

US HISTORY IN LATAM

1954 GUATEMALA
On June 27, 1954, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, president of Guatemala, was driven from power by mercenaries trained and financed by Washington, after a land reform that threatened the interests of the powerful US company United Fruit Corporation. In 2003, the US officially acknowledged the CIA's role in this coup, in the name of fighting communism.

1961 CUBA
From April 15 to 19, 1961, 1,400 anti-Castro militants trained and financed by the CIA attempted to land at the Bay of Pigs, 250 kilometres from Havana, but failed to overthrow Fidel Castro's communist regime. The fighting left killed more than a hundred on each side.

1965 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
In 1965, citing a "communist threat", the United States sent Marines and paratroopers to Santo Domingo to crush an uprising in support of Juan Bosch, a leftist president ousted by generals in 1963.

1970S SUPPORT FOR DICTATORSHIPS
Washington backed several military dictatorships, seen as a bulwark against left-wing armed movements in a world divided by Cold War rivalries. It actively assisted Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet during the September 11, 1973 coup against leftist president Salvador Allende. In the 1970s and 1980s, six dictatorships (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil) joined forces to eliminate left-wing opponents under "Operation Condor," with tacit US support.

1980S WARS IN CENTRAL AMERICA
In 1979, the Sandinista rebellion overthrew dictator Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua. US president Ronald Reagan, concerned about Managua's alignment with Cuba and the USSR, secretly authorised the CIA to provide \$20 million in aid to the Contras (the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries), partly funded by the illegal sale of arms to Iran. The Nicaraguan civil war, which ended in April 1990, claimed 50,000 lives. Reagan also sent military advisers to El Salvador to crush the rebellion of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front in a civil war (1980-1992) that resulted in 72,000 deaths.

1983 GRENADA
On October 25, 1983, US Marines and Rangers intervened on the island of Grenada after PM Maurice Bishop was assassinated by a far-left junta. Reagan launched Operation "Urgent Fury" with the stated goal of protecting a thousand US citizens. The operation, widely deplored by the UN General Assembly, ended on November 3, with more than a hundred dead.

1989 PANAMA
In 1989, after a contested election, president George W Bush ordered a military intervention in Panama, resulting in the surrender of general Manuel Noriega, a former collaborator of US intelligence, who was wanted by US justice. Some 27,000 GIs took part in Operation "Just Cause", which officially left 500 dead.

SOURCE: AFP



(From left, clockwise) Members of the National Guard stand guard at Forte Tiuna, Venezuela's largest military complex, in Caracas yesterday; Venezuelans in Miami in the US celebrate news of the strikes and capture of Maduro; and Fire at Forte Tiuna is seen from a distance after a series of explosions in Caracas.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Bombing for peace!
Under 'peacemaker' Trump, US has become 'world bully' from 'world cop'



AFP, Washington

Donald Trump returned to office vowing to be the peace president. Nearly a year later, he is embracing war on multiple fronts.
Trump on Saturday ordered large-scale military strikes in Venezuela and announced that leftist leader Nicolas Maduro had been captured and flown out of the country.
The raid to kick off the new year comes after the US military on Christmas Day hit Nigeria, in what Trump said was an operation targeting jihadists who had attacked Christians.
And hours before the attack in Venezuela, Trump warned of another US intervention in a third region, saying US forces were "locked and loaded" if Iran's clerical state kills protesters who have taken to the streets.
The enthusiasm for war would seem at odds for a president who has loudly declared that he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for supposedly ending eight wars, a claim that is highly disputable.
In his second inaugural address on January 20 last year, Trump said: "My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier."
But soon after, Trump rebranded the Defense Department as the "Department of War."
Both Trump and his aides insist that military muscle is the path to real peace.
"We're making peace through strength. That's what we're doing," Trump told a rally last month in Pennsylvania.

Making his love of force even more striking, Trump has not only described himself as a peacemaker but has spoken for years against US interventionism.
Declaring "America First," he cast himself as a different kind of Republican than the party's last president George W Bush, whose administration he castigated as warmongers over the Iraq invasion of 2003.
In a speech in Riyadh in May, Trump said that "so-called nation-builders wrecked far more nations than they built" and failed to understand countries where they intervened.
In one key difference with Bush, Trump has made no pretense of long-term commitment.
He last year ordered the bombing of Iranian nuclear sites in support of an Israeli attack as well as strikes in Syria in retaliation for the killings of US forces.
But like Bush, Trump cares little about UN or other international conventions on war.
The Trump administration argues that Maduro faced a warrant for drug charges in the United States, but Maduro's government is a UN member, even if most Western countries consider him illegitimate following elections riddled with irregularities.
Senator Ruben Gallego, a Democrat and Iraq war veteran, called Venezuela the "second unjustified war in my lifetime," although he agreed Maduro was a dictator.
"It's embarrassing that we went from the world cop to the world bully in less than one year. There is no reason for us to be at war with Venezuela," he said on X.

