

How USAID Created Nicaragua's Anti-Sandinista Media Apparatus, now Under Money Laundering Investigation

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Global Research, June 07, 2021

[The Grayzone](#) 1 June 2021

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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With tens of millions of dollars over years of work, CIA front USAID helped create and train Nicaragua's anti-Sandinista opposition. At the center of its operations is the elite Chamorro Foundation, which stands accused of money laundering.

The US government has spent years cultivating a ring of right-wing media outlets in Nicaragua that played a central role in a violent 2018 coup attempt. This network is now being investigated by the Nicaraguan government on allegations of money laundering.

These publications are an integral part of a political opposition that Washington has carefully managed, trained, and funded with millions of dollars over the past decade. While relentlessly accusing Nicaragua's leftist government of corruption, they have been suspiciously obscure with their own finances and record-keeping.

The institution at the heart of the US-backed influence network is called the Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro para la Reconciliación y la Democracia, or Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation for Reconciliation and Democracy – often referred to simply as the Chamorro Foundation.

Run by one of the richest and most powerful family dynasties in Nicaragua, the Chamorro Foundation is perhaps the most important domestic organization in coordinating the political opposition to the Central American nation's socialist-oriented Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

The Chamorro Foundation is a central vehicle for Washington's massive financial, technical, and logistical support to the Nicaraguan opposition, acting as what the CIA refers to as a “pass-through” – a third-party organization that serves as a seemingly independent channel for US government funding to foreign political groups and media outlets.

Since the Sandinistas came to power in 2007, the United States has funneled tens of millions of dollars to opposition groups in Nicaragua through its soft-power arm the [US](#)

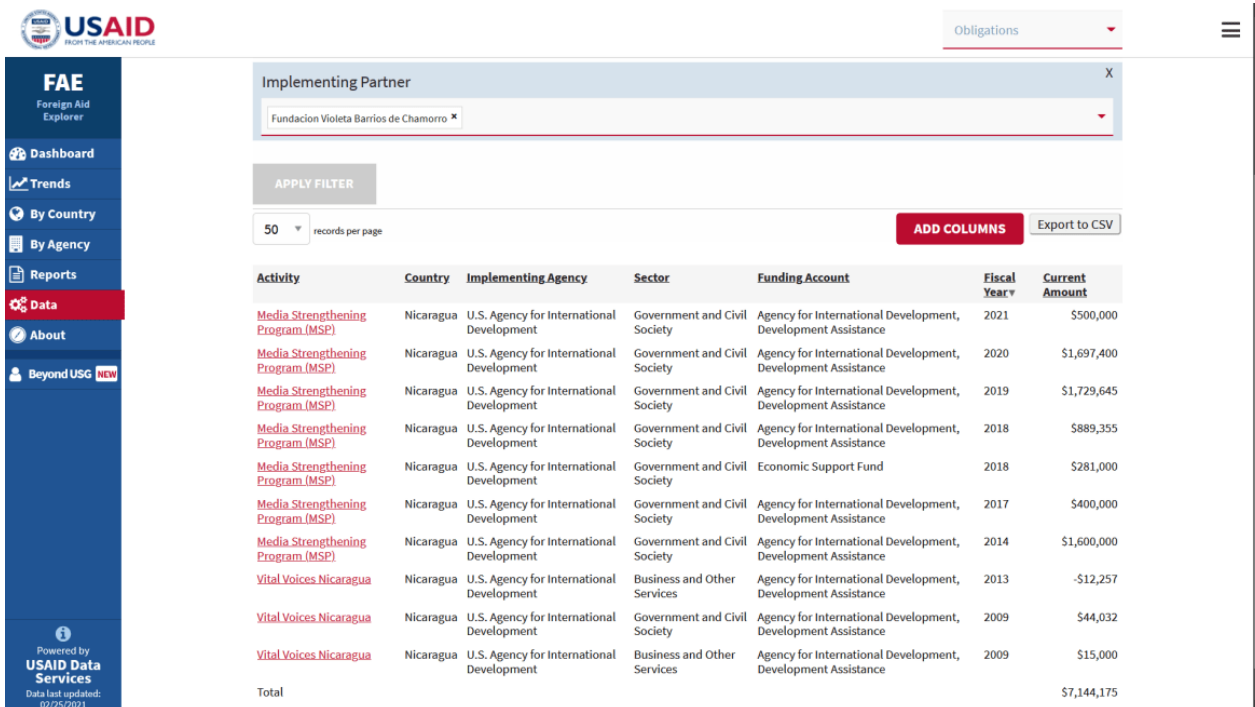
[Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), a CIA front that has long been used as “humanitarian” cover for operations to destabilize independent left-wing governments, especially in Latin America.

[Internal reports from USAID](#) show that the agency does much more than just fund anti-Sandinista political organizations, NGOs, and media outlets in Nicaragua; it births them, nurtures them, and trains them in every aspect of politicking, from electoral strategies and public relations to outreach and social media messaging, branding and marketing to organizing and building broad alliances, developing technology skills and navigating legal issues to managing finances and accounting.

This Grayzone investigation illustrates how USAID has helped to create Nicaragua’s anti-Sandinista opposition from the ground up. The right-wing political forces that comprise it are anything but organic; they are the product of an enormous campaign of foreign meddling by US government interference at every single level of Nicaraguan society.

The US astroturfing has been especially effective in forming Nicaragua’s anti-Sandinista media apparatus. Publicly available records show that USAID has spent at least \$10 million specifically on opposition media outlets in Nicaragua since 2009. Of that money, USAID sent more than \$7 million to the Chamorro Foundation from 2014 to 2021.

Given that much of the information that USAID discloses about its support for the political opposition and media outlets in Nicaragua is redacted, these figures are likely conservative estimates.



The screenshot shows the USAID Foreign Aid Explorer interface. A sidebar on the left contains navigation links: FAE Foreign Aid Explorer, Dashboard, Trends, By Country, By Agency, Reports, Data (highlighted), and About. Below these is a 'Beyond USG' link. The main content area has a search bar for 'Implementing Partner' with 'Fundacion Violeta Barrios de Chamorro' selected. Below the search bar is an 'APPLY FILTER' button and a dropdown for '50 records per page'. To the right are buttons for 'ADD COLUMNS' and 'Export to CSV'. The table below lists grants with columns: Activity, Country, Implementing Agency, Sector, Funding Account, Fiscal Year, and Current Amount. The table shows 11 rows of data, including multiple entries for 'Media Strengthening Program (MSP)' and 'Vital Voices Nicaragua', all funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The total current amount is \$7,144,175.

Activity	Country	Implementing Agency	Sector	Funding Account	Fiscal Year	Current Amount
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2021	\$500,000
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$1,697,400
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2019	\$1,729,645
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2018	\$889,355
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2018	\$281,000
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2017	\$400,000
Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2014	\$1,600,000
Vital Voices Nicaragua	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Business and Other Services	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2013	-\$12,257
Vital Voices Nicaragua	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2009	\$44,032
Vital Voices Nicaragua	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Business and Other Services	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2009	\$15,000
Total						\$7,144,175

A partial list of USAID grants for the Nicaraguan opposition’s Chamorro Foundation

Western European governments have supplemented Washington’s efforts in cultivating the anti-Sandinista opposition, with a special emphasis on the press.

European Union member states have handed out millions to the Chamorro Foundation, using the influential opposition group to fund right-wing news outlets. In 2020 alone, the [foundation received €831,527 \(more than \\$1 million USD\)](#) from the Spanish Agency for

International Development Cooperation (AECID), an arm of Madrid's soft power that is modeled after USAID.

The Western funding has been bolstered with millions of dollars from Washington's [National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\) – another CIA front](#) that exists to push regime change across the globe. Between 2016 and 2019, the NED provided at least \$4.4 million to Nicaraguan opposition groups, including media organizations, according to public records – although this is likely an underestimate as well.



The image shows a document from AECID (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo). The header includes the AECID logo and the text 'AGENCIA ESPAÑOLA DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL PARA EL DESARROLLO'. Below this, a paragraph states: 'Dentro del marco del Proyecto de Apoyo a la democracia de Nicaragua DCI-TLA/2020/87-123, financiado por la AECID y cumpliendo con lo establecido en el numeral 0.7 del Reglamento Operativo y las Condiciones Generales de los Convenios con los representantes de Fundaciones abajo descritas.' Below the paragraph is a table titled 'ESPECIFICACIONES TÉCNICAS DE LOS FONDOS'.

DESTINO	MONTO	ID
FUNDACIÓN VIOLETA BARRIOS DE CHAMORRO	€ 831,527.56	00040/D15

FECHA Y NÚMERO DE ENTREGA	OBJETIVO
OCTUBRE 2020 / 00009874	Desarrollo integral de jóvenes emprendedores de la comunicación

€831,527 in funding for Nicaragua's Chamorro Foundation in 2020 from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)

These are exorbitant sums of money in Central America, one of the poorest regions of the world, where the minimum wage amounts to around \$200 per month. Such foreign funding is the main force keeping Nicaragua's right-wing opposition afloat – especially given that polling show it has mere [single-digit support among the general population](#).

Many of the media outlets bankrolled by USAID in these programs traffic in blatant fake news and extremist content, while inciting violence against the Nicaraguan government and supporters of the Sandinista Front.

The prominent tabloid opposition network 100% Noticias, for instance, which is funded by USAID through the Chamorro Foundation, regularly transmitted calls for Nicaraguans to overthrow their elected government during the [violent 2018 coup attempt](#).

The director and founder of that US-funded station, Miguel Mora, stated in an interview with Grayzone editor Max Blumenthal that he wanted the US military to invade Nicaragua,

violently remove the elected Sandinista Front party from power, and capture President Daniel Ortega. He cited Washington's 1989 invasion of Panama as a model.



What I see from the United States is it doing a Noriega-style operation, like in Panama.

They come, they grab the [Ortega-Murillo] family, and they take them away.

The director and founder of the USAID-funded right-wing media outlet 100% Noticias, Miguel Mora, calls for the US to invade Nicaragua and overthrow its elected government, in an interview with The Grayzone

"What I see from the United States is it doing a Noriega-style operation, like in Panama," Mora told Blumenthal in an interview in Managua, days after the putsch fizzled out in July 2018.

"They come, they grab the [Ortega-Murillo] family, they take them away, and the army is not involved. In two days, 24 hours, this is solved, if there were US intervention like that," the US-funded 100% Noticias director said.

"So what I see, instead of the United States giving weapons, like what it did with the Contras, is that they come and do a Noriega-style operation," Mora added.

While USAID bankrolled violent, far-right, coup-plotting elements like Mora, internal documents reviewed by The Grayzone show that it was simultaneously supporting liberal NGOs that exploited issues like LGBT equality, women’s empowerment, and Indigenous rights, to provide the rightist anti-Sandinista opposition with progressive cover.

“opportunity to find out much more about the rights of vulnerable groups and share experiences. There is a lot to share to get feedback that contributes to improving the work of each [organization] participating in the course.”
-Norman Gutiérrez, Director, Centro para la Educación y Prevención del Sida

As a result of CEGODEM’s support, three LGBTI groups from Masaya advocated to declare the locality free from discrimination against the LGBTI population.

CEGODEM also developed and delivered a postgraduate course on democratic governance and human rights of vulnerable populations called “Democratic Governance and Human Rights.” The course was taken by 25 Nicaraguan human rights activists working on these issues and focused on the conditions of indigenous peoples, youth, women, and LGBTI individuals. As a result, these activists enhanced their skills to promote and defend human rights and democratic governance.

With its CBCSA grant, ASODEL executed the public awareness campaign “Lifting Voices against Sexual Abuse” that included trainings, public forums, and public demonstrations. Under this campaign, ASODEL raised and increased awareness on the need to have spaces for dialogue and information to prevent sexual abuse of children. ASODEL’s awareness and trainings targeted the entire population of Chinandega and included activities and actions in 10 schools, focusing on elementary and high school teachers, parents, children, adolescents, and youth. The campaign directly reached 1,132 individuals who participated in different activities under the campaign. Through social media, ASODEL’s campaign reached more than 5,000 Nicaraguans. As a result of this effort, three cases of alleged sexual abuse have been identified and are in the process being denounced.



