

Covert United States foreign regime change actions

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Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

Covert United States foreign regime change actions

[1949 Syrian coup d'état](#)

[1953 Iranian coup d'état](#)

[1954 Guatemalan coup d'état](#)

[1959 Tibetan uprising](#)

[1961 Cuba, Bay of Pigs Invasion](#)

[1963 South Vietnamese coup](#)

[1964 Brazilian coup d'état](#)

[1973 Chilean coup d'état](#)

[1976 Argentine coup d'état](#)

[1979–89 Afghanistan, Operation Cyclone](#)

[1980 Turkish coup d'état](#)

[1981–87 Nicaragua, Contras](#)

- [view](#)
- [talk](#)
- [edit](#)

History of U.S. expansion and influence

[Foreign policy](#)

[Military history](#)

[Timeline of military operations](#)

[List of wars](#)

[List of bases](#)

[Manifest destiny](#)

[Non-interventionism](#)

[Overseas interventions](#)

[Pax Americana](#)

[America's Backyard](#)

[Territorial acquisitions](#)

- [view](#)
- [talk](#)
- [edit](#)

The **United States** has been involved in and assisted in the **overthrow of foreign governments** (more recently termed "[regime change](#)") without the overt use of U.S. military force. Often, such operations are tasked to the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA).

Regime change has been attempted through direct involvement of U.S. operatives, the funding and training of insurgency groups within these countries, anti-regime propaganda campaigns, [coups d'état](#), and other activities usually conducted as operations by the CIA. These actions were sometimes accompanied by [by direct military action](#), such as following the [U.S. invasion of Panama](#) in 1989 and the [U.S.-led military invasion of Iraq](#) in 2003.

Some argue that non-transparent [United States government](#) agencies working in secret sometimes mislead or do not fully implement the decisions of elected civilian leaders and that this has been an important component of many such operations,^[1] Some contend that the U.S. has supported more coups against democracies that it perceived as [communist](#), becoming communist, or pro-communist.^[1]

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

- [1 Prior to Cold War](#)
 - [1.1 Russia](#)
- [2 During the Cold War](#)
 - [2.1 Communist states 1944–89](#)
 - [2.2 Syria 1949](#)
 - [2.3 Iran 1953](#)
 - [2.4 Guatemala 1954](#)
 - [2.5 Tibet 1955–70s](#)
 - [2.6 Indonesia 1958](#)
 - [2.7 Cuba 1959](#)
 - [2.8 Iraq 1960–63](#)
 - [2.9 Democratic Republic of the Congo 1960–65](#)
 - [2.10 Dominican Republic 1961](#)
 - [2.11 South Vietnam 1963](#)
 - [2.12 Brazil 1964](#)
 - [2.13 Ghana 1966](#)

- [2.14 Chile 1970–73](#)
- [2.15 Argentina 1976](#)
- [2.16 Afghanistan 1979–89](#)
- [2.17 Turkey 1980](#)
- [2.18 Poland 1980–89](#)
- [2.19 Nicaragua 1981–90](#)
 - [2.19.1 Destablization through CIA assets](#)
 - [2.19.2 Arming the Contras](#)
- [3 Since the end of the Cold War](#)
 - [3.1 Iraq 1992–96](#)
 - [3.2 Venezuela 2002](#)
 - [3.3 Iraq 2002–03](#)
 - [3.4 Iran 2005–present](#)
 - [3.5 Somalia 2006–07](#)
 - [3.6 Syria 2012–present](#)
- [4 See also](#)
- [5 References](#)
- [6 Further reading](#)
 - [6.1 Books](#)
- [7 External links](#)

Prior to Cold War[[edit](#)]

This section requires [expansion](#). (May 2012)

Russia[[edit](#)]

Main article: [Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War](#)




U.S. troops in [Vladivostok](#), August 1918

The [Bolshevik revolution](#) of 1917 was met with hostility from President [Wilson](#)'s administration. After withdrawing funding for Russia and opposing a British and French plan to include the Bolsheviks as allies against Germany in 1918, the United States extended its maritime [blockade](#) of [Germany](#) to include Soviet Russia and began [covertly supporting Russian opposition factions](#).^{[2][3]}

In 1918, the [Allied powers](#), including the United States, began to supplement their covert efforts with [a military intervention](#) in the [Russian Civil War](#). The U.S. sent 13,000 troops to the Russian port cities of [Vladivostok](#) and [Archangelsk](#).^{[4][5]} This intervention would not end until 1920 when it became clear that Lenin's forces were defeating the loose anti-Bolshevik [White Russian movement](#).

During the Cold War[[edit](#)]

Communist states 1944–89[[edit](#)]

 This section requires [expansion](#). (*June 2012*)

The United States supported resistance movements and [dissidents](#) in the communist regimes of [Eastern Europe](#) and the Soviet Union during the [Cold War](#). One example is the [counterespionage](#) operations following the discovery of the [Farewell dossier](#) which some argue contributed to the fall of the Soviet regime.^{[6][7]}

Syria 1949[[edit](#)]

Main article: [March 1949 Syrian coup d'état](#)

[Syria](#) became an independent republic in 1946, but the [March 1949 Syrian coup d'état](#), led by Army Chief of Staff [Husni al-Za'im](#), ended the initial period of civilian rule. Za'im met at least six times with CIA operatives in the months prior to the coup to discuss his plan to seize power. Za'im requested American funding or personnel, but it is not known whether this assistance was provided. Once in power, Za'im made several key decisions that benefited the United States. He approved the [Trans-Arabian Pipeline](#) (TAPLINE), an American project designed to transport Saudi Arabian oil to Mediterranean ports. Construction of TAPLINE had been delayed due to Syrian intransigence. Za'im also improved relations with two American allies in the region: Israel and Turkey. He signed an [armistice in 1949](#) with Israel, formally ending the [1948 Arab-Israeli War](#) and he renounced Syrian claims to [Hatay Province](#), a major source of dispute between Syria and Turkey. Za'im also cracked down on local communists. However, Za'im's regime was short-lived. He was overthrown in August, just four and a half months after seizing power.^{[8][9][10][11]}

Iran 1953[[edit](#)]

Main article: [1953 Iranian coup d'état](#)

See also: [Tudeh Party](#) and [Iran hostage crisis](#)

