than convicted, of a crime.

At the S-Comm workshop at the LASC Anti-Militarization Conference we shared information about efforts to opt out of Secure Communities and discussed strategies. We formed an email list so that we can keep in touch regarding future developments. Anyone wishing to be add to this list or interested in additional citations for thie article can contact Diana Bohn at [nicca@igc.org](mailto:nicca@igc.org).



## “Conference” Continued from Page 1

The first step was a Peoples’ Movement Assembly at the US Social Forum in Detroit last June. The second, a one-day organizers’ conference in Columbus, GA prior to the SOA Watch vigil last November. For the next two days we’ll be building on those meetings, learning, teaching, strategizing and analyzing what we need to do to build a movement that will challenge the very culture of militarism, which holds this country in thrall. A culture which makes the United States the greatest threat to peace in the world and which threatens the advancement of democracy and justice in Latin America. Our work has begun to pay off. This conference has 82 co-sponsoring groups, more than any Latin America Solidarity Conference over the past 11 years. We have an excellent line-up of plenary speakers and an array of workshops that leaves me saying, “How can I pick just one per session?” But lots of conferences have great speakers and outstanding workshops. We go to them -- learn a lot – and then what? We go home and life goes on. Let us vow not to let this be just another conference. Let us vow to make linkages here that will last beyond Sunday afternoon. Let us vow to come out of Sunday’s sector caucus meetings with strategies to work together into the future to grow the movement within our institutions of faith, within the labor movement, within academia and among youth and students, among veterans and women from which arise so many of our leaders, and on and on. Let us vow that this is not just a conference, but rather a peoples’ assembly from which we will go out – like our courageous sisters and brothers in Honduras – to re-found our nation. Because our nation needs to be re-founded. Our political system has been corrupted beyond redemption by the economic power of the corporations. We do not have a democracy; we have a corptocracy. Our social contract has been shredded. We need liberation theology’s preferential option for the poor in our own country. Our literacy rate is lower than that of Nicaragua. Our health care system inferior to that of Cuba. Our education system produces people without the ability to think critically and our news and entertainment industries fill their heads with lies and

“Our nation’s wealth is squandered on a military grown far beyond any rational need for defense of our territory.”

fears that give birth to proto-fascist groups like the tea party. Only in the area of force do we excel. Our nation’s wealth is squandered on a military grown far beyond any rational need for defense of our territory.

We spend as much on our killing machine each year as the entire rest of the world combined. Congressman Barney Frank, who is calling for an immediate 25% reduction in military spending wrote in the Huffington Post, “For decades, the subject of military expenditures has been glaringly absent from public debate. Yet the Pentagon budget for 2010 is \$693 billion - - more than all other discretionary spending programs combined. Even subtracting the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military spending still amounts to over 42% of total spending. It is irrefutably

clear to us that if we do not make substantial cuts in the projected levels of Pentagon spending, we will do substantial damage to our economy and dramatically reduce our quality of life.” We have already done substantial damage to our economy. The richest 140 Americans control as much wealth as the 150 million poorest. This generation of youth is the first in our history which can expect real income lower than their parents.

Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his 1960 farewell speech, gave us fair warning. He said, “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

And yet we have let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties and democratic processes in the wake of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. We are clearly NOT as free today as we were before. First it was the Muslims in our midst whose Constitutional rights were

trampled. Now it is immigrants – especially the Mexican migrants. And most recently it is those of us in this room – we who disagree with our government’s foreign policies.

On Sept. 24, as I’m sure most of you know, the FBI raided anti-war activists’ homes and offices in Chicago and Minneapolis. A Grand Jury is considering absurd criminal charges of material support to terrorists for their work on behalf of peace in Colombia and Palestine. One of the victims of the FBI witch hunt will be speaking tomorrow night at the concert and there is a workshop on the subject that I would commend to you. They are not alone. All of us are at risk due to this effort to criminalize speech and thought.

