

Habit, not *exception.*

The Roosevelt Corollary as normalized authorization — six occupations between 1903 and 1934, each citing the Monroe Doctrine and the Corollary as the legal basis for intervention.

OCCUPATIONS

Six

Across the Caribbean and Central America

PERIOD

31 years

November 3, 1903 — August 15, 1934

LONGEST

21 years

Nicaragua, 1912-1933

Repeated application is what makes a reinterpretation feel original. No single occupation made the Corollary doctrine. The pattern of six did. Each landing cited the Monroe Doctrine. Each rewrite of a customs house, a constitution, or a gendarmerie was justified under the Corollary's "international police power" language. Habit becomes precedent. Precedent becomes law.

Source. U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, volumes 1903 through 1934. Office of the Historian. history.state.gov/historicaldocuments

Important. The interventions overlap and cluster. Cuba and Nicaragua each had two distinct formal occupations. Dominican Republic had two. Veracruz was the shortest at seven months. Haiti was the longest single sustained occupation at 19 years. The pattern is not tidy. Normalization rarely is.

The normalization, in order.

November 3, 1903	Panama secedes from Colombia under U.S. naval protection. Canal Zone established.
February 7, 1905	Dominican Republic customs receivership — first explicit Corollary citation.
September 29, 1906	Cuba — first formal occupation under the Platt Amendment / Corollary.
December 1909	Nicaragua — Knox Note invokes the Monroe Doctrine to remove Zelaya.
August 1912	Nicaragua — Marines land to support Adolfo Díaz. Occupation runs until 1933.
April 21, 1914	Veracruz — Wilson seizes the port to block a German arms shipment.
July 28, 1915	Haiti — Marines land the day after President Sam's killing. 19-year occupation begins.
May 13, 1916	Dominican Republic — second occupation begins. Constitution rewritten by military governor.
1917 – 1922	Cuba — second formal occupation during World War I sugar production crisis.
1933	Final withdrawal from Nicaragua. Sandino assassinated in 1934.
August 15, 1934	Haiti — final Marine withdrawal under FDR's emerging Good Neighbor Policy.
December 6, 1904	<i>The Roosevelt Corollary articulated. Each occupation above cites it. Step 03 receipt.</i>
February 22, 1904	<i>The Hague Tribunal Award rewards force in Venezuela — the international ruling that made the normalized pattern politically possible.</i>

1928

Clark Memorandum quietly concedes that the Corollary has drifted beyond Monroe. Step 05 receipt to come.

March 4, 1933

FDR's Good Neighbor framing. The pattern ends — the doctrine itself does not. Step 05 receipt to come.

United States warships prevented Colombian troops from suppressing the Panamanian revolt. Recognition followed within 72 hours. The Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty granted the United States perpetual control of a ten-mile-wide Canal Zone. Construction ran from 1904 to 1914. The Canal Zone remained under direct American sovereignty until 1979 and was not fully returned to Panama until December 31, 1999.

STARTED**DURATION**

November 3, 1903 11 years to canal completion; Canal Zone occupied indefinitely

Trigger. Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, November 18, 1903 — signed two weeks after the United States recognized Panama's secession from Colombia.

"Roosevelt named Panama explicitly in his 1904 Annual Message as one of the operations the Corollary authorized: "in taking such steps as we have taken in regard to Cuba, Venezuela, and Panama." The intervention preceded the Corollary's articulation by one year — the Corollary retroactively codified what had already been done."

Primary record: *FRUS 1903 — Colombia / Panama — history.state.gov*

The United States took control of Dominican customs to forestall European intervention over unpaid debts — precisely the scenario the Venezuela crisis had demonstrated. American customs receivers collected duties and distributed payments to international creditors. The receivership ran for 36 years.

STARTED

February 7, 1905

DURATION

Customs receivership 1905–1941

Trigger. Roosevelt-Dominican Convention of January 1905 placed Dominican customs houses under American receivership to manage European creditor claims.

"The first explicit invocation of the Corollary as authorization for preemptive fiscal control. Roosevelt cited "chronic wrongdoing" and "impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society" as justification — the exact language he had used in the December 6, 1904 Annual Message two months earlier."