In 1953, the CIA worked with the [United Kingdom](#) to overthrow the democratically elected government of [Iran](#) led by [Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh](#) who had attempted to [nationalize](#) Iran's petroleum industry, threatening the profits of the [Anglo-Iranian Oil Company](#), now known as [BP](#).^[12] Declassified CIA documents show that Britain was fearful of Iran's plans to

nationalize its oil industry and pressed the U.S. to mount a joint operation to depose the prime minister and install a [puppet regime](#).^[13] In 1951 the [Iranian parliament](#) voted to nationalize the petroleum fields of the country.^{[13][14]}

The coup was led by CIA operative [Kermit Roosevelt, Jr.](#) (grandson of President [Theodore Roosevelt](#)). With help from [British intelligence](#), the CIA planned, funded and implemented [Operation Ajax](#).^[15] In the months before the coup, the UK and U.S. imposed a boycott of the country, exerted other political pressures, and conducted a massive covert propaganda campaign to create the environment necessary for the coup. The CIA hired Iranian [agents provocateurs](#) who posed as communists, harassed religious leaders and staged the bombing of one cleric's home to turn the Islamic religious community against the government. For the U.S. audience, the CIA hoped to plant articles in U.S. newspapers saying that [Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi's](#) return to govern Iran resulted from a homegrown revolt against what was being represented to the U.S. public as a communist-leaning government. The CIA successfully used its contacts at the [Associated Press](#) to put on the newswire in the U.S. a statement from [Tehran](#) about royal decrees that the CIA itself had written.^[13]



Tehran men celebrating the [1953 Iranian coup d'état](#)

The coup initially failed and the Shah fled the country. After four days of rioting, Shi'ite-sparked street protests backed by pro-Shah army units defeated Mossadeq's forces and the Shah returned to power.^[16]

Supporters of the coup have argued that Mossadegh had become the *de facto* dictator of Iran, citing his dissolution of the Parliament and the Supreme Court, and his abolishment of free elections with a secret ballot, after he declared victory in a referendum where he claimed 99.9% of the vote.^[17] [Darioush Bayandor](#) has argued that the CIA botched its coup attempt and that a popular uprising, instigated by top Shi'ite clerics such as Grand Ayatollah [Seyyed Hossein Borujerdi](#) and [Abol-Ghasem Kashani](#) (who were certain that Mosaddegh was taking the nation toward religious indifference, and worried that he had banished the Shah), instigated street riots to return the Shah to power four days after the failed coup.^[16] After the coup, the Shah introduced electoral reforms extending suffrage to all members of society, including women. This was part of a broader series of reforms dubbed the [White Revolution](#).^[18] However, the Shah also carried out at least 300 political executions, according to [Amnesty International](#).^[19]

The CIA subsequently used the apparent success of their Iranian coup project to bolster their image in American government circles. They expanded their reach into other countries, taking a greater portion of American intelligence assets based on their record in Iran.^[16]

In August 2013 the CIA admitted that it was involved in both the planning and the execution of the coup, including the bribing of Iranian politicians, security and army high-ranking officials, as well as pro-coup propaganda.^{[20][21]} The CIA is quoted acknowledging the coup was carried out "under CIA direction" and "as an act of U.S. foreign policy, conceived and approved at the highest levels of government."^[22] The [National Security Archive](#) said it that while it "applauds the CIA's decision to make these materials available, today's posting shows clearly that these materials could have been safely declassified many years ago without risk of damage to [national security](#)."^[20]

Guatemala 1954[[edit](#)]

Main article: [1954 Guatemalan coup d'état](#)

The [Guatemalan Revolution](#) of 1944-54 had overthrown the US backed dictator [Jorge Ubico](#) and brought a democratically elected government to power. The government began an ambitious [agrarian reform](#) program attempting to grant land to millions of landless peasants. This program threatened the land holdings of the [United Fruit Company](#), who lobbied for a coup by portraying these reforms as communist. The CIA engineered the overthrow of the democratically elected government of [Jacobo Árbenz](#), and installed the military dictator [Carlos Castillo Armas](#). A [decades long civil war](#) ensued in which some 200,000 people were killed, mostly by the US backed military.^{[23][24][25][26][27]}

Tibet 1955–70s[[edit](#)]



According to the [14th Dalai Lama](#), the CIA supported the [Tibetan independence movement](#) "not because they (the CIA) cared about Tibetan independence, but as part of their worldwide efforts to destabilize all communist governments".^[28]

Main article: [CIA Tibetan program](#)

The CIA armed an anti-Communist insurgency for decades in order to oppose the [invasion](#) of [Tibet](#) by Chinese forces and the subsequent [control of Tibet](#) by China. The program had a record of almost unmitigated failure.^[29]

According to the [14th Dalai Lama](#), the CIA supported the [Tibetan independence movement](#) "not because they (the CIA) cared about Tibetan independence, but as part of their worldwide efforts to destabilize all communist governments".^[28]

The budget figures for the CIA's Tibetan program were as follows:

- **Subsidy to the [Dalai Lama](#):** US\$180,000^[30]
- **Support of Tibetan guerrillas based in [Nepal](#):** US\$500,000^[30]
- **Other costs:** US\$1.06m^[30]
- **Total:** US\$1.73m^[30]

Indonesia 1958^[edit]

See also: [Guided Democracy in Indonesia](#), [Transition to the New Order](#), [Non-Aligned Movement](#) and [30 September Movement](#)

The autocratic [Indonesian](#) government of [Sukarno](#) was faced with a major threat to its legitimacy beginning in 1956, when several regional commanders began to demand autonomy from [Jakarta](#). After mediation failed, Sukarno took action to remove the dissident commanders. In February 1958, dissident military commanders in Central Sumatera (Colonel Ahmad Hussein) and North Sulawesi (Colonel Ventje Sumual) declared the [Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia-Permesta](#) Movement aimed at overthrowing the Sukarno regime. They were joined by many civilian politicians from the [Masyumi](#) Party, such as [Sjafruddin Prawiranegara](#), who were opposed to the growing influence of the communist [Partai Komunis Indonesia](#) party. Due to their anti-communist rhetoric, the rebels received arms, funding, and other covert aid from the CIA until [Allen Lawrence Pope](#), an American pilot, was shot down after a bombing raid on government-held [Ambon](#) in April 1958. The central government responded by launching airborne and seaborne military invasions of rebel strongholds [Padang](#) and [Manado](#). By the end of 1958, the rebels were militarily defeated, and the last remaining rebel guerilla bands surrendered by August 1961.^[31] To make amends for CIA involvement in the rebellion, President [Kennedy](#) invited Sukarno to Washington, and provided Indonesia with billions of dollars in civilian and military aid.^[32]

Cuba 1959^[edit]



[Bay of Pigs Memorial](#) in [Little Havana](#)- [Miami](#), [Florida](#).

