US intelligence helped Saddam's Ba'ath Party seize power for the first time in 1963. Evidence suggests that Saddam was on the CIA payroll as early as 1959, when he participated in a failed assassination attempt against Iraqi strongman Abd al-Karim Qassem. In the 1980s, the US and Britain backed Saddam in the war against Iran, giving Iraq arms, money, satellite intelligence, and even chemical & bio-weapon precursors. As many as 90 US military advisors supported Iraqi forces and helped pick targets for Iraqi air and missile attacks.

US Intelligence Helps Saddam's Party Seize Power in 1963

Saddam Key in Early CIA Plot (April 10, 2003)
According to former US intelligence officials and diplomats, the CIA's relationship with Saddam Hussein dates back to 1959, when he was part of a CIA-authorized six-man squad that attempted to assassinate Iraqi Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim. (United Press International)

A Tyrant Forty Years in the Making (March 14, 2003)
Roger Morris writes of the "regime change" carried out by the CIA in Iraq forty years ago. Among the CIA's actions were attempted political assassinations and the handing over of a list of suspected communists and leftists that led to the deaths of thousands of Iraqis at the hands of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party. (New York Times)

CIA Lists Provide Basis for Iraqi Bloodbath
In this excerpt from his classic study of Iraqi politics, Hanna Batatu discusses how the Ba'ath Party seized power for the first time in a military coup in February 1963. He speaks of lists, provided by US intelligence, that enabled the party to hunt down its enemies, particularly the Communists, in a terrible bloodletting.

US and British Support for Saddam in the 1970s and 1980s

The Riegle Report (1994)
This report by the Senate Banking Committee analyzes the US's exports of warfare-related goods to Iraq and their possible impact on the health consequences of the Gulf War. The report concludes that the US provided Iraq "with 'dual-use' licensed materials which assisted in the..."
Officers Say US Aided Iraq in War Despite Use of Gas (August 18, 2002)
According to senior military officials, a covert program carried out during the Reagan Administration provided Iraq with critical battle planning assistance at a time when US intelligence agencies knew that Iraqi commanders would employ chemical weapons against Iran. (New York Times)

Did Saddam Die for Our Sins? (January 9, 2007)
The US–backed Iraq Tribunal sentenced Saddam Hussein to death for his role in the 1982 massacre of nearly 150 Shiites in Dujail, Iraq. But the same court has dropped all charges against Hussein, post mortem, for the killing of 180,000 Kurds during the 1980s - crimes committed with Western complicity. The author of this TomPaine piece concludes that if the tribunal does not look into US and British involvement in the genocide case, it will fail "to educate the world about Saddam and his barbarous regime."

This Was a Guilty Verdict on America as Well (November 6, 2006)
The US–backed Iraq Special Tribunal sentenced the country's former ruler and "one-time [US] ally" Saddam Hussein to death by hanging - a verdict which came as no surprise to many. The court sought to bring Saddam to justice for crimes against humanity, but failed to acknowledge past US and British administrations' roles in facilitating these crimes. For decades, Washington provided economic and military support - including chemical weapons - to Saddam's regime. Therefore, in light of the court's ruling and its positive reception in Washington, the author of this Independent opinion piece asks, "Have ever justice and hypocrisy been so obscenely joined?"

The True Iraq Appeasers (August 31, 2006)
US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has compared critics of the Bush administration's policy in Iraq to those who appeased Adolf Hitler. The author of this Boston Globe article points out the hypocrisy of such a statement, noting the arming and financing of Saddam Hussein by the Reagan and first Bush administrations. As the article shows, many of the planners of the 2003 Iraq war supported Hussein in the 1980s during his ruthless and genocidal dictatorship.

Morality in Iraq, Then and Now (August 27, 2006)
This Washington Post opinion piece criticizes the historically inconsistent US policy towards Iraq. The author tracks US involvement in Iraq from the 1970s up until the trial of the country's former leader Saddam Hussein, which began in 2005. Although the US helped to set up the Special Iraq Tribunal, contributing to the exposure of some of these crimes, the author warns against overlooking US complicity with the Hussein regime.