Primary record: *FRUS 1905 — Dominican Republic — history.state.gov*

After the August 1906 Cuban revolt, President Tomás Estrada Palma resigned and asked Washington for intervention. Roosevelt sent Secretary of War William Howard Taft as provisional governor. American forces remained until 1909. A second occupation ran 1917–1922 during World War I sugar production concerns.

STARTED

September 29, 1906

DURATION

Two formal occupations totaling roughly 8 years

Trigger. The Platt Amendment, written into the Cuban constitution in 1901 and into the 1903 Cuban-American Treaty, gave the United States the explicit right to intervene to preserve Cuban independence and maintain stable government.

"Roosevelt named Cuba in the 1904 Annual Message: "if every country washed by the Caribbean Sea would show the progress in stable and just civilization which with the aid of the Platt amendment Cuba has shown since our troops left the island." Cuba was the template — the Platt Amendment was the proof that the Corollary's mechanism could be written into treaty form."

Primary record: *FRUS 1906 — Cuba — history.state.gov*

Marines remained in Nicaragua continuously from 1912 to 1933, except for a brief 1925-1926 withdrawal. The occupation enforced the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1914, which granted the United States rights to a potential canal route and naval bases. Augusto Sandino's guerrilla campaign against the occupation ran from 1927 until the final American withdrawal in January 1933.

STARTED

December 1909

DURATION

Over 21 years of intermittent and sustained occupation

Trigger. Removal of President José Santos Zelaya in 1909 — the State Department's Knox Note cited Zelaya's threat to "the moral force of the Monroe Doctrine." U.S. Marines landed in 1912 to support President Adolfo Díaz against a liberal revolt.

"The Knox Note of December 1, 1909 — addressed to Zelaya's representative — invoked the Corollary's standard directly. The 1912 landing was justified to Congress as necessary to protect American lives and property and maintain regional stability under the Monroe Doctrine. The longest sustained Corollary occupation."

Primary record: *FRUS 1912 — Nicaragua — history.state.gov*

Veracruz was the second-busiest port in Mexico. The seven-month occupation paralyzed Mexican customs revenue and contributed to Huerta's fall in July 1914. The intervention set a precedent for armed interference based on the Corollary that Latin American states would cite for decades as evidence of bad faith.

STARTED

April 21, 1914

DURATION

7 months

Trigger. The Tampico Affair of April 9, 1914 — Mexican forces briefly detained American sailors. Wilson asked Congress for authorization to use force. Before Congress could vote, Wilson ordered the Navy to seize Veracruz to prevent a German arms shipment from reaching the Huerta government.

"Wilson framed the action under the Monroe Doctrine's prohibition of European powers supplying arms to hemispheric governments. The intervention killed roughly 150 Mexicans and 19 Americans. The ABC Powers mediation (Argentina, Brazil, Chile) ended the occupation in November 1914 — the first time Latin American powers successfully constrained a Corollary intervention."

The two longest sustained occupations of the Corollary period. Haiti's gendarmerie (later the Garde d'Haïti) was created and trained by the U.S. Marines. The Dominican occupation ended in 1924 after a negotiated transition. Haiti's occupation ended August 15, 1934 under Franklin Roosevelt's emerging Good Neighbor Policy — Step 05 of the authorization pattern. The customs receivership continued in both countries for decades after the troops left.

STARTED

July 28, 1915 (Haiti) · May 13, 1916
(Dominican Republic)

DURATION

19 years in Haiti, 8 years in the
Dominican Republic

Trigger. Haiti — the mob killing of President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam on July 27, 1915 prompted Wilson to order Marines into Port-au-Prince the following day. Dominican Republic — political instability and unpaid loans led to a Marine landing in May 1916.

"Both occupations were justified to Congress and the press under the Corollary. Wilson's statements consistently invoked the Monroe Doctrine's prohibition on European intervention. Both countries had their finances and constitutions rewritten by American military governors. Haiti's gold reserves were transferred to National City Bank of New York. The Forbes Commission of 1930 began the Haitian withdrawal."

Primary record: *FRUS 1915 — Haiti / Dominican Republic — history.state.gov*