Main articles: [Bay of Pigs Invasion](#), [The Cuban Project](#), [Operation Northwoods](#) and [Cuba–United States relations](#)

The Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations approved initiatives for [CIA](#)-trained Cuban anti-communist exiles and refugees to land in [Cuba](#) and attempt to overthrow the government of Cuban leader [Fidel Castro](#). Critics have characterized Castro's rule as dictatorship. Plans originally formed under Eisenhower were scaled back under Kennedy. The largest and most complicated coup effort, approved at White House level, was the [Bay of Pigs operation](#).

The CIA made a number of attempts to [assassinate Castro](#), often with White House approval, as in [Operation Mongoose](#).

Iraq 1960–63[\[edit\]](#)

See also: [CIA transnational human rights actions § Qasim](#)

In February 1960, the United States planned a coup against the government of [Iraq](#) headed by Prime Minister [Abd al-Karim Qasim](#), who two years earlier had deposed the Western-allied Iraqi monarchy. Qasim's rule has been described as authoritarian and dictatorial. The U.S. was concerned about the growing influence of [Iraqi Communist Party](#) government officials under his administration, as well as his threats to invade [Kuwait](#), which almost caused a war between Iraq and Britain.

According to the [Church Committee](#), the CIA planned a "special operation" to "incapacitate" an Iraqi Colonel believed to be "promoting Soviet bloc political interests in Iraq." The aim was to send Qasim a poisoned handkerchief, "which, while not likely to result in total disablement, would be certain to prevent the target from pursuing his usual activities for a minimum of three months." During the course of the Committee's investigation, the CIA stated that the handkerchief was "in fact never received (if, indeed, sent)." It added that the colonel: "Suffered a terminal illness before a firing squad in Baghdad (an event we had nothing to do with) after our handkerchief proposal was considered."

Qasim was killed on 8 February 1963 by a firing squad of the [Ba'ath](#) party in collaboration with Iraqi nationalists and members of the [Arab Socialist Union](#), in what came to be known as the [Ramadan Revolution](#). Of the 16 members of Qasim's cabinet, 12 of them were Ba'ath Party members; however, the party turned against Qasim due to his refusal to join [Gamel Abdel Nasser](#)'s United Arab Republic.^[33] Washington immediately befriended the successor regime. "Almost certainly a gain for our side," [Robert Komer](#), a National Security Council aide, wrote to President Kennedy on the day of the takeover.^[34] The Ba'ath Party was subsequently purged from the government in the [November 1963 Iraqi coup d'état](#) after the Ba'athist Prime Minister, [Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr](#), attempted to seize power from the U.S.-backed President, [Abdul Salam Arif](#).

Writing in his memoirs of the 1963 coup, long time OSS and CIA intelligence analyst Harry Rositzke presented it as an example of one on which they had good intelligence in contrast to others that caught the agency by surprise. The overthrow "was forecast in exact detail by CIA

agents." "Agents in the Ba'ath Party headquarters in Baghdad had for years kept Washington au courant on the party's personnel and organization, its secret communications and sources of funds, and its penetrations of military and civilian hierarchies in several countries.... CIA sources were in a perfect position to follow each step of Ba'ath preparations for the Iraqi coup, which focused on making contacts with military and civilian leaders in Baghdad. The CIA's major source, in an ideal catbird seat, reported the exact time of the coup and provided a list of the new cabinet members.... To call an upcoming coup requires the CIA to have sources within the group of plotters. Yet, from a diplomatic point of view, having secret contacts with plotters implies at least unofficial complicity in the plot."^[35]

Qasim was aware of U.S. complicity in the plot and continually denounced the U.S. in public. The [U.S. Department of State](#) was worried that Qasim would harass US diplomats in Iraq because of this. The CIA was aware of many plots in Iraq in 1962, not just the one that succeeded.^[36]

The best direct evidence that the U.S. was complicit is the memo from Komer to President Kennedy on February 8, 1963. The last paragraph reads: "We will make informal friendly noises as soon as we can find out whom to talk with, and ought to recognize as soon as we're sure these guys are firmly in the saddle. CIA had excellent reports on the plotting, but I doubt either they or UK should claim much credit for it."^[37]

Democratic Republic of the Congo 1960–65[[edit](#)]

Main article: [Congo Crisis](#)

In 1960, the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) became independent from [Belgium](#), and [Patrice Lumumba](#) became its first prime minister.^[38] The new country quickly became embroiled in a civil war, with the regions of [Katanga](#) and [South Kasai](#) declaring their independence. Lumumba sought assistance from the [Soviet Union](#) to put down the rebellions. Fearing a communist takeover of the country, the [CIA](#) was authorized by US president [Dwight Eisenhower](#) to assassinate Lumumba; however, these plans were never carried out.^{[39][40]}

In 1964, the [Maoist Simba Rebellion](#) (Swahili for "Lions") broke out. In early 1965 Marxist revolutionary [Che Guevara](#) traveled to Congo to offer his knowledge and experience as a guerrilla to the insurgents. Guevara led the Cuban operation in support of the Marxist Simba movement. Guevara, his second-in-command [Victor Dreke](#), and 12 other Cuban expeditionaries arrived in the Congo on 24 April 1965 and a contingent of approximately 100 Afro-Cubans joined them soon afterward.^{[41][42]} They collaborated for a time with guerrilla leader [Laurent-Désiré Kabila](#), who had previously helped supporters of Lumumba lead an unsuccessful revolt months earlier. White South African mercenaries, led by [Mike Hoare](#) in concert with Cuban exiles and the CIA, worked with the Congo National Army to thwart Guevara in the mountains near the village of [Fizi](#) on [Lake Tanganyika](#). They were able to monitor his communications and so pre-empted his attacks and interdicted his supply lines. Despite the fact that Guevara sought to conceal his presence in the Congo, the U.S. government was aware of his location and activities. The CIA assisted the operation, carried out by U.S. and Belgian forces, to rescue hundreds of European hostages held by the Simba forces.^[43]

