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Fearing FEMA

Sander Hicks, April 14, 2003

Most Americans know **FEMA**, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency**, as the helping hand that shows up after major natural disasters or large-scale terrorist attacks like 9/11, handing out blankets and doling out loans like a friendly neighbor with a taxpayer-fattened bank account. But beginning in the early 90's, a small contingent of "conspiracy theorists" began to claim there was something much more sinister to the agency. They see FEMA as the nothing less than the stormtroopers of a **New World Order**, a dark force for oppression that hides behind its benevolent public image waiting to round up patriotic Americans who dare question the creation of a United Nations-controlled **One World Government**. Frequently, Jews are implicated as part of the scheme, as are assorted Rockefellers and Rothschilds.

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The idea that such a seemingly benign agency could harbor a hidden agenda has been largely dismissed by the mainstream media as the paranoid rantings of people who wear tinfoil hats and spend way too much time indoors. But is there any substance to the black helicopter crowd's suspicions?

In fact, the agency does have a long history of totalitarian impulses. In an era of vanishing civil liberties, GNN believes now more than ever it is important to ask: Should we fear FEMA?

FEMA's precursor was the **California Specialized Training Institute**, a counter-terrorism training center started by then-**Governor Ronald Reagan** in 1971. Reagan inaugurated the idea of utilizing the military and law enforcement to combat dissent. He hired retired **National Guard General Louis O. Giuffrida** to design **Operation Cable Splicer**. The Cable Splicer plans were martial law proposals to legitimize the arrest and detention of anti-Vietnam war activists and other political dissidents. At the Army War College in 1970, Guiffrida had written a proposal that advocated the roundup and transfer to relocation camps of at least 21 million "American Negroes" in the event of a national uprising.

In 1979, under President Carter, FEMA was officially created with a single stroke of a pen by **Executive Order 1-2148**. However, Ronald Reagan elevated FEMA to intelligence agency status by giving the National Security Council authority over the planning for civil defense policy and security. Reagan created a senior-level interdepartmental board, the **Emergency Mobilization Preparedness Board**, or EMPB, a precursor to the cabinet-level Office of Homeland Security. The EMPB was charged with coordinating plans for civil security.

Oliver North enters the story here. From 1982 to 1984, North was assigned by National Security Advisor and fellow Iran-Contra conspirator **Robert McFarlane** to work on the EMPB. Former General Louis Giuffrida was at EMPB as well. According to Covert Action Quarterly, "By forming the Emergency Mobilization Preparedness Board, Ronald Reagan made it possible for a small group of people, under the authority of the NSC, to wield enormous power. They, in turn, used this executive authority to change civil defense planning into a military/police version" of domestic control. While at EMPB, North revised contingency plans for dealing with nuclear war, domestic insurrection and massive military mobilization.

Giuffrida and North worked to refine and implement **Operation GARDEN PLOT**, a plan to suspend the Constitution in the event of a national crisis, such as widespread internal opposition to a U.S. military invasion abroad. GARDEN PLOT was actually implemented during LA's Rodney King Riots in the form of street curfews as well as in recent anti-globalization protests.

In 1983, at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, FEMA's **General Frank S. Salcedo** recommended expanding FEMA's power even further. As he saw it at least 100,000 U.S. citizens, from survivalists to tax protesters, were serious threats to civil security. Salcedo saw FEMA's new frontier as the protection of industrial and government leaders from assassination, and the protection of civil and military installations from sabotage or attack. Notable for stations such as this one, Salcedo warned against dissident groups gaining access to U.S. opinion or a global audience in times of crisis.

FEMA and the Department of Defense began a continuing tradition of biannual joint exercises to test civilian mobilization, civil security emergency and counterterrorism plans. The **Rex-84 Alpha Explan** (Readiness Exercise 1984, Exercise Plan) showed that FEMA lead 34 other federal agencies, including CIA, FBI, and U.S. Treasury, in a massive civil readiness exercise. It was conducted in coordination with "**Night Train 84**," a worldwide military command post exercise, based on multi-emergency scenarios operating both abroad and at home.

The exercises envisioned that the previously mentioned 100,000 U.S. citizens, labeled "national security threats" would be rounded up and thrown into concentration camps.

FEMA came into direct conflict with the FBI, whose Director William Sessions forced Giuffrida to turn over more than 12,000 political dossiers FEMA had assembled on dissidents.

