BRIEF HISTORY OF U.S. INTERVENTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA SINCE 1946

The U.S. Army School of the Americas, Panama

The U.S. Army opened the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) in Panama to "modernize and professionalize" Latin American armies. Since then, more than sixty thousand SOA graduates have learned about counterinsurgency, weapons training, psychological warfare, interrogation techniques and other fields of study. With many dictators, assassins and general hatchet men among its graduates, the SOA is held in contempt throughout Latin America. Famous graduates include Panama's Manuel Antonio Noriega, Bolivia's Hugo Banzer Suárez and the murderers of El Salvador's Archbishop Óscar Romero. The SOA was moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1984 and renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC) in 2001. Defenders of the institution argue that the school should not be held responsible for the actions of some of its graduates. They also point out that every class includes at least eight hours of instruction in human rights and democracy. Critics, however, find it unlikely that WHISC is any better than its predecessor, the SOA. They point to manuals such as the one disclosed by the Pentagon in 1996 that referred to "eliminating potential rivals," "obtaining information involuntarily" and the "neutralization" of people.

United Fruit Company, Guatemala

U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower funded a right-wing military coup against the popular, Indian-dominated government of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala. Árbenz had expropriated two hundred and thirty-four thousand acres of land owned by the Rockefeller family's United Fruit Company, although the company was offered compensation (based on fraudulent tax records). Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-trained insurgents led by Guatemalan Army officer Carlos Castillo took power and proceeded to return the land, abolished the tax on interest and dividends to foreign investors, eliminated the secret ballot for elections and jailed thousands of political critics. Both U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother CIA Director Allen Dulles were investors in the United Fruit Company.

Tonton Macoutes, Haiti François "Papa Doc" Duvalier became president of Haiti in 1957. He later declared himself president for life. Duvalier's regime was particularly brutal. As told by a Haitian citizen, "Duvalier has performed an economic miracle. He has taught us to live without money... to eat without food... to live without life." His police force was called the Tonton Macoutes (Creole, for "the Bogeymen"), and members were armed with machetes. In 1959, U.S. marines arrived in Haiti to serve as military advisors and bolster Duvalier's regime; later that year, they helped put down an insurrection. The commander in charge of the U.S. operation, Colonel Robert Debs Heinl Jr., claimed that a State Department undersecretary had told him, "Colonel, the most important way you can support our objectives in Haiti is to help keep Duvalier in power so he can serve out his full term in office, and maybe a little longer than that if everything works out." By the time Papa Doc died in 1971, the Tonton Macoutes had killed tens of thousands of Haitians and tortured countless thousands more.

Acción Anticomunista Ecuatoriana, Ecuador

After José Maria Velasco Ibarra was elected president of Ecuador, he refused American demands that he break relations with Cuba and crack down on communists. The U.S. proceeded to infiltrate Ecuadorian political groups, both left and right, and created bogus organizations to agitate politically. A CIA officer established a group called Acción Anticomunista Ecuatoriana (Ecuadorian Anti-Communist Action). The CIA also penetrated the postal service and the immigration department to collect intelligence. All this interference culminated with the overthrow of Velasco who was replaced by Carlos Julio Arosemana, a paid CIA employee. Arosemana proved to be as difficult for the U.S. as Velasco and was supplanted by a military junta that immediately outlawed communism, suspended civil liberties, canceled the 1964 elections and used the CIA's Subversive Control Watch List to round up the Leftists.

Cuban Missile Crisis, Cuba

President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to begin operations against Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro, including a campaign to destabilize the country by burning crops, blowing up ships and sabotaging industry. On April 17, 1961, around one thousand four hundred anti-Castro Cubans landed at the Bay of Pigs, armed and transported by the CIA. However, the local population failed to rise up and promised U.S. air support was held back. Within three days, most of the invaders had been either killed or captured. The next year, President John F. Kennedy instituted a quarantine on the shipment of offensive missiles to Cuba by the U.S.S.R. He also warned the Soviet Union that the launch of any missiles from Cuba against the West would bring U.S. nuclear retaliation, taking the world to the brink of nuclear war.