Exhibit 12. Public demonstration against sexual abuse of children in Chinandega

Exhibit 13. Leaflet for IPADE's campaign

Through a digital and radio campaign funded by a CBCSA grant, IPADE generated awareness and disseminated information on citizen identification rights. The campaign focused on the LGBTI community in Managua, Tipitapa, Masaya, and the

USAID boasting, in an internal report on its Nicaragua operations, of exploiting sensitive issues like sexual violence against children and women, LGBT equality, and Indigenous rights as cover for its anti-Sandinista operations

The USAID-backed coordinator of many of these opposition groups, the Chamorro Foundation, was accused of fiscal improprieties this May, and the Nicaraguan government launched an official investigation on suspicion of money laundering, stating that it had found “serious financial inconsistencies in the reports presented to the government and the amounts received by the foundation.”

Serious questions about the Chamorro Foundation remain unanswered. This February, the organization announced that it had voluntarily suspended its operations in Nicaragua as a form of protest against a [law passed in October 2020](#) by the nation’s democratically elected National Assembly that requires [NGOs funded by foreign governments to register as foreign agents](#). (The legislation was harshly condemned by Washington, although it was modeled after an 83-year-old US law.)

However, while the foundation claimed to have legally shut down in Nicaragua, it still continued receiving large sums of money from foreign governments. In 2020, Washington gave the Chamorro Foundation at least \$1.3 million, and as of this May, the US government sent the group at least \$419,000 more for 2021.

Exactly where this money has gone is not clear, and what happened with the millions in its bank accounts when the foundation shut down is not known.

The Chamorro Foundation has denied the charges by pointing to a 2020 audit done by an accounting firm called Baker Tilly Nicaragua S.A. (a company that is closely linked to the

country's right-wing opposition). But the [USAID inspector general's office](#) admitted in an internal memo that there was no external peer review of the audit, noting that it did not meet Washington's own Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) requirements.

A high-profile elected member of the National Assembly from a left-wing party allied with the Sandinista Front, Wilfredo Navarro, accused the [Chamorros of using a money-laundering ring](#) to fund the 2018 coup attempt in Nicaragua.

"Between the Chamorro Foundation, the Grupo Cinco [another Western government-funded media organization run by the Chamorro family], and other NGOs, they laundered money and sent more than \$30 million to pay the killers and torturers, the authors of the pain, destruction, and death in the failed 2018 coup," Navarro alleged. "Neither justice in heaven or on Earth will forgive them. Their hands are full of blood."

For its part, the Chamorro family has thus far stonewalled, refusing to publicly provide concrete answers to the lingering questions about its finances.

In a revealing response to the allegations of financial malpractice, the founder and director of the foundation, opposition politician Cristiana Chamorro – the elite daughter of the right-wing former president of Nicaragua after whom the foundation is named – rejected the investigation by immediately citing the authority of her patrons in the US government.

[Cristiana Chamorro insisted](#) in an official statement, "The US State Department rejected the charges of money laundering against the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation based on audits they conducted that did not find evidence of money laundering or diversion of funds."

Managua's Public Ministry replied by politely reminding Chamorro that Nicaragua is a sovereign country and the US government does not control its justice system. "The statement by the State Department is not relevant to the investigative process taking place in Nicaragua, which is being carried out according to the Constitution and laws of the Republic," the ministry wrote.

Cristiana Chamorro appeared to have forgotten that she was a citizen of Nicaragua, not the United States. Her confusion was perhaps understandable, however, given that her foundation – and the Central American nation's right-wing opposition as a whole – has been not only financially sustained by Washington, but created, cultivated, and propped up by the US government over the course of a decades-long foreign meddling operation.

Nicaragua's oligarch family tries to retake control, with help from Washington
The Chamorro family has long been one of Uncle Sam's most reliable assets in the region. An oligarchic clan descended from Spanish colonialists, the Chamorro dynasty boasts seven former presidents of Nicaragua, tracing back to the very first head of state of the republic in the 1850s.

The modern history of the Chamorro family clearly reflects Washington's role as the guiding force behind Nicaragua's right-wing opposition.

Cristiana Chamorro's mother, and the namesake of her foundation, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, was the first opposition president to come to power after the 1979 Sandinista Revolution that toppled Nicaragua's decades-long US-backed military dictatorship.

In the 1980s, Washington poured millions of dollars into violent far-right death squads, known as the Contras (short for “counterrevolutionaries” in Spanish), which resorted to [terrorist tactics in a failed bid to overthrow the socialist Sandinista government](#).

One of the most important leaders of the Contras was Edgar Chamorro – another member of the same oligarchic family. He later turned against the murderous paramilitary groups, and published a revealing letter-to-the-editor in the New York Times in 1986 titled, “[Terror Is the Most Effective Weapon of Nicaragua’s ‘Contras’](#).”

“The ‘contras’ were, and are, a proxy army controlled by the U.S. Government,” Edgar Chamorro wrote. “If U.S. support were terminated, they would not only be incapable of conducting any military activities against the Sandinistas, but would also immediately begin to disintegrate. I resigned rather than continue as a Central Intelligence Agency puppet.”

Edgar Chamorro’s description of the anti-Sandinista opposition in Nicaragua as a proxy of the US government that would collapse were it not for Washington’s enormous economic, political, and logistical support remains true today.

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro only came to power in 1990 thanks to a presidential campaign that was directed and financed by the US government. Her victory reflected the exhaustion of a population sapped by a decade of Washington-sponsored terrorist war – compounded by an economic crisis created by an illegal US blockade of their country, as well as an implicit US threat to levy even more sanctions on the impoverished nation if Ortega won.



Right-wing Nicaraguan President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro speaking before the US Congress in 1991

Violeta Chamorro’s presidential campaign was one of the first projects of the US government’s newly created [National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\)](#), a CIA front that still bankrolls the anti-Sandinista opposition today.

Her presidential tenure was an unmitigated disaster, and the horrors that working-class Nicaraguans suffered through during that period, which they now call the “neoliberal era,” are seared into their collective sociocultural memory. Despite massive economic assistance

from the United States and debt forgiveness by its financial organs the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Violeta's Chicago Boy-style policies led to skyrocketing poverty and inequality, unleashing an epidemic of organized crime, drug-trafficking, and prostitution in Nicaragua, creating one of the highest murder rates in the world.

Violeta Chamorro's departure in 1997 was followed by another decade of neoliberal rule that continued the trend of widespread poverty and inequality. To perpetuate her legacy, she founded the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation the year she left office.

When the leftist Sandinista Front won Nicaragua's 2006 presidential election and returned to power a year later, the Chamorro Foundation became the central pass-through for US government funding to the opposition.

The foundation is run by Violeta's daughter, Cristiana, who is the top opposition choice for Nicaragua's November 2021 presidential election, and the preferred pick in Washington. Although she has no real political experience, Cristiana's sponsors in Western governments and corporate media outlets frequently refer to her as an "opposition leader."

Cristiana has been aggressively boosted by mainstream corporate media outlets, becoming a regular fixture on [CNN en Español](#), which lavishes praise on her as the "[woman who promises to save Nicaragua](#)."

The scion of a veritable aristocratic clan, Cristiana has marketed herself as the second-coming of her mother, making it clear that she hopes to inherit the presidency with her aristocratic last name – and a little help from her friends in the US government.



US government-funded Nicaraguan opposition figure Cristiana Chamorro, interviewed by Voice of America

USAID-funded Chamorro Foundation and NED sustain coup-mongering Nicaraguan right-wing media

In addition to their enormous political and economic influence, the Chamorro dynasty has significant control over Nicaragua's media. The country's two largest newspapers, La Prensa and Confidencial, are run by Chamorros – and funded by the US government. And the Washington-backed Chamorro Foundation is used to sustain other right-wing outlets in the

country.

Western governments and corporate media outlets often accuse the Sandinista government of opposing freedom of the press and freedom of speech, but the reality is that the majority of Nicaraguan media outlets are neoliberal and viciously anti-Sandinista.

The opposition's media apparatus in Nicaragua consists of newspapers such as La Prensa and Confidencial; TV channels Canal 10, Canal 11, Canal 12, and Vos TV; the outlet [Radio Corporación](#) and radio show [Café con Voz](#); as well as online outlets [100% Noticias](#), [Artículo 66](#), [Nicaragua Investiga](#), [Nicaragua Actual](#), [BacanalNica](#), and [Despacho 505](#), to name just a few. This is further supplemented by dozens of right-wing social media influencers.

These domestic outlets receive heavy amplification from foreign-based corporate media networks, which broadcast nonstop anti-Sandinista propaganda – and [quite a bit of fake news](#) – day in and day out.

Sustaining most of the Nicaraguan opposition outlets is a steady flow of US government money through the Chamorro Foundation.

These media platforms played a key role in the [violent coup attempt in Nicaragua in 2018](#). The Washington-funded outlets spread fake news, openly incited violence against Sandinistas, and even called on opposition supporters to attack the government and kill President Ortega.

As mentioned above, the founding director of the influential right-wing network 100% Noticias, Miguel Mora, called for the US military to invade his country and overthrow President Daniel Ortega in a “Noriega-style operation,” in his July 2018 interview with The Grayzone editor Max Blumenthal.

With the help of USAID funding through the Chamorro Foundation, 100% Noticias also sent its reporter Lucía Pineda Ubau to the violent barricades erected by armed coup-plotters, known as tranques, where she encouraged viewers to join them and take up arms against the elected government.



Right-wing media activist Lucía Pineda Ubau from US government-funded Nicaraguan outlet 100%

Another fanatical right-wing Nicaraguan media personality who advocated for the coup attempt in 2018, host Jaime Arellano of Radio Corporación, openly broadcasted his support for former US President Donald Trump.

Arellano, known as “El Pingüino,” posted a photo on Facebook in 2020 of himself wearing a Trump hat, accompanied by the text “[Nicas for Trump](#).”

Arellano and 100% Noticias staff were among the media figures who were called in for questioning by the Nicaraguan justice system in May 2021 as part of its investigation into alleged money laundering.



Right-wing Nicaraguan media personality Jaime Arellano “El Pingüino” expressing support for Donald Trump

Nicaragua’s top two newspapers, La Prensa and Confidencial, are slightly more measured in their messaging, but essentially espouse the same extremist viewpoints.

For her part, Cristiana Chamorro – who was educated in the United States and has never had a real job other than positions she inherited from her family – is not only director of the Chamorro Foundation; she is also vice president of La Prensa. Both institutions are funded largely by Washington, which effectively makes Cristiana an unofficial employee of the US government.

La Prensa is directed by [Jaime Chamorro Cardenal](#), Cristiana’s uncle. Following the 1979 Sandinista Revolution, the newspaper served as Washington’s key propaganda weapon. During the US terror war in the 1980s, [the NED used La Prensa](#) to spread pro-Contra disinformation.

The Chamorro family also ran the leading newspaper [El Nuevo Diario](#), which closed down in 2019. Meanwhile, the other major Nicaraguan opposition news outlet, Confidencial, is run by

Cristiana's brother, Carlos Fernando.

