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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



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MEDIA RELEASE: Benning Road gate will close to allow for annual protest

FORT BENNING, Ga. – The Benning Road “Stone Gate” will be closed from 6 p.m. Nov. 22 to 5 a.m. Nov. 25 to maintain public safety and mitigate traffic concerns during the annual School of the Americas Watch protest.

SOA Watch organizers have been granted a protest permit for this weekend’s vigil, now in its 23rd year. Last year about 2,200 organized at the Stone Gate, calling for the closure of the School of the Americas, an organization that closed its doors here in December 2000.

In January 2001, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation opened in its stead, with a refined purpose and mission, an even more stringent focus on human rights and democracy and an independent oversight committee.

For more information on WHINSEC and the controversy surrounding the School of the Americas, refer to the attached information paper.

Fort Benning officials will not interfere with SOA Watch’s right to conduct a peaceful protest, as they have done in the past. During this time, the installation will work with local law enforcement to maintain the public safety of those who live and work at Fort Benning and to uphold federal law, which prohibits partisan political demonstrations on federal property.

While the Stone Gate is closed, visitors to the installation may access post through the I-185, Sand Hill, Eddy Bridge and Harmony Church vehicle checkpoints.

All vehicles attempting to access the installation will be stopped and may be searched. Drivers and passengers who are 17 and older will be asked to present identification. Pedestrians attempting to access the installation via the River Walk will be required to present a valid identification upon entering the installation.

The National Infantry Museum, located just outside Fort Benning, will be open for normal business hours Nov. 23-24; however, the Benning Boulevard parking entrance will be closed due to the protest. Follow signs and law enforcement directions to the museum’s South Lumpkin Road entrance. For museum information, visit: <http://www.nationalinfantrymuseum.org/>.

For more information about this release, call the MCoE Public Affairs Office. On weekends and after duty hours, call 706-545-2218.