

Retrospect on the Role of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

FEMA - The Secret Government

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Some people have referred to it as the “secret government” of the United States. It is not an elected body, it does not involve itself in public disclosures, and it even has a quasi-secret budget in the billions of dollars. This government organization has more power than the President of the United States or the Congress, it has the power to suspend laws, move entire populations, arrest and detain citizens without a warrant and hold them without trial, it can seize property, food supplies, transportation systems, and can suspend the Constitution.

Not only is it the most powerful entity in the United States, but it was not even created under Constitutional law by the Congress. It was a product of a Presidential Executive Order. No, it is not the U.S. military nor the Central Intelligence Agency, they are subject to Congress. The organization is called FEMA, which stands for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Originally conceived in the Richard Nixon Administration, it was refined by President Jimmy Carter and given teeth in the Ronald Reagan and George Bush Administrations.

FEMA had one original concept when it was created, to assure the survivability of the United States government in the event of a nuclear attack on this nation. It was also provided with the task of being a federal coordinating body during times of domestic disasters, such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes. FEMA had one original concept when it was created, to assure the survivability of the United States government in the event of a nuclear attack on this nation. It was also provided with the task of being a federal coordinating body during times of domestic disasters, such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes. Its awesome powers grow under the tutelage of people like Lt. Col. Oliver North and General Richard Secord, the architects on the Iran-Contra scandal and the looting of America’s savings and loan institutions.

THE MOST POWERFUL ORGANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Though it may be the most powerful organization in the United States, few people know it even exists. But it has crept into our private lives. Even mortgage papers contain FEMA’s name in small print if the property in question is near a flood plain. FEMA was deeply involved in the Los Angeles riots and the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area. Some of the black helicopter traffic reported throughout the United States, but mainly in the West, California, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado, are flown by FEMA personnel. FEMA has been given responsibility for many new disasters including urban forest fires, home heating emergencies, refugee situations, urban riots, and emergency planning for nuclear and toxic incidents. In the West, it works in conjunction with the Sixth Army.

FEMA was created in a series of Executive Orders. A Presidential Executive Order, whether Constitutional or not, becomes law simply by its publication in the Federal Registry. Congress is by-passed. Executive Order Number 12148 created the Federal Emergency Management Agency that is to interface with the Department of Defense for civil defense planning and funding. An “emergency czar” was appointed. FEMA has only spent about 6 percent of its budget on national emergencies, the bulk of their funding has been used for the construction of secret underground facilities to assure continuity of government in case of a major emergency, foreign or domestic. Executive Order Number 12656 appointed the National Security Council as the principal body that should consider emergency powers. This allows the government to increase domestic intelligence and surveillance of U.S. citizens and would restrict the freedom of movement within the United States and grant the government the right to isolate large groups of civilians. The National Guard could be federalized to seal all borders and take control of U.S. air space and all ports of entry.

Here are just a few Executive Orders associated with FEMA that would suspend the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These Executive Orders have been on record for nearly 30 years and could be enacted by the stroke of a Presidential pen:

- EXECUTIVE ORDER 10990 allows the government to take over all modes of transportation and control of highways and seaports.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 10995 allows the government to seize and control the communication media.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 10997 allows the government to take over all electrical power, gas, petroleum, fuels and minerals.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 10998 allows the government to take over all food resources and farms.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11000 allows the government to mobilize civilians into work brigades under government supervision.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11001 allows the government to take over all health, education and welfare functions.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11002 designates the Postmaster General to operate a national registration of all persons.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11003 allows the government to take over all airports and aircraft, including commercial aircraft.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11004 allows the Housing and Finance Authority to relocate communities, build new housing with public funds, designate areas to be abandoned, and establish new locations for populations.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11005 allows the government to take over railroads, inland waterways and public storage facilities.

- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11051 specifies the responsibility of the Office of Emergency Planning and gives authorization to put all Executive Orders into effect in times of increased international tensions and economic or financial crisis.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11310 grants authority to the Department of Justice to enforce the plans set out in Executive Orders, to institute industrial support, to establish judicial and legislative liaison, to control all aliens, to operate penal and correctional institutions, and to advise and assist the President.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11049 assigns emergency preparedness function to federal departments and agencies, consolidating 21 operative Executive Orders issued over a fifteen year period.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 11921 allows the Federal Emergency Preparedness Agency to develop plans to establish control over the mechanisms of production and distribution, of energy sources, wages, salaries, credit and the flow of money in U.S. financial institution in any undefined national emergency. It also provides that when a state of emergency is declared by the President, Congress cannot review the action for six months.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has broad powers in every aspect of the nation. General Frank Salzedo, chief of FEMA's Civil Security Division stated in a 1983 conference that he saw FEMA's role as a "new frontier in the protection of individual and governmental leaders from assassination, and of civil and military installations from sabotage and/or attack, as well as prevention of dissident groups from gaining access to U.S. opinion, or a global audience in times of crisis."