In January 2010, when returning from a delegation investigating UN stabilization force’s human rights violations in Haiti, just before the earthquake, I was taken into custody by Homeland Security in New York and my co-worker James Jordan was taken off his plane in Ft. Lauderdale. We were each held and questioned for four hours, our papers copied, our cell phone contacts recorded. Our rights have been seriously eroded here in the United States.

In the 1980s, we matched dollar for dollar Congressional appropriations for the US-directed and funded Contra War against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. We matched that war money by sending material aid, by building schools and houses, by picking coffee and cotton. I’m sure many of you in this room contributed to that effort. Now imagine if we tried to do the same thing today for the people of Afghanistan. How long would it be before our bank accounts were frozen and we ourselves were put in prison for a long time? Had you told me in 1987 that I would have fewer freedoms under the first African American president than I did under Ronald Reagan, I would have laughed. Well, I’m not laughing. The United States of America has lost its soul, and it is up to you and me to re-found our nation. Sure the forces arrayed against us are formidable.

We need to change our very culture of militarism



Members of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression table at the US militarism conference. Meredith Aby, (second from left) is a Minneapolis activist whose house was raided on Sept. 24 by the FBI and who is refusing, along with 21 other activists to testify before the Grand Jury. (Photo: Kosta Harlan)

and savage capitalism. But cultures can be changed. Let us look for our inspiration to the Abolition Movement. Who today can even imagine that the system of chattel slavery was once the law of the land defended from the pulpit to the newspapers to the schools. The fact that slavery is unimaginable today is because the Abolition Movement didn’t give up in the face of overwhelming odds. It persisted until it changed the very culture of its day.

The abolition movement had its Nat Turners, Harriet Tubmans, John Browns and William Lloyd Garrisons and thousands whose names we do not know. Well we have our Bradley Mannings, Cindy Sheehans, Roy Bourgeois, and Amy Goodmans. And we have thousands more like those of us in this room. But sometimes we seek excuses for why we cannot win. Can you imagine John Brown saying, “Well, ending slavery isn’t on the Congressional agenda this year. We’ll just have to work to elect more Republicans.” Can you imagine Harriet Tubman deciding that leading slaves to freedom wasn’t addressing the root causes of slavery, so she’s pray for them instead? Can you imagine William Lloyd Garrison saying, “Okay, I’ve written my annual editorial against slavery, now let’s cover what people really want to know -- Sam Houston is marrying a woman 17 years younger than himself!” Or Nat Turner saying, “Well, maybe things will be better for our children. In the meantime we just have to accept what is. I’m just one guy, what can I do?”

We can't imagine any of those things, because those heroes knew what was the most important injustice of their day, and they were resolute in confronting it. Let history look back on us the same way as we look back on the abolitionists.

I want to pause for just a second and call out a presente for two of our heroes who we lost in the past year. Rev. Lucius Walker of Pastors for Peace from whom I learned that you never back down from injustice; and Fr. Bill Callahan from the Quixote Center/Quest for Peace from whom I learned what he called bold dreaming. Please join me: Lucius Walker and Bill Callahan, Presente! Presente! Presente!

I am calling on you and on this conference to declare a culture war against US militarism. I am calling on us to say, "We will not allow you to make us afraid. We will not allow you to desensitize us to violence through the entertainment industry. We will not allow you to spend the blood of our youth and our indentured immigrants in foreign wars for corporate profit. We will not allow you to short-change us by spending our wealth on the military instead of education, health, and as the indigenous call it, "living well." We will spend our lives, our health, and our sacred honor to liberate ourselves from the culture of death and greed. We will especially stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Latin America and the world who seek to liberate themselves from our military imperialism and corporate exploitation. We will go forth from this conference and build a movement that will change our culture and re-found our nation.

## **"Goliath" Continued from Page 2**

Center. Information that has more recently come to light (through the classified cables released by WikiLeaks) suggests that Arias most likely entered the meeting with the intention of denying the request to stop sending Costa Rican police to WHINSEC. However, as the group presented their case, Arias appeared to be moved. His Minister of Security appeared to become extremely uncomfortable.

