

Militarizing the “Homeland” in Response to the Economic and Political Crisis

NORTHCOM's Joint Task Force-Civil Support

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Antifascist Calling [reported](#), [published by Global Research](#) (October 6) that nine months prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Donald Rumsfeld signed off on revisions for the Pentagon’s secretive Continuity of Operations Program (COOP).

Based on a document ([AR 500-3](#)) published by the whistleblowing website [Wikileaks](#), it described “all hazards COOP planning” as the mechanism by which “the Army remains capable of continuing mission-essential operations during any situation, including military attack, terrorist activities, and natural or man-made disasters.”

The *Wikileaks* document is all the more relevant since a September report in [Army Times](#) described how the 3rd Infantry Division’s 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) would be deployed October 1 “under the day-to-day control of U.S. Army North,” the “service component” of NORTHCOM.

Since that article appeared September 8, *Army Times* has done a partial climb-down and now claims that the “non-lethal crowd control package” described earlier for operations in the *heimat*, “is intended for use on deployments to the war zone, not in the U.S., as previously stated.”

But this mendacious claim by *Army Times* is belied by current political trends in the U.S. Under cover of the “war on terror,” driftnet surveillance and moves toward suppressing dissent, most recently on display when protests during the Democratic and Republican National Conventions were criminalized and organizers were charged with “[domestic terrorism](#)” under the Patriot Act, are but the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Wholesale spying on activists by the Pentagon’s now defunct Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA), as well as revelations that State police agencies in Maryland routinely spied on antiwar organizers, shared this information with the National Security Agency and classified them as “terrorists” in government-run [databases](#), are viewed as exemplary means to “keep the rabble in line”—and under wraps, if necessary.

A highly-disturbing report by Christopher Ketchum in the May/June 2008 issue of [Radar Magazine](#), outlined how the top secret Main Core database linked to Continuity of Government contingency planning, “includes dissidents and activists of various stripes, political and tax protesters, lawyers and professors, publishers and journalists, gun owners,

illegal aliens, foreign nationals, and a great many other harmless, average people.”

Reporting in July for [Salon](#), investigative journalist Tim Shorrock was told by a source that Main Core is “‘an emergency internal security database system’ designed for use by the military in the event of a national catastrophe, a suspension of the Constitution or the imposition of martial law. Its name ... is derived from the fact that it contains ‘copies of the ‘main core’ or essence of each item of intelligence information on Americans produced by the FBI and the other agencies of the U.S. intelligence community’.”

As the historic economic and political crisis gripping capitalism deepens and intensifies, and as stop-gap measures deployed by the U.S. Treasury Department intended to shore-up the crumbling financial sector crash, one by one, “forward thinking” ruling class factions are openly preparing a “Pinochet option” for the American people.

In this context, the militarization of domestic law enforcement is now coupled with the military’s own rapid development and deployment of “non-lethal weapons” systems which inevitably, will be “shared” with civilian police for “crowd control.” As with data mining, DHS spy-satellite surveillance, blanket CCTV coverage of American cities, illegal FBI deployment of infiltrators and provocateurs, “mission creep” by the Pentagon into civil affairs are signs that stronger measures to blunt the crisis may be in the offing. (For more on the Pentagon’s development of NLW’s, see: [Antifascist Calling](#), “‘Non-Lethal’ Weapons: Where Science and Technology Service Repression,” July 8, 2008; and, [Antifascist Calling](#), “The Calmative Before the Storm,” July 12, 2008)

During the recent Vibrant Response exercise at Fort Stewart, Georgia, three units of NORTHCOM’s Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF, pronounced “sea-smurfs”), including two combat units from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Army Division and the elite 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade participated in mock drills designed to “coordinate with local governments and interagency organizations such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency,” according to a [report](#) on *U.S. Northern Command News*.

Interestingly enough, Fort Stewart is also the site of a top secret NSA listening post that routinely “intercepted and transcribed satellite phone calls of American civilians in the Middle East for the NSA,” according to a whistleblower and former Arab linguist attached to the illegal NSA project, *Wired* [reports](#).

