

FEMA's activation sets the stage for rule by decree

by Kathleen Klenetsky

“In the developed countries there will be a bitter struggle for the control of their diminished resources. This struggle will merely worsen a bad situation; it will somehow have to be stopped. If left unchecked, it would lead to anarchy and to a drastic reduction of the size of the population by civil war, famine and pestilence, the historic reducers of populations that have outgrown their means of subsistence. Consequently in all developed countries, a new way of life—a severely regimented way—will have to be imposed by a ruthless authoritarian government.”

—Arnold Toynbee, *“After the Age of Affluence,”*
Skeptic, July/August 1974

Of all the signs during early November that the Bush administration was lunging toward a cataclysmic conflict in the Persian Gulf, one of the most ominous was the five-day, closed-door meeting which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) convened in Atlanta during the week of Nov. 5.

Despite its innocuous-sounding name, FEMA serves as the framework for the anti-constitutional, authoritarian regime envisioned by British strategic gamemaster Arnold Toynbee in the article quoted above. It is now mobilizing for precisely that purpose.

Since Bush launched his “Operation Desert Shield” in August, preparations for a FEMA dictatorship, under the guise of a national security crisis induced either by an oil shortage or war, have dominated behind-the-scenes planning at the National Security Council, which controls FEMA and its activation.

The process has been shrouded in secrecy. FEMA spokesmen adamantly refused to provide any information about the agency’s Atlanta meeting, other than to confirm it was taking place. However, enough information has leaked out to fuel speculation that Bush will soon utilize the vast array of stand-by emergency powers available to him.

Over the last few weeks, FEMA has drafted new legislation that would expand



Brian Lantz

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is known for its bungling role in "disaster relief" during the San Francisco earthquake in 1989. It was set up to provide the bureaucratic structure and legal framework for unconstitutional "emergency rule," in the event of a national emergency. Shown here is the Marina district of San Francisco, Oct. 25, 1989.

its already formidable powers, allowing it, for example, to set up operations within any state or locality, without the prior permission of local or state authorities, as is currently required.

'Emergency' fascism?

We are not arguing in this report that emergency preparedness or emergency measures are unnecessary and inappropriate under any and all circumstances. What we are saying is that the Bush administration is dead-set on using the pretext of a national security crisis to carry out a set of policies which violate the U.S. Constitution, and are inimical to the interests of the vast majority of the U.S. population.

Bush is being impelled toward exercising emergency powers by the same circumstances that are behind his drive for war: the economic collapse of the Anglo-American financial superstructure. The principal reason why Bush wants a war with Iraq, is to set a precedent for reviving the savage colonialist policy of looting Third World countries of their raw materials.

This is deemed necessary by the Anglo-American elite, because their failed policies of "post-industrialism" and speculation have made it impossible to pay Third World countries a just and fair price for their oil, minerals, and other commodities. Rather than change their own economic policies, Bush, Thatcher, and their elite controllers have opted for misery on

a global scale.

By the same token, Bush needs an excuse to wield emergency powers because of the economic depression in the United States. As exemplified in the budget wranglings of the past six months, the administration has decided to deal with the nation's economic woes not by stimulating investment in agriculture, manufacturing, and high-tech industries, but by looting the living standard of the middle and working class.

But the depths of the depression the United States has entered will require austerity on a scale that cannot be accomplished within the framework of constitutional government—at least not without risking a popular upsurge that could overturn the administration and its policies.

Thus, the Iraq conflict—which, as *EIR* has documented, was deliberately set up by the United States and Great Britain—has provided Bush with the long-sought-for chance to ram austerity down the throats of Americans, while establishing a genocidal U.S. policy toward the nations of the Third World.

FEMA's police state

Should the American people resist, FEMA is prepared to step in with police-state measures. In its July 5, 1987 issue, the *Miami Herald* published a revealing exposé on FEMA's plans to rip up the Constitution in the event of a

national crisis.

Written by Alfonso Chardy, the article reported that between 1982 and 1984, FEMA revised its contingency plans for dealing with “nuclear war, insurrection or a massive mobilization.”

Chardy reported that National Security Council staffer Lt. Col. Oliver North assisted FEMA in drawing up “a controversial plan 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*” (emphasis added). The last eventuality is of special significance under the present circumstances of growing domestic opposition to Bush’s war plans in the Gulf.

The plan “also advocated the roundup and transfer to ‘assembly centers or relocation camps’ of at least 21 million” black Americans.

In 1984, FEMA ran its “Rex 84” exercise (one of many such exercises, almost all of them classified, which FEMA regularly carries out in conjunction with the Defense Department), to test its upgraded capabilities and powers. The “Rex 84” scenario was based on a superpower confrontation over Central America which would lead to a nuclear war. Included in the scenario was a roundup of Central American refugees who had poured over the borders into the United States, and who were placed in detention camps located on U.S. military bases. The scenario also called for the imposition of martial law in the United States, to quell an anti-war movement.

Substitute Middle East for Central America, and war with Iraq for superpower confrontation, and you’ve got the Bush administration-FEMA script for suppressing any opposition to U.S. participation in a Gulf conflict. A still-secret National Security Directive Decision (No. 52), issued by President Reagan in August 1982, pertains to the “Use of National Guard Troops to Quell Disturbances.”

Bush: the American Mussolini

Bush is the perfect candidate to be the American Mussolini. His patrician background and intimate ties to the U.S. intelligence community (he served as director of the CIA in the mid-1970s), have inculcated in him a contempt for constitutional and representational government. That has been nowhere more evident than in his recent response to pleadings from Capitol Hill that he consult with Congress on the Gulf conflict. In defiance of the Constitution’s provision that only Congress has the right to declare war, Bush has refused.

During the Reagan years, Bush insinuated himself into the heart of the administration’s vast crisis-planning apparatus, getting himself appointed head of the Special Situations Group, which effectively placed him in charge of all crisis management.

Bush signaled his intention to use crisis management as the means of imposing emergency police-state rule just a

week after the election. One of his first acts after winning the presidency was to persuade Ronald Reagan to issue Executive Order 12656, which we excerpt at length in the *Documentation* section—a chilling blueprint for an emergency dictatorship, with FEMA at the helm.

Blank check for crisis management

If Bush does decide to use the Gulf crisis as an excuse to declare a national emergency, he has a virtual blank check to do what he pleases. “The President has a broad range of emergency powers available to him in a crisis,” a White House spokesman confirmed. According to Harold Relyea, a specialist at the Congressional Research Service, the powers available to the President under conditions of a national security crisis are “wide open . . . there is probably not a whole lot circumscribing the President’s authority to use certain statutes, some of which require a declaration of national emergency, some of which don’t.”

These powers are based on a huge body of executive orders, national security directives, and legislation that has evolved since World War II. In addition to the various executive orders and national security directives described elsewhere in the report, some of the most important of these include:

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

In addition, numerous measures exist that are specifically designed to be invoked in the event of a cutoff in U.S. energy supplies, which would likely occur should fighting break out in the Gulf.

These include: the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, which establishes the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and establishes separate energy priorities and allocation authority, to be coordinated with the national defense priorities and allocations system set up by the Defense Production Act; the Energy Security Act of 1980; the Naval Petroleum Reserve Act, which establishes the naval petroleum and oil shale reserve and authorizes the Navy to seize or acquire transportation pipelines to transport the petroleum; the Export Administration Act and the Trade Expansion Act, which authorize the President to control exports and imports; and the Energy Emergency Preparedness Act of 1982.