

Syrian Regime Change: A 70-Year Project

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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You may assume that the idea of kicking out Syrian dictator Assad is a recent idea stemming from his brutal crackdowns on protestors starting in [March 2011](#).

But the truth is that it is a 70-year old project ...

The CIA backed a right-wing coup in Syria [in 1949](#). A CIA officer [involved in the coup](#) has written several books about it.

Douglas Little, Professor, Department of Clark University History professor Douglas Little [notes](#):

Recently declassified records... confirm that beginning on November 30, 1948, [CIA operative Stephen] Meade met secretly with Colonel Zaim at least six times to discuss the "possibility [of an] army supported dictatorship." ["Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958," Middle East Journal, Winter 1990, p. 55]

As early as 1949, this newly independent Arab republic was an important staging ground for the CIA's earliest experiments in covert action.

The CIA secretly encouraged a right-wing military coup in 1949.

The reason the U.S. initiated the coup? Little explains:

In late 1945, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) announced plans to construct the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line (TAPLINE) from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean. With U.S. help, ARAMCO secured rights-of-way from Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Syrian right-of-way was stalled in parliament.

In other words, Syria was the sole holdout for the lucrative oil pipeline.

(Indeed, the CIA has carried out this type of covert action [right from the start](#).)

In 1956, NSA and CIA officials penciled out "[Operation Straggle](#)" to implement a US-backed "anti-communist" coup in Syria.

In 1957, the CIA planned another coup, code-named "[Operation Wappen](#)".

After the coup plot was exposed, the U.S. tried [another means](#) to overthrow the Syrian government:

After the coup attempt was exposed, the US government and media began describing Syria as a “Soviet satellite”. One intelligence report suggested that the USSR had delivered “not more than 123 Migs” to the country. Reporter Kennett Love later said that “there were indeed ‘not more than 123 Migs’. There were none.” In September 1957, the US deployed a fleet to the Mediterranean, armed several of Syria’s neighbors, and incited Turkey to deploy 50,000 troops to its border. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles suggested that the US sought to invoke the “Eisenhower Doctrine” of retaliating against provocations, and this intention was later confirmed in a military report. No Arab state would describe Syria as a provocateur, and these military deployments were withdrawn.

Also in 1957, the [American president and British prime minister themselves agreed](#) to launch regime change again in Syria. Historian Little notes that the coup plot was discovered and stopped:

On August 12, 1957, the Syrian army surrounded the U.S. embassy in Damascus. Claiming to have aborted a CIA plot to overthrow neutralist President Shukri Quwatly and install a pro-Western regime, Syrian chief of counterintelligence Abdul Hamid Sarraj expelled three U.S. diplomats

Syrian counterintelligence chief Sarraj reacted swiftly on August 12, expelling Stone and other CIA agents, arresting their accomplices and placing the U.S. embassy under surveillance.

More importantly, Syria also had control of one of the main oil arteries of the Middle East, the pipeline which connected pro-western Iraq’s oilfields to Turkey.

The report said that once the necessary degree of fear had been created, **frontier incidents and border clashes would be staged to provide a pretext** for Iraqi and Jordanian military intervention. Syria had to be “made to appear as the sponsor of plots, sabotage and violence directed against neighbouring governments,” the report says. “CIA and SIS should use their capabilities in both the psychological and action fields to augment tension.”

The plan called for funding of a **“Free Syria Committee”** [hmmm ... sounds [vaguely familiar](#)], and the **arming of “political factions with paramilitary or other actionist capabilities” within Syria**. The CIA and MI6 would **instigate internal uprisings**, for instance by **the Druze** [a [Shia Muslim sect](#)] in the south, help to free political prisoners held in the Mezze prison, **and stir up the Muslim Brotherhood in Damascus**.

1983 [CIA documents](#) show that the U.S. schemed to:

Covertly orchestrating simultaneous military threats against Syria from three border states hostile to Syria: Iraq, Israel and Turkey.

Consideration must be given to orchestrating a credible military threat against Syria in order to induce at least some moderate change in its policies.

[CIA documents](#) show that, in 1986, the CIA drew up plans to overthrow Syria by [provoking sectarian tensions](#).

