

Will Bush invoke emergency government-by-decree?

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Will President Bush use the pretext of the Persian Gulf crisis to invoke emergency domestic powers, so that he can impose wartime controls over U.S. economic and political life? Although administration officials are refusing to comment on the possibility that the President might resort to the sweeping emergency measures available to him in a national security crisis, there is growing evidence that such a contingency is definitely in the works.

One especially compelling factor leading to that conclusion, is the reason that Bush opted for such a lunatic response to the Mideast eruption in the first place. Faced with a series of economic crises—ranging from the savings and loan mess to the real estate collapse—which were destroying the “recovery” myth once and for all, the President was desperate to find some means of diverting Americans’ attention away from economic matters. Iraq’s move against Kuwait could not have come at a more opportune moment.

But there is an even more ominous factor involved. Bush and his backers need a police state of the kind emergency powers could create, if they are to push through the draconian austerity measures which they intend to use as the depression worsens. Seizures of banks and industry, wage controls, tax hikes, anti-strike measures, controls on political opposition—these would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Bush to implement, without the smokescreen of his jingoistic adventure in the Middle East.

There is little question that the Bush team is chafing at the bit to invoke emergency powers. A well-placed European source, with ties to Helmut Schmidt’s Inter-Action Council, confided to a journalist that Bush is definitely inclined to use the Gulf crisis to establish statutory emergency powers to deal with the financial-economic and other crises. Bush’s “political future is on the block,” he said. “He must do some-

thing. To put it simply, he’s using the situation to alleviate his internal problems.”

Noting that the U.S. has “vast experience” in emergency rule, going back to World War II, the same source said, “It would just be a matter of reactivating those mechanisms” to “deal with economic and financial situations, probably in the direction of some kind of re-regulation by fiat, or at least a much strengthened role for the state in the economy, to streamline the whole thing.” He added, “One thing I certainly see coming is emergency taxation. The point is, we’re entering into a totally different domain, which is completely different than not being at war. You have to ask whether Bush is doing this all because of the U.S. internal problems, or is he just capitalizing on the fallout from the crisis? Now, everthing is possible: war economy, a war financial-emergency situation, in other words, a war system put into place.”

Already, the *Wall Street Journal* is demanding that the President declare a national emergency to deal with the domestic side of the crisis, and sentiment on Capitol Hill is becoming increasingly rabid. “Joe Six-Pack is finally going to learn that he can’t have cheap energy forever,” ranted one House Energy Committee staffer in a discussion with a journalist. “We’re going to have to go to \$3-4 per gallon gasoline. Sure, poor people and the middle class are going to suffer, but what do you want? We can’t have cheap cocaine and gasoline for the masses, if it means sending your brother to war.”

‘Emergency’ police state?

Administration officials have adamantly refused to comment on the possibility that the President will invoke emergency measures, because, as one White House staffer put it, “he wants to avoid creating the impression that the crisis is

worse than it is." A bureaucratic stone wall has been thrown up to prevent any information about what is being done from reaching the public. Yet there is little question that the administration emergency structure went into high gear as soon as the crisis struck. "There's a tremendous amount of contingency planning taking place," confirmed one oil industry analyst, "but no one wants to talk about it."

Should Bush decide to utilize emergency powers, there is virtually no limit to what he can do. "The President has a broad range of emergency powers available to him in a crisis," a White House spokesman confirmed.

These powers derive from a huge body of legislation, executive orders, and national security directives that has been put together over the last 40 years. Among the most important of these are the 1950 Defense Production Act—which gives the President sweeping powers in a national security crisis—and Executive Order 12656. The latter, entitled "Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities," was signed by President Reagan on Nov. 18, 1988—a little more than a week after George Bush won the presidential elections.

EO 12656 is a chilling blueprint for a bloodless coup against constitutional government. Among its provisions are ones mandating the Department of Justice to carry out the following measures in times of national emergency: "Coordinate contingency planning for national security emergency law enforcement activities that are beyond the capabilities of State and local agencies; Develop national security emergency plans for regulation of immigration, regulation of nationals of enemy countries, and plans to implement laws for the control of persons entering or leaving the United States; Develop intergovernmental and interagency law enforcement plans to respond to civil disturbances that may result in a national security emergency or that occur during such an emergency; Support the Secretary of the Treasury in developing plans to control the movement of property entering and leaving the United States. . . ."

FEMA's technocratic dictatorship

Preparations for an "emergency" police state were put into high gear with the Carter administration. In 1979, Carter issued Presidential Review Memorandum 32, which created the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the secretive structure that coordinates all government emergency planning and preparedness, and reports directly to the National Security Council. Far from being a legitimate and long overdue serious attempt at civil defense, FEMA was conceived as a means of replacing constitutional government with a technocratic dictatorship.

FEMA has a group of 100 individuals positioned throughout the government bureaucracy—a sort of emergency government in the wings—known as the "continuity of government" structure. Among its members during the 1980s was Oliver North of "Project Democracy"—the apparatus identi-

fied by Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.) as the "parallel government" behind the Iran-Contra affair.

Plans for FEMA were drawn up by another key Project Democracy figure, Samuel Huntington, while working at the NSC. Huntington was the lead author of the 1975 Trilateral Commission report "The Crisis of Democracy," which called for slapping restrictions on democracy, because the world was entering an era of limited economic growth. "A government which lacks authority and which is committed to substantial domestic programs will have little ability, short of a cataclysmic crisis, to impose on its people the sacrifices which may be necessary," Huntington wrote. "We have come to recognize that there are potentially desirable limits to economic growth. There are also potentially desirable limits to the indefinite extension of political democracy."

There has been a noticeable increase in FEMA activity since the Bush team took office. Less than a year ago, for example, FEMA adopted emergency planning program called "graduated mobilization response" (GMR) Options, which, according to a FEMA official, "gives us the option of a phased civil emergency mobilization. In other words, we now have a series of options in between the two extremes of no mobilization, and all-out mobilization."

A recent report issued by Congress's Office of Technology Assessment says that GMR "provides a framework for mobilization planning in three incremental steps: planning and preparation, crisis management, and national emergency/war." In January 1990, a Defense Mobilization Order was issued, "which defines GMR, provides policy guidance, and further establishes a system for developing and implementing mobilization actions that are responsive to a wