

# The U.S. Carried out Regime Change in Syria in 1949 ... and Tried Again in 1957, 1986, 1991 and 2011-Today

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, February 26, 2017

[Washington's Blog](#) 24 February 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*The CIA backed a right-wing coup in Syria [in 1949](#). 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]

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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 1957, the [American president and British prime minister 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.

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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.

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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."

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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.

Newly-declassified [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](#).

And as Nafeez Ahmed [notes](#):

According to former French foreign minister [Roland Dumas](#), Britain had planned covert action in Syria as early as 2009: "I was in England two years before the violence in Syria on other business," he told French television: "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."

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."

[Indeed](#).

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

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