

21st Century Internment Camps: Disaster relief or civil rights disaster?

The National Emergency Centers Establishment Act

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On January 22, 2009, [the National Emergency Centers Establishment Act \(NECEA\)](#) [1] was submitted to Congress for consideration. It was introduced by Congressman Alcee L. Hastings of Florida, a man who, in 1989, became only the sixth federal judge in the history of America to be removed from office by the Senate for corruption and perjury.

Even though NECEA has received very little mainstream media coverage, action alerts are making their way across message boards and Internet sites due to [Global Research's Michel Chossudovsky](#) [2], who has brought to light both the Act itself as well as the U.S. government's actions leading up to the presentation of NECEA.

The question we must ask ourselves is simple: if NECEA is meant to address natural disasters, then why is the scope of the Act so vague, large and open-ended? The flipside of which is: if NECEA is only meant to address natural disasters, they why isn't NECEA crystal clear on this point?

Instead, we find that the purpose of these military-based emergency centres may be used to "meet other appropriate needs, as determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security." It is when we attempt to understand the pocket of obscurity created by NECEA's vagueness, and while factoring in the readying of the U.S. military's response to the anticipated civil unrest (due to the economic war being waged on all but the 'haves'), that the potentially insidious nature of the centres becomes evident.

21st century internment camps?

On the surface, NECEA proposes to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security in the establishment of six "national emergency centers on military installations," one in each of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions.

The purpose of these centres is to use existing military infrastructure for several emergency situations or natural disasters that might render individuals and families "dislocated." NECEA further proposes that over the course of the next two years, \$360,000,000 is to be appropriated for this initiative. (To whom do you think such construction contracts will be awarded?)

As already mentioned, primary concern must be given to the following catch-all phrase: that the purpose of these military-based emergency centres may "meet other appropriate needs, as determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security." In other words, that the purpose is

to be determined by the same U.S. government body who, since launching the trailer for the War on Terrorism in 2001, has systematically worked to institutionalize prejudice against civil rights groups and activists, anti-war movements, unions, 'brown' people (you are homogeneous, don't challenge this) and Muslims, while stripping the American citizen of their right to privacy and dissent.

Second, nowhere does NECEA provide clear indication as to which system of justice those inside of the emergency centres would be held. Since they are to be established within the parameters of military bases, the de facto assumption is that those within would be subject to military law. More dangerous perhaps is an all-together different system, removed even from the military one, learned courtesy of Guantanamo and all other secret and illegal US 'security' facilities across the globe.

NECEA does, however, mention that within six months, the "Secretary of Defense shall transfer to the Secretary of Homeland Security administrative [sic] jurisdiction." It would then follow that the definition of 'administrative' jurisdiction here may have nothing to do with legal jurisdiction, and so NECEA makes it possible that those within the emergency centre would, for the duration of their (interred) stay, not be subject to the regular legal system. Once more, Americans may welcome the suspension of habeas corpus.

At a more general level, these centres are "capable of being scaled up or down" and would each be subject to a "24/7 operations watch center [which] shall be in full ready mode." For what, exactly, the watch centre will be ready, is left to our imagination and to be utilised at the discretion of those in power. Nowhere is it mentioned for whom these centres are to be established, or more specifically, who would be kept within these locations.

NECEA begs the following questions: Are these 'emergency centres' only for U.S. Citizens? How does one become eligible? Is it on a first-come, first-served basis? Does one have to be arrested? If the centre is filled to capacity and there is indeed a natural disaster, how will individuals be kept out? If one is inside of the emergency centre, can they simply walk out and leave, or will their freedom of movement be at the discretion of the military? Etc., ad infinitum.

Finally, and if not more insidious, is the reality that nowhere in NECEA is mentioned either the duration of these emergency centres or the efforts that must be undertaken to restore to order and to normal the lives and environment post 'emergency.'

'None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free'

Within the reality presented above and in order to understand the full weight of this silent war on Americans, it is necessary to view it within a greater context. First, there is the unfortunate reality that Obama has time and again stated that his administration will neither investigate, hold to account, nor prosecute the officials responsible for the United States' criminal policies of torture, illegal detention and "extraordinary rendition" (whereby alleged terrorists were kidnapped and sent beyond American borders to foreign countries or secret CIA prisons, where they were tortured).

More importantly, the Bush Administration's disregard for and mockery of international, as well as constitutional, law have not been undone by this new Administration, and there are no clear indications that they will be undone by Obama's campaign of 'change.' In fact, there is strong evidence to the contrary.

In laymen's terms, Obama's letting criminals walk, and in this context, this can only mean the following: that he does not believe they are guilty of a crime, thereby making it clear that Obama himself does not view torture, illegal detention or extraordinary rendition as criminal actions.

Second, that many experts are foreshadowing that the on-going financial disaster being levelled against all-but-the-wealthy is going to lead to great civil unrest within the United States. Rightly, there exists a palpable fear that the 'have-nots' will take seriously their right to bear arms and they will rise against — not only the government — but all institutions who continue (at the expense of the 'have-nots') to lie and behave in fraudulent manner. Finally, that the reality that in the fall of 2008, military bodies previously active only on foreign soil became operational within America's borders, with much of their mandate focussed on [how to address 'civil unrest.'](#) [3]

To recap, the U.S. has a President who — until he fully proves otherwise — seems relatively chill about torture, indefinite detention, extraordinary rendition and the suspension of habeas corpus.

Also, there is a strong foreshadowing of great civil unrest within the US, as well as a now present military contingent trained to deal with civil unrest. Add to this recipe the creation of military-based emergency centres used to “meet other appropriate needs, as determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security” and one is left with the choice to believe either they are witnessing random unrelated events or layered preparation to further dilute — and possibly completely suspend — civil rights.

Naturally, the third option is to view these events as a combination of coincidence and design; no matter from which perspective you choose to approach it, the reality remains that NECEA, as it stands today, is a dangerous Act which threatens what remains of American civil liberties.

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