FEMA's powers were consolidated by President Carter to incorporate:

- the National Security Act of 1947, which allows for the strategic relocation of industries, services, government and other essential economic activities, and to rationalize the requirements for manpower, resources and production facilities;
- the 1950 Defense Production Act, which gives the President sweeping powers over all aspects of the economy;
- the Act of August 29, 1916, which authorizes the Secretary of the Army, in time of war, to take possession of any transportation system for transporting troops, material, or any other purpose related to the emergency; and
- the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which enables the President to seize the property of a foreign country or national.

These powers were transferred to FEMA in a sweeping consolidation in 1979.

HURRICANE ANDREW FOCUSED ATTENTION ON FEMA

FEMA's deceptive role really did not come to light with much of the public until Hurricane Andrew smashed into the U.S. mainland.

As Russell R. Dynes, director of the Disaster Research Center of the University of Delaware, wrote in *The World and I*, "...The eye of the political storm hovered over the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA became a convenient target for criticism." Because FEMA was accused of dropping the ball in Florida, the media and Congress commenced to study this agency. What came out of the critical look was that FEMA was spending 12 times more for "black operations" than for disaster relief. It spent \$1.3 billion building secret bunkers throughout the United States in anticipation of government disruption by foreign or domestic upheaval. Yet fewer than 20 members of Congress, only members with top security clearance, know of the \$1.3 billion expenditure by FEMA for non-natural disaster situations. These few Congressional leaders state that FEMA has a "black curtain" around its operations. FEMA has worked on National Security programs since 1979, and its predecessor, the Federal Emergency Preparedness Agency, has secretly spent millions of dollars before being merged into FEMA by President Carter in 1979.

FEMA has developed 300 sophisticated mobile units that are capable of sustaining themselves for a month. The vehicles are located in five areas of the United States. They have tremendous communication systems and each contains a generator that would provide power to 120 homes each, but have never been used for disaster relief.

FEMA's enormous powers can be triggered easily. In any form of domestic or foreign problem, perceived and not always actual, emergency powers can be enacted. The President of the United States now has broader powers to declare martial law, which activates FEMA's extraordinary powers. Martial law can be declared during time of increased tension overseas, economic problems within the United States, such as a depression, civil unrest, such as demonstrations or scenes like the Los Angeles riots, and in a drug crisis. These Presidential powers have increased with successive Crime Bills, particularly the 1991 and 1993 Crime Bills, which increase the power to suspend the rights guaranteed under the Constitution and to seize property of those suspected of being drug dealers, to individuals who participate in a public protest or demonstration. Under emergency plans already in existence, the power exists to suspend the Constitution and turn over the reins of government to FEMA and appointing military commanders to run state and local governments. FEMA then would have the right to order the detention of anyone whom there is reasonable ground to believe...will engage in, or probably conspire with others to engage in acts of espionage or sabotage. The plan also authorized the establishment of concentration camps for detaining the accused, but no trial.

Three times since 1984, FEMA stood on the threshold of taking control of the nation. Once under President Reagan in 1984, and twice under President Bush in 1990 and 1992. But under those three scenarios, there was not a sufficient crisis to warrant risking martial law. Most experts on the subject of FEMA and Martial Law insisted that a crisis has to appear dangerous enough for the people of the United States before they would tolerate or accept complete government takeover. The typical crisis needed would be threat of imminent nuclear war, rioting in several U.S. cities simultaneously, a series of national disasters that affect widespread danger to the populous, massive terrorist attacks, a depression in which tens of millions are unemployed and without financial resources, or a major environmental disaster.

THREE TIMES FEMA STOOD BY READY FOR EMERGENCY

In April 1984, President Reagan signed Presidential Director Number 54 that allowed FEMA to engage in a secret national “readiness exercise” under the code name of REX 84. The exercise was to test FEMA’s readiness to assume military authority in the event of a “State of Domestic National Emergency” concurrent with the launching of a direct United States military operation in Central America. The plan called for the deputation of U.S. military and National Guard units so that they could legally be used for domestic law enforcement. These units would be assigned to conduct sweeps and take into custody an estimated 400,000 undocumented Central American immigrants in the United States. The immigrants would be interned at 10 detention centers to be set up at military bases throughout the country.