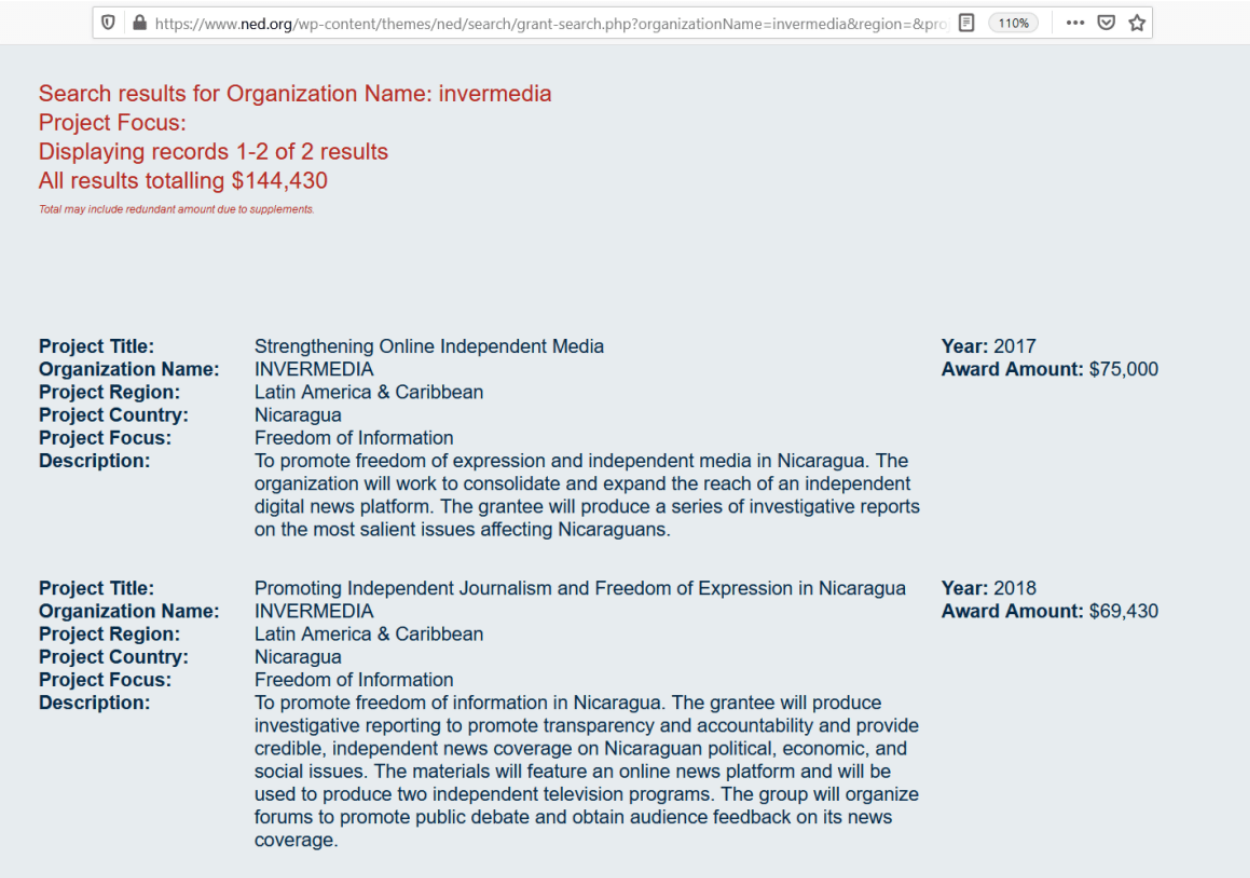
Carlos Fernando Chamorro is essentially the Rupert Murdoch of Nicaragua. Thanks to the many millions of dollars he has received from Western governments over years, Carlos Fernando has built a veritable media empire.

The most important weapon in Carlos Fernando's information warfare arsenal is Confidential. He uses it to churn out non-stop propaganda against the government of President Daniel Ortega, while pushing an aggressively neoliberal editorial line that makes Fox News look like a bastion of journalistic rigor.

Confidential refers to Nicaragua's elected government as a "dictatorship" and "regime," and often pushes dubious stories and disinformation with little basis in fact.

This May, for instance, Carlos Fernando's publication sought to distract from the government's investigation into his family's alleged money laundering by running an absurd story that claimed an attempt by the Managua mayor's office to collect unpaid back taxes owed by Nicaraguan corporations was part of an "[extortion scheme](#)." Confidential has also accused the mayor's office of "[fiscal terrorism](#)" for forcing wealthy elites to pay taxes.

The institution that bankrolls this disinformation factory is the US government. Confidential is funded by the NED, through the companies Invermedia and Promedia, which Carlos Fernando owns.



Search results for Organization Name: invermedia		
Project Focus:		
Displaying records 1-2 of 2 results		
All results totalling \$144,430		
<small>Total may include redundant amount due to supplements.</small>		
Project Title:	Strengthening Online Independent Media	Year: 2017
Organization Name:	INVERMEDIA	Award Amount: \$75,000
Project Region:	Latin America & Caribbean	
Project Country:	Nicaragua	
Project Focus:	Freedom of Information	
Description:	To promote freedom of expression and independent media in Nicaragua. The organization will work to consolidate and expand the reach of an independent digital news platform. The grantee will produce a series of investigative reports on the most salient issues affecting Nicaraguans.	
Project Title:	Promoting Independent Journalism and Freedom of Expression in Nicaragua	Year: 2018
Organization Name:	INVERMEDIA	Award Amount: \$69,430
Project Region:	Latin America & Caribbean	
Project Country:	Nicaragua	
Project Focus:	Freedom of Information	
Description:	To promote freedom of information in Nicaragua. The grantee will produce investigative reporting to promote transparency and accountability and provide credible, independent news coverage on Nicaraguan political, economic, and social issues. The materials will feature an online news platform and will be used to produce two independent television programs. The group will organize forums to promote public debate and obtain audience feedback on its news coverage.	



US NED funding for Invermedia, owned by Carlos Fernando Chamorro, used to run Confidential



Confidential is also financed by the Swiss government, an appropriate patron given that

Carlos Fernando has employed a Swiss bank-style strategy to create a panoply of de facto shell companies to rake in foreign funding for anti-Sandinista media outlets.

In addition to Confidencial, Invermedia, and Promedia, [Carlos Fernando runs](#) an influential group called the Centro de Investigaciones de la Comunicación ([CINCO](#)).

The Grupo CINCO, like his sister Cristiana's Chamorro Foundation, is funded by another EU member state, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).





AGENCIA ESPAÑOLA DE
COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL
PARA EL DESARROLLO

Dentro del marco del Proyecto de Apoyo a la democracia de Nicaragua DCI-TLA/2020/87-123, financiado por la AECID y cumpliendo con lo establecido en el numeral 0.7 del Reglamento Operativo y las Condiciones Generales de los Convenios con los representantes de Fundaciones abajo descritas.


ESPECIFICACIONES TÉCNICAS
DE LOS FONDOS

DESTINO	MONTO	ID
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FECHA Y NÚMERO DE ENTREGA	OBJETIVO	
OCTUBRE 2020 / 00009874	Desarrollo integral de jóvenes emprendedores de la comunicación	

ESPECIFICACIONES TÉCNICAS
DE LOS FONDOS

DESTINO	MONTO	ID
GRUPO CINCO	€ 125,976.82	00259/D24
NÚMERO DE ENTREGA	OBJETIVO	
AGOSTO 2020 / 00009875	Promoción de la libertad pública Programa Voces en Libertad	

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Carlos Fernando Chamorro helps run Grupo CINCO with the prominent opposition activist Sofía Montenegro. They are allied with the [Movimiento Renovador Sandinista, or Sandinista Renovation Movement \(MRS\)](#), an ostensible social-democratic opposition party founded by upper-class NGO activists and academics who claimed momentary loyalty to the Sandinista movement in the 1980s, but broke with it when it lost power in the 1990s.

When the Sandinista Front returned to power in 2007, wealthy liberal intellectuals like Carlos Fernando Chamorro and Montenegro emerged as some of the government's most vehement opponents. They allied with Washington, reaping substantial paychecks from the United States' regime-change entities.

Nicaragua-based journalists Nora McCurdy and Stephen Sefton uncovered photos showing Montenegro holding [friendly meetings with the US embassy](#), alongside MRS leaders.



US Ambassador Laura Farnsworth Dogu meeting with Sofia Montenegro and MRS leaders in Nicaragua in March 2016

The MRS has never been able to earn more than 6% in a presidential election, but its petit-bourgeois members dominate Nicaragua's NGO sector, media, and academia. The MRS was a significant player in the violent US-backed coup attempt in 2018, helping to organize and supply the various elements vying to topple the elected government.

In January 2021, MRS leadership shed any pretense of loyalty to Sandinismo and renamed their party the Unión Democrática Renovadora (Democratic Renovation Union), or UNAMOS.

The website [NicaLeaks published a leaked internal USAID document](#) revealing that Montenegro and the Grupo CINCO that she helps run with Carlos Fernando Chamorro are funded by the US government.

In 2016, USAID gave Montenegro a one-year grant of \$80,000 to fund her anti-Sandinista media work.

Managua, 12 de febrero de 2016

Señora: Sofia Montenegro
Cargo: Directora Ejecutiva
Organización: Centro de Investigaciones de la Comunicación (CINCO)
ASUNTO: Acuerdo de Subdonación No. PD -0416

Estimada Señora:

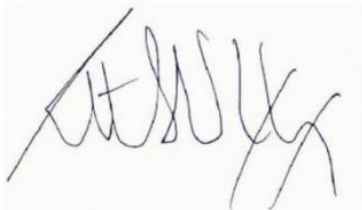
En respuesta a su solicitud de asistencia con fecha 04 de diciembre de 2015, es grato para mí adjudicar al Centro de Investigaciones de la Comunicación (CINCO), que en adelante se denominará El Subdonatario, esta subdonación por un monto de US\$80,000.00, para la ejecución del proyecto titulado *Periodismo móvil "Yo Reporto"*, que será ejecutado en alianza con De Humo TV, Asociación de Mujeres por la integración de la Familia En Nicaragua (AMIFANIC), Asociación La Amistad, Asociación Movimiento de Mujeres de Chinandega (AMMCH) y Asociación Movimiento de Mujeres Nidia White, como se describe en el Anexo 1 del Acuerdo de Subdonación.

Este Acuerdo de subdonación es efectivo y se han asignado los fondos respectivos a partir de la fecha de esta carta y se aplicarán los compromisos hechos por la organización para el desarrollo de los objetivos del proyecto durante el periodo que comienza el 12 de febrero de 2016 y termina el 11 de enero de 2017. El Programa de Donaciones a la Sociedad Civil no será responsable de reembolsos a El Subdonatario por cualquier costo que exceda la suma de US\$80,000.00.

Los fondos de esta subdonación deben ser administrados de conformidad a los términos y condiciones establecidas en el Acuerdo de Subdonación y sus anexos.

Sírvase firmar los dos ejemplares originales del Acuerdo de Subdonación adjunto, conservar un original y regresar el otro original al Programa de Donaciones.

Atentamente,



Roberto Courtney Cerda
Director Ejecutivo de EyT



Cc: Archivo

Reparto Las Palmas, costado este del Templo Mormón, Managua
Teléf.: 2268-1036 al 37

USAID funding for Nicaragua's Grupo CINCO and MRS activist Sofia Montenegro

Other shell organizations run by Carlos Fernando Charmorro include the little-known Fondo de Apoyo al Periodismo Investigativo, as well as the Costa Rica-based Asociación Productora de Periodismo Independiente. Then there is his [radio station Onda Local](#), and his TV shows, "Esta Semana" and "Esta Noche."

The closeness that Carlos Fernando and Cristiana Chamorro enjoy to the US government was reflected in the fact that they were both invited to sign an open letter in 2020 [organized by the NED](#), which accused “authoritarian regimes” of exploiting the Covid-19 pandemic to “tighten their grip on power.” They were joined by a slew of powerful right-wing political leaders from across Latin America.

US and EU baselessly accuse Nicaragua of money laundering while funding rich elites accused of money laundering

Among average working-class Nicaraguans, it is well-known that the Chamorro oligarchs control myriad shell companies, front groups, and political NGOs, and have many millions of dollars flowing into their multiple bank accounts from a variety of foreign sponsors. The family is notorious for its financial murkiness.

The government’s investigation into alleged money laundering by the Chamorro Foundation comes at a time when Nicaragua is trying to crack down on rampant tax evasion by local elites.

This May, Nicaragua’s National Assembly voted to [strengthen the laws on money laundering](#), in order to better combat the crime, noting that [new technologies like cryptocurrencies](#) have made it easier for plutocrats to hide their wealth from taxation.