On 25 November 1965, just five days after Guevara's departure, [Joseph Mobutu](#) seized power with the help of the political and military support of Western countries, including the U.S.^[44]^[*Unreliable fringe source?*]

Dominican Republic 1961^[edit]

See also: [CIA transnational human rights actions § Trujillo](#)

The CIA supported the overthrow of [Rafael Trujillo](#), President/Dictator of the [Dominican Republic](#), on 30 May 1961.^[45] Trujillo has been described as one of the worst dictators in the Americas. In a report to the Deputy [Attorney General of the United States](#), CIA officials described the agency as having "no active part" in the assassination and only a "faint connection" with the groups that planned the killing,^[46] but the internal CIA investigation, by its Inspector General, "disclosed quite extensive Agency involvement with the plotters."^[47]

South Vietnam 1963^[edit]

Main articles: [Cable 243](#), [1963 South Vietnamese coup](#) and [Arrest and assassination of Ngô Đình Diệm](#)



The body of Diệm in the back of the APC, having been killed on the way to military headquarters

The CIA backed a coup against President [Ngô Đình Diệm](#) of [South Vietnam](#). [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.](#), the US ambassador to South Vietnam, refused to meet with Diệm. Upon hearing that a [coup d'état](#) was being designed by [Army of the Republic of Vietnam](#) (ARVN) generals led by General [Đương Văn Minh](#), Lodge gave secret assurances to the generals that the U.S. would not interfere. [Lucien Conein](#), a CIA operative, provided a group of South Vietnamese generals with \$40,000 to carry out the coup with the promise that US forces would make no attempt to protect Diệm. [Đương Văn Minh](#) and his co-conspirators overthrew the government on 1 November 1963 in a swift coup. On 1 November, with only the palace guard remaining to defend Diệm and his younger brother, [Nhu](#), the generals called the palace offering Diệm exile if he surrendered. However, that evening, Diệm and his entourage escaped via an underground passage to [Cholon](#), where they were captured the following morning, 2 November. The brothers were assassinated together in the back of an [armoured personnel carrier](#) with a [bayonet](#) and revolver by Captain [Nguyễn Văn Nhung](#) while en route to the Vietnamese Joint General Staff headquarters.^[48] Diệm was buried in an [unmarked grave](#) in a cemetery next to the house of the U.S. ambassador.^[49] Upon learning of Diệm's ouster and death, [Hồ Chí Minh](#) reportedly said, "I can scarcely believe the Americans would be so stupid."^[50]

Brazil 1964[[edit](#)]

Main article: [1964 Brazilian coup d'état](#)

The democratically-elected government of [Brazil](#), headed by President [João Goulart](#), was successfully overthrown in a coup in March 1964. On March 30, the American military attaché in Brazil, Colonel [Vernon A. Walters](#), telegraphed the [State Department](#). In that telegraph, he confirmed that Brazilian army generals, independently of the US, had committed themselves to acting against Goulart within a week of the meeting, but no date was set.^[51]

[LBJ receives briefing on Brazil.](#)



U.S. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) receiving briefing on events in Brazil on March 31, 1964 on his Texas ranch with Undersecretary of State [George Ball](#) and Assistant Secretary for Latin America, [Thomas C. Mann](#). Ball briefs Johnson on that status of military moves in Brazil to overthrow the government of [João Goulart](#).

Problems playing this file? See [media help](#).

Declassified transcripts of communications between U.S. ambassador to Brazil [Lincoln Gordon](#) and the U.S. government show that, predicting an all-out civil war, President Johnson authorized logistical materials to be in place to support the coup-side of the rebellion as part of U.S. [Operation Brother Sam](#).^[52]

In the telegraphs, Gordon also acknowledges U.S. involvement in "covert support for pro-democracy street rallies... and encouragement [of] democratic and anti-communist sentiment in Congress, armed forces, friendly labor and student groups, church, and business" and that he "may be requesting modest supplementary funds for other covert action programs in the near future."^[53]

In Gordon's 2001 book, *Brazil's Second Chance: En Route Toward the First World*, on Brazilian history since the military coup, he denied a role in the coup. However, James N. Green, an American historian of Brazil, argued: "[Gordon] changed Brazil's history, for he... made it clear that, if the coup was advanced, the United States was going to recognize it immediately, which was fundamental [to the plotters]."^[54]

Ghana 1966[[edit](#)]

In February 1966, the government of [Ghana](#) led by [Kwame Nkrumah](#) was overthrown in a military coup led by [Emmanuel Kwasi Kotoka](#). Several commentators, including former CIA officer [John Stockwell](#), have alleged the CIA's involvement in the coup.^{[55][56][57]} Other commentators have stated that no documentary evidence implicating the United States in the coup exists,^[58] while claims of involvement may have been based on KGB disinformation.^[59]

Chile 1970–73[[edit](#)]

Main articles: [1973 Chilean coup d'état](#) and [United States intervention in Chile](#)



Two Chilean air force jets fire 18 rockets into the presidential palace [La Moneda](#), setting it on fire, in the [1973 Chilean coup d'état](#) on September 11, 1973

The election of Marxist candidate [Salvador Allende](#) as [President of Chile](#) in September 1970 led President [Richard Nixon](#) to order that Allende not be allowed to take office.^{[60]:25} Nixon pursued a vigorous campaign of covert resistance to Allende, first designed to convince the Chilean congress to confirm [Jorge Alessandri](#) as the winner of the election. When this failed, [false flag](#) operatives approached senior Chilean military officers, in "some two dozen contacts", with the message that "the U.S. desired... a coup."^[60] Once Allende took office, extensive covert efforts continued with U.S.-funded [black propaganda](#) placed in [El Mercurio](#), strikes organized against Allende, and funding for Allende opponents. When *El Mercurio* requested significant funds for covert support in September 1971, "...in a rare example of presidential micromanagement of a covert operation, Nixon personally authorized the \$700,000—and more if necessary—in covert funds to *El Mercurio*."^{[60]:93} Following an extended period of social, political, and economic unrest, General [Augusto Pinochet](#) assumed power in a violent coup d'état on September 11, 1973; among the dead was Allende. Peter Kornbluh asserts that the CIA destabilized Chile and helped create the conditions for the [1973 Chilean coup d'état](#), which led to years of dictatorship under [Augusto Pinochet](#).^[60] Others also point to the involvement of the [Defense Intelligence Agency](#), agents of which allegedly secured the missiles used to bombard the [La Moneda Palace](#).^[61]

