

Top Secret Pentagon Operation “Granite Shadow” revealed. Today in DC: Commandos in the Streets?

"Granite Power" allows for emergency military operations in the US without civilian supervision or control.

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Today, somewhere in the DC metropolitan area, the military is conducting a highly classified Granite Shadow “demonstration.”

Granite Shadow is yet another new Top Secret and compartmented operation related to the military’s extra-legal powers regarding weapons of mass destruction. It allows for emergency military operations in the United States without civilian supervision or control.

A spokesman at the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region (JFHQ-NCR) confirmed the existence of Granite Shadow to me yesterday, but all he would say is that Granite Shadow is the unclassified name for a classified plan.

That classified plan, I believe, after extensive research and after making a couple of assumptions, is CONPLAN 0400, formally titled Counter-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Concept Plan (CONPLAN) 0400 is a long-standing contingency plan of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) that serves as the umbrella for military efforts to counter the spread of weapons of mass destruction. It has extensively been updated and revised since 9/11.

The CJCS plan lays out national policy and priorities for dealing with WMD threats in peacetime and crisis — from far away offensive strikes and special operations against foreign WMD infrastructure and capabilities, to missile defenses and “consequence management” at home if offensive efforts fail.

All of the military planning incorporates the technical capabilities of the intelligence agencies and non-military organizations such as the national laboratories of the Department of Energy. And finally, CONPLAN 0400 directs regional combatant commanders to customize counter-proliferation plans for each of their own areas of operations.

When that “area of operations” is the United States, things become particularly sensitive.

That’s where Granite Shadow comes in. U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the military’s new homeland security command, is preparing its draft version of CONPLAN 0400 for military operations in the United States, and the resulting Granite Shadow plan has been classified above Top Secret by adding a Special Category (SPECAT) compartment restricting access.

The sensitivities, according to military sources, include deployment of “special mission units” (the so-called Delta Force, SEAL teams, Rangers, and other special units of Joint Special Operations Command) in Washington, DC and other domestic hot spots. NORTHCOM has worked closely with U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), as well as the secret branches of non-military agencies and departments to enforce “unity of command” over any post 9/11 efforts.

Further, Granite Shadow posits domestic military operations, including intelligence collection and surveillance, unique rules of engagement regarding the use of lethal force, the use of experimental non-lethal weapons, and federal and military control of incident locations that are highly controversial and might border on the illegal.

Granite Shadow is the twin to Power Geyser, a program I first revealed to The New York Times in January. The JFHQ spokesman confirms that Granite Shadow and Power Geyser are two different unclassified names for two different classified plans.

In the case of Power Geyser, the classified plan is CJCS CONPLAN 0300, whose entire title is classified. According to the military documents, the unclassified title is “Counter-Terrorism Special Operations Support to Civil Agencies in the event of a domestic incident.” It is another Top Secret/SPECAT plan directing the same special mission units to provide weapons of mass destruction recovery and “render safe” in either a terrorist incident or in the case of a stolen (or lost) nuclear weapon. Render safe refers to the ability of explosive ordnance disposal experts to isolate and disarm any type of biological, chemical, nuclear or radiological weapon.

The obvious question is why there is a need for two plans. My guess is that Power Geyser and CONPLAN 0300 refers to operations in support of a civil agency “lead” (most likely the Attorney General for a WMD attack) while Granite Shadow and CONPLAN 0400 lays out contingencies where the military is in the lead. I’ll wait to be corrected by someone in the know.

Both plans seem to live behind a veil of extraordinary secrecy because military forces operating under them have already been given a series of “special authorities” by the President and the secretary of defense. These special authorities include, presumably, military roles in civilian law enforcement and abrogation of State’s powers in a declared or perceived emergency.

In January, when The New York Times reported on the Power Geyser name from my Code Names website, the Pentagon argued that “It would be irresponsible ... to comment on any classified program that may or may not exist.”

I can’t see how the Defense Department can continue this line of argument post-Katrina. We see the human cost of a system of contingency planning done in complete secret, with a lack of any debate as to what should be the federal government’s priorities, emphasis, and rules.

As the Granite Shadow commandos and their federal brethren go through their paces today, some inside the system will lament that I have “compromised” their work. But the very fact that nothing in my writing damages the Granite Shadow effort should demonstrate that we can have a discussion of contingency planning priorities in the United States, and debate extraordinary special authorities granted to those in uniform, without compromising the

details of the plans themselves.

There's still time. The full-scale exercise of Granite Shadow's capabilities and procedures doesn't start until April 2006.

A note to readers: Today begins a weekly feature of Early Warning, namely code name of the week. This will endeavor to discuss some secret program of the government, sometimes with an argument that the secrecy is excessive, sometime with far more questions than answers.

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