Arias asked, "What can we do?"

Lisa urged, "You can stop sending them."

Arias said, "It is done."

Recalling the event, Lisa later wrote, "I will always remember how Arias' eyes watered when I spontaneously jumped up to hug him – breaking protocol – upon hearing his consent to our proposal to withdraw from the SOA. I thanked him in the name of the tens of thousands who had lost their lives because of this school. It was clear that this was a decision that touched the fibers of his commitment to peace."

She further recalled, "Both Roy and I really appealed to his heart and reminded him who the victims of this school were, the very same people he defended in the 80s and for whom he won the Nobel Peace Prize. We really appealed to that part of him, made it clear he would be a hero to many if he made that decision. It was clear that he had a lot of respect for Roy. I think that he surprised himself and Berrocal when he gave us a clear 'yes'."

What a success for peace and human rights! Although Costa Rica is small, it is well-known and respected as a peace-loving country with a president who won the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize.

### **Heavy Hearts at Fort Benning**

Six months later, as several members of the Friends Peace Center prepared to go to Fort Benning to join the annual vigil, local newspapers announced disturbing news. Minister Berrocal had just returned from a trip there with U.S. Ambassador Langdale and others.

Berrocal was publicly calling for Costa Rica to continue using SOA/WHINSEC to train its police. He extolled the benefits

of the training and the importance of that training for Costa Rica. The peace activists wondered, "How could a cabinet-level minister be so open in opposing a decision of his president? Had Arias changed his mind? And why?" At the rally, Rita addressed the crowd of thousands from the stage and delivered the disappointing news that Arias may have reversed his decision and might continue to send police to WHINSEC. Still, there was no word from Arias himself, no definite decision.

During the months that followed, the Friends Peace Center reached out to the Arias government to try to get clarity and to urge the president to keep his promise. Some met with Minister Berrocal in early 2008. He talked about the need for Costa Rican police

**"We will not allow you to make us afraid. We will not allow you to desensitize us to violence..."**



to be trained to address the serious threat posed by drug traffickers. When asked whether Costa Rica would continue to send police to WHINSEC, his reply was extremely vague, but he did not deny that they would. And they have, into 2011.

### U.S. Embassy Cables Released by WikiLeaks

March 6, 2011 the major Costa Rican newspaper, La Nación, broke a story based on Wikileaks-released cables from the U.S. Embassy and an interview with former Minister Berrocal showing how stunned Berrocal and the U.S. government were when they heard of Arias' surprise decision to stop sending police. The cables also provided details on the intense six-month campaign by the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, the Pentagon's Southcom and WHINSEC to pressure Arias to change his mind. The U.S. military clearly did not want to lose the prestige of Costa Rica's continued involvement with the notorious school.

The cables revealed that Costa Rica stood to lose \$1.2 million in various types of assistance from the U.S. if it pulled out of WHINSEC. When Arias yielded to the pressure, Berrocal was tasked with handling it in a way that would not tarnish Arias' reputation as a peacemaker. In November, with the involvement of the U.S. Embassy, they agreed that Berrocal would announce the decision to continue using WHINSEC, and Arias would say nothing on the subject. The following excerpts from the Embassy cables detailed the effectiveness of that tactic:

"Berrocal's WHINSEC trip and the initial accompanying media coverage went better than expected....On December 13...Berrocal wrote President Oscar Arias a letter recommending that Costa Rican law enforcement personnel 'could maintain a training scheme' at WHINSEC to receive counternarcotics, counterterrorism and other 'strictly police' training."

"Following the plan that Berrocal outlined to us after his November visit to Fort Benning, President Arias will not respond to this letter, and his silence will be treated as acquiescence.

Berrocal will then be authorized to resume unrestricted, non-military training for Costa Rican

law enforcement personnel at WHINSEC."

"Berrocal's letter ended the controversy, which began in May when Arias told School of the Americas Watch (SOA) representatives that the GOCCR would no longer send students to WHINSEC."