Argentina 1976[[edit](#)]

Main article: [1976 Argentine coup d'état](#)



This section requires [expansion](#). (December 2014)

Afghanistan 1979–89[[edit](#)]

Main articles: [Operation Cyclone](#), [Reagan Doctrine](#), [Soviet war in Afghanistan](#) and [War in Afghanistan \(1978–present\)](#)

See also: [Charlie Wilson's War](#) and [Badaber Uprising](#)

"To watch the courageous Afghan freedom fighters battle modern arsenals with simple hand-held weapons is an inspiration to those who love freedom."

— [U.S. President Ronald Reagan](#), March 21, 1983 ^[62]

In April 1978, the communist [People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan](#) (PDPA) seized power in [Afghanistan](#) in the [Saur Revolution](#). Within months, opponents of the communist government launched an uprising in eastern Afghanistan that quickly expanded into a civil war waged by guerrilla [mujahideen](#) against government forces countrywide. The [Pakistani](#) government provided these rebels with covert training centers, while the Soviet Union sent thousands of military advisers to support the PDPA government.^[63] Meanwhile, increasing friction between the competing factions of the PDPA – the dominant [Khalq](#) and the more moderate [Parcham](#) – resulted in the dismissal of Parchami cabinet members and the arrest of Parchami military officers under the pretext of a Parchami coup. By mid-1979, the United States had started a covert program to finance the mujahideen,^[64] whose aim was later allegedly described by Carter's National Security Adviser, [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#), as to "induce a Soviet military intervention."^[65] However, Brzezinski has denied the accuracy of the quote,^[66] while [Cyrus Vance](#)'s close aide Marshall Shulman "insists that the State Department worked hard to dissuade the Soviets from invading and would never have undertaken a program to encourage it".^[67]

In September 1979, Khalqist President [Nur Muhammad Taraki](#) was assassinated in a coup within the PDPA orchestrated by fellow Khalq member [Hafizullah Amin](#), who assumed the presidency. Distrusted by the Soviets, Amin was assassinated by Soviet special forces in December 1979. A Soviet-organized government, led by Parcham's [Babrak Karmal](#) but inclusive of both factions, filled the vacuum. Soviet troops were deployed to stabilize Afghanistan under Karmal in more substantial numbers, although the Soviet government did not expect to do most of the fighting in Afghanistan. As a result, however, the Soviets were now directly involved in what had been a domestic war in Afghanistan.^[68]

At the time some believed the Soviets were attempting to expand their borders southward in order to gain a foothold in the [Middle East](#). The Soviet Union had long lacked a [warm water port](#), and their movement south seemed to position them for further expansion toward Pakistan in the East, and [Iran](#) to the West. American politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike, feared the Soviets were positioning themselves for a takeover of [Middle Eastern](#) oil. Others believed that the Soviet Union was afraid Iran's Islamic Revolution and Afghanistan's Islamization would spread to the millions of Muslims in the USSR.

After the invasion, President [Jimmy Carter](#) announced what became known as the [Carter Doctrine](#): that the U.S. would not allow any outside force to gain control of the [Persian Gulf](#). He also began arming Afghan insurgents, a policy which President [Ronald Reagan](#) would greatly

expand. Years later, National Security Advisor [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#) stated that "The day the Soviets officially crossed the border [24 December 1979], I wrote to President Carter, saying 'We now have the opportunity of giving the USSR its Vietnam War'."¹⁶⁵ In a 1997 [CNN/National Security Archive](#) interview he detailed the strategy taken by the Carter administration against the Soviets in 1979:

We immediately launched a twofold process when we heard that the Soviets had entered Afghanistan. The first involved direct reactions and [sanctions](#) focused on the Soviet Union, and both the State Department and the National Security Council prepared long lists of sanctions to be adopted, of steps to be taken to increase the international costs to the Soviet Union of their actions. And the second course of action led to my going to Pakistan a month or so after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for the purpose of coordinating with the Pakistanis a joint response, the purpose of which would be to make the Soviets bleed for as much and as long as is possible; and we engaged in that effort in a collaborative sense with the [Saudis](#), the [Egyptians](#), the British, the Chinese, and we started providing weapons to the Mujaheddin, from various sources again – for example, some Soviet arms from the Egyptians and the Chinese. We even got Soviet arms from the [Czechoslovak](#) communist government, since it was obviously susceptible to material incentives; and at some point we started buying arms for the Mujaheddin from the Soviet army in Afghanistan, because that army was increasingly corrupt.¹⁶⁹

The supplying of billions of dollars in arms to the Afghan mujahideen militants was one of the CIA's longest and most expensive covert operations.¹⁷⁰ The CIA provided assistance to the fundamentalist insurgents through the Pakistani secret services, [Inter-Services Intelligence](#) (ISI), in a program called [Operation Cyclone](#). At least [US\\$3 billion](#) were funneled into the country to train and equip troops with weapons, and there were similar programs run by Saudi Arabia, Britain's [MI6](#) and [SAS](#), Egypt, Iran, and the People's Republic of China.¹⁷¹

No Americans trained or had direct contact with the mujahideen.¹⁷² The skittish CIA had fewer than 10 operatives in the region.¹⁷³ Pakistan's secret service, [Inter-Services Intelligence](#) (ISI), was used as an intermediary for most of these activities to disguise the sources of support for the resistance.

