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Preface

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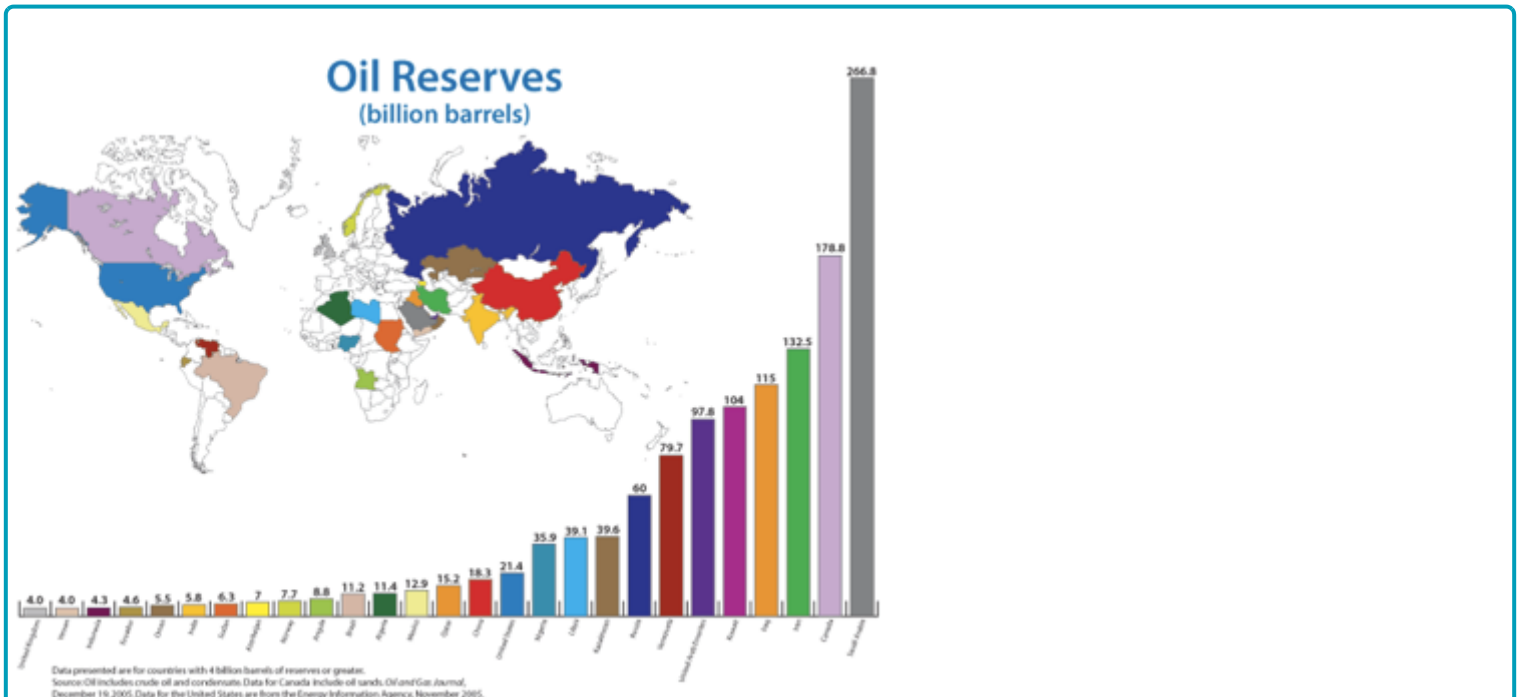
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This graphic, depicting the location of the world's largest oil reserves, shows Iran (in green) as number three. Graphic by "The World of Energy."

By 1951, Iranians were becoming ever-more convinced that they should control their own oil reserves. One of the ways to accomplish that objective was for the government to nationalize the British-controlled Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq (Mosaddegh) - a very popular Iranian nationalist whom the people had elected to Parliament (in 1944) and the Shah had appointed Prime Minister (in 1951) - was of a similar mind. He persuasively presented his case, at the United Nations, where no one could dispute that Iran was profiting far less from its own oil than was Britain.