Reverse NGOs ban in Gaza
UN chief tells Israel

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called for Israel to end a ban on humanitarian agencies that provided aid in Gaza, saying he was "deeply concerned" at the development.
Guterres "calls for this measure to be reversed, stressing that international non-governmental organizations are indispensable to life-saving humanitarian work and that the suspension risks undermining the fragile progress made during the ceasefire," his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.
"This recent action will further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians," he added.
Israel on Thursday suspended 37 foreign organisations from accessing the Gaza Strip after they had refused to share lists of their Palestinian employees with government officials.
NGOs included in the ban have been ordered to cease their operations by March 1.
Several NGOs have said the requirements contravene international humanitarian law.
Israel says the new regulation aims to prevent bodies it accuses of supporting terrorism from operating in the Palestinian territories.

Iran protesters' demands fair
Says Khamenei after Trump warning

AFP, Tehran

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday acknowledged the economic demands of protesters in Iran, where demonstrations have spread to more than two dozen cities, even as he warned there would be no quarter for "rioters".
The protests began on Sunday as an expression of discontent over high prices and economic stagnation, but have since expanded to include political demands.
"The president and high-ranking officials are working to resolve" the economic difficulties in the sanctions-battered country, Khamenei said in a speech.
"The shopkeepers have protested against this situation and that is completely fair," he added.
But Khamenei nonetheless warned that while "authorities must have dialogue with protesters, it is useless to have dialogue with rioters. Those must be put in their place."
US president Donald Trump on Friday said the US was "locked and loaded and ready to go" if Iran crackdown on protesters but did not specify what action it might take.
At least ten people have been killed in the protests so far, including members of the security services, according to sources.
The protests have mostly been concentrated in mid-sized cities in Iran's west and southwest, where clashes and vandalism have been reported.
In recent days, the protests have taken on a more overtly political bent. In Karaj, on the outskirts of the capital, "a few people burned the Iranian flag, shouting 'Death to the dictator!' and 'This isn't the last battle, Pahlavi is coming back!'" Fars reported, adding that others in the crowd objected to the slogans.



FIRST PHASE OF MYANMAR POLLS
Military-backed party takes lead

REUTERS

Myanmar's military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party is leading after the first phase of a contentious general election, early results cited by state media showed, in the first vote since a 2021 coup.
Having sparked a nationwide rebellion after crushing pro-democracy protests in the wake of its coup, the ruling junta has said the three-phase vote would bring political stability to the impoverished Southeast Asian nation.
Partial results from Myanmar's first election since 2020, released by the Union Election Commission (UEC) for 56 constituencies, showed the junta-backed party winning by a wide margin as expected, despite thin turnout.
The results published on Friday show the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led by retired generals, winning 38 of 40 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw, or lower house, whose outcomes have been tallied.
The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, also known as the White Tiger Party and the Mon Unity Party (MUP) got one seat each.
Among a diminished field of competitors handpicked by the military, the USDP also won 14 seats of the 15 regional or State Hluttaw seats tallied in the first-past-the-post system, while the Akha National Development Party took one.
For the upper house, or Amyotha Hluttaw, only one seat has been declared, which was won by the Wa National Party.
Two more rounds of voting set for January 11 and January 25 will cover 265 of Myanmar's 330 townships, in some of which the junta does not have complete control.



Hindu devotees take a holy dip in the Shali River on the occasion of the Swasthani Brata Katha festival on the outskirts of Kathmandu yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

India security forces kill 14 Maoist rebels

AFP, Raipur

Indian security forces killed 14 Maoist rebel fighters yesterday in two clashes, police said, as New Delhi steps up efforts to quash the long-running insurgency in the country's central regions.
More than 10,000 people have died in the decades-long rebellion waged by Naxalite rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised indigenous people in resource-rich central India.
The government has been cracking down on the remnants of the group, named after the village in the Himalayan foothills where the Maoist-inspired insurgency began nearly six decades ago.
The rebels were shot dead in the central state of Chhattisgarh in the early hours of yesterday.
Authorities have repeatedly vowed to completely finish the insurgency by the end of March.