The early foundations of [al-Qaida](#) were allegedly built in part on relationships and weaponry that came from the billions of dollars in U.S. support for the Afghan mujahadin during the war to expel Soviet forces from that country.¹⁷⁴ However, scholars such as [Jason Burke](#), [Steve Coll](#), [Peter Bergen](#), [Christopher Andrew](#), and [Vasily Mitrokhin](#) have argued that Bin Laden was "outside of CIA eyesight" and that there is "no support" in any "reliable source" for "the claim that the CIA funded bin Laden or any of the other Arab volunteers who came to support the mujahideen."¹⁷⁵¹⁷⁶¹⁷⁷¹⁷⁸

[Michael Johns](#), the former [Heritage Foundation](#) foreign policy analyst and [White House](#) speechwriter to President [George H. W. Bush](#), argued that "the Reagan-led effort to support [freedom fighters](#) resisting Soviet oppression led successfully to the first major military defeat of the Soviet Union.... Sending the Red Army packing from Afghanistan proved one of the single most important contributing factors in one of history's most profoundly positive and important developments."¹⁷⁹

Turkey 1980[[edit](#)]

See also: [1980 Turkish coup d'état](#)

One day before the military coup of 12 September 1980 some 3,000 US troops of the RDF started a maneuver *Anvil Express* on Turkish soil.^[80] At the end of 1981 a Turkish-American Defense Council ([Turkish: *Türk-Amerikan Savunma Konseyi*](#)) was founded. Defense Minister Ümit Haluk and [Richard Perle](#), then [U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense international security policy](#) of the new [Reagan administration](#), and the deputy Chief of Staff Necdet Öztorun participated in its first meeting on 27 April 1982.

U.S. support of the coup was acknowledged by the CIA's Ankara [station chief](#), Paul Henze. After the government was overthrown, Henze cabled Washington, saying, "our boys [in Ankara] did it."^{[81][82]} This has created the impression that the U.S. stood behind the coup. Henze denied this during a June 2003 interview on [CNN Türk's *Manşet*](#), but two days later Birand presented an interview with Henze recorded in 1997 in which he basically confirmed Mehmet Ali Birand's story.^{[83][84]} The [U.S. State Department](#) announced the coup during the night between 11 and 12 September: the military had phoned the U.S. embassy in [Ankara](#) to alert them of the coup an hour in advance.^[85]

Poland 1980–89[[edit](#)]

The U.S. supported the [Solidarity](#) movement in [Poland](#), and—based on CIA intelligence—waged a public relations campaign to deter what the Carter administration felt was "an imminent move by large Soviet military forces into Poland." When the Polish government launched a crackdown of its own in 1981, however, Solidarity was not alerted. Potential explanations for this vary; some believe that the CIA was caught off guard, while others suggest that American policy-makers viewed an internal crackdown as preferable to an "inevitable Soviet intervention."^[86] CIA support for Solidarity included money, equipment and training, which was coordinated by Special Operations CIA division^[87] [Henry Hyde](#), US House intelligence committee member, stated that USA provided "supplies and technical assistance in terms of clandestine newspapers, broadcasting, propaganda, money, organizational help and advice"^[88] Rainer Thiel in "Nested Games of External Democracy Promotion: The United States and the Polish Liberalization 1980-1989" mentions how covert operations by CIA and spy games among others allowed USA to proceed with successful regime change.^[89] Michael Reisman from Yale Law School named operations in Poland as one of the covert actions of CIA during [Cold War](#)^[90] Initial funds for covert actions by CIA were \$2 million, but soon after authorization were increased and by 1985 CIA successfully infiltrated Poland^[91] Initial funds for covert actions by CIA were \$2 million, but soon after authorization were increased and by 1985 CIA successfully infiltrated Poland^[91] By the end of the program it is estimated that CIA transferred around \$10 million dollars in cash to Solidarity^[92]

Nicaragua 1981–90[[edit](#)]

See also: [Reagan Doctrine](#), [Nicaraguan general election, 1990](#) and [Nicaragua v. United States](#)

From 1981–90, the CIA attempted to overthrow the [Sandinista](#) government of [Nicaragua](#).

Destablization through CIA assets[\[edit\]](#)

In 1983, the CIA created a group of "Unilaterally Controlled Latino Assets" (UCLAs), whose task was to "sabotage ports, refineries, boats and bridges, and try to make it look like the contras had done it."^[93] In January 1984, these UCLA's carried out the operation for which they would be best known, the last straw that led to the ratifying of the [Boland Amendment](#), the mining of several Nicaraguan harbors, which sank several Nicaraguan boats, damaged at least five foreign vessels, and brought an avalanche of international condemnation down on the United States.^[94]

Arming the Contras[\[edit\]](#)

See also: [Iran–Contra Affair](#)



[Oliver North](#)'s mugshot taken after his arrest

The [Contras](#), based in neighboring [Honduras](#), waged a [guerrilla war](#) insurgency in an effort to topple the government of Nicaragua. The U.S. played a decisive role in financing, training, arming, and advising the contras.^[95]

The Boland Amendment made it illegal under U.S. law to provide arms to the Contra militants. Nevertheless, the Reagan administration continued to arm and fund the Contras through the [Iran-Contra](#) scandal, pursuant to which the U.S. secretly sold arms to Iran in violation of U.S. law in exchange for cash used by the U.S. to supply arms to the Contras.

The U.S. argued that:^[96]

"The United States initially provided substantial economic assistance to the Sandinista-dominated regime. We were largely instrumental in the OAS action delegitimizing the Somoza regime and laying the groundwork for installation for the new junta. Later, when the Sandinista role in the Salvadoran conflict became clear, we sought through a combination of private

diplomatic contacts and suspension of assistance to convince Nicaragua to halt its subversion. Later still, economic measures and further diplomatic efforts were employed to try to effect changes in Sandinista behavior."

"Nicaragua's neighbors have asked for assistance against Nicaraguan aggression, and the United States has responded. Those countries have repeatedly and publicly made clear that they consider themselves to be the victims of aggression from Nicaragua, and that they desire United States assistance in meeting both subversive attacks and the conventional threat posed by the relatively immense Nicaraguan Armed Forces."