Code-named “Operation Highlander,” the top secret program was initiated in the wake of the September 11 attacks on orders from the Bush administration. According to *Wired*,

If the allegations are true, it would seem to indicate that warrantless spying of Americans approved by President Bush following 9/11 expanded rapidly beyond U.S. borders to citizens overseas, notwithstanding United States Signals Intelligence Directive 18, or USSID 18—an NSA rule that bars overseas surveillance of Americans without authorization and probable cause. (Kim Zetter, “Inside Operation Highlander,” *Wired*, October 10, 2008)

While the ostensible purpose of Vibrant Response was to wargame scenarios where chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive incidents (CBRNE) were launched “in the nation’s heartland,” what other events could trigger the declaration of a “national security emergency,” or even martial law in the U.S.?

As Amy Goodman [reported](#) in a column for *Democracy Now!*

Military participation in domestic operations was originally outlawed with the Posse Comitatus Act in 1878. The John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, however, included a section that allowed the president to deploy the armed forces to “restore public order” or to suppress “any insurrection.” While a later bill repealed this, President Bush attached a signing statement that he did not feel bound by the repeal. (“Invasion of the Sea-Smurfs,” *Democracy Now!*, October 2, 2008)

As I pointed out in my October 6 article, current Army doctrine is heavily-weighted towards contingency planning for “civil disturbances.” While these programs are not new and in fact, plans such as Garden Plot and Cable Splicer have been integral to military doctrine since the late 1960s, what is new—and highly disturbing—is the launch of NORTHCOM’s Joint Task Force Civil Support (JTF-CS).

Located at Ft. Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, JTF-CS is described on NORTHCOM’s [website](#) as “a subordinate command of U.S. Northern Command, a unified combatant command formed in October 2002 to plan, organize and execute both homeland defense and civil support missions.”

While NORTHCOM claims that JTF-CS would be deployed “only after a Governor requests federal assistance from the President, and after the President issues a Presidential Disaster Declaration,” the Bush signing statement as well as secret annexes in updated Continuity of Government planning documents, National Security Presidential Directive 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20 ([NSPD 51/HSPD 20](#)) means, as Commander-in-Chief,

The President shall lead the activities of the Federal Government for ensuring constitutional government. In order to advise and assist the President in that function, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHS/CT) is hereby designated as the National Continuity Coordinator. ...

Federal Government COOP, COG, and ECG plans and operations shall be appropriately integrated with the emergency plans and capabilities of State, local, territorial, and tribal governments, and private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure, as appropriate, in order to promote interoperability and to prevent redundancies and conflicting lines of authority. The Secretary of Homeland Security shall coordinate the integration of Federal continuity plans and operations with State, local, territorial, and tribal governments, and private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure, as appropriate, in order to provide for the delivery of essential services during an emergency. (The White House, President George W. Bush, NSPD 51/HSPD 20, May 7, 2007)

It should be kept in mind that top secret annexes of this document have been withheld from Congress, despite repeated requests—and legal oversight requirements—by the House Homeland Security Committee, as Peter Dale Scott [reported](#) in March for *CounterPunch*.

NORTHCOM avers that,

The Primary Federal Agency [PFA] is the federal civilian agency designated to

coordinate and direct the government's response to a disaster or emergency situation. Presidential Decision Directive 39 designated the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the PFA for managing the consequences of CBRNE events. In most instances, FEMA will be the PFA, however, the Federal Bureau of Investigation serves as the PFA for crisis management in events designated as an act of terrorism. Although the JTF-CS supports the PFA throughout a CBRNE consequence management operation, the unit operates within a clear Department of Defense chain of command. (U.S. Northern Command, Joint Task Force Civil Support, FAQ, no date)

In other words, although civilian agencies are the nominal PFA's during a "disaster or emergency situation," JTF-CS "operates within a clear Department of Defense chain of command" that begins and ends with the Executive Branch, that is, the President in his role as the leader of the "unitary executive branch" and Commander-in-Chief. Were a "national emergency" of any kind declared by the President, rules governing Continuity of Government operations would place civilian agencies, including "State, local, territorial, and tribal governments, and private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure," under the effective control of the military.