The increased enforcement of laws against money laundering and tax evasion is partly aimed at boosting Nicaragua’s tax base, which has been hard-hit by the 2018 coup attempt and the subsequent, [aggressive US sanctions](#) that effectively locked the country’s economy out of the Washington-controlled international financial system.

In February 2020, Nicaragua was placed on the “greylist” of the Financial Action Task Force, an instrument created by the G7 nations ostensibly to reduce money laundering, but which is, in fact, an economic arm of NATO designed to punish countries that refused to toe the neoliberal line demanded by Washington and Brussels.

That same year, the European Commission added Nicaragua to its short list of “[high-risk third countries](#)” – another economic attack on the Sandinista government disguised as a measure against money laundering.

While Western governments employ dubious accusations of money laundering to economically strangle Nicaragua, they continue funneling tens of millions of dollars to conservative Nicaraguan elites who are infamous for shady book-keeping.

USAID’s explicitly stated goal in Nicaragua: “political transition”

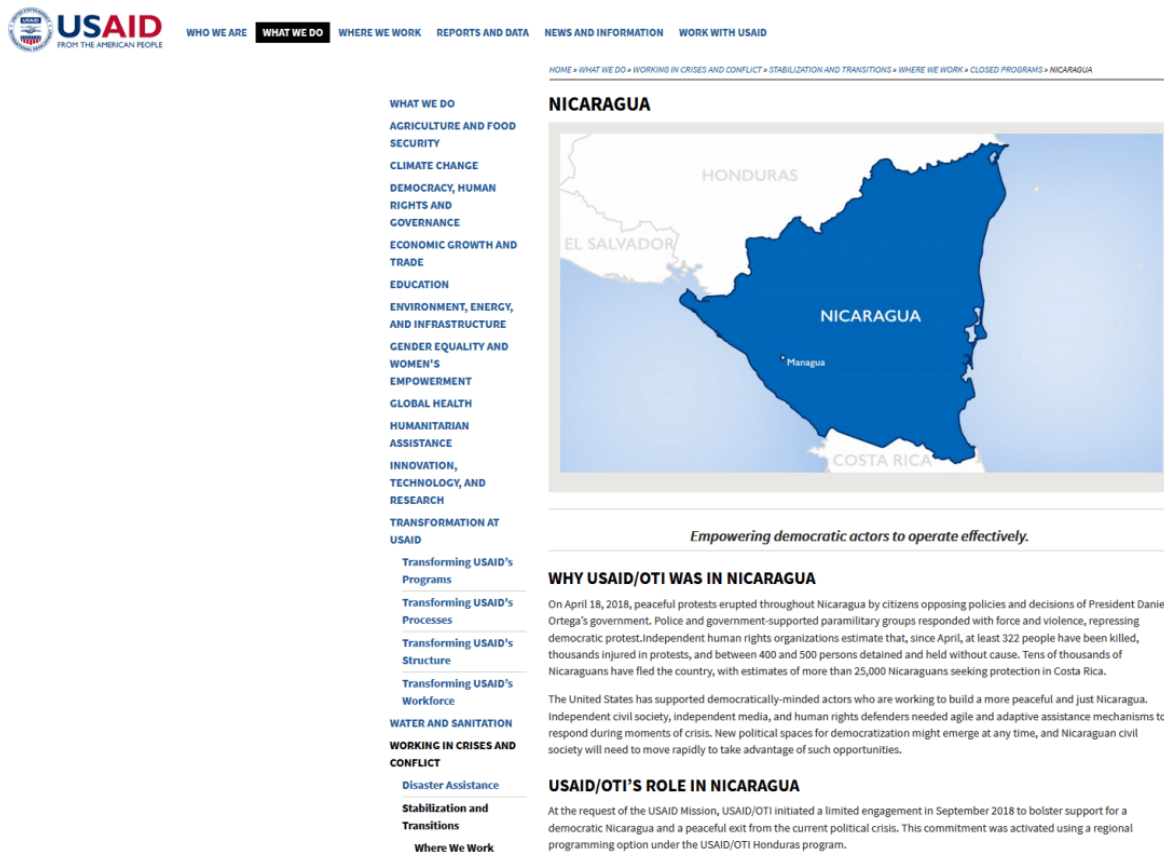
The main financial sponsor of Nicaragua’s political opposition has been the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Most grassroots Sandinistas are familiar with USAID’s dark history in the country, and the organization’s name has become synonymous with meddling and destabilization.

During the 1980s, USAID helped the CIA run covert operations to arm and fund the far-right Contra death squads. Then-Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams admitted that the Reagan administration [sent weapons to the Contras on so-called “humanitarian aid” flights](#).

Today, USAID plays a similar role in Washington’s attempts to topple the democratically elected leftist government not only in Nicaragua, but also in Venezuela.

[USAID was used to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to a parallel Venezuelan coup regime led by Juan Guaidó.](#) The agency was also integral to a violent US coup attempt against Venezuela in February 2019. In 2021, the US government's own inspector general's office acknowledged that [USAID committed fraud in order to fund regime-change efforts in Venezuela.](#)

The fact that USAID wants regime change in Nicaragua as well is hardly hidden. The agency admits on its own [website that USAID](#) has run a program in Nicaragua sponsored by its [Office of Transition Initiatives](#) (OTI).



The screenshot shows the USAID website's Nicaragua page. At the top, the USAID logo is displayed alongside navigation links: WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO, WHERE WE WORK, REPORTS AND DATA, NEWS AND INFORMATION, and WORK WITH USAID. Below these, a breadcrumb trail reads: HOME » WHAT WE DO » WORKING IN CRISES AND CONFLICT » STABILIZATION AND TRANSITIONS » WHERE WE WORK » CLOSED PROGRAMS » NICARAGUA. The main content area is titled 'NICARAGUA' and includes a map of the country, showing its borders with Honduras to the north, El Salvador to the west, and Costa Rica to the south. The capital, Managua, is marked on the map. To the left of the map is a vertical list of USAID program areas, including Agriculture and Food Security, Climate Change, Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, Economic Growth and Trade, Education, Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Global Health, Humanitarian Assistance, Innovation, Technology, and Research, Transformation at USAID, Water and Sanitation, and Working in Crises and Conflict. Below the map, the text reads: 'Empowering democratic actors to operate effectively.' Further down, the section 'WHY USAID/OTI WAS IN NICARAGUA' explains that on April 18, 2018, peaceful protests erupted throughout Nicaragua by citizens opposing policies and decisions of President Daniel Ortega's government. It states that police and government-supported paramilitary groups responded with force and violence, repressing democratic protest. Independent human rights organizations estimate that, since April, at least 322 people have been killed, thousands injured in protests, and between 400 and 500 persons detained and held without cause. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have fled the country, with estimates of more than 25,000 Nicaraguans seeking protection in Costa Rica. The text also mentions that the United States has supported democratically-minded actors who are working to build a more peaceful and just Nicaragua. Independent civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders needed agile and adaptive assistance mechanisms to respond during moments of crisis. New political spaces for democratization might emerge at any time, and Nicaraguan civil society will need to move rapidly to take advantage of such opportunities. The final section, 'USAID/OTI'S ROLE IN NICARAGUA', states that at the request of the USAID Mission, USAID/OTI initiated a limited engagement in September 2018 to bolster support for a democratic Nicaragua and a peaceful exit from the current political crisis. This commitment was activated using a regional programming option under the USAID/OTI Honduras program.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) program pushing for regime change in Nicaragua

The OTI's goal is simple: to overthrow governments that challenge Washington's political and economic domination of the world. It states this quite clearly on its website, explaining that the office "supports U.S. foreign policy objectives" and "provides fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political transition."

USAID/OTI boasts of supporting "Independent civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders" – or in other words, the right-wing opposition – in Nicaragua during and after the failed 2018 coup d'état, pushing for an "exit from the current political crisis" and an end to the democratically elected government of President Daniel Ortega.

USAID/OTI was exposed for running a similarly putschist plot to overthrow Venezuela's elected President Hugo Chávez. A secret [2006 US State Department cable published by WikiLeaks](#) shows that the USAID/OTI regime-change strategy was aimed at "Penetrating Chavez' Political Base, Dividing Chavismo, Protecting Vital US business, and Isolating Chavez internationally."

In Nicaragua, USAID is advancing the same goals: penetrating the Sandinista Front's base,

dividing Sandinismo, isolating President Ortega internationally, and of course, advancing the interests of US corporations.

In 2020, [The Grayzone exposed USAID's latest regime-change scheme in Nicaragua](#) by exposing a leaked internal document revealing the agency's Responsive Assistance in Nicaragua (RAIN) program. This project calls openly for the overthrow of the Sandinista government, as well as imposing neoliberal reforms based on a "market economy" and the "protection of private property rights," and purging the military, police, and all state institutions of any trace of Sandinismo.


USAID's \$9.4 million "Media Strengthening Program" bankrolls Nicaragua's anti-Sandinista outlets

As the recipient of at least \$7 million from USAID from 2013 to today, the Chamorro Foundation is the central node in contemporary USAID operations in Nicaragua.

Much of the information surrounding USAID grants for Nicaragua is redacted from documents, citing the [Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016](#) as justification. The redactions have become more comprehensive since the failed 2018 coup attempt exposed the extent of US penetration of Nicaraguan civil society.

In 2020, for instance, an organization in Nicaragua received \$2.82 million from USAID, but the agency redacted the recipient's name and the nature of its activities. In 2021, USAID again obscured the recipients of and reasons for a \$1.6 million grant, as well as another \$1.2 million grant.

This means that this \$7 million figure given to the Chamorro Foundation is likely just a conservative estimate, and the actual sum of US financial support for the foundation and other anti-Sandinista opposition organizations could be significantly higher.

							
FAE Foreign Aid Explorer Dashboard Trends By Country By Agency Reports Data About Beyond USG	USAID redacted: this field in accordance with the exceptions outlined in the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016.	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Agency for International Development, Operating Expenses	2021	\$104,148
	USAID Pay and Benefits	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Agency for International Development, Operating Expenses	2021	\$254,612
	USAID Miscellaneous Goods, Services, and Operations Maintenance	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2021	\$262,000
	Media Strengthening Program (MSP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2021	\$500,000
	USAID redacted: this field in accordance with the exceptions outlined in the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016.	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2021	\$669,645
	USAID redacted: this field in accordance with the exceptions outlined in the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016.	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$2,822,800
	Strengthening Care and Treatment Cascade	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	HIV/AIDS	Department of State, Global Health Programs	2020	\$105,704
	YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Education, Level Unspecified	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$130,000
	USAID Pay and Benefits	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Economic Support Fund	2020	\$217,158
	Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Agency for International Development, International Disaster Assistance	2020	\$254,489
	Education for Success	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2020	\$317,644
	USAID Miscellaneous Goods, Services, and Operations Maintenance	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$362,504
	Citizen Security Task Order	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Conflict, Peace, and Security	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$400,000
	USAID redacted: this field in accordance with the exceptions outlined in the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016.	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Post-Secondary Education	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$402,332
	USAID Pay and Benefits	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Operating Expenses	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$544,312

USAID redacts information about many of its largest grantees in Nicaragua-related funding

The public records that do exist show that USAID ran its programs supporting the opposition in Nicaragua through various contractors, including the following:

- National Democratic Institute (NDI), which also [trained opposition forces against socialist President Rafael Correa in Ecuador](#)
- International Republican Institute (IRI), which played a key role in [US-backed coups against Haiti's progressive elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide](#)
- Freedom House, a [regime-change lobby group](#)
- US Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS)
- World Bank's International Finance Corporation
- International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)
- RTI International
- Global Communities
- Creative Associates International
- FHI 360
- Chamorro Foundation

[Internal USAID data](#) reviewed by The Grayzone shows that USAID has a decade-long, multimillion-dollar program with the Chamorro Foundation to create, fund, and train right-wing media outlets in Nicaragua.

