

Protest targets soldiers' school

Blasts training, civilian deaths

BY INDIA AUTRY
STAFF WRITER

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Thirty-one Triangle community members, including 10 UNC students, traveled to Fort Benning on Sunday to participate in the annual School of the Americas protest.

The group, organized by Students United for a Responsible Global Environment, joined more than 16,000 demonstrators for the second day of the protest.

Now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, the school trains soldiers from nearly every country in the western hemisphere and educates some civilians and law enforcement officers. In Latin America, some who received instruction in the United States went on to abuse and kill hundreds of thousands of people.

Protesters occupying the one-

mile stretch of road leading to the fort's gates expressed their vehement distaste for the school, often calling it the "School of the Assassins" or a "terrorist training camp."

Catholics made their usual large showing, and the tone of the day was highly spiritual. Speakers often aligned their cause with the righteousness of God.

A singer crooned to the SOA and its opponents, "The evil that you're fighting for, God condemn your holy war."

Four UNC students from the Presbyterian Campus Ministry also traveled to the event.

The turnout was diverse. Before her performance, Indigo Girls singer Amy Ray boasted that the protesters, many decked out in anti-SOA gear, ranged from "punk rockers to folksies to priests."

Actor Martin Sheen voiced his deep commitment to the school's closing. "I think you know what I do for a living, but this is what I do to stay alive."

He immediately made a play on his "West Wing" TV role. "As

the acting president of the United States, I came to issue the following directive: The School of the Americas shall cease and desist, effective immediately. ... Jed Bartlett, November 21, 2004."

As he stepped down from the stage, several in the crowd shouted with laughter, "Four more years, four more years."

Sheen's declaration embodied the optimism that was central to the protest. With chants such as "Si, se puede" (Yes, we can) and "No mas, no more," the crowd members showed that they weren't there to complain but to demand change.

The three-hour symbolic funeral procession was the day's main event. Most participants brought white crosses bearing the names of the SOA's indirect victims. A stage ensemble soulfully sang the names and ages of just a portion of those they called martyrs, many of whom were civilians or unarmed activists.

UNC senior Ian Kibbe talked about the impact the string of names had on him. "It hits you that, 'Wow, oh, there were a lot of people

killed," he said. "But then it sort of drowns into the background, but then an hour and a half later, you realize they're still reading names."

Afterward, the mood changed from somber to celebratory, with folk dancing, a comedy routine by "the world's only singing CIA agent" Dave Lippman and anticipation of the justice they hope will come.

People who crossed the temporary fences at the entrance of the fort received shouts of encouragement from the crowd but a less supportive response from a recorded voice transmitted over a loudspeaker: "It's the policy of this installation that no partisan political demonstrations be held here."

UNC graduate Dan Schwankl was one of at least 16 trespassing protesters. Dennis Kynne, a member of Veterans for Peace, announced that later in the afternoon, he planned to climb over the fence and leave his "dirty old rag" of a uniform at the entrance.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Spending bill brings key cuts

Abortion provision also raises ire

BY MARK PUENTE
STAFF WRITER

U.S. legislators have attached two provisions to a \$388 billion, must-pass spending bill that pits civil libertarians against social conservatives while hitting students in their pockets.

Congress passed the 11th-hour stopgap measure, which funds agencies such as the FBI and the Environmental Protection Agency, to avoid a partial shutdown — but not before a war of words broke out between differing groups.

Both sides are in disagreement on whether the bill is a payback for the social conservatives who turned out en masse on Election Day or democracy at its best.

"It's trying to spin the forces of democracy," said Eric Scheidler, communications director for Pro-Life Action League. "People should be glad that their representatives are responding."

Hidden clause

House and Senate negotiators attached to the bill an abortion provision that will ban federal, state and local agencies from withholding taxpayer funds from health care providers that refuse to provide or pay for abortions.

The bill also would allow doctors to decide if they want to offer abortion counseling or referrals to women.