In 1986 the [International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ) ruled in favor of [Nicaragua](#) and against the United States and awarded reparations to Nicaragua. The ICJ held that the U.S. had violated [international law](#) by supporting the Contras in their rebellion against the Nicaraguan government and by [mining](#) Nicaragua's harbors. The Court found in its verdict that the United States was "in breach of its obligations under customary international law not to use force against another State", "not to intervene in its affairs", "not to violate its sovereignty", "not to interrupt peaceful maritime commerce", and "in breach of its obligations under Article XIX of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the Parties signed at Managua on 21 January 1956." ^[95]



The U.S.-supported [Nicaraguan Contras](#)

The Sandinista government headed by [Daniel Ortega](#) won decisively in the 1984 Nicaraguan elections.^[97] The national elections of 1984 were conducted during a state of emergency officially justified by the war fought against the Contras insurgents and the CIA-orchestrated bombings. Many political prisoners were still held as it took place, and none of the main opposition parties participated due to what they claimed were threats and persecution from the government. The 1984 election was for posts subordinate to the Sandinista Directorate, a body "no more subject to approval by vote than the Central Committee of the Communist Party is in countries of the East Bloc," and there was no secret ballot.^[98]

It has been argued that "probably a key factor in preventing the 1984 elections from establishing liberal democratic rule was the United States' policy toward Nicaragua." ^[99] The Reagan administration was divided over whether the rightwing coalition [Coordinadora Democrática Nicaragüense](#) participate in the elections or not, which "only complicated the efforts of the

Coordinadora to develop a coherent electoral strategy." ^[99] Ultimately, the U.S. administration's public and private support for non-participation allowed those members of the Coordinadora who favoured a boycott to gain the upper hand.^[99] Others have disputed this view, claiming that "the Sandinistas' decision to hold elections in 1984 was largely of foreign inspiration".^[100]

The U.S. continued to pressure the government by illegally arming the Contra insurgency. On October 5, 1985 the Sandinistas broadened the state of emergency begun in 1982 and suspended many more civil rights. A new regulation also forced any organization outside of the government to first submit any statement it wanted to make public to the censorship bureau for prior censorship.^[101]

As the Contras' insurgency continued with U.S. support, the Sandinistas struggled to maintain power. They lost power in 1990, when they ended the [state of emergency](#) and held an election that all the main opposition parties competed in. The Sandinistas have been accused of killing thousands by Nicaragua's Permanent Commission on Human Rights.^[102] The Contras have also been accused of committing war crimes, such as rape, arson, and the killing of civilians.^[103]

The New York Times surveyed voters on the 1990 election:

"The longer they [Sandinistas] were in power, the worse things became. It was all lies, what they promised us" (unemployed person); "I thought it was going to be just like 1984, when the vote was not secret and there was not all these observers around" (market vendor); "Don't you believe those lies [about fraud], I voted my conscience and my principles, and so did everyone else I know" (young mother); "the Sandinistas have mocked and abused the people, and now we have given our vote to [the opposition] UNO" (ex-Sandinista officer).^[104]

Since the end of the Cold War[[edit](#)]

Iraq 1992–96[[edit](#)]

See also: [Iraq Liberation Act](#)

According to former U.S. intelligence officials interviewed by [The New York Times](#), the CIA indirectly supported a bomb and sabotage campaign between 1992 and 1995 in Iraq conducted by the [Iraqi National Accord](#) insurgents, led by [Iyad Allawi](#). The campaign had no apparent effect in toppling Saddam Hussein's rule.^[105]

According to former CIA officer [Robert Baer](#), various rebel groups were attempting to oust Hussein at the time. No public records of the CIA campaign are known to exist, and former U.S. officials said their recollections were in many cases sketchy, and in some cases contradictory. "But whether the bombings actually killed any civilians could not be confirmed because, as a former CIA official said, the United States had no significant intelligence sources in Iraq then." In 1996, Amneh al-Khadami, who described himself as the chief bomb maker for the Iraqi National Accord, recorded a videotape in which he talked of the bombing campaign and complained that he was being shortchanged money and supplies. Two former intelligence officers confirmed the existence of the videotape. Mr. Khadami said that "we blew up a car, and

we were supposed to get \$2,000" but got only \$1,000, as reported in 1997 by the British newspaper *The Independent*, which had obtained a copy of the videotape.^{[105][106]}

U.S. and Iraqi sources provided an account of the unsuccessful strategy of deposing Saddam by a coup d'état during the 1990s, an effort reportedly known within CIA by the cryptonym "DBACHILLES".^[107] According to the *Washington Post*,^[108] the CIA appointed a new head of its Near East Division, Stephen Richter, who assumed that large parts of the Iraqi army might support a coup. A team met with Gen. [Mohammed Abdullah Shawani](#),^[108] a former commander of Iraqi Special Forces, and a [Turkmen](#) from Mosul. As the CIA was drafting its plans, the British encouraged the agency to contact an experienced Iraqi exile named [Ayad Alawi](#), who headed a network of current and former Iraqi military officers and Ba'ath Party operatives known as *wifaq*, the Arabic word for "trust".

According to the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, DBACHILLES succeeded in reaching a number of senior Iraqi military officers, but was compromised and collapsed in June 1996. The Iraqis began arresting the coup plotters on June 26. At least 200 officers were seized and more than 80 were executed, including Shawani's sons.^[107]

Venezuela 2002[[edit](#)]

Main article: [2002 Venezuelan coup d'état attempt](#)

In 2002, Washington is claimed to have approved and supported a coup against the [Venezuelan](#) government. Senior officials, including Special Envoy to Latin America [Otto Reich](#) and convicted [Iran-contra](#) figure and George W. Bush "democracy 'czar'" [Elliott Abrams](#), were allegedly part of the plot.^[109] Top coup plotters, including [Pedro Carmona](#), the man installed during the coup as the new president, began visits to the White House months before the coup and continued until weeks before the putsch. The plotters were received at the White House by the man President [George W. Bush](#) tasked to be his key policy-maker for Latin America, [Special Envoy](#) Otto Reich.^[109] It has been claimed by Venezuelan news sources that Reich was the U.S. mastermind of the coup.^[110]

Bush Administration officials and anonymous sources acknowledged meeting with some of the planners of the coup in the several weeks prior to April 11, but have strongly denied encouraging the coup itself, saying that they insisted on constitutional means.^[111] Because of allegations, Sen. [Christopher Dodd](#) requested a review of U.S. activities leading up to and during the coup attempt. A [U.S. State Department Office of Inspector General](#) report found no "wrongdoing" by U.S. officials either in the State Department or in the U.S. Embassy.^[112] According to *The New York Times*, documents revealed by pro-Chavez activist [Eva Golinger](#) "do not show that the United States backed the coup, as Mr. Chávez has charged. Instead, the documents show that American officials issued 'repeated warnings that the United States will not support any extraconstitutional moves to oust Chávez'".^[113]