This is clearly delineated in Department of Defense Directive 3025.12 ([DoD 3025.12](#)), "Military Assistance for Civil Disturbances (MACDIS)":

Ensure continuous planning by the DoD Components, both in the Department of Defense and in cooperation with civil government agencies for MACDIS operations that may be required during any time or condition of peace, war, or transition to war, **including any national security emergency**. ...

The President is authorized by the Constitution and laws of the United States to employ the Armed Forces of the United States to suppress insurrections, rebellions, and domestic violence under various conditions and circumstances. Planning and preparedness by the Federal Government and the Department of Defense for civil disturbances are important due to the potential severity of the consequences of such events for the Nation and the population.

Military resources may be employed in support of civilian law enforcement operations in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories and possessions only in the parameters of the Constitution and laws of the United States and the authority of the President and the Secretary of Defense, including delegations of that authority through this Directive or other means.

The primary responsibility for protecting life and property and maintaining law and order in the civilian community is vested in the State and local governments. Supplementary responsibility is vested by statute in specific Agencies of the Federal Government other than the Department of Defense. The President has additional powers and responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States to ensure that law and order are maintained. ("Military Assistance for Civil Disturbances [MACDIS]," Department of Defense Directive, No. 3025.12, February 4, 1994, pp. 1, 3) [emphasis added]

The Executive Branch's leading role in MACDIS operations are underscored by the following:

Delegations of Authority. The Secretary of Defense shall be assisted in executing his responsibility for MACDIS by the following:

The Secretary of the Army shall be the DoD Executive Agent and shall act for the Secretary of Defense in accordance with this Directive and any supplemental direction or guidance received from the Secretary of Defense. In that capacity, the DoD Executive Agent shall develop planning guidance, plans, and procedures for MACDIS, in accordance with this Directive. The DoD Executive Agent has the authority of the Secretary of Defense to task the DoD Components to plan for and to commit DoD resources, in response to requests from civil authorities under MACDIS. The DoD Executive Agent shall coordinate with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff any commitment of Military Forces assigned to the Combatant Commands.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shall communicate to the Commanders of the Combatant Commands appropriate guidance issued by the DoD Executive Agent for their compliance with this Directive, and also shall assist the DoD Executive Agent in developing MACDIS planning guidance for all conditions of war or attacks on the United States or its territories. ...

For response to domestic terrorist incidents and other purposes, the DoD Executive Agent shall obtain authority from the Secretary of Defense for any employment of U.S. counterterrorism forces. The DoD Executive Agent shall coordinate with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff any request, contingency plan, directive, or order affecting the employment of such forces and, simultaneously, shall provide all applicable information to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict), who provides policy oversight for the Secretary of Defense, in accordance with DoD Directive 5138.3 (reference (h)).

The Secretary of Defense reserves the authority to modify or terminate the Executive Agency established by this Directive if operational needs so require in a particular situation. (MACDIS, op. cit., pp. 5-6)

What those “operational needs” are that might require the Secretary of Defense to “modify or terminate” the “Executive Agency” are not specified in the MACDIS Directive. However, in this regard, it is clear that a leading role of U.S. military “civil disturbance” operations will be assumed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and *not* a “Prime Federal Authority,” that is a civilian agency. The JCS will,

In coordination with the DoD Executive Agent, facilitate communications by the DoD Executive Agent with Commanders of Combatant Commands, as appropriate.

Ensure the compatibility of MACDIS plans with other military plans.

Assist in the DoD Executive Agent’s determination of military units and capabilities sufficient for all contingencies of the GARDEN PLOT plan.