Titled the “Media Strengthening Program,” the initiative is highly secretive. However, USAID records show that, in 2014, the agency signed a \$9.4 million agreement with the Chamorro Foundation to oversee the program, which was earmarked to run through 2023.

As of May 2021, more than \$7 million of that allotted \$9.4 million has been delivered to the foundation.

[illegible]

USAID Nicaragua data showing \$9.4 million allotted to the Chamorro Foundation to run the Media Strengthening Program from 2014 to 2023

There are no internal reports exposing the scope of USAID's Media Strengthening Program, and almost no mention of it on the internet, aside from two [audit reports](#) published by the agency's Office of Inspector General.

USAID does, however, operate a similar ["Media Strengthening Program" in Mozambique](#), another formerly colonized country that is governed by the revolutionary party that overthrow the colonial regime – in its case, FRELIMO, or the Liberation Front of Mozambique.

In Nicaragua, the website [NicaLeaks published leaked internal documents](#) showing that at least 12 opposition media outlets were "partners" of the Chamorro Foundation, and therefore received funding from USAID.

Among the USAID/Chamorro Foundation's key partners is the right-wing network 100% Noticias, which played a key role in the failed 2018 coup attempt, spreading fake news, inciting violence against Sandinistas, and encouraging viewers to take up arms against the elected government.

Managua, 28 de Enero 2015

Sr. Miguel Mora
Representante Legal
Canal 15 (100% Noticias)
Managua, Nicaragua

Asunto: Proceso de Selección de Socios
Referencia: Acuerdo de Cooperación No. AID-524-A-14-00001

Estimado Sr. Mora

Por este medio tenemos el agrado de informarle que el Comité de Selección de Socios del Programa de Medios para Nicaragua (PMN), desarrollado por la Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (FVBCH) con financiamiento de USAID, ha seleccionado al medio que usted representa para formar parte del grupo de socios de este programa, el cual asciende a doce en total.

Para presentarles los objetivos del Programa, les invitamos a una **primera reunión informativa** con todos los socios seleccionados, prevista para el día **Viernes 13 de Febrero a la 10.00 am**, en las oficinas de la Fundación, en el Km. 8 carretera Sur, Plaza San José, módulo 5 y 6, en Managua.

En esta reunión les presentaremos los requisitos y regulaciones que debemos cumplir para acceder a la asistencia técnica y los recursos previstos en el Programa. El contenido específico del apoyo que cada medio recibirá, se expresará en un acuerdo de colaboración y un Plan de trabajo conjunto que elaboraremos en las próximas semanas, y que serán aprobados por USAID.

Aprovechamos para expresarle nuestras disculpas por el tiempo transcurrido en esta **primera etapa** que nos llevó más de lo esperado y les agradecemos su paciencia

Para efectos de futuras comunicaciones, las siguientes posiciones han sido designadas en el convenio para darle respuesta a sus consultas:

Directora del Proyecto	Claudia Pineda Gadea	cpineda@violetachamorro.org.ni
Gerente de Donaciones	Martha Lorena Chacón	mlchacon@violetachamorro.org.ni
Gerente de Comunicaciones	Joaquín Tórrez	jtorrez@violetachamorro.org.ni

Atentamente,



Claudia Pineda Gadea
Directora de Proyecto | Programa de Medios para Nicaragua
FVBCH/USAID



Km. 8 Carretera Sur, Centro Corporativo Plaza San José, Módulos B 5 y 6 * Managua, Nicaragua * Tel. (505) 22652856, 22650239 -
Fax: (505) 2265-5294 * E-mail: fundacionvioletachamorro@gmail.com * Página WEB: www.violetachamorro.org.ni

USAID funding for Nicaragua's right-wing media outlet 100% Noticias through the Chamorro Foundation

The head of 100% Noticias, Miguel Mora, who called for the Panama-style US military invasion of Nicaragua in 2018, personally received \$43,100 from USAID through the Chamorro Foundation in 2015. And this grant is from just one year in a decade-long program.

Managua, 09 de Noviembre de 2015

Sr. Miguel Mora
Representante Legal
CANAL 15 (100% Noticias)
Managua, Nicaragua

Asunto: Aprobación de Plan Operativo
Ref. Sub donación: FVBCH-PMN-AE-001/2015

Estimado Sr. Mora:

Por este medio tenemos el agrado de informarle que su solicitud de Sub Donación con referencia antes descrita, ha sido aprobada conforme el presupuesto detallado en tabla a continuación:

RUBRO	MONTO APROBADO	TIPO DE SUBDONACIÓN
EQUIPOS	US\$27,500.00	
ASISTENCIA TECNICA	US\$8,198.00	
CAPACITACIÓN	US\$1,302.00	
SUB TOTAL DE SUB DONACIÓN	US\$37,000.00	Sub donación en especie
CONTRAPARTIDA (auditable)	US\$6,100.00	Aporte directo del medio
TOTAL DEL PLAN OPERATIVO	US\$43,100.00	

Próximamente estaremos comunicándonos con usted para establecer la fecha, lugar y hora de la firma del Acuerdo de Sub donación que fue remitido a usted en borrador para que revisara los términos, procesos y regulaciones que se establecen en dicho acuerdo. Si tiene algún comentario y/o observación sobre el contenido del Acuerdo, favor hágamelo saber pues estoy procediendo a elaborar el documento final.

Atentamente,

Violeta B de Chamorro
FUNDACIÓN
Martha Lorena Chacón S.
Gerente de Donaciones | M&E
Programa de Medios en Nicaragua
Skype: martha-lorenach | Cel.:84562225
Tel.: (505) 22652856 | 22650239

USAID funding to Miguel Mora, the head of Nicaragua's right-wing media outlet 100% Noticias, through the Chamorro Foundation

Another recipient of USAID money through the Chamorro Foundation is La Prensa – the same newspaper where foundation director Cristiana Chamorro serves as vice president.

This means that Cristiana has double-dipped USAID money, using it not only to fund her Chamorro Foundation, but also to pay her family and herself.

Managua, 28 de Enero 2015

Sr. Eduardo Enríquez
Editor Jefe
Diario La Prensa
Managua, Nicaragua

Asunto: Proceso de Selección de Socios
Referencia: Acuerdo de Cooperación No. AID-524-A-14-00001

Estimado Sr. Enríquez;

Por este medio tenemos el agrado de informarle que el Comité de Selección de Socios del Programa de Medios para Nicaragua (PMN), desarrollado por la Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (FVBCH) con financiamiento de USAID, ha seleccionado al medio que usted representa para formar parte del grupo de socios de este programa, el cual asciende a doce en total.

Para presentarles los objetivos del Programa, les invitamos a una **primera reunión informativa** con todos los socios seleccionados, prevista para el día **Viernes 13 de Febrero a la 10.00 am.** en las oficinas de la Fundación, en el Km. 8 carretera Sur, Plaza San José, módulo 5 y 6, en Managua.

En esta reunión les presentaremos los requisitos y regulaciones que debemos cumplir para acceder a la asistencia técnica y los recursos previstos en el Programa. El contenido específico del apoyo que cada medio recibirá, se expresará en un acuerdo de colaboración y un Plan de trabajo conjunto que elaboraremos en las próximas semanas, y que serán aprobados por USAID.

Aprovechamos para expresarle nuestras disculpas por el tiempo transcurrido en esta **primera etapa** que nos llevó más de lo esperado y les agradecemos su paciencia.

Para efectos de futuras comunicaciones, las siguientes posiciones han sido designadas en el convenio para darle respuesta a sus consultas:

Directora del Proyecto	Claudia Pineda Gadea	cpineda@violetachamorro.org.ni
Gerente de Donaciones	Martha Lorena Chacón	mlchacon@violetachamorro.org.ni
Gerente de Comunicaciones	Joaquín Tórrez	jtorrez@violetachamorro.org.ni

Atentamente,



Claudia Pineda Gadea
Directora de Proyecto | Programa de Medios para Nicaragua
FVBCH|USAID



Km. 8 Carretera Sur, Centro Corporativo Plaza San José, Módulos B 5 y 6 * Managua, Nicaragua *
Tel (505) 22652856, 22650239 - Fax: (505) 2265-5294 * E-mail: fundacionvioletachamorro@gmail.com *
Página WEB: www.violetachamorro.org.ni

USAID funding for Nicaraguan right-wing newspaper La Prensa, through the Chamorro Foundation

This is a clear conflict of interest; as head of the Chamorro Foundation, Cristiana controlled how much money would be sent to the newspaper she helped run.

NicaLeaks obtained another USAID document showing the agency approving the foundation's disbursement of USAID money to La Prensa. This meant that the US government knew Cristiana was using its citizens' tax dollars to enrich herself and her

family members, and took no measures to impede her corruption.

Given its shady financial dealings, it should be no surprise that the Chamorro Foundation is being investigated on suspicions of money laundering.



April 4, 2016

Ms. Claudia Pineda
Project Director
Media Strengthening Program, "MSP"
Fundación Violeta Barrios de Chamorro
Managua, Nicaragua

Subject: Request for approval of sub-grant to La Prensa in the amount of USAID funding of US\$37,121.30 and Counterpart Contribution of US\$4,000.

Reference: Media Strengthening Program - Cooperative Agreement No. AID -524-A-14-00001

Dear Ms. Pineda:

In reference to your e-mail dated March 15, 2016 requesting AOR approval to issue a sub-grant to La Prensa for the implementation of a project titled "Desarrollo Multimedia de La Prensa" in the amount of \$37,121.30, please be advised that based on the documentation submitted AOR's approval is hereby provided to this sub-grant.

This approval is made with the understanding that there are sufficient funds in the Cooperative Agreement to fund the sub-awards. This approval does not constitute authorization to exceed the total amount of the Agreement or the total obligated amount.

This approval does not constitute an approval of the sub-award terms and conditions or the allowability of costs, as this determination is the responsibility of the prime recipient.

Sincerely,

Luis Fernando Ubeda
Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR)
Media Strengthening Program, "MSP"
USAID/Nicaragua

U.S. Agency for International Development
American Embassy, Managua, USAID
Unit 2712, Box 9
APO AA 34021

Tel: +(505) 2252-7138
Fax: +(505) 2252-7324
<http://nicaragua.usaid.gov>

Embajada Americana
Km 5.5 Carretera Sur
Apartado Postal C-167, ZP 13
Managua, Nicaragua

USAID approving funding for the Chamorro-run newspaper La Prensa through the Chamorro Foundation

Washington claims its support for media outlets in Nicaragua is a means of supporting "independent journalism" and the freedom of the press. In reality, the records clearly show that the United States seeks to destabilize the Sandinista government by propping up and promoting the country's leading right-wing political operatives.

USAID trained and funded Nicaraguan opposition leaders, holding in-person meetings to

coordinate with media


While precise details about USAID's \$9.4 million Media Strengthening Program through the Chamorro Foundation are redacted, a look at an array of USAID operations supporting opposition groups in Nicaragua can shed critical light on the foundation's activities.

Between 2013 and 2018, USAID simultaneously oversaw a separate operation to support anti-Sandinista groups in Nicaragua, earmarking more than \$6 million in funding for Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy (CBCSA). USAID's partner for this program was the Dexis Consulting Group, which in turn subcontracted the work out to Chemonics.

Chemonics is a for-profit company that contracts with US government agencies in sensitive areas around the globe, specializing in destabilization and intelligence operations. The founder of the firm openly admitted he created it to "[have my own CIA.](#)"

The Grayzone documented how Chemonics was used to provide millions of dollars in [US government funding to the White Helmets in Syria](#), while also helping to [destabilize the government of Ecuador's democratically elected socialist President Rafael Correa](#).

Publicly available data show that USAID gave Dexis/Chemonics at least \$6,117,000 to run the Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy initiative.



The screenshot shows the USAID Foreign Aid Explorer (FAE) interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options: Dashboard, Trends, By Country, By Agency, Reports, Data (highlighted in red), About, and Beyond USG. The main content area displays a table of funding data for the 'Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy' program in Nicaragua. The table has columns for Program, Country, Agency, Activity, Agency for International Development, Development Assistance, Year, and Amount. The data shows multiple funding entries from 2012 to 2017, with a total amount of \$6,117,000.