Iraq 2002–03[[edit](#)]

Main articles: [Iraq War](#) and [Operation Viking Hammer](#)

See also: [Lead-up to the Iraq War](#)

The CIA's [Special Activities Division](#) teams were the first U.S. forces to enter Iraq, in July 2002, before the main [invasion](#). Once on the ground, they prepared for the subsequent arrival of [U.S. Army Special Forces](#) to organize the [Kurdish Peshmerga](#). This joint team (called the Northern Iraq Liaison Element (NILE)^[114]) combined to defeat [Ansar al-Islam](#), a group with ties to al-Qaeda, in Iraqi Kurdistan. This battle was for control of the territory that was occupied by Ansar al-Islam and took place before the invasion. It was carried out by Paramilitary Operations Officers from SAD and the Army's [10th Special Forces Group](#). This battle resulted in the defeat of Ansar and the capture of a [chemical weapons](#) facility at Sargat.^[114] Sargat was the only facility of its type discovered in the Iraq war.^{[115][116]}

SAD teams also conducted missions behind enemy lines to identify leadership targets. These missions led to the initial [air strikes](#) against Hussein and his generals. Although the strike against Hussein was unsuccessful in killing him, it effectively ended his ability to [command and control](#) his forces. Strikes against Iraq's generals were more successful and significantly degraded the Iraqi command's ability to react to, and maneuver against the U.S.-led invasion force.^{[114][117]} SAD operations officers were also successful in convincing key [Iraqi Army](#) officers into surrendering their units once the fighting started.^[115]

[NATO](#) member [Turkey](#) refused to allow the U.S. forces across its territory into [northern Iraq](#). Therefore, joint SAD and Army Special forces teams and the Peshmerga were the entire Northern force against the Iraqi army. They managed to keep the northern divisions in place rather than allowing them to aid their colleagues against the U.S.-led coalition force coming from the south.^[118] Four of these CIA officers were awarded the [Intelligence Star](#) for their actions.^{[115][116]}

Iran 2005–present[[edit](#)]

President [George W. Bush](#) authorized the CIA to undertake [black operations](#) against Iran in an effort to destabilize the Iranian government.^[119] A 2005 article in the [New York Times](#) stated that the [Bush administration](#) was expanding efforts to influence Iran's internal politics with aid to opposition and pro-democracy groups abroad and longer broadcasts criticizing the Iranian government. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns said the administration was "taking a page from the playbook" on [Ukraine](#) and [Georgia](#). Unnamed administration officials were reported as saying the State Department was also studying dozens of proposals for spending \$3 million in the coming year "for the benefit of Iranians living inside Iran" including broadcast activities, Internet programs and "working with people inside Iran" on advancing political activities there.^[120]

In 2006, the United States congress passed the [Iran Freedom and Support Act](#), which directed \$10 million towards groups opposed to the Iranian government. In 2007, [ABC news](#) reported that President Bush had authorized a \$400 million covert operation to create unrest in Iran.^[121] According to the [The Daily Telegraph](#), the CIA has also provided support to a militant [Sunni](#) organization called [Jundullah](#), which has launched raids into Iran from its base in Pakistan.^[119] [Alexis Debat](#) separately claimed that the US encouraged Pakistan to support Jundullah, but his reporting was challenged after he was discovered to have allegedly fabricated numerous

interviews.^[122] [Seymour Hersh](#), writing in *The New Yorker*, alleged that the US has provided funding and training to the [People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran](#) and [Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan](#), militant groups opposed to the current Iranian government.^{[123][124]} Prior to 2012, the U.S. State Department had listed the PMOI as a terrorist organization, despite the absence of any confirmed terrorist acts committed by the group in more than a decade.^[125]

Somalia 2006–07[\[edit\]](#)

See also: [War in Somalia \(2006-present\)](#)

Although the United States has had an ongoing interest in [Somalia](#) for decades, in early 2006 the CIA began a program of funding a coalition of anti-Islamic warlords.^[126] This involved CIA case workers funneling payments of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the [Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism](#) against the [Islamic Court Union](#). Although the ICU was locally supported for having restored a relative level of peace, some concern had been expressed about their treatment of women and strict interpretation of Islamic law.^[127]

Syria 2012–present[\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Syrian civil war](#)

In 2012, President [Barack Obama](#) authorized U.S. government agencies to support forced regime change in Syria.^[128] In July 2012, the [Office of Foreign Assets Control](#) authorised channeling financial support for the [Free Syrian Army](#) through the [Syrian Support Group](#), a non-governmental organization based in [Washington, D.C.](#)^[129] In April 2013, the Obama administration promised to double non-lethal aid to the rebels, from US\$123 million to US\$250 million, thus attaining the goal of US\$1 billion in total international aid.^[130]

In June 2013, the [White House](#) confirmed that the U.S. has "stepped up" its assistance to Syrian rebels.^[131] While the State Department was in charge of providing non-lethal aid to the rebels, the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA) was tasked with the supply and delivery of weaponry and other lethal equipment.^[132] By early September 2013, the Obama administration considered putting [The Pentagon](#) in charge of arming and training Syrian rebel forces because the CIA's previous training program was too limited and too slow.^[133]

In October 2013, the CIA ramped up its clandestine effort to train opposition fighters in Syria amid concern that moderate, U.S.-backed militias are rapidly losing ground in the country's civil war. The program is aimed at increasing the fighting power of units aligned with the [Supreme Council of the Syrian Revolution](#), an umbrella organization led by a former Syrian general that is the main recipient of U.S. support.^[134] The CIA has run the training at bases in [Qatar](#), [Jordan](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) since about August 2013.^{[135][136][137]}

See also[\[edit\]](#)

- [American imperialism](#)
- [Foreign policy of the United States](#)

- [Kirkpatrick Doctrine](#)
- [Overseas interventions of the United States](#)
- [United States Foreign Military Financing](#)
- [United States and state-sponsored terrorism](#)
- [United States involvement in regime change](#)
- [United States military aid](#)
- [United States support of authoritarian regimes](#)

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(December 2010)

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