REX 84 was so highly guarded that special metal security doors were placed on the fifth floor of the FEMA building in Washington, D.C. Even long-standing employees of the Civil Defense of the Federal Executive Department possessing the highest possible security clearances were not being allowed through the newly installed metal security doors. Only personnel wearing a special red Christian cross or crucifix lapel pin were allowed into the premises. Lt. Col. North was responsible for drawing up the emergency plan, which U.S. Attorney General William French Smith opposed vehemently. The plan called for the suspension of the Constitution, turning control of the government over to FEMA, appointment of military commanders to run state and local governments and the declaration of Martial Law. The Presidential Executive Orders to support such a plan were already in place. The plan also advocated the rounding up and transfer to “assembly centers or relocation camps” of a least 21 million American Negroes in the event of massive rioting or disorder, not unlike the rounding up of the Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

The second known time that FEMA stood by was in 1990 when Desert Storm was enacted. Prior to President Bush’s invasion of Iraq, FEMA began to draft new legislation to increase its already formidable powers. One of the elements incorporated into the plan was to set up operations within any state or locality without the prior permission of local or state authorities. Such prior permission has always been required in the past. Much of the mechanism being set into place was in anticipation of the economic collapse of the Western World. The war with Iraq may have been conceived as a ploy to boost the bankrupt economy, but it only pushed the West into deeper recession.

The third scenario for FEMA came with the Los Angeles riots after the Rodney King brutality verdict. Had the rioting spread to other cities, FEMA would have been empowered to step in. As it was, major rioting only occurred in the Los Angeles area, thus preventing a pretext for a FEMA response.

On July 5, 1987, the Miami Herald published reports on FEMA’s new goals. The goal was to suspend the Constitution in the event of a national crisis, such as nuclear war, violent and widespread internal dissent, or national opposition to a U.S. military invasion abroad. Lt. Col. North was the architect. National Security Directive Number 52 issued in August 1982, pertains to the “Use of National Guard Troops to Quell Disturbances.”

The crux of the problem is that FEMA has the power to turn the United States into a police state in time of a real crisis or a manufactured crisis. Lt. Col. North virtually established the apparatus for dictatorship. Only the criticism of the Attorney General prevented the plans from being adopted. But intelligence reports indicate that FEMA has a folder with 22 Executive Orders for the President to sign in case of an emergency. It is believed those Executive Orders contain the framework of North’s concepts, delayed by criticism but never truly abandoned.

The crisis, as the government now see it, is civil unrest. For generations, the government was concerned with nuclear war, but the violent and disruptive demonstrations that surrounded the Vietnam War era prompted President Nixon to change the direction of emergency powers from war time to times of domestic unrest. Diana Reynolds, program director of the Edward R. Murrow Center, summed up the dangers of FEMA today and the public reaction to Martial Law in a drug crisis: "It was James Madison's worst nightmare that a righteous faction would someday be strong enough to sweep away the Constitutional restraints designed by the framers to prevent the tyranny of centralized power, excessive privilege, an arbitrary governmental authority over the individual. These restraints, the balancing and checking of powers among branches and layers of government, and the civil guarantees, would be the first casualties in a drug-induced national security state with Reagan's Civil Emergency Preparedness unleashed. Nevertheless, there would be those who would welcome NSC (National Security Council) into the drug fray, believing that increasing state police powers to emergency levels is the only way left to fight American's enemy within. In the short run, a national security state would probably be a relief to those whose personal security and quality of life has been diminished by drugs or drug related crime. And, as the general public watches the progression of institutional chaos and social decay, they too may be willing to pay the ultimate price, one drug free America for 200 years of democracy."

The first targets in any FEMA emergency would be Hispanics and Blacks, the FEMA orders call for them to be rounded up and detained. Tax protesters, demonstrators against government military intervention outside U.S. borders, and people who maintain weapons in their homes are also targets. Operation Trojan Horse is a program designed to learn the identity of potential opponents to martial law. The program lures potential protesters into public forums, conducted by a "hero" of the people who advocates survival training. The list of names gathered at such meetings and rallies are computerized and then targeted in case of an emergency.

The most shining example of America to the world has been its peaceful transition of government from one administration to another. Despite crises of great magnitude, the United States has maintained its freedom and liberty. This nation now stands on the threshold of rule by non-elected people asserting non-Constitutional powers. Even Congress cannot review a Martial Law action until six months after it has been declared. For the first time in American history, the reigns of government would not be transferred from one elected element to another, but the Constitution, itself, can be suspended.

The scenarios established to trigger FEMA into action are generally found in the society today, economic collapse, civil unrest, drug problems, terrorist attacks, and protests against American intervention in a foreign country. All these premises exist, it could only be a matter of time in which one of these triggers the entire emergency necessary to bring FEMA into action, and then it may be too late, because under the FEMA plan, there is no contingency by which Constitutional power is restored.

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