Supporters say the bill is a welcome restriction to abortion rights.

"It's unjust to force people to pay for the destruction of human life," Scheidler said.

"At least half of Americans are opposed to abortion."

But opponents are concerned that the Bush administration is attempting to strip away a woman's right to choose and wipe out Roe v. Wade.

"This is bad public policy," said Brian Lewis, director of public policy for Planned Parenthood Health Systems in Raleigh. "This is just the beginning of this administration's compassionate conservatism."

Some politicians, including California Sen. Barbara Boxer, a Democrat, had threatened to block the bill's progress, but Congress' Republican majority drowned her out.

If Boxer had delayed the bill's passage, it would have resulted in what essentially would have been a partial government shutdown, idling thousands of federal workers.

"Washington is all about people in politics playing their best hand," said Mike Briggs, press secretary for Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C. "Senator Edwards does not support this provision."

Sen. Elizabeth Dole's office did not return phone calls by press time.

Dividing the pie

The other controversial provision in the bill is likely to significantly alter the formula that calculates funding for Pell Grants, the nation's primary federal scholarship program.

The cut will shave \$300 mil-

lion from a program that spends \$12.5 billion a year and, many say, is already underfunded.

The cuts would go into effect July 1, 2005 — the beginning of the new academic year.

The U.S. Department of Education attempted to change the way it distributes financial aid last year, but Congress blocked the measure.

In 2003, the department changed the formula on its own, which angered members of Congress who contended that it was a backdoor way of cutting funding without facing the public.

In response, Sen. John Corzine, D-N.J., introduced legislation that suspended the new formula for a year. He introduced similar legislation this year, but it did not survive the conference committee.

The education department is supposed to update yearly the tax tables that determine the payouts.

"It ought to be re-looked at every year," said Steven Brooks, executive director of the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority. "It should be sensitive to all income levels."

The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, an arm of Congress that advises it on student aid, estimated that \$300 million will be saved by the recalculation.

About 1.2 million students will lose an estimated \$200 to \$300 a year. But nationwide, 85,000 to 90,000 will lose total eligibility.

The hardest hit students, who will lose their Pell Grants, will come from households that earn \$35,500 to \$40,000 a year.

"This is not the lowest income levels for dependent students," said Brian Fitzgerald, staff director of the ACSFA.

"But it does have a trickle-down effect on state and campus funding."

Higher education officials expected the legislation to be included in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which is up for renewal when Congress reconvenes in January.

"We are not happy," said Melanie Corrigan, associate director of the American Council on Education's Center for Policy Analysis. "Quite frankly, it's a grave concern."

UNC officials say preliminary estimates determined that between 300 and 400 students will be affected by the cut to financial aid.

The University is running focus reports that will determine the exact amount, said Shirley Ort, associate provost and director of scholarships and student aid.

"I don't think it will be huge," she said. "But it will impact some. It's not a happy thought."

Ort said it is difficult for officials to plan for cuts when state budgets are being cut and resources are being rationed.

"We can probably weather this limited change," she said.

"But we have to watch our reserves that can be used as a contingency."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Cancer survivors, researchers share views

BY LILY KUO
STAFF WRITER

In her mind, Marlye Gelin-Adams has a list of things she can control. Cancer is not one of them, but her life and attitude are.

"I thought, 'I have cancer, and I can't control that,'" Gelin-Adams said. "This is my battle; I have a 2-year-old, and I have to build a life for him."

Gelin-Adams, a breast cancer survivor who has worked as an international development consultant, spoke Monday night at the Kappa Cancer Awareness forum hosted by the Theta Omicron chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.

Cancer researchers, educators and survivors discussed their experiences and involvement in the field of prostate and breast cancer.

"People think that cancer has to kill you — but it doesn't," said senior Adhanom Yohannes, service chairman of the organization. The program focused on preventative measures against cancer, namely awareness.