### Significance for Peace Work

The WikiLeaks releases of the U.S. Embassy cables provide proof of what was happening behind the scenes and show how the US government has operated in buying and coercing acquiescence to their wishes.

A new president, Laura Chinchilla, took office in Costa Rica in May 2010. The Friends Peace Center has pursued contact with the new Minister of Public Security and has a meeting scheduled with him for mid-April to discuss the many issues and concerns regarding the training of Costa Rican police.

The peace activists of the Friends Peace Center believe that Costa Rica, a country that made a historic decision in 1948 to disband its military, has the moral authority to decide with autonomy, where its police will be trained. Numerous alternatives for training exist. Furthermore, the Friends Peace Center will continue to speak out against the increasing militarization of Latin America by the U.S. government and the threats to Costa Rica's constitutional mandate for neutrality in international relations and prohibition of a standing army.

The struggle for justice and peace will continue, inspired by this message from Lisa Sullivan, "When we join together as small grassroots groups from around the Americas to resist militarization and promote a culture of peace, we are, quite simply, very powerful. So much so, that the world's largest military giant not only takes notice, but sometimes has to scramble to keep up as we take the lead."

*"...for in the future we will continue to work on faith, not knowing how each of our actions ripples out. So hold onto this moment of truth and remember it when you feel helpless, unnoticed, overwhelmed, or unappreciated: Remember how Goliath staggered because of you."*

- Nicole Sault, Ph.D.

**"...for in the future we will continue to work on faith, not knowing how each of our actions ripples out."**

### **“Research” Continued from Page 3**

Patience is useful, especially when dealing with large amounts of detail, or long waits for responses to Freedom of Information Act requests. Curiosity – that propensity to ask open questions and really seek the answers - also helps a lot, but so does a sense of purpose and focus.

While toodling around a large database (such as the State Department cables posted by Wikileaks), or in an interview with someone who has deep experience in a subject of interest, it is easy to get drawn down fascinating paths. This is one way to learn about areas we had not been aware of, and to reconsider assumptions. And it can offer that understanding of context that permits us to analyze and connect what we find and give it more meaning. A lot of militarism is embedded in banal bureaucracy, for example. But this can also be, as many dissertation writers know, a way of multiplying inquiries way beyond our capacity to pursue them.

Another important ingredient, but also something that many activists experience as scarce, is time. That is something to consider in a group that wants to undertake research.

Where can we go to learn about militarism? A universe of sources lives in those who are most affected by militarism – its participants in the military, government and private contractors, the communities where military activities take place and, most of all, its victims and survivors. These may be sources who lack “official” legitimacy, yet often contribute more to our knowledge than the official documents or spokespeople, because they have firsthand knowledge that has not been written down. Often these folks have been deceived and lied to by outsiders, and they may face real risks by talking about what they know. So establishing trust – and being trustworthy – is key to the relationship.

Trust is related to accountability, especially to people who are negatively impacted by militarism (by war, human rights violations, sexual violence, usurpation of sovereignty, environmental contamination, health effects, etc.). When we do research on militarism, there is an ethical obligation to share our results with those harmed by it, in a form that is intelligible to them – not in academic obscurity, a foreign language or technically inaccessible – so that they can be better informed agents of their liberation.

Beginning with their experience will also shape our research questions. In Vieques, Puerto Rico, the movement to stop U.S. naval bombing practice on the island took a turn when the Puerto Rico Department of Health reported that Vieques had a 27% higher

incidence of cancer than the rest of Puerto Rico. At a resident’s request, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) began an environmental study of Vieques. But, instead of asking why Viequenses were getting sick at a higher rate, with no industrial activity on the island, ATSDR did a computer simulation of air particles during bombing practice, and concluded that the air was safe during bombing. In contrast, some Puerto Rican scientists concerned with why cancer was occurring measured the amount of heavy metals in islanders’ body tissue and vegetation and found exceptionally high levels.

