

Big Brother: Obama Calls for the Integration of State and Federal Military Forces

Executive Order Seeks to "Synchronize and Integrate"

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In the wake of the Flight 253 provocation, over-hyped terrorism panics, and last year's Big Pharma and media-engineered hysteria over the H1N1 flu pandemic, President Barack Obama signed [Executive Order 13528](#) on January 11.

Among other things, the Executive Order (EO) established a Council of Governors, an "advisory panel" chosen by the President that will rubber-stamp long-sought-after Pentagon contingency plans to seize control of state National Guard forces in the event of a "national emergency."

According to the White House [press release](#), the ten member, bipartisan Council was created "to strengthen further the partnership between the Federal Government and State Governments to protect our Nation against all types of hazards."

"When appointed" the announcement continues, "the Council will be reviewing such matters as involving the National Guard of the various States; homeland defense; civil support; synchronization and integration of State and Federal military activities in the United States; and other matters of mutual interest pertaining to National Guard, homeland defense, and civil support activities."

Clearly designed to weaken the [Posse Comitatus Act of 1878](#) which bars the use of the military for civilian law enforcement, EO 13528 is the latest in a series of maneuvers by previous administrations to wrest control of armed forces historically under the democratic control of elected state officials, and a modicum of public accountability.

One consequence of moves to "synchronize and integrate" state National Guard units with those of the Armed Forces would be to place them under the effective control of United States Northern Command ([USNORTHCOM](#)), created in 2002 by Bushist legislators in both capitalist parties under the pretext of imperialism's endless "War on Terror." At the time, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called USNORTHCOM's launch "the most sweeping set of changes since the unified command system was set up in 1946."

The real-world consequences of those changes weren't long in coming.

Following their criminal inaction during 2005's Hurricane Katrina catastrophe, the Bush regime sought, but failed, to seize control of depleted Gulf Coast National Guard units, the bulk of which had been sent to Iraq along with equipment that might have aided the recovery. Bush demanded that then Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco sign over control of

the Guard as well as state and local police units as the blood price for federal assistance.

At the height of the crisis, Bush cited presidential prerogatives for doing so under the [Insurrection Act](#), a repressive statute which authorizes the President to federalize National Guard units when state governments fail to “suppress rebellion.” How the plight of citizens engulfed by Katrina’s flood waters could be twisted into an act of “rebellion” was achieved when Orwellian spin doctors, aided and abetted by a compliant media, invented a new criminal category to cover traumatized New Orleans residents: “Drowning while Black.”

Fast forward five years. Given the serious implications such proposals would have for a functioning democracy, the media’s deafening silence on Obama’s Executive Order is hardly surprising. Like their role as cheerleaders in the escalating wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, media self-censorship tell us much about the state of affairs in “new normal” America.

Like his predecessors in the Oval Office, stretching back to the 1960s with Pentagon “civil disturbance” plans such as [Cable Splicer](#) and [Garden Plot](#), both of which are continuously updated, our “change” President will forge ahead and invest the permanent National Security bureaucracy with unprecedented power.

Under color of the [2008 National Defense Authorization Act](#), an unsavory piece of Bushist legislative detritus, “The President shall establish a bipartisan Council of Governors to advise the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the White House Homeland Security Council on matters related to the National Guard and civil support missions.”

The toothless Council, whose Executive Director will be designated by the Secretary of Defense no less, “shall meet at the call of the Secretary of Defense or the Co-Chairs of the Council.”

Will such a Council have veto power over administration deliberations? Hardly. They are relegated “to exchange views, information, or advice with the Secretary of Defense; the Secretary of Homeland Security” and “the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.”

Additional entities covered by the EO with whom the Governors Council will “exchange views” include, “the Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement; the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas’ Security Affairs; the Commander, United States Northern Command; the Chief, National Guard Bureau; the Commandant of the Coast Guard; and other appropriate officials of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense, and appropriate officials of other executive departments or agencies as may be designated by the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of Homeland Security.”

In other words, right from the get-go, the Council will serve as civilian cover for political decisions made by the Executive Branch and the security apparatus. EO 13528 continues, “Such views, information, or advice shall concern: (a) matters involving the National Guard of the various States; (b) homeland defense; (c) civil support; (d) synchronization and integration of State and Federal military activities in the United States; and (e) other matters of mutual interest pertaining to National Guard, homeland defense, and civil support activities.”

When news first broke last summer of Obama's proposal to expand the military's authority to respond to domestic disasters, it was opposed by the National Governors Association (NGA).

[Congressional Quarterly](#) reported that a letter sent on behalf of the NGA opposed creation of the Council on grounds that it "would invite confusion on critical command and control issues, complicate interagency planning, establish stove-piped response efforts, and interfere with governors' constitutional responsibilities to ensure the safety and security of their citizens," Govs. Jim Douglas, R-Vt., and Joe Manchin III, D-W.Va., wrote.

According to their August letter to Paul N. Stockton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, Douglas and Manchin III argued that "without assigning a governor tactical control" of military forces during a natural disaster such as a flood or earthquake, or an unnatural disaster such as a terrorist attack or other mass casualty event, the "strong potential exists for confusion in mission, execution and the dilution of governors' control over situations with which they are more familiar and better capable of handling than a federal military commander."

