



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE MOAKLEY AMENDMENT TO H.R. 4205

I rise in strong opposition to the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, this is not a new debate. Opponents of the School of the Americas have sought to stop engagement with Latin American militaries for over a decade. Unfortunately, these critics have failed to recognize that the School of the Americas has played a vital role in expanding democracy in our hemisphere by teaching civilian control of the military and rule of law to students from Latin America.

Times have changed and so must this debate. Our nation cannot walk away from its obligation to lead our hemisphere in preserving regional stability, conducting counter-narcotics operations, providing disaster relief, and promoting democratic values and respect for human rights. Our military, and the School of the Americas in particular, have been at the forefront of these efforts.

Ironically, the amendment before us would actually strike a provision of H.R. 4205 that would reform the School of the Americas and address key concerns that have been raised over the years by the School's critics. Specifically, H.R. 4205 would:

- Transition the School into the "Defense Institute for Hemispheric Security Cooperation;"
- Require a minimum of eight hours of instruction per student in human rights, the rule of law, due process, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society, and;
- Create a board of visitors with a broad mandate to oversee the activities and curriculum of the Institute and require the board to submit a report to the Secretary of Defense and to Congress.

These are fundamental changes to the program that are intended to ensure continued education and training of military, law enforcement, and civilian personnel from Latin America while enhancing transparency.

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Passage of this amendment would undo the important reforms contained in H.R. 4205 and would eliminate the School of the Americas altogether. This would be a regrettable step backwards and would disregard the significant contribution of our military in fostering democracy throughout Latin America.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment and reserve the balance of my time.

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