1962

Government Overthrow, Brazil

The CIA began an operation in Brazil to prevent presidential candidate João Goulart from taking control of Congress, giving millions of dollars to anti-Goulart candidates. The U.S. feared a "drift to the Left" under his leadership even though Goulart was a millionaire landowner, who had offered a toast "to the Yankee Victory!" after the Cuban Missile Crisis. A CIA-backed military coup overthrew Goulart's elected government and installed General Castelo Branco as leader. Branco, with help from the CIA, created Latin America's first

1965

Fear of Communism, Dominican Republic

The U.S. intervened in the Dominican Republic, for the fourth time in fifty-eight years, to protect American lives and property during a revolt and to prevent another communist revolution as had happened in Cuba. It sent more troops as fears grew that the revolutionary forces were under communist control. An estimated twenty thousand U.S. troops invaded on April 28. Most Americans in the country were evacuated by U.S. forces, and the popular revolt was smashed, at a cost of fifty-nine Americans killed in action and one hundred seventy-four wounded.

The Victims Are Communists, Guatemala

Three years after President Kennedy installed Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia as Guatemalan president, the U.S. intervened again to overthrow his government. Peralta's first act after coming to power had been to order eight political and trade union leaders killed by having rockladen trucks drive over them. The country's new leader, Julio César Méndez Montenegro, allowed the U.S. free reign. Consequently, shipments of American military equipment, helicopters and weaponry increased. U.S. Colonel John D. Webber Jr. took command of the American military mission in Guatemala and hinted at his brutal tactics when he told Time magazine: "The communists are using everything they have including terror... and it must be met." His forces joined

Guatemalan military attacks on peasant villages. The CIA flew bombing and strafing missions against the peasantry using aircraft modified for slaughter with machine guns, small rockets and napalm. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of Public Safety (OPS) began a major operation to radically expand and militarize the Guatemalan police forces. By 1970 more than thirty thousand Guatemalan police had received OPS training in torture techniques and disappearances. One State Department official noted with irony: "Murder, torture and mutilation are alright if our side is doing it and the victims are communists."

Capture of Che Guevara, Bolivia

A CIA-organized military action captured the legendary thirty-nine-year-old guerrilla Che Guevara. The U.S. wanted Che kept alive for interrogation, but the Bolivian government executed him to prevent worldwide calls for clemency.

Organización Democrática Nacionalista, El Salvador

The CIA financed General José Alberto Medrano in organizing the Organización Democrática Nacionalista (Orden) (National Democratic Organization) paramilitary force, the first of El Salvador's infamous death squads.

Military Coup, Bolivia

With U.S. Air Force support, the CIA backed a violent military coup in Bolivia, in which five hundred people died. The coup toppled Leftist president Juan Torres, who had nationalized many of the country's industries, including oil. His replacement, General Hugo Banzer, was trained at the SOA. Banzer's regime became known for using brutal tactics to eradicate Leftists, Banzer survived thirteen coup attempts in seven years as dictator, and in the same period, two hundred of his political opponents were killed and one hundred fifty thousand people were arrested.

Tupamaros, Uruguay

A U.S.-armed and -trained military in Uruguay eliminated the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Tupamaros (Tupamaros National Liberation Movement) and instituted a military government. The U.S. was worried that a popular left-wing government would be elected—as one had been in Chile the previous year—and that other Latin American countries would follow suit. The military dictatorship lasted eleven years and amassed more than one thousand political prisoners. Per capita, it was the largest number in the world.

September 11, Chile

Chile's socialist president Salvador Allende was killed in a coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power. This action followed three years of covert operations and economic sabotage carried out by the CIA. Pinochet received American support throughout his presidency despite his role in the torture, killing and disappearance of thousands of Chileans.

U.S. Troops Withdrawn, Guatemala

Under U.S. President Jimmy Carter, American troops were withdrawn from Guatemala and most U.S. aid was cut off, though arms and cash continued to flow to the country via Israel. U.S.-trained death squads and the military had killed an estimated twenty thousand people in the previous

Contras, Nicaragua

The U.S.-backed dictator of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza, fell from power and was replaced by the Marxist Sandinistas. The new regime received popular support for its calls for land reform and other solutions to poverty. The surviving members of the National Guard, Somoza's secret police force, became the Contra rebels that fought a CIA-backed guerrilla war against the Sandinistas throughout the 1980s.