The FBI's power struggle with FEMA necessitated damage control. **Attorney General William French Smith** finally reined in the abuses. He publicly admonished Robert McFarlane, in a letter on August 2, 1984, "I believe that the role assigned to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on the revised Executive Order exceeds its proper function as a coordinating agency for emergency preparedness." He also protested, "the expansion of the definition of severe emergencies to encompass 'routine' domestic law enforcement."

This public chastisement necessitated a cleaning of house. FEMA **Inspector General Robert Guffus** discovered large-scale waste and dysfunction in his investigation. Its federal programs with state and local governments were badly coordinated. Personnel suffered from imprecise program guidelines, a lack of

resources, fiscal mis-management, unclear assignment of responsibilities, overlapping job descriptions, inflated training figures, and a lack of written procedures.

To top it off, FEMA head Louis Giuffrida was discovered to have spent \$170,000 of agency funds to outfit a deluxe bachelor pad at the Civil Defense Training Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He was forced to resign in 1985.

Louis Giuffrida had run FEMA since 1981. He played a major role in the transformation of FEMA from a public disaster management aid to an extension of the military intelligence state. Yet today, Louis Giuffrida is not mentioned on the FEMA.gov website official "History" of FEMA.

After the scandal, National Security Director Robert McFarlane quietly removed North from the EMPB and assigned him to help with conducting unconventional warfare in Nicaragua. North became overseer of a new wing of the State Department dedicated to molding public opinion, the "Office of Public Diplomacy." He released disinformation on the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua including a leak that the Soviet Union was shipping MiG fighter jets to the Sandinistas, a story that later proved false. North supervised the "black operations" that funded the Contras through narcotics trading and illegal arms sales to Iran, in violation of Federal law. Oliver North is today an "embedded reporter" for the highly-rated Fox News Channel, but not everyone views Oliver North as a "hero." In August of 94, Judge James L. Berry of Clarke County Circuit Court, in Virginia refused to re-issue North a carrying permit for a concealed weapon, citing his conviction for obstructing Congress during the investigation into the Iran-contra affair. The judge reasoned, "This court is unable to ignore his convictions for crimes based on moral turpitude, even though his convictions were later overturned."

What is FEMA's role today? Simple disaster management in the public interest as per their web site? Or something else more in line with their legacy?

In the months immediately after 9/11, between 1,200 and 2,000 Muslim, Arab and South Asian immigrants were detained and held in secret. Although most have been recently released, the government refused to divulge the names of detainees, how many were held, and how many deported.

On August 14, 2002, **Attorney General John Ashcroft** was called a "menace to Liberty" by Jonathan Turley, in the *Los Angeles Times*, for announcing his desire for camps for U.S. citizens he deems "enemy combatants."

Ashcroft has had a troubling history when it comes to civil liberties. The same man who is chipping away at the Bill of Rights endorsed and supported the pro-slavery, pro-white, pro-Confederacy magazine **Southern Partisan** in 1998. Southern Partisan has published praise for Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, as well as "super hero" **Nathan Bedford Forrest**, founder of the KKK. In an interview Ashcroft said, "Your magazine also helps set the record straight. You've got a heritage of doing that, of defending Southern patriots.... Traditionalists must do more. I've got to do more."

In the summer of 2002, FEMA published a bid request for qualified construction companies to compete for contracts for three \$6 million projects to create temporary cities that can house massive populations in the event of a disaster.

Published on conservative web site [Newsmax](#), this news was dismissed by FEMA Spokesman Chad Kolton as "totally bogus." But when challenged by the publishers on the phone, Kolton confirmed the essence of the story. The camps and temporary cities are being planned, to be built in 2003.

FEMA says the sprawling temporary cities are being built to handle millions of displaced persons in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack on a major population center. Perhaps. Maybe FEMA has shed the yoke of its dark history. But considering the agency's legacy, is it so far-fetched to think it is not in some small way laying the groundwork to deal with those who dissent from our government's increasingly draconian program of permanent war?

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This article was based on **Hicks'** debut television investigative broadcast for **INN Report**, a new alternative news hour which airs at 6 PM, on **Free Speech TV** (Channel 9415) on the Dish Network. This is the expanded version exclusively for **GNN**.

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