Of course, official documentary sources are also important. Some of these are online; for research on U.S. military activities, these include sites on federal contracts ([www.usaspending.gov](http://www.usaspending.gov)), foreign military training ([www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt](http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt)), and domestic and foreign military bases ([www.acq.osd.mil/ie/download/bsr/BSR2010Baseline.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/download/bsr/BSR2010Baseline.pdf)). An active community that uses these public sources is critical to protecting transparency and democratic debate about the country’s policies and use of funds.

Once we obtain information, sometimes we can leverage that information to obtain more, for example, by partnering with other organizations, journalists, or legislators and by performing more sophisticated internet searches.

Whatever the findings of our research, it is critical to analyze them in order to try to understand what is occurring and articulate a narrative about it. And then to choose ways to distribute our findings, analysis and narrative that are most likely to get to those we want to reach.

If you are interested in increasing your skills in research on militarism, to share skills you have or be part of a collective of research on militarism, please contact John Lindsay-Poland, [johnlp@forusa.org](mailto:johnlp@forusa.org), (510) 282-8983

### **“Pres.’s War” Continued from Page 4**

“The police rebelled against various commanders, in particular against Commander Salomon Alarcon, who was accused of planting arms and drugs on those who did not obey him. One officer, who declined to be identified, denounced the action of his boss, known as El Chaman (The Shaman), who he accuses of committing multiple acts of extortion and who they said did not care about corruption and even less about his reputation.

It is worth noting that in this unusual case, not all is lost. Not everyone in the establishment

is corrupt. However, this incident reveals a broken system, incapable of completing the mission for which it was created, incapable of undertaking a fight against delinquency and much less against organized crime.

We must ask ourselves, who is this war being waged against? In Ciudad Juarez, every day there are murders and no one is detained. Does the president care? What is the value of his war if the number of orphans, widows and parents that suffer the irreparable loss of a child is constantly increasing? What has been its purpose if there are more and more youth killed? Since the arrival of the military in Ciudad Juarez, the average number of murders has increased each year. Moreover, the military's arrival opened the door to the diversification of criminal conduct to include kidnappings, extortion, assaults, highjacking and a plethora of violent acts. Many of these crimes have been committed by cartels like the "Zetas" that themselves operate with the Mexican army.

The violence has increased due to the tolerance and impunity on the part of the three levels of government (federal, state and local). This is demonstrated by the fact that since the soldiers arrived in the state a series of murders have been committed against activists, in addition to those committed against two members of the local press.

This is how militarization has changed Ciudad

Juarez. The city, that 40 years ago until just a few years back, was a place for opportunity and employment, has become the most violent city in the world.

And while we cannot change the course of history, if we keep betting on militarization in place of true social change, things will continue in the direction they are headed. That is, as long as we keep thinking that change comes from the top-down, from the State to society, things will continue to go downhill. But if we assume the power we have as a community that we have not yet made use of, if we realize that one of our greatest enemies is passivity against corruption, against organized crime, against simulation (simulación) and impunity, then we will see that beyond all of this, we find a bigger and more powerful enemy: the neoliberal capitalist system.

This is the space of power where everything that afflicts us manifests. This is the point where we should direct our desire for change. Clearly, our starting point is in the local, that which is within our reach, in unity, in denunciation, in the return to a state of law and in which we ask ourselves, "Who is President Calderon fighting against? Who benefits from this war?"

This is my reflection, with the wish that very soon better times will come when I can talk about the social changes I yearn to see on this border.

# News from Nicaragua

(Feb. 22, 2011 - April 12, 2011)

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[Ortega opponents and supporters march \(Apr. 5\)](#)

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[Veterans groups express differing political opinions \(Mar. 22\)](#)

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['War of eggs' in Managua \(Feb. 22\)](#)

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[Sandino Vive! \(Feb. 22\)](#)

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[Costa Rica to send personnel to mouth of San Juan \(Apr. 5\)](#)

[Obama visits Central America \(Mar. 29\)](#)

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