Neoconservatives planned regime change in Syria once again [in 1991](#). General Wesley Clark, who commanded NATO's bombing campaign in the Kosovo war, said:

It came back to me ... a **1991** meeting I had with Paul Wolfowitz.

In 1991, he was the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy - the number 3 position at the Pentagon. And I had gone to see him when I was a 1-Star General commanding the National Training Center.

And I said, "Mr. Secretary, you must be pretty happy with the performance of the troops in Desert Storm."

And he said: "Yeah, but not really, because the truth is we should have gotten rid of Saddam Hussein, and we didn't ... But one thing we did learn [from the Persian Gulf War] is that we can use our military in the region - in the Middle East - and the Soviets won't stop us. And we've got about 5 or 10 years to clean up those old Soviet client regimes - **Syria**, Iran, Iraq - before the next great superpower comes on to challenge us."

(Skip to 3:07 in the following video)

In 1996 - U.S. and Israeli Neocons [advocated](#):

Weakening, containing, and even **rolling back** Syria

General Clarke said that - in 2001 - the Pentagon *again* planned regime change against Syria:

I had been through the Pentagon right after 9/11. About ten days after 9/11, I went through the Pentagon and I saw Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz. I went downstairs just to say hello to some of the people on the Joint Staff who used to work for me, and one of the generals called me in. He said, "Sir, you've got to come in and talk to me a second." I said, "Well, you're too busy." He said, "No, no." He says, "We've made the decision we're going to war with Iraq." This was on or about the 20th of September.

So I came back to see him a few weeks later, and by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan. I said, “Are we still going to war with Iraq?” And he said, “Oh, it’s worse than that.” He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, “I just got this down from upstairs” — meaning the Secretary of Defense’s office — “today.” And he said, “This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then **Syria**, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.”

Michel Chossudovsky notes:

The proposed re-division of both Iraq and Syria is broadly modeled on that of the Federation of Yugoslavia which was split up into seven “independent states” (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia (FYRM), Slovenia, Montenegro, Kosovo). According to Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, the re division of Iraq into three separate states is part of a broader process of redrawing the Map of the Middle East.



The above map was prepared by Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters. It was published in the Armed Forces Journal in **June 2006**, Peters is a retired colonel of the U.S. National War Academy. (Map Copyright Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters 2006).

Although the map does not officially reflect Pentagon doctrine, it has been used in a training program at NATO’s Defense College for senior military officers”. (See [Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a “New Middle East”](#) By [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#), Global Research, November 2006)

A December 13, 2006 [U.S. diplomatic cable](#) reveals how the US government (USG) was seeking out weaknesses of the Assad government which could be exploited to undermine it. William Roebuck, chargé d'affaires at the US embassy in Damascus, said in summarizing the cable:

We believe [Syrian leader] Bashar's weaknesses are in how he chooses to react to looming issues, both perceived and real, such as the conflict between economic reform steps (however limited) and entrenched, corrupt forces, the Kurdish question, and the potential threat to the regime from the increasing presence of transiting Islamist extremists. This cable summarizes our assessment of these vulnerabilities and suggests that there may be actions, statements, and signals that the USG can send that will improve the likelihood of such opportunities arising.

Roebuck [argued](#) that the US should try to destabilize the Syrian government by coordinating more closely with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to fan sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia, including by the promotion of "exaggerated" fears of Shia proselytizing of Sunnis, and of concern about "the spread of Iranian influence" in Syria in the form of mosque construction and business activity.

The [U.S.](#) started funding the [Syrian opposition](#) in [2006](#) ... and [arming](#) the opposition in [2007](#).

Former French foreign minister **Roland Dumas** said that Britain had planned covert action in Syria as early as 2009. He told French television:

I was in England two years before the violence in Syria on other business.

I met with top British officials, who confessed to me that they were preparing something in Syria. This was in Britain not in America. Britain was preparing gunmen to invade Syria.

Nafeez Ahmed [notes](#):

Leaked emails from the [private intelligence firm Stratfor](#), including notes from [a meeting with Pentagon officials](#), confirmed that as of 2011, US and UK special forces training of Syrian opposition forces was well underway. The goal was to elicit the "collapse" of Assad's regime "from within."

And [see this](#).

Indeed, the U.S. has carried out regime change in the Middle East and North Africa for [many decades](#).

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