

State of Emergency: The US in the Final Six Months of the George W. Bush Administration

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

In short, we are living in an on-going state of emergency whose exact limits are unknown, on the basis of a controversial deep event — 9/11 — that is still largely a mystery. - UC Professor Emeritus Peter Dale Scott

Unhindered by a neutered Congress and a compliant Court, President Bush has six months remaining to pursue his agenda of expanding the war in the Middle East and ensuring the continuation of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) beyond his tenure in office.

The current administration has taken unto itself unprecedented, nearly hegemonic powers since the events of 9/11. On that day, George W. Bush issued his “Declaration of Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks” under the authority of the National Emergencies Act. This declaration, which can be rescinded by joint resolution of Congress, has instead been extended six times. In 2007, the declaration was strengthened with the issuance of National Security Presidential Directive 51 (NSPD-51) which gave the president the authority to do whatever he deems necessary in a vaguely defined “catastrophic emergency” including everything from canceling elections to suspending the Constitution to launching a nuclear attack.

Despite time constraints, there are clear signs that the president, the vice-president and their neocon collaborators are not finished. The constant saber-rattling toward Iran, with strong support from Israel, should send a chill down the spine of any peace-loving American. Military chiefs who oppose the president are “retired,” as observed most recently with the March dismissals of CENTCOM commander Admiral William Fallon and 6th Fleet commander Vice-Admiral John Stufflebeem. Public opinion counts for nothing. In a March 24 interview with ABC’s Martha Raddatz, vice president Dick Cheney responded to a question about the war weariness of Americans with a languid “So?”

According to J. Scott Carpenter, former deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, Cheney pushed hard for airstrikes against Iranian Revolutionary Guard bases last summer. He was deterred by Pentagon officials who insisted that retaliation might be difficult to contain. Now, with Cheney ally General David Petraeus poised to take over Fallon’s command, a significant obstacle has been removed.

It seems clear that there is a deadly struggle going on within the US government, a struggle that could well determine not only the election of the next president, but the survival of the republic. On one side are the neocons, the fanatics who led us into Iraq and who believe they alone possess the strategic acumen to usher in a “new American century.” On the

other is the Republican Party old guard ostensibly led by Defense Secretary Robert Gates. Gates was brought into the administration at the end of 2006 to replace the disgraced and despised Donald Rumsfeld, and generally to ride herd over the neocons.

The conflict between these factions has broken into the open over the past eight months. The first public signal came in October of last year, when the sixteen US intelligence agencies issued a consensus National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that cut the legs out from under the administration's argument that Iran was on the verge of developing a nuclear weapon. The NIE stated that the Iranians had stopped work on the project in 2003.

Just before Labor Day last year, a B-52 Stratofortress bomber carrying six cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads flew an unauthorized mission from Minot AFB in North Dakota to Barksdale AFB in Louisiana. Due to anonymous, high-level tips to the Military Times, the warheads were recovered. After several seemingly inconclusive investigations of the incident, Pentagon chief Gates fired Air Force Chief of Staff Michael Moseley and Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne last week, without revealing the role either man played in the nuke heist. Given the volume of evidence that this unprecedented transfer of live nuclear weapons was not an accident, the question remains: what individual or individuals within the government have the authority to commandeer nuclear bombs?

Conservative pundit Patrick J. Buchanan recently suggested that the neocons might be tempted to go to war with Iran in order to improve John McCain's chances of winning the presidency. As audacious as that seems, we want to go one step further. We believe that this administration is so zealous, so determined to hold onto power, that they may well stage a "false flag" attack, creating just the kind of "catastrophic emergency" to which NSPD-51 refers.

On April 29 of this year, CIA veteran Roland V. Carnaby was shot dead by police officers after a high speed chase through the streets of Houston. Carnaby, who had been the CIA's Chief of Station for the Southeast Region headquartered in Houston, was involved in conducting security surveys of the Port of Houston and had discovered that the Department of Homeland Security was tolerating gaping holes in port security. Carnaby and Houston intelligence and law enforcement personnel were also investigating the presence of "Middle Easterners" who were conducting surveillance of the Port of Houston. The "Middle Eastern" designator is the term used by the FBI for Israelis (typically Mossad agents) in order to avoid "political" problems with superiors.

Former National Security Agency analyst and naval intelligence officer Wayne Madsen has been in Houston investigating the Carnaby case at great personal risk. Madsen believes Carnaby was involved both in heading off a potential war with Iran (by leaking Mossad plans to assassinate Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah just days before Carnaby himself was killed) and in trying to forestall a potential terrorist attack on the port.

According to Madsen, "federal agents in Houston fear that 'another 9/11-type part false flag' attack is imminent, perhaps as early as July 4." Such an attack along the twenty-five-mile Houston Ship Channel, site of more explosive materials, toxic gases, and deadly petrochemicals than anywhere else in the country, could create an environmental and economic catastrophe that would dwarf 9/11.

How will the struggle within this administration be brought to an end? Will courageous

military men like Adm. Fallon speak out before the next national tragedy befalls us? Will Congress act decisively to remove the president's emergency powers, challenge NSPD-51, and defend the Constitution? Will Defense Secretary Gates hold the line?

With just a half year left in what many believe has been the worst presidency in American history the possibilities are many, and some of them are truly frightening. As citizens of this country, we must do everything in our power to ensure that there is no expansion of war in the Middle East, no "false flag" attack at the Port of Houston or anywhere else, and a peaceful and constitutional succession to a new administration.

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