Death Squads, El Salvador

Archbishop Romero of San Salvador appealed to President Carter, "Christian to Christian," to stop financing the right-wing government of Salvadoran dictator Roberto D'Aubuisson. But D'Aubuisson had Romero shot while he was celebrating Mass. Soon after, El Salvador fell into a civil war. The CIA and the U.S. military gave the government superior military intellgence over the rebels, who were mostly poor peasants. They then began training the Salvadoran death squads. By 1992 some sixty-three thousand Salvadorans had been killed

1980

Military Aid, Honduras

The U.S. set up bases for the Nicaraguan Contra terrorists in Honduras and used Honduran territory to support Salvadoran death squads. In exchange, U.S. military aid to Honduras was radically increased, and the death squads eliminated Honduran dissidents. Aid rose from sixteen million in 1978 to two hundred and thirty-one million dollars by the early 1980s.

Military Advising, El Salvador

After a guerrilla offensive against the government of El Salvador, the U.S. sent additional military advisers, bringing the total number of people training government forces in counterinsurgency to fifty-five.

Iran-Contra Affair, Nicaragua

As part of its continuing support of the Contra terrorists, the CIA began selling weapons to Iran via Israel and using the profits to finance the Contras. This became known as the "Iran-Contra Affair." In 1983 the CIA issued the Manual del Combatiente por la Libertad (Freedom fighter's manual) to the Contras, which included instructions on economic sabotage, propaganda and general insurgency. The U.S. applied pressure to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to limit and reduce loans to Nicaragua as well as impose an economic embargo.

However, U.S. senators were so outraged by the covert CIA support of the Contras that in 1982 they passed a bill cutting off all money aimed at overthrowing the government of Nicaragua. Despite this directive, the CIA continued operating in Nicaragua, mining three of its harbors in 1984. Years later, these actions were the basis for a seventeen billion dollar judgment against the U.S. in a case Nicaragua brought before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The American government never recognized the decision nor paid any damages. In 1984 U.S. President Ronald Reagan had set up a front organization directed by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North to solicit donations for the Contras from wealthy American anticommunists. The program expanded to the point where North's office was providing the Contras with weapons paid for by illegal arm sales to Iran, which the U.S. considered a terrorist state. The U.S. government was forced to admit to the scheme in 1986 when a transport plane carrying military supplies to the Contras was shot down. Survivor Eugene Hasenfus and the two dead pilots all turned out to be CIA employees. North and his secretary quickly shredded documents implicating them and their friends—including Vice President George H. W. Bush—but it was too late. Years of hearings and special investigations led to many resignations and a few minor convictions. On Christmas Eve 1992, then-President George Bush pardoned former Defense secretary Caspar Weinberger, former national security adviser Robert McFarlane and four other officials linked to the affair, including Elliott Abrams. Abrams later served as a special advisor to President George W. Bush, running the National Security Council's Middle East desk. Bush also tried to redeem Vice Admiral John Poindexter, who had also been convicted of lying to Congress about the Iran-Contra affair. In 2002, Bush asked Poindexter to head Total Information Awareness (TIA), a government snooping program that was scaled back after public furor. Even North landed on his feet, drawing on his Iran-Contra fame to make millions as a high-priced speaker, best-selling author and columnist. Republicans had not lost faith in North either, giving him the nod as the party's candidate for the 1994 Senate race in Virginia, which he lost.

General Efraín Ríos Montt, Guatemala

General Efraín Ríos Montt, a graduate of the SOA, seized control of Guatemala with U.S. support. After the coup, U.S. arms shipments to Guatemala increased. Ríos Montt declared a state of emergency and suspended the rule of law. Within the first six months of his rule, two thousand six hundred Indians were massacred. During his seventeen months in power, he oversaw the complete destruction of four hundred Indian villages. President Reagan paid a state visit and publicly stated his belief that Ríos Montt was "totally dedicated to democracy."