US Military Assistance to Saddam Hussein during the Iran–Iraq War (April 20, 2006)
This material highlights the various military, intelligence, and financial assistance given to Saddam's regime by the US. In 1986, former Vice President George H.W. Bush traveled to the Middle East, repeatedly encouraging Saddam to step up Iraq's bombing campaign against Iran. In addition, the US supplied Saddam with several big orders of helicopters and provoked a diversionary engagement with the Iranian navy in coordination with a major Iraqi offensive. (Global Policy Forum)

Saddam Hussein Trial: US–Iraq Military and Economic Relations (October 20, 2005)
Saddam Hussein's trial has prompted discussions about US economic and military support to Iraq during the Iran–Iraq War. This bibliography offers a list of sources addressing US policy towards Iraq from 1979 to 1990. (Global Policy Forum)

Rumsfeld Visited Baghdad in 1984 to Reassure Iraqis, Documents Show (December 19, 2003)
While the US publicly maintained neutrality during the Iran–Iraq war, it privately attempted to forge a better relationship with the government of Saddam Hussein. This policy did not shift when Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran. (Washington Post)

Saddam's Arrest Raises Troubling Questions (December 2003)
For decades Washington supported the regime of Saddam Hussein. US officials responsible for such policies could themselves be guilty of war crimes and might face allegations in an international tribunal. (Foreign Policy in Focus)

This report, by the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network, investigates the "revolving door" between the Bechtel Group and the Reagan administration that drove US policy towards Iraq in the 1980s. The authors argue that many of the same actors are back today, justifying military action against Iraq and waiting to reap the benefits of post-war reconstruction.

Britain's Dirty Secret (March 6, 2003)
Britain secretly assisted in building a chemical plant in Iraq despite being fully aware that Saddam Hussein gassed Iranian troops in the 1980s. The warning about possibilities to make chemical weapons was dismissed by Paul Channon, British trade minister at that time, stating abandoning the project "would do our other trade prospects in Iraq no good." (Guardian)
This extensive report from the National Security Archive uses declassified US documents to illustrate the nature of US involvement in Iraqi affairs under the administration of President Ronald Reagan.

America Didn’t Seem to Mind Poison Gas (January 17, 2003)
As part of his call for regime change in Iraq, George W. Bush has accused Saddam Hussein of using poison gas against his own people. However, in 1988 the US worked to prevent the international community from condemning Iraq’s chemical attack against the Kurdish village of Halabja, instead attempting to place part of the blame on Iran. (International Herald Tribune)

Rumsfeld “Offered Help to Saddam” (December 31, 2002)
As President Reagan’s Middle East envoy in the early 80s, current US Secretary of Defense and leading Bush administration hawk, Donald Rumsfeld, offered support to Saddam Hussein during the Iraq–Iran conflict with knowledge that the Iraqis were using chemical weapons. (Guardian)

US Had Key Role in Iraq Buildup (December 30, 2002)
This Washington Post article discusses the US role in the military buildup of Iraq preceding the Gulf War. The administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush authorized the sale of poisonous chemicals and deadly biological viruses such as anthrax and bubonic plague.

Iraq and Poison Gas (August 28, 2002)
The US has always known about Baghdad’s deployment of chemical weapons and their use against his own people, especially during the Iran–Iraq War. “What did the US government do about it then? Nothing,” reports The Nation, “until â€”gassing his own people’ became a catchy slogan to demonize Saddam.”

Iraq Uses Techniques in Spying Against its Former Tutor, the US (February 5, 1991)
This 1991 article discusses the deep intelligence link between the US and Iraq in the 1980s, detailing the intelligence assistance that the US provided to Saddam Hussein during the Iran–Iraq war. (Philadelphia Inquirer)

Excerpts From Iraqi Document on Meeting with US Envoy (September 22, 1990)
Former US Ambassador to Iraq Ms. April Glaspie met with Saddam Hussein on July 25 1990, only 8 days before he invaded Kuwait. According to this excerpt from a transcript of their meeting, the two talked about oil prices, how to improve US–Iraq relations, and how the US has “no opinion on the Arab–Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.” (New York Times)