With slim prospects of congressional authorization for the scheme, in fact the 2008 language was removed from subsequent Defense spending legislation, other means were required. Playing bureaucratic hardball with the governors, this has now been accomplished by presidential fiat, further eroding clear constitutional limits on Executive Branch power.

These maneuvers as I have previously [written](#), have very little to do with responding to a catastrophic emergency. Indeed, EO 13528 is only the latest iteration of plans to expand the National Security State's writ and as such, have everything to do with decades-old Continuity of Government (COG) programs kept secret from Congress and the American people.

Derided by neocons, neoliberals and other corporatists as a quaint backwater for "conspiracy theorists" railing against "FEMA concentration camps," Continuity of Government, and the nexus of "civil support" programs that have proliferated like noxious weeds are no laughing matter.

Indeed, even members of Congress are considered "unauthorized parties" denied access "to information on COG plans, procedures, capabilities and facilities," according to a Pentagon [document](#) published by the whistleblowing web site Wikileaks, as are the classified annexes of National Security Presidential Directive 51 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20 (NSPD 51/HSPD 20). In a new twist on administration promises of transparency and open government, even the redacted version of these documents have been removed from the White House [web site](#).

As Antifascist Calling previously reported (see: "[Vigilant Shield 09: A Cover for Illegal Domestic Operations?](#)"), the Congressional Research Service issued a 46-page [report](#) in 2008 that provided details on the COG-related National Exercise Program, a "civil support" operation that war games various disaster scenarios.

Among other things, the document outlines the serious domestic implications of military participation in national emergency preparedness drills. CRS researchers pointed to the Reagan-era Executive Order 12656 ([EO 12656](#)) that "directs FEMA to coordinate the planning, conduct, and evaluation of national security emergency exercises." EO 12656

defines a national security emergency as “as any occurrence, including natural disaster, military attack, technological emergency, or other emergency that seriously degrades or seriously threatens the national security of the United States.”

Such programs, greatly expanded by the Bush-era Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 ([HSPD-8](#)), also removed from the White House web site, established “a national program and a multi-year planning system to conduct homeland security preparedness-related exercises.” CRS avers, “The program is to be carried out in collaboration with state and local governments and private sector entities.”

The Defense Department’s role during such emergencies were intended to focus “principally on domestic incident management, either for terrorism or non terrorist catastrophic events.” DoD would play a “significant role” in the overall response. Such murky definitions cover a lot of ground and are ripe with a potential for abuse by unscrupulous securocrats and their corporate partners.

The primary DoD entity responsible for “civil support,” a focus of Obama’s EO is USNORTHCOM and its active combat component, U.S. Army North. However, as with almost everything relating to COG and current plans under EO 13528 that propose to “synchronize and integrate State and Federal military activities,” USNORTHCOM’s role is shrouded in secrecy.

As researcher Peter Dale Scott [revealed](#) in 2008, when Congressman Peter DeFazio, Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson and Oversight Subcommittee Chairman Christopher Carney sought access to classified COG annexes, their request was denied by the White House. Scott wrote: “DeFazio’s inability to get access to the NSPD Annexes is less than reassuring. If members of the Homeland Security Committee cannot enforce their right to read secret plans of the Executive Branch, then the systems of checks and balances established by the U.S. Constitution would seem to be failing.”

One hammer blow followed another. In 2008, [Army Times](#) reported, that the “3rd Infantry Division’s 1st Brigade Combat Team [BCT] has spent 35 of the last 60 months in Iraq patrolling in full battle rattle, helping restore essential services and escorting supply convoys. Now they’re training for the same mission—with a twist—at home.”

Analyst Michel Chossudovsky [commented](#), “What is significant in this redeployment of a US infantry unit is the presumption that North America could, in the case of a national emergency, constitute a ‘war theater’ thereby justifying the deployment of combat units.” According to Chossudovsky, “The new skills to be imparted consist in training 1st BCT in repressing civil unrest, a task normally assumed by civilian law enforcement.”

“It is noteworthy, the [World Socialist Web Site](#) commented, “that the deployment of US combat troops ‘as an on-call federal response force for natural or manmade emergencies and disasters’ ... coincides with the eruption of the greatest economic emergency and financial disaster since the Great Depression of the 1930s.”

“Justified as a response to terrorist threats,” socialist critic Bill Van Auken averred, “the real source of the growing preparations for the use of US military force within America’s borders lies not in the events of September 11, 2001 or the danger that they will be repeated. Rather, the domestic mobilization of the armed forces is a response by the US ruling establishment to the growing threat to political stability.”

Since USNORTHCOM's deployment of a combat brigade on U.S. soil, the capitalist crisis has deepened and intensified. With unemployment at a post-war high and the perilous economic and social conditions of the working class growing grimmer by the day, EO 13258 is a practical demonstration of ruling class consensus when it comes to undermining the democratic rights of the American people.

After all, where the defense of wealth and privileges are concerned corporate thugs and war criminals have no friends, only interests...

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