Program	Country	Agency	Activity	Agency for International Development	Development Assistance	Year	Amount
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2017	\$800,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	World	U.S. Agency for International Development	Other Multisector	Agency for International Development, Gifts and Donations		2019	-\$95,201
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	World	U.S. Agency for International Development	Other Multisector	Agency for International Development, Gifts and Donations		2014	\$280,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2013	\$740,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2015	\$1,042,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund		2016	\$2,500,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	World	U.S. Agency for International Development	Program Design and Learning	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2012	\$25,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2013	\$50,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2013	\$185,000
Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance		2014	\$800,000

USAID funding to contractor Dexis/Chemonics for its Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy (CBCSA) program in Nicaragua

When the CBCSA program concluded in 2018, [Dexis/Chemonics prepared an internal report](#) summarizing the successes of the initiative. The publicly available document shows how USAID not only funded opposition leaders in Nicaragua, but drilled them in methods to undermine the Sandinista government.

USAID said one of the program's principal objectives was to "Improve the capacity of CSOs and individuals to increasingly coordinate and network with one another, the private sector, and media outlets to promote awareness, advocacy, and activism." In other words, CBCSA

aimed to cultivate opposition leaders and build an anti-Sandinista alliance uniting US-funded NGOs, powerful business interests, and the press.

USAID took credit for creating 126 “alliances and partnerships” and supporting 224 civil society organizations as part of the five-year CBCSA program.

Using an acronym to refer to anti-Sandinista civil society organizations (CSOs), USAID said “CBCSA worked with CSOs to establish partnerships with the private sector.”

One of the main so-called civil society organizations that USAID’s CBCSA program utilized was the Chamorro Foundation. Using another acronym to refer to the Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation (FVBCH), USAID boasted that it “worked with FVBCH ... to ensure increased dissemination of the CSOs’ activities through independent media outlets.”

CBCSA even organized quarterly “in-person networking and outreach” meetings in Nicaragua, bringing together US-funded NGOs and opposition media outlets for sessions on improving anti-Sandinista messaging.

USAID boasted, “These meetings provided CSOs the opportunity to coordinate with one another and with media outlets.” It added that a majority of attendees had “increased press coverage because of the meetings.”

The report singled out the Chamorro Foundation specifically as a group that helped “ensure increased dissemination of the CSOs’ activities through independent media outlets.”

The USAID report published a photo showing Nicaraguan opposition figures meeting to share tactics under US tutelage.

IMPROVED COORDINATION EFFORTS BETWEEN CSOS AND WITH MEDIA OUTLETS INCREASE AWARENESS

In-person networking and outreach. To foster CSO networking and advocacy, CBCSA organized quarterly in-person meetings for CSO grantees and the independent media during phase 2. These meetings provided CSOs the opportunity to coordinate with one another and with media outlets to exchange ideas, share experiences, and discuss current issues related to both civil society and the media. CBCSA worked with FVBCH and International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), which are implementing two USAID-funded media programs, to ensure increased dissemination of the CSOs’ activities through independent media outlets.

On February 10, 2017, CBCSA held the first meeting between CSOs and media outlets. Thirty-eight individuals from CBCSA grantees and independent media outlets that receive FVBCH or IREX support gathered to learn from each other and coordinate their work. During the event, CSOs presented their work to the media and shared publicity materials including brochures, studies, flyers, and CDs, among others, and identified possible topics of interest to the media. Participants rated the event as excellent, timely, and highly productive. Participants also mentioned that the event created a friendly space for CSOs to exchange information and make important contacts.

According to a survey applied by CBCSA in June 2017, 52% of participants surveyed said they had some type of coordination, including increased press coverage because of the meetings.

The quarterly meetings also served as opportunities to learn new skills and identify best practices to find new funding sources and web platforms to disseminate information. Both grantees and the independent media were trained on how to use those tools to strengthen linkages and explore possible scenarios for joint efforts towards crowdfunding opportunities.

Exhibit 15. First Quarterly Coordination Meeting



An in-person USAID meeting bringing together Nicaraguan opposition civil society groups (CSOs) and media outlets to train them to better destabilize the Sandinista government

In addition to training opposition activists and connecting them with businesses and the media, USAID boasted that “CBCSA designed digital and media campaign materials,

including posters, Twitter messages, and Facebook pages” for the anti-Sandinista groups.

In other words, a noted CIA front helped create and run social media accounts for Nicaraguan opposition organizations.

As cover for these anti-Sandinista operations, USAID cynically exploited issues like sexual violence against women, LGBT equality, and Indigenous rights. It even helped launch a campaign called “Let’s raise voices against child sexual abuse” as cover for opposition activities.

“Opportunity to find out much more about the rights of vulnerable groups and share experiences. There is a lot to share to get feedback that contributes to improving the work of each [organization] participating in the course.”

-Norman Gutiérrez, Director, Centro para la Educación y Prevención del Sida

As a result of CEGODEM’s support, three LGBTI groups from Masaya advocated to declare the locality free from discrimination against the LGBTI population.

CEGODEM also developed and delivered a postgraduate course on democratic governance and human rights of vulnerable populations called “Democratic Governance and Human Rights.” The course was taken by 25 Nicaraguan human rights activists working on these issues and focused on the conditions of indigenous peoples, youth, women, and LGBTI individuals. As a result, these activists enhanced their skills to promote and defend human rights and democratic governance.

With its CBCSA grant, ASODEL executed the public awareness campaign “Lifting Voices against Sexual Abuse” that included trainings, public forums, and public demonstrations. Under this campaign, ASODEL raised and increased awareness on the need to have spaces for dialogue and information to prevent sexual abuse of children. ASODEL’s awareness and trainings targeted the entire population of Chinandega and included activities and actions in 10 schools, focusing on elementary and high school teachers, parents, children, adolescents, and youth. The campaign directly reached 1,132 individuals who participated in different activities under the campaign. Through social media, ASODEL’s campaign reached more than 5,000 Nicaraguans. As a result of this effort, three cases of alleged sexual abuse have been identified and are in the process being denounced.



Exhibit 12. Public demonstration against sexual abuse of children in Chinandega

Exhibit 13. Leaflet for IPADE’s campaign

Through a digital and radio campaign funded by a CBCSA grant, IPADE generated awareness and disseminated information on citizen identification rights. The campaign focused on the LGBTI community in Managua, Tipitapa, Masaya, and the

USAID boasting of exploiting sensitive issues like sexual violence against children and women, LGBT equality, and Indigenous rights as cover for its anti-Sandinista operations

USAID highlighted in its report that CBCSA’s work creating, cultivating, training, and funding the anti-Sandinista opposition was complemented with help from the Central American branch of the Kellogg corporation, as well as the Catholic Church.

In an unintentionally comical section demonstrating the total subservience of Nicaragua’s opposition to Washington, the report noted that “CBCSA provided guidance and training to RED LOCAL and FVBCH to purchase air tickets for consultants and staff to ensure compliance with the Fly America Act, including how to document an exemption for individual travel. RED LOCAL and FVBCH now have the knowledge to compliantly purchase U.S.-funded travel in the future.”

Cristiana and her Chamorro Foundation can now sleep comfortably with the assurance that, whenever they want to fly to Miami or Washington, Uncle Sam has it covered.

USAID’s \$2.8 million “Nicaragua Media Program” designed “to advance U.S. interests”

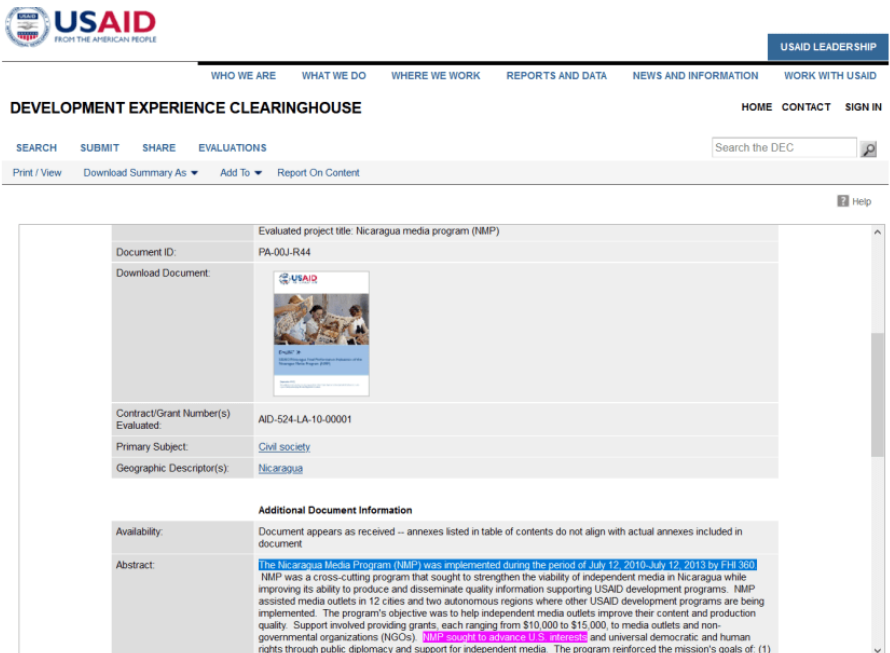
USAID’s Media Strengthening Program and Capacity Building for Civil Society Advocacy initiative were just two of the agency’s many operations aimed at attacking Nicaragua’s leftist government.

From 2010 to 2013, USAID ran a very similar project called the Nicaragua Media Program, with \$2.8 million in funding.

While the 10-year Media Strengthening Program was run out of the Chamorro Foundation, the three-year Nicaragua Media Program was run by a contractor called Family Health International (FHI) 360.

At the end of the project in 2013, USAID produced a [final performance evaluation report](#), which stated clearly, using an acronym for the Nicaragua Media Program, that the “NMP sought to advance U.S. interests.”

The document noted that the USAID program was actively promoted by then-US Ambassador Robert J. Callahan, and added, “The broad dissemination of USAID messages served to promote the United States Government (USG) presence [in Nicaragua].”



The screenshot shows the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) interface. At the top is the USAID logo with the tagline 'FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links: WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO, WHERE WE WORK, REPORTS AND DATA, NEWS AND INFORMATION, and WORK WITH USAID. A 'USAID LEADERSHIP' button is also present. The main header reads 'DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE CLEARINGHOUSE'. Below this is a search bar with the text 'Search the DEC' and a magnifying glass icon. A secondary navigation bar includes links: SEARCH, SUBMIT, SHARE, EVALUATIONS, and a 'Print / View' button. The main content area displays details for an evaluated project titled 'Nicaragua media program (NMP)'. The document ID is PA-00J-R44. A 'Download Document' button is available. The contract/grant number is AID-524-LA-10-00001. The primary subject is 'Civil society' and the geographic descriptor is 'Nicaragua'. An 'Additional Document Information' section notes that the document appears as received and that the annexes listed in the table of contents do not align with the actual annexes included. The abstract states that the NMP was implemented from July 12, 2010, to July 12, 2013, by FHI 360, and that it was a cross-cutting program designed to strengthen the viability of independent media in Nicaragua while improving its ability to produce and disseminate quality information supporting USAID development programs. The program's objective was to help independent media outlets improve their content and production quality. Support involved providing grants, each ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000, to media outlets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The program reinforced the mission's goals of (1) [helping to advance U.S. interests](#) and universal democratic and human rights through public diplomacy and support for independent media. The program reinforced the mission's goals of: (1)

USAID’s Nicaragua Media Program to support anti-Sandinista outlets and “advance U.S. interests”

The report revealed that the Nicaragua Media Program ultimately awarded 45 grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000 each year to anti-Sandinista media outlets, for a total of \$2.8 million over the three years.

This is a substantial sum of money in a region where the minimum wage is around \$200 per month.

USAID’s Nicaragua Media Program carried out operations in 12 cities and two autonomous regions across Nicaragua.