Making things more worrisome, at a time when Cold-War tensions were rising between the West and the Soviet Union, Mossadeq allegedly favored communism over capitalism. That perception bothered U.S. government officials.

Throughout 1952, diplomatic efforts focused on diffusing the increasingly tense situation. British and American officials hoped the Iranian government could be persuaded not to nationalize Anglo-Iranian Oil.

Their efforts weren't working. In his early 70s, Mossadeq - very popular within his own country - was determined to carry out his plans to nationalize the oil business.

Frustrated Brits approached their American counterparts with an idea. What if the SIS ("Secret Intelligence Service," also known as MI-6) and the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) joined forces to engineer a regime-change in Iran?

The Brits wanted to oust Mossadeq in a coup. What if they made it seem like getting rid of the country's Prime Minister was in Iran's best interests? What if they spread propaganda materials to set-up Mossadeq, making it seem like he posed a risk to Iranians? What if they could get the country's religious leaders to oppose him?

When the proposed plan first surfaced, in 1951, Harry Truman (who had met Mosaddegh) was still America's president. He rejected the idea, so the Brits and Iranians were left to work-out their differences.

In 1953, a new Administration - lead by President Eisenhower - was in office. "Ike," as he was popularly known, was concerned that communism could spread from the Soviet Union to nearby Iran. Perhaps interference in Iran's internal affairs might help to prevent that development?

A seemingly preposterous idea - to oust Mossadeq - took on new life after an Iranian general secretly asked an American in Iran for help in mounting a coup against the Prime Minister.

By August of 1953, operatives for the CIA and SIS had developed a top-secret plan (called "TPAJAX"). We know how things developed - and what actually happened - because the chief architect of the coup (Dr. Donald Wilber) wrote a detailed history about it.

Classified for decades, that Secret History - entitled "Overthrow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran" - is now available for online study. It paints a picture of how U.S. and British government officials, in the 1950s, used covert actions, deception and "gray propaganda" to end Dr. Mossadeq's job as Prime Minister.

Shah Reza Pahlavi, although initially reluctant to be involved, was part of the plot. Without him, regime change was impossible since he had to sign two royal decrees. One of those documents would remove Mossadeq; the other would replace him with a Western-friendly Iranian general.

When developments in Tehran became tense, and removing Mossadeq from office was met with armed resistance, the Shah left his country (first for Baghdad, then for Rome). At the time, the Aga Khan (an influential Shia Muslim claiming direct descendancy from the Prophet Muhammad) observed:

...a ruler who left his throne and country would never return ... (Aga Khan III, quoted in the Secret History, Chapter VII - "Apparent Failure" - page 58.)

If America's covert operatives continued with their plans, they would do more than merely damage the friendship between Iran and the U.S. They would sow seeds of an ever-deepening distrust - and the potential of downright enmity - between the two countries.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHEN-the-FRIENDSHIP-was-DAMAGED-ARGO>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHEN-the-FRIENDSHIP-was-DAMAGED-ARGO>

Media Stream



Harry Truman with Mohammad Mosaddegh

Photo of Truman and Mosaddegh, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Harry-Truman-with-Mohammad-Mosaddegh>



Donald N. Wilber - Architect of Operation AJAX

Photo of Donald N. Wilber, online courtesy CIA.

View this asset at:

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Iran - Nationalization of Oil Reserves

Video segment of "Longines Chronoscope with Charles L. Harding." discussing the "Iranian Oil Crisis," from September 28, 1951. Online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Iran-Nationalization-of-Oil-Reserves>



Iranian Oil Conflict - 1951

Historical news footage from the U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Iranian-Oil-Conflict-1951>



US and Iran - When the Friendship was Damaged

Clip from a documentary profiling *All the Shah's Men*, online via YouTube.

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