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Official History Details Covert CIA Role

State Dept. Says Agency Aided Rebels to Curb Communist Influence on

Pub 10/30/94
Los Angeles Times

In the first official acknowledgment of its kind, the State Department has provided a detailed account of major covert operations launched by the CIA in Indonesia during the 1950s, when it feared growing communist influence over President Sukarno.

A 600-page documentary history published this month shows that President Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration mounted clandestine intelligence operations to support anti-communist rebels in Indonesia in what was, in some respects, a forerunner of the Bay of Pigs operations against Cuba.

William Z. Slany, the State Department's official historian, wrote in an introduction that the new book represents "a transitional volume on the road to fuller release of important intelligence operations" carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Until now, the official documentary histories of American foreign policy, which are called "Foreign Relations of the United States," have been written as though the CIA did not exist.

In an interview, Slany said that before the new Indonesia volume, State Department histories had never published information about covert CIA operations—with the single exception of some intelligence activities in Vietnam in the early 1960s, when the United States was an overt and active participant in that country's civil war.

Indonesia was a more typical Cold War intelligence operation. Publicly, the United States maintained normal diplomatic relations with Sukarno's government in Jakarta. Meanwhile, the Eisenhower administration secretly intervened in military actions against him.

Secretary of State John Foster Dul-

les said at one key meeting that Sukarno was "dangerous, untrustworthy and by character susceptible to the Communist way of thinking." And so, in early 1958, the United States began secretly supplying and supporting dissident military groups on Indonesia's outer islands of Sumatra and Sulawesi.

"There is ample evidence that the United States encouraged and supported the rebellion, until it was clear that it was failing," the State Department historians concluded.

Historians say the fact that the CIA mounted the covert operations in Indonesia already was known. Indonesia began complaining about the CIA's

activities after it shot down and captured an American pilot, Allen Pope, who was bombing military targets in support of the rebels. Howard P. Jones, U.S. ambassador to Indonesia, later wrote a book in which he acknowledged, and criticized, the covert intelligence operations.

For Indonesia, then-CIA Director Allen Dulles sat in on all the key strategy sessions, trying to manage the day-to-day details of an Asian land that he viewed through Western eyes. At one point, he told the National Security Council: "As a people, the Indonesians often do a lot of talking, accompanied by very little action."

WASHINGTON POST

in Indonesia Sukarno Government

By 1959, when it became clear that the rebels would fail, Eisenhower shifted course. Instead of backing the rebels, he decided to throw American support to the regular Indonesian army that had been fighting them—in hopes that military leaders would provide a counterweight to Sukarno and Indonesia's Communist Party.

Over the long term, that strategy was more effective. In 1965, amid a mysterious flurry of attempted coups d'etat, Indonesian military leaders led by Gen. Suharto took control of the country, gradually easing Sukarno from power. Suharto remains Indonesia's president today.

The State Department has been under pressure from Congress since the early 1990s to provide more information about American intelligence operations. The American Historical Association criticized the State Department for publishing a history of the restoration of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of Iran to his throne in 1953, without ever mentioning the CIA's well-documented role in returning him to power.

In 1991, Congress passed a law requiring the CIA and other intelligence agencies to cooperate with State Department historians by giving them complete access to all information relevant to foreign policy decisions. The Indonesia book is the first one in which the State Department shows openly the extensive role of the CIA in the making of American foreign policy.