

WOMEN DEFACE THE PRESIDIO ARMY BASE

"Built on blood, built on war, we know what this place is for!" Between 150 and 200 women shouted this chant and others at an International Women's Day demonstration on March 10 at the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco, California. The women began the protest by filtering in from different entrances, converging at the Headquarters of the Sixth U.S. Army Division at the Presidio. The women immediately took down the American flag flying high above the base, threw blood all over the Headquarters, and began a picket. Some carried large puppets representing U.S. army officials with the declaration WANTED FOR WAR CRIMES painted across their chests. A few women carried large CIA death masks. Others carried portraits of women freedom fighters, prisoners of war, and flags from liberation movements like the FMLN in El Salvador and the FSLN in Nicaragua. "We're angry women and we're here to say, 'Down with the Army and the CIA!'" they shouted.

"We reject the authority of the American flag and the U.S. government which is sending an additional 2,000 U.S. troops to an existing force of 5,000 troops on the Honduran/Salvadorean border, preparing for an invasion of El Salvador," stated one of the women protesters.

The women indicted the current and historical role that the Presidio has played in the colonization of Native American and Mexican land, in the wars against the Phillipines, Puerto Rico and Cuba, and in the training of the National Guard to put down urban rebellions. "We're building ties with Irish, British, and West German women who are demonstrating at Armagh Women's Prison, at Greenham Common, and at U.S. military bases throughout Europe. We join with women in Central America, the Middle East, and around the world who demand an end to U.S. militarism and to U.S. imperialism itself," announced a spokeswoman from Women Against Imperialism, the sponsor of the demonstration.

The military police, armed with shotguns and clad in riot gear, scrambled to gain a defensive position in front of the headquarter's entrance, but women bearing the FSLN flag stood in their way. The military base commander demanded that the women leave. The women responded, "We'll leave when you leave Central America, the Caribbean and the Middle East!"

Continuing their demonstration, the women marched on to the Army Museum where they threw more blood on the building and tanks stationed outside. One woman announced to the crowd, "Inside this building is an exhibit honoring the American woman at war. Its message to women is that our duty is either to support the armed forces as faithful wives and mothers, or join the armed forces as Private Benjamins. We say NO! We will confront the U.S. war machine with our own militancy and power!"

The women marched on to another center of military activity on the base, the Letterman Army Hospital. As one of the protesters denounced the hospital's germ warfare research, two MPs pushed her aside and arrested her. Women immediately crowded around them shouting, "Who's the real terrorist? The U.S. Army!" and doused the military police car with blood.

When the police drove her away, the demonstrators continued their march through the base, meeting up at the Presidio's main entrance at Lombard and Baker streets -- the gates had been shut by the Army officials when numbers of women began a picket coordinated with the march inside the Presidio. The two groups merged to continue the protest outside the gates. "We demonstrate today to challenge this base of U.S. imperialism, where decisions are made with a shuffling of paper -- decisions which shed blood from Central America to Watts. We'll continue to protest until forced sterilization of Puerto Rican and Third World women stops. We'll continue to demonstrate until pornography and all forms of violence against women end! Like the women in Nicaragua and El Salvador who have fought and continue to fight for their national liberation as well as their

liberation as women, we will struggle for real change. We will build an anti-imperialist women's movement."

For more information, contact Women Against Imperialism at 3543 18th Street #14, San Francisco, CA 94110, or call (415) 652-4401, ext. 656.