Operation Urgent Fury, Grenada

In October, the U.S. invaded the island of Grenada, following the overthrow and murder of popular socialist leader Maurice Bishop. The official rationale for Operation Urgent Fury was an "urgent" request for aid from the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS), who had said they "feared an aggressive act" from the new ultra-left regime. But the Barbadian prime minister later said the OECS plea had been triggered by U.S. requests and that a regime change had been planned for some time. The initial invasion force of one thousand two hundred troops met stiff resistance from Grenadian and Cuban military units. Heavy fighting continued for several days, but as the U.S. force grew to more than seven thousand, the defenders began surrendering or fleeing into the mountains. This forced regime change in a British Commonwealth country saw the relationship between President Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher plummet to a freezing point. Scattered fighting continued as U.S. troops hunted down stragglers, but for the most part, the island quickly fell under American control to widespread local support. The U.S. conservatives were happy that socialism had been put to rest, and the local population was happy that Bishop's murder had been avenged. By mid-December, U.S. combat forces went home, and a pro-American government took power. One of its first acts was to seize books and institute a system of censorship. It also made the U.S. troops who had been involved in the conflict, "heroes of the republic." By the end of the fighting, nineteen Americans, forty-nine Grenadians and twenty-nine Cuban nationals had died.

Trade Unions, Honduras

Trade unions in Honduras demonstrated against the biggestever peacetime military exercise in Central America, in which thirty-nine U.S. warships and seven thousand troops helped the country's army repel a mock Nicaraguan invasion. They feared the Honduran people could be pushed into a war against the Sandinista government.

Operation Blast Furnace, Bolivia

U.S. Army personnel and aircraft assisted Bolivia in Operation Blast Furnace, closing down twenty-one refineries used to make cocaine. Within six months, production had fully resumed to the levels seen before the operation.

Baby Doc Duvalier, Haiti

After a popular revolt, Haitian dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier was evacuated on a U.S. Air Force jet to France, where he retired with millions of dollars. He left behind the poorest country in the world, where more than half of the people were unemployed and four in five were illiterate. A Haitian child had a one in three chance of dying before his or her fifth birthday. The CIA began working to install another dictator, but popular unrest against more U.S. meddling kept the political situation unstable for the next four years. In an attempt to strengthen the military against the people, the CIA created, trained and supplied the National Intelligence Service (NIS). The NIS was allegedly developed to fight the cocaine trade, but it suppressed popular revolt and free expression by means of torture and assassination.

1988-89 General Manuel Antonio Noriega, Panama

In 1988, amid growing calls for the resignation of Panamanian leader General Noriega and general instability, the U.S. sent one thousand troops to Panama to "further safeguard the canal, U.S. lives, property and interests in the area." The forces supplemented ten thousand U.S. military personnel already there. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) also indicted Noriega on federal drug charges connected to his involvement with the Medellin Cartel in the early 1980s. It marked the beginning of the end for Noriega, whose criminal acts had long been overlooked in exchange for allowing the U.S. to set up listening posts, aiding pro-U.S.

forces in El Salvador and Nicaragua, letting the Contras train

in Panama and acting as a conduit for U.S. arms and money

General Noriega's disregard for the results of the Panamanian election received a quick response from U.S. President George H. W. Bush, who ordered approximately one thousand nine hundred troops to Panama on March 11, 1989, to augment the estimated eleven thousand U.S. forces already in the area, charged with protecting American citizens and bringing General Noriega to justice. Noriega was captured, given a show trial and imprisoned for life in isolation inside the U.S. Official American casualties were twenty-three troops killed in action, but this number is contested because of a media blackout instituted by the U.S. during the invasion. Since 1966 General Noriega had been supported by the CIA, which had known about his drug smuggling since 1972.

However, his growing independence and intransigence

1989

War on Drugs, Colombia, Bolivia and Peru

resulted in Washington turning against him.

U.S. President Bush announced that military and law enforcement assistance along with eighty-two million dollars in aid would be sent to help the Andean nations of Colombia, Bolivia and Peru combat illicit drug producers. By mid-September there were as many as six hundred U.S. military advisers and personnel in the three countries engaged in counter-drug and intelligence services.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti

After Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted from power in a military coup, the U.S. restored the rightfully elected president to power. Operation Uphold Democracy was launched on September 19 with U.N. Security Council approval. As thirty-nine thousand U.S. paratroopers prepared to invade, the Haitian military voluntarily allowed the U.S. forces to land peacefully. The airborne troops were returned, but fifteen thousand U.S. soldiers remained in Haiti to ensure Aristide's return to power. On March 31, 1995, the U.S. transferred full responsibility for Haiti to the U.N.