Among the main goals of the program, USAID admitted in the report, was “promoting economic growth, with equity to private sector-led growth and market-led agriculture” – in other words, advocating for neoliberal economic reforms.

Another openly stated USAID goal was “implementing the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).” This placed the program directly at odds with the Bolivarian Alliance, or ALBA, that President Daniel Ortega joined when he

returned to power in 2007, an economic bloc unifying Nicaragua with fellow leftist governments in Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

One of the cornerstones of US foreign policy in Latin America since the ALBA was created in 2004 has been to force countries to leave the alliance. Honduras' democratically elected left-wing former [President Manuel Zelaya explained to The Grayzone](#) that the US government threatened him, warning Honduras could not join the ALBA; and when he did so, he was soon overthrown in a Washington-sponsored military coup.

Many of the opposition outlets funded by the Nicaragua Media Program received multiple grants, and the report boasted that "NMP funding helped several media outlets remain in business."

The report surveyed recipients and found "75% of the interviewed grantees believe that NMP support was essential for them to stay in business."

One of the striking features of the evaluation is that USAID compiled a list of influential Twitter users in Nicaragua. Many of those named are recipients of US government funding, and almost all are opposition supporters.

The list is a bit dated, given the report was published in 2013, but it is proof that the US government is watching influential foreign voices on social media.

The InterMedia report also indicates that by 2010, urban Nicaraguans had significantly increased their use of mobile phones and internet: more than 88% has access to a mobile phone and approximately 48% used the Internet. The vast majority of internet users avoided the burden of recurring internet costs by connecting to the web at internet cafés.⁵

Most media outlets have, or are in the process of, transitioning to digital media. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media have become very popular. Among the most influential Tweeters are:

- *Xiomara Blandino (@XiomaraBlandino)* – former Miss Nicaragua, Director of the Miss Teen Nicaragua pageant and TV personality at Channel 2. Has more than 22,000 followers and uses her tweets to advertise brands and social campaigns.
- *Rodrigo Peñalba (@penalba)* – Blogger and expert in new technologies. Has more than 3,000 followers and great ability to generate opinion through the social media. Generates topics on arts, politics and new technologies.
- *Carlos Fernando Chamorro (@cefeche)* – Journalist and director of the TV programs *Esta Semana*, *Esta Noche* and *Confidencial Digital*. One of the most important generators of public opinion in Nicaragua. Has more than 9,000 followers.
- *Augusto Mejía (@AugustoMejiaL)* – well-known musician. Has more than 7,000 followers. Writes about his music, personal opinion and occasionally political views.
- *Bacanalnica.com (@Bacanalnica)* – The largest Nicaraguan community on the Internet with more than 31,000 followers. It generates public opinion and mobilized topics within social media.
- *La Prensa (@laprensa)* – one of the two main newspapers in the country. Has more than 53,000 followers.
- *@confidencialni* – a digital newspaper. Provides continues news coverage and has more than 7,000 followers.
- *Tierra pinolera (@tierrapinolera)* – is a blog that tweets on diverse topics of interest to Nicaraguans. Has more than 13,000 followers.
- *Canal 2 (@Canal2Nicaragua)* – one of the national TV stations with greatest audience. Has more than 30,000 twitters. Publishes information on its programming, some news and provides special offers to its followers.

Practically all television stations and print media are accessible via the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter, although radio stations have not utilized the platforms as extensively. Internet readership has now surpassed that of paper for the two main newspapers, *LA PRENSA* and *EL NUEVO DIARIO*, and other media outlets, such as *Confidencial Digital* and *Conexiones*, are fully digital.

A list of Twitter influencers in Nicaragua compiled by USAID in 2013

USAID also compiled a list of Nicaraguan general media influencers, demonstrating the agency's careful monitoring of the country's press and identification of those who best serve US interests.

Noticeable in both of these lists was that nearly all of the influencers identified at that time were supporters of the political opposition. USAID is clearly not interested in pro-Sandinista influencers, only in amplifying anti-Sandinista voices.

4.1.10 Question 10: Who are the main Nicaraguan media “influencers”? Who is following them? How are they connecting with people?

Below is a list of names provided by interviewees regarding who they believe has the capacity to generate public opinion and maintain followers. It is in alphabetical order, not in order of influence. There was no information as to who is following them or how they exert their influence.

- Arnoldo Aleman, *former President.*
- Don Emilio Alvarez Montalvan, *intellectual and former diplomat.*
- Javier Alvarez Meza, *lawyer.*
- Bayardo Arce, *President of the National Assembly and former Sandinista comandante.*
- Bishop Silvio José Báez of Managua. Highly respected for his encouraging messages.
- José Luis Báez, *economist.*
- Humberto Belli, *former Minister of Education.*
- Bishop Leopoldo Brenes, *President of the Episcopal Conference.*
- Carlos F. Chamorro, *broadcaster of “Esta Semana” and “Esta Noche,” two independent programs on Channel 12 and director of CONFIDENCIAL digital magazine.*
- Arturo Cruz, Jr., *former Nicaragua Ambassador to US.*
- José Luis Medal, *economist.*
- Sofia Montenegro, *award winning journalist and feminist.*
- Patricia Orozco, *TV personality and member of the Autonomous Movement of Nicaraguan Women.*
- Sergio Ramirez, *writer and intellectual. Served as Vice President under the first government of Daniel Ortega.*
- Alejandro Serrano Caldera, *historian.*

A list of Nicaraguan media influencers, compiled by USAID in 2013

The contractor that ran the Nicaragua Media Program for USAID, [FHI 360](#), boasts on its website that it was not the only project it was running for the agency.

FHI 360 had another USAID contract for a neoliberal initiative called “Market-Based Opportunities for Conservation and Sustainable Tourism in Nicaragua.” One of the prominent young Nicaraguan “entrepreneurs” who was trained in this USAID program and publicly promoted by the firm, [Nestor Bonilla](#), is a die-hard [anti-Sandinista opposition figure](#) who now lives in Panama.

USAID, Chamorro Foundation, and Nicaraguan corporations exploit women to boost anti-Sandinista opposition

Before it launched the Media Strengthening Program in 2013, USAID ran another operation in Nicaragua through the Chamorro Foundation, exploiting the issue of women’s rights to strengthen the anti-Sandinista opposition.

In 2009, USAID incorporated the Central American nation into a larger international soft-power project, launching what it called [Voces Vitales Nicaragua](#), or Vital Voices Nicaragua.

Voces Vitales Nicaragua was the local manifestation of the [Vital Voices](#) program that emerged out of the US government under the Bill Clinton administration. Then-First Lady Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used the initiative to support female opposition leaders in countries targeted for regime change, and to push neoliberal economic policies that benefited US corporations behind the guise of women’s empowerment.

In Nicaragua, the project was run by the Chamorro Foundation – the obvious choice for any neoliberal US initiative – with Cristiana Chamorro as one of its leaders.

In addition to the funding the Chamorro Foundation received from USAID for this program, it

raked in hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants from large [corporations like CitiBank](#).

The Clinton-led Vital Voices program states clearly on its official website that its goal is “to promote the advancement of women as a [U.S. foreign policy goal](#).”



The USAID “Vital Voices Nicaragua” program run in the Chamorro Foundation


USAID wages multi-million dollar hybrid war on Nicaragua’s Sandinista government

The programs described above represent just the surface level of the unconventional war that Washington has waged on Nicaragua’s Sandinista government.

The minute details of most of these USAID programs are not known because the specifics are redacted. However, data on the agency’s website show tens of millions of dollars more have been poured into supporting opposition groups.

One of the largest projects run by the US government in Nicaragua is its Municipal Governance Program, which received a whopping \$29,999,763 from USAID between 2010 and 2020.

[USAID’s Municipal Governance Program in Nicaragua](#) was run by the US-based NGO Global Communities, which notes on its website that, in addition to functioning as a government contractor, it “[partners](#)” with corporations like Chevron, Coca-Cola, Goldman Sachs, IBM, and Walmart.

 FAE Foreign Aid Explorer Dashboard Trends By Country By Agency Reports Data About Beyond USG NEW Powered by USAID Data Services Data last updated: 02/25/2021	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Other Social Infrastructure and Services	Economic Support Fund	2014	\$237,200
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2014	\$689,919
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2015	\$450,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2015	\$1,500,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2016	\$1,957,892
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Other Social Infrastructure and Services	Economic Support Fund	2016	\$300,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2016	\$1,400,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2017	\$700,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2017	\$1,781,093
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2018	\$1,590,690
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2018	\$475,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2018	\$1,086,413
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2019	\$3,047,800
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2019	\$500,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2019	\$300,000
	Municipal Governance Program	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$152,200
	Total						\$29,999,763
showing 1 to 29 of 29 records							Page 1 of 1 PREVIOUS NEXT FIRST LAST

Internal USAID data shows \$30 million in funding for opposition groups in Nicaragua through its Municipal Governance Program

USAID says this program “promotes the effective engagement of citizens with municipal governments to influence decision making, demand accountability and transparency, and improve management of public resources,” by “strengthening networks of key civil society organizations (CSOs)” and helping them “conduct better oversight of the government-funded projects.”

In other words, USAID’s Municipal Governance Program is a massive, \$30 million, decade-long project to support and develop anti-Sandinista forces in local governments in Nicaragua, in order to weaken the authority of the central government.


USAID’s description also hints that its Municipal Governance Program was aimed at bolstering opposition NGOs in their activism against the Sandinista government’s infrastructure projects. And at the top of the list of Nicaraguan infrastructure projects that Washington has worked to sabotage is the long-awaited construction of an inter-oceanic canal that could challenge the monopoly of the US-created Panama Canal.

Nicaraguan government officials have said they believe the canal project – which was being built with help from Chinese companies – was a major reason for the violent US-backed coup attempt in 2018. The project is currently on hold.

Another enormous, decade-long operation run by the US government in Nicaragua is called the Democratic Leadership Development Program. This initiative is technically not run by USAID, but rather by another US regime-change arm, the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

The NDI is one of the main branches of CIA front the National Endowment for Democracy. Overseeing both of these outfits is USAID, which ultimately funds the NED through the State Department budget approved by Congress.

USAID's public records include figures spent by NDI projects. They show that in the 10 years from 2010 through the end of 2019, the NDI spent more than \$21 million on its Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP) in Nicaragua.



Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2010	\$1,700,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2010	\$473,700
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2011	\$1,639,801
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2011	\$600,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2011	\$1,316,074
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2012	\$1,000,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2012	\$329,875
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2012	\$100,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2013	\$687,964
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2013	\$1,444,477
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2013	\$120,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2014	\$1,200,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2014	\$372,036
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2015	\$1,800,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2015	\$1,470,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2016	\$1,572,022
MORE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, COMPROMISE AND TRANSPARENCY	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2016	-\$1,682
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2017	\$944,405
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2018	\$1,000,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2018	\$1,440,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2018	\$1,200,000
Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP)	Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2019	\$1,100,000

Funding for the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) Democratic Leadership Development Program in Nicaragua

There is almost no information publicly available about the Democratic Leadership Development Program. USAID's website has a brief summary that says it "brings together respected Nicaraguan and international institutions and experts to support democratic political processes by strengthening democratic leadership of youth," and "supports the development of a core group of young political leaders that fosters a more transparent, participatory and democratic society."

This description makes it clear that the program was aimed to create, train, and cultivate anti-Sandinista opposition leaders in Nicaragua. Such an interpretation is reinforced by one of the only other places on the internet that mentions the Democratic Leadership Development Program: the LinkedIn profile of the former NDI country director for Nicaragua, Julian Quibell.

His page shows that Quibell, in his words, "Oversaw the design and implementation of a 10 year \$22.9 million dollar USAID democracy and governance project focused on youth leadership and citizen participation in a challenging environment with increasingly closed political space." That reads as a fairly clear implication that NDI was training young anti-Sandinista leaders to undermine the leftist government.

In case it wasn't clear that NDI's work in Nicaragua was explicitly partisan, Quibell revealed that he managed "relations with media, civil society and political party leaders, private sector, international cooperation and diplomatic corps."





