

Tinoco Granados, Federico

By [Patricia Vega Jiménez](#)

Tinoco Granados, José *Federico*

Costa Rican politician and military officer

Born 21 November 1868 in San José, Costa Rica

Died 07 September 1931 in Paris, France

Summary

Federico Tinoco Granados was the Costa Rican president from 1917-1919 who declared war on Germany in April 1917. With his support for the United States during the last two years of the war, he tried to gain President Woodrow Wilson's acceptance. The American president, however, later contributed to Tinoco's overthrow.

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A Tumultuous Presidency

José Federico Alberto Tinoco Granados (1868-1931), son of the wealthy farmer and congressman [Federico Tinoco Iglesias \(1840-1915\)](#), completed his studies in Europe and the [United States](#). The Republican Party activist was a congressman in 1908 and served as secretary of war and navy under President [Alfredo González Flores \(1877-1962\)](#) between 1914 and 1917. On 27 January 1917, after a coup against Flores, General Tinoco Granados assumed the presidency of the Republic of Costa Rica. President [Woodrow Wilson \(1856-1924\)](#) never recognized his administration, despite Tinoco's multiple efforts to negotiate and his attempts to endear himself to the U.S. government.

On the stage of a war of worldwide dimensions, which at the beginning of 1917 had no end in sight, the Tinoco administration did not face an easy situation: Costa Rica was going through an unprecedented fiscal crisis stemming from the closure of the European markets and the U.S.'s refusal to provide any form of financial aid. In his eagerness to secure recognition and subsequent support from the U.S., Tinoco offered the use of Cocos Island (near the [Panama](#)

[Canal](#)), the ports and the entire Costa Rican territory to the U.S. army and navy. The latter was important because the United States was anxious to protect the Panama Canal, opened prematurely in 1914, just as the conflict in Europe had erupted.

Further Attempts to Secure U.S. Support

Tinoco severed diplomatic and economic relations with [Germany](#) at the same time as the U.S. did so, in February 1917. He also declared war on Germany on 7 April 1917, a day after Wilson had announced his declaration of war. In July 1917, Tinoco requested extraordinary powers from congress, citing an imminent threat of German invasion in Costa Rica. Despite all this, Tinoco did not receive his much sought-after U.S. approval. Wilson justified his refusal by pointing to the fact that Tinoco had taken the presidency by force and that the elections held shortly afterwards had been a farce. This explanation stood in direct contradiction with the idea of Manifest Destiny, which justified U.S. intervention to any country under its influence posing a threat to U.S. citizens and/or companies.

Another possible explanation for the refusal is the fact that Tinoco had handed over the country's oil development to an English company, to the detriment of an eager U.S. consortium with which Costa Rica had negotiated. President Wilson never forgave Costa Rica for this; however, the American president did not intervene to remove Tinoco from power. In this case, neither the lives nor the properties of U.S. citizens were in danger so as to justify the invasion in accordance with the Manifest Destiny concept. An intervention would have meant compromising military resources that were needed in the war. Besides, a confrontational attitude would have undermined the United States' image in [Latin America](#) when it needed help.

Tinoco's Resignation

Tinoco managed to stay in power for two years. This was thanks, in no small measure, to the early support he received from the [coffee](#)-growing group that opposed the recently overthrown [Cleto González Flores \(1858-1937\)](#). It was also, towards the end, thanks to the conditional collaboration of [Minor Keith \(1848-1929\)](#), who controlled commerce and transport in Central America and the Caribbean through the United Fruit Company, and Lincoln Valentine, representative of the North American oil interests. Nevertheless, domestic opposition and pressure from the U.S. government led to Tinoco's resignation on 20 August 1919. He lived in exile in Paris until his death in 1931.

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