Support training for and coordinated evaluation of MACDIS plans and capabilities by the Commanders of the Combatant Commands through exercises or other means, as appropriate. (MACDIS, op. cit., pp. 10-11)

Clearly, NORTHCOM’s Vibrant Response exercise, initiated by the Joint Task Force-Civil Support falls under the broad purview of Garden Plot and other planning “contingencies.” In terms of dealing with a “national security emergency” declared by the Executive Branch under rules governing Continuity of Government operations, DoD 3025.12 describes “civil disturbances” as,

Group acts of violence and disorders prejudicial to public law and order in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. possessions and territories, or any political subdivision thereof. The term “civil disturbance” includes all domestic conditions requiring the use of Federal Armed Forces under this Directive. (MACDIS, op. cit., p. 17)

Would, let’s say, the eruption of mass protests as a result of a stolen presidential election or mass actions as a legitimate and exemplary civilian response to limiting bank withdrawals, a freeze on Social Security payments, a prohibition on strikes or the declaration of a “national security emergency” as a result of prerevolutionary challenges to the legitimacy of federal authority (as took place in Argentina in 2000 during that nation’s economic meltdown) trigger MACDIS and other Continuity of Government operations?

DoD 3025.12 states, “Under reference (r), the terms “major disaster” and “emergency” are defined substantially by action of the President in declaring that extant circumstances and risks justify Presidential implementation of the legal powers in those statutes.” In other words, “extant circumstances” are “defined substantially” by the President. Once triggered by Executive Order, the scope of operations undertaken by the military acting as the enforcement arm of the “unitary executive branch” are virtually unlimited.

Under these rules, martial law, suspension of habeas corpus, indefinite detention would render lawful rules guiding a constitutional republic moot; mere footnotes written on the “blank page” of America’s “new normal,” what Naomi Klein has termed “disaster capitalism.” Klein writes,

A more accurate term for the system that erases the boundaries between Big Government and Big Business is not liberal, conservative or capitalist, but corporatist. Its main characteristics are huge transfers of public wealth to private hands, often accompanied by exploding debt, an ever-widening chasm between the dazzling rich and the disposable poor and an aggressive nationalism that justifies unlimited spending on security. For those inside the bubble of extreme wealth created by such an arrangement, there can be no more profitable way to organize a society. But because of the obvious drawbacks for the vast majority of the population left outside the bubble, other features of the corporatist state tend to include aggressive surveillance (once again, with government and large corporations trading favors and contracts), mass incarceration, shrinking civil liberties and often, though not always, torture. (The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007, p. 15)

Now that the economic bubble for the vast majority of Americans has burst, “shrinking civil liberties” are rushing headlong towards the vanishing point.

While DoD 3025.12 states that “any employment of Military Forces in support of law enforcement operations shall maintain the primacy of civilian authorities,” as noted above JTF-CS “operates within a clear Department of Defense chain of command,” answerable to the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army as the “DoD Executive Agent for MACDIS.”

Clearly, a “terrorist attack” or “any national security emergency” so designated by the President would trigger MACDIS guidance for “civilian law enforcement operations” and fall under the purview of NORTHCOM and JTF-CS as “a subordinate command” and would play a

leading role in responding to “any national security emergency” declared by the President.

Despite the repeal of the “Insurrection Act Rider” to the 2007 Defense Appropriations bill that gave the President sweeping emergency power to deploy the military for any “condition” he might cite, not merely a terrorist atrocity or CBRNE “event,” the Bush “signing statement” reported by Amy Goodman above, effectively nullified Congress’ intent not to give the president carte blanche to station U.S. troops on American streets.

While NORTHCOM insists that JTF-CS, “will not be called upon to help with law enforcement, civil disturbance or crowd control, but will be used to support lead agencies involved in saving lives,” as I have outlined above, citing the DoD’s own documents and Executive Branch National Security Presidential Directives, contingency plans for suppressing “civil disturbance” such as the Garden Plot scenario are, like an iron fist inside a velvet glove, already in place and capable at a moment’s notice of striking the American people.

During these dark times, it is well-worth recalling the sage advice of the great American revolutionary Thomas Jefferson:

“The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government.”

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