Julian Quibell

Country Director at National Democratic Institute (NDI), Ecuador



National Democratic Institute (NDI)

18 yrs 10 mos

Country Director, Ecuador

Jul 2020 – Present · 11 mos

Ecuador

Country Director, Chief of Party, Democratic Leadership Development Program (DLDP), Nicaragua

Sep 2012 – Jul 2020 · 7 yrs 11 mos

Nicaragua

Oversaw the design and implementation of a 10 year \$22.9 million dollar USAID democracy and governance project focused on youth leadership and citizen participation in a challenging environment with increasingly closed political space. Managed large local staff; relations with media, civil society and political party leaders, private sector, international cooperation and diplomatic corps. Fostered consensus-building and alliances across sectors. Successfully developed and managed multi-sectorial coalitions and consortia, including women leaders, LGBTI and disability activists, universities and the private sector. Monitored and evaluated program impact for strategic to maximize achievement of program goals. Incorporated information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve effectiveness of partners' programs and increase team productivity.

[see less](#)



Counrty Director, Mexico

Aug 2004 – Aug 2012 · 8 yrs 1 mo

Mexico

Managed NDI's portfolio of programs - including funding from USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) -- to support citizen engagement on diverse issues including: citizen security, education, and women's and disabled persons' rights, among others. Leadership contributed to key successes including the design and implementation of NDI's Academy for Future Women Mayors and participation in the UN Women Advisory Group. Advocacy training and follow-on assistance resulted in an increased capability of local partners to successfully influence public policy, including state public security legislation, education reform for students with disabilities, and accountability rules for political party spending on women's political participation. Cultivated and maintained relationships with Mexican government officials at the federal, state, and municipal levels, as well as key civic and political leaders. During the tense period following Mexico's disputed 2006 presidential election outcome, maintained relationships and work with all political parties in Mexico. Provided long-term consultation and technical support to a group of more than 100 young political leaders from the three major Mexican parties - including current federal senators and deputies, mayors, and national party leaders.

[see less](#)



The LinkedIn profile for the Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Mexico country director for the US National Democratic Institute (NDI)

This enormous NDI program helped set the stage for the attempted 2018 coup d'état. And soon after the failure of the violent regime-change operation in Nicaragua, Quibell moved to Ecuador, where he became country director for NDI's operation there.

The Grayzone has documented how the [NDI was used to train and fund opposition parties](#)

[and leaders in Ecuador](#) to oppose the leftist Correísta movement founded by former President Rafael Correa. The fact that Quibell transferred to Ecuador in 2020 is significant, because these NDI-cultivated forces were integral in handing the 2021 presidential election to right-wing banker Guillermo Lasso.

Before he worked in Nicaragua, Quibell was also NDI country director for Mexico, where he admits on LinkedIn that he “cultivated and maintained relationships with Mexican government officials at the federal, state, and municipal levels, as well as key civic and political leaders.”

Another US regime-change front and NED subsidiary, the International Republican Institute (IRI), has also been active in Nicaragua.

USAID data show that the IRI has spent at least \$8 million to fund Nicaragua-based projects since 2013, although what exactly these programs are is not known because the information is redacted.

As [The Grayzone editor Max Blumenthal has documented](#), the IRI played a significant role in a 2004 US-backed military coup against Haiti’s first democratically elected president, left-wing liberation theology advocate Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

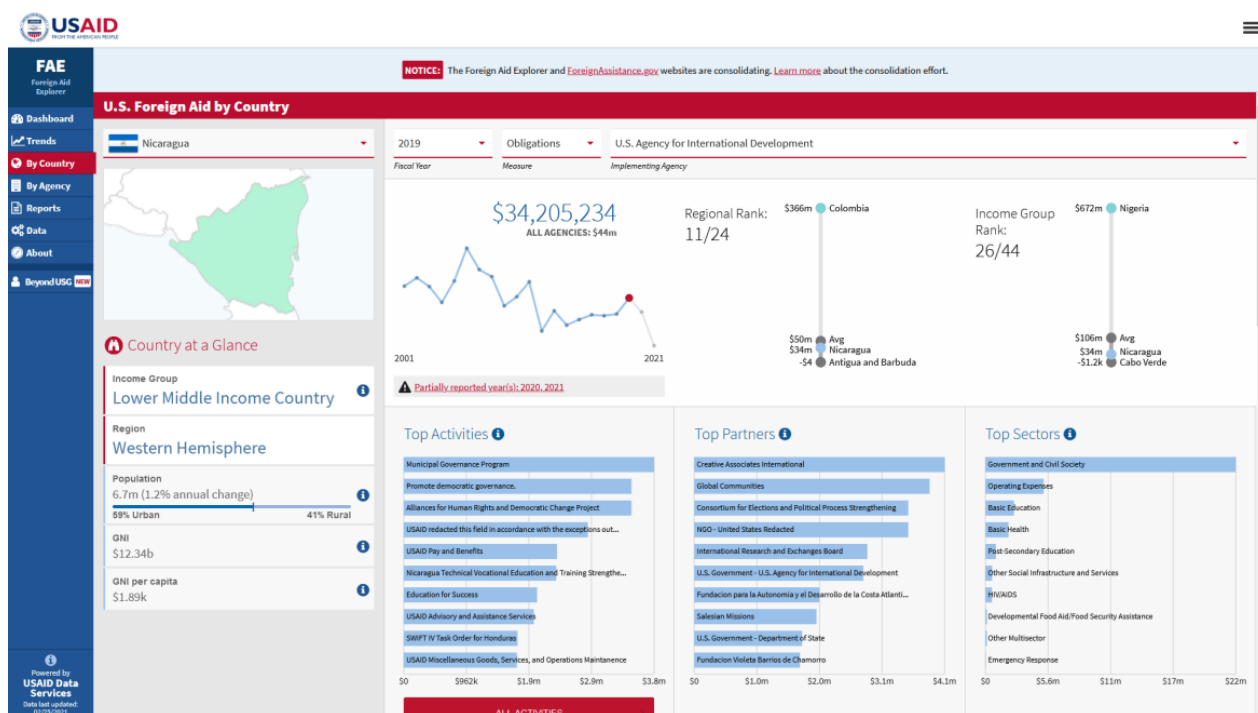


Country	Agency	Sector	Recipient	Year	Amount
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2006	-\$2
Nicaragua	Department of State	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, National Endowment for Democracy	2013	\$120,000
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2017	\$500,000
Nicaragua	Department of State	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, National Endowment for Democracy	2017	\$150,000
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2018	\$1,344,000
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Economic Support Fund	2018	\$140,000
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Department of State, Democracy Fund	2018	\$680,000
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2019	\$1,600,000
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2020	\$2,822,800
Nicaragua	U.S. Agency for International Development	Government and Civil Society	Agency for International Development, Development Assistance	2021	\$1,200,000

International Republican Institute (IRI) funding for programs in Nicaragua

USAID’s own website transparently illustrates its role as arm of US political power that aims to advance neoliberal governance and shatter any political movement or party that presents an alternative economic model.

In 2019, the year after the failed coup, for instance, more than 90% of USAID grants for Nicaragua-related programs were classified under its “Government and Civil Society” sector, whereas spending on public health, agriculture, and the environment was almost non-existent.



USAID's Nicaragua-related spending in 2019

Of the \$34 million that USAID allotted for Nicaragua-related programs in 2020, \$22 million – nearly two-thirds – were classified as “Government and Civil Society” spending. Another \$5.2 million, or 15%, went to USAID’s own operating expenses.

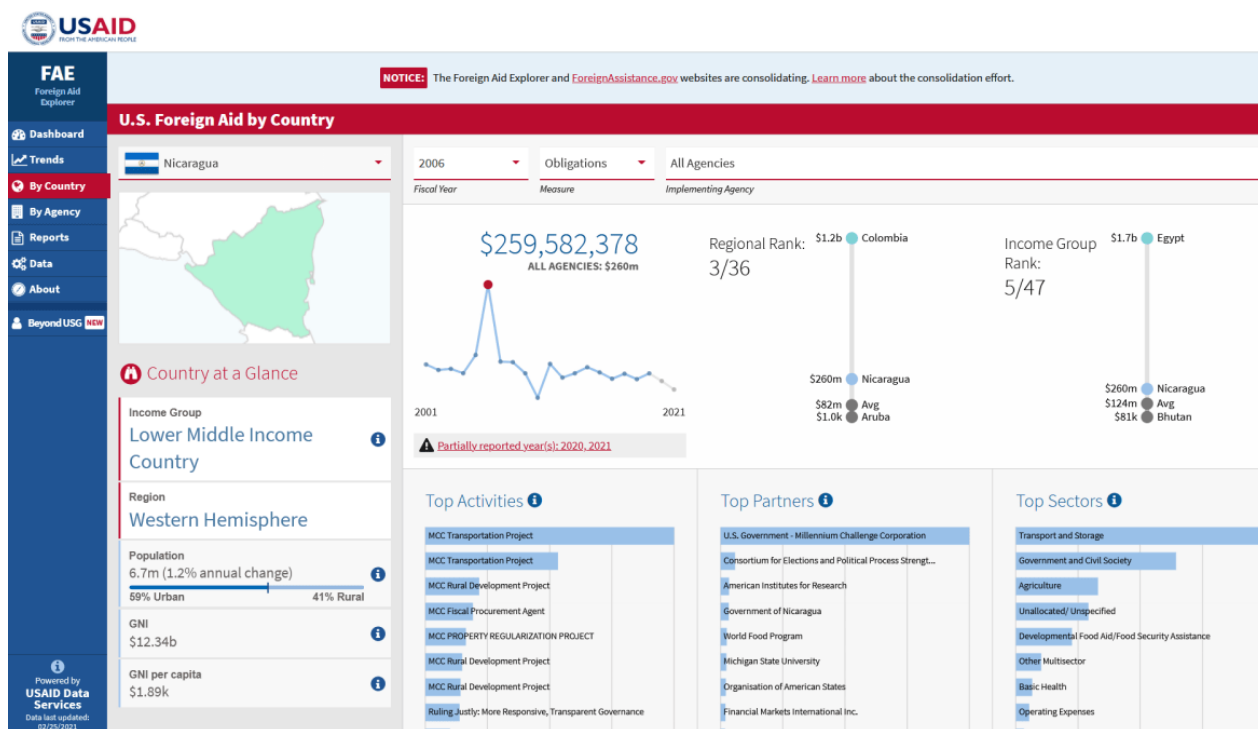
The fact that USAID uses its supposed “aid” money to support right-wing opposition forces in Nicaragua is reflected most explicitly by the record-breaking surge in its budget in 2006.

That year, the neoliberal President Enrique Bolaños was very unpopular, and opinion polls showed that Daniel Ortega and his socialist Sandinista Front were on the verge of returning to power after 16 years in the opposition.

Washington was desperate to beat back the so-called Pink Tide, or wave of progressive movements that were winning elections across Latin America at the time. So the US government returned to a strategy it had used with President Violeta Chamorro: attempt to bribe the Nicaraguan people with enormous offers of aid.

In 2006, USAID poured a staggering \$260 million into projects in Nicaragua. Most of that funding went into an infrastructure, rural development, and transportation project run through Washington’s Millennium Challenge Corporation.

But the windfall spending failed, Ortega won the 2006 election, and Nicaragua shifted back to the left. By 2009, USAID spending had shrunk from \$260 million down to \$45 million, and by 2012 to just \$34 million.



A record-breaking \$260 million in USAID funding for Nicaragua's right-wing government in 2006, the year before the Sandinistas returned to power

USAID's own data make it clear without a doubt: it not a humanitarian entity, but a mechanism for political infiltration and destabilization that cultivates and funds right-wing opposition to the Sandinista government.

It is therefore not hyperbole to say that the US government in essence created Nicaragua's political opposition, and directs its activities today.

As a product of foreign meddling, Nicaragua's opposition reflects an extraordinary case study of Washington's toxic legacy in the region and across the globe.

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