1999 - Present

Plan Colombia, Colombia

President Bill Clinton's administration initiated Plan Colombia. Although partially earmarked for "social development," the bulk of the billion dollar program assists military programs and drug-crop eradication. At least four hundred U.S. military trainers are active in Colombia Hundreds of contractors are employed in aerial fumigation to kill coca crops throughout the country using the toxin glyphosate. The chemical causes environmental damage as well as human and animal health problems. In 2001, President George W. Bush expanded the program to Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

Hugo Chávez, Venezuela

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez became a vocal U.S. enemy, thanks to his anti-globalization rhetoric, his friendship with Fidel Castro and his criticism of the so-called war on terror. In 2002, relations became even colder when Chávez renewed state control of the country's oil industry. Venezuela was the fourth largest oil-producing nation and the third largest oil provider to the U.S. With so much at stake, the head of the Venezuelan business federation, Pedro Carmona, was brought to the White House. There he met with Otto Reich, who served previously in the Reagan administration, running the Office for Public Diplomacy and reporting directly to Oliver North. Reich is said to have had numerous meetings with Carmona and his associates, discussing explicitly the timing and likelihood of successfully overthrowing Chávez. In April 2002, Chávez was ousted, and Washington gave its official support for the coup, endorsing Carmona's government. A popular uprising began the next day, leading to Chávez's return to power and prompting an about-face by the George W. Bush administration. The U.S. ambassador to Venezuela and two U.S. embassy military attachés are said to have met with the coup leaders just prior to their attempt at dislodging Chávez. A former Ú.S. intelligence officer, Wayne Madsen, revealed to the Guardian newspaper that U.S. Navy ships provided electronic jamming during the putsch, blocking Chávez's ability to communicate with his diplomatic allies. For his part, Chávez threatened to halt oil exports to the U.S. and promised a one-hundred-year war if the U.S. invaded. In March 2004, he suggested that the U.S. government was not only supporting the Venezuelan opposition but also funding acts of conspiracy against his government.

2004

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti

In March 2004, U.S. troops arrived on Haiti's shores for the twenty-seventh time. Days earlier, as internal resistance to President Aristide mounted, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell asserted, "There is frankly no enthusiasm right now for sending in military personnel." That lack of enthusiasm was set aside once Aristide's opponents clamored at the gates of his palace, and U.S. troops arrived in the capital to secure key sites and protect Americans. They also helped whisk Aristide off to the Central African Republic, where he promptly declared that he had been kidnapped. The White House scoffed at the story, calling it nonsense. Whatever the case, George W. Bush's government was wary of Aristide and had contributed to his downfall. He was a populist, who associated with Cuba and resisted neo-liberal economic directives from the World Bank and IMF. The White House claimed he was corrupt and withheld five hundred million dollars of humanitarian aid from Haiti. In the lead-up to Aristide's removal, Powell scolded the "thugs" who were plotting his ouster. As a result of the coup, those thugs became the Haitian security forces while three thousand four hundred and fifty American troops walked the country's pot-holed streets. Some Haitians greeted the Americans with cheers of "Liberty!" while others marched past the U.S. embassy denouncing Yankee imperialism.

U.S. Ambassador, Bolivia

On September 11, President Evo Morales expelled U.S. ambassador Philip Goldberg accusing him of fomenting civil unrest that "threatens the unity of the nation."

José Manuel Zelaya, Honduras The U.S. provided support for a coup that deposed

Honduras's democratically elected president, José Manuel Zelaya in June.

USAID, Bolivia

President Morales expelled USAID in May, claiming it is involved with "alleged political interference in peasant unions and other social organizations."

2013

End of the Monroe Doctrine? In a speech at the Organization of American States (OAS) in

Washington, D.C., U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry claimed that "the era of the Monroe Doctrine is over." The Monroe Doctrine has formed the backbone of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America since it was first articulated in December 1823.

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- www.adbusters.org/media/flash/hope_and_memory/flash.html (accessed in 2005) © adbusters 2004

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• History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America: www2.truman.edu/~marc/resources/interventions.html

This is the ninth print run of this newspaper, Brief History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America Since 1946, 2005-14, which was made as part of the project SOA CYCLE by Carlos Motta and recommissioned by Pablo León de la Barra for the exhibition Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, June 13 - October 1, 2014, part of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative. Endless copies.

The image on front is based on a photograph by Susan Meiselas of the White Hand signature left by a Salvadorean death squad on the door of a slain peasant leader.