"We know about (cancer), but we don't know enough, like what it stems from and how it evolves into such a problem," said senior management and society major Courtney Crawford.

"You could be walking around with (cancer) and not know it — and that's a problem."

Routine doctor visits and self-

examination are key to prevention, the speakers said.

"The black community hasn't been known to go to the doctor," said senior business major Brandon Neal. "My grandfather was diagnosed with cancer five years after it had been growing."

Panelist Jane Schroeder, a professor in the Department of Epidemiology at UNC, said the instance and mortality rate of cancer in black males is higher than in Caucasians.

"Historically, the health care system has not been friendly to the African-American community," Schroeder said.

Although Caucasians and black males might be diagnosed in the same stage of cancer, the mortality rate is still higher for blacks.

"It may be that treatment is different due to race or financial reasons," Schroeder said.

"If you don't have insurance, maybe they won't give you the 'Cadillac treatment.'"

The speakers said that organizations such as BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina offer affordable individual health coverage, and that the YWCA of The Greater Triangle Inc. provides free breast cancer screening and treatment.

Schroeder said age and race are the top influencing factors for prostate cancer. She explained that breast cancer depends on the time of hormonal changes caused by the onset of a woman's menstrual cycle



Kacey Hanson speaks at the Kappa Cancer Awareness forum Monday night in the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History.

or the birth of a baby.

"Basically, it's not something you can prevent," she said.

Cancer research is another method of prevention. The panelists emphasized the need for participants for research.

"We don't know the answers to these questions," said panelist Kacey Hanson of the N.C. BEAUTY and Health Project.

"That's why research is so important."

"You've got prostate cancer, and we can't prevent your case, but maybe we can prevent someone

else's," Schroeder said, describing her approach to cancer patients for research.

One in nine women have breast cancer, said Gelin-Adams.

"I was misdiagnosed by two doctors," she said.

"I want young women to know that they are never too young to have breast cancer."

"I learned the hard way that it's a myth that doctors know best; we know our bodies best."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

FDA augments abortion drug's safety label

BY JULIANA HANSON
STAFF WRITER

The Food and Drug Administration decided last week to update the medication guide and safety label for mifepristone, an abortion drug suspected to have caused the death of three women since its legalization in 2000.

The FDA added new information for physicians about the symptoms and treatment of these rare but serious complications.

Mifepristone already carried a black box warning, which warns of the risks associated with any form of abortion. These risks include serious bacterial infections, sepsis, bleeding and death.

The FDA has received about 600 adverse health reports concerning mifepristone since the drug was approved.

But these adverse medical reports don't indicate that the drug is the cause of the problem, only that the drug was taken.

Dr. Steven Galson, acting director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, stressed during a conference call that although the FDA investigated these reports, it did not find conclusive scientific evidence determining mifepristone as the cause of death.

"We feel the safety profile of the drug along with the steps taken today are adequate for the drug to be used safely," Galson said.

Vicki Saporta, president and CEO of the National Abortion Federation, voiced her support for the FDA's

warning label, saying that it includes scientific evidence and has sufficiently addressed the situation.

"Women should feel confident in choosing this as a safe and effective way to end a pregnancy," she said.

Although there is not yet a concrete scientific link, John Jansen, co-director for the Generations for Life branch of the Pro Life Action League, said he believes the strong suspicion surrounding the drug is sufficient for it to be removed from the market.

"After even one documented instance of someone dying, it should be taken off the market immediately and researched more," he said, adding that the FDA's label doesn't go nearly far enough.

Jansen said he has been leery of the drug since its approval in 2000, after a process, he said, was rushed and failed to take serious health concerns into account.

But David Grimes, clinical professor at the UNC Medical School's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, maintains that mifepristone is extremely safe, and that complications from taking it are extremely rare.

He said the risk of death is .8 per 100,000 users for mifepristone, compared to 2 per 100,000 for penicillin.

"This drug has been used around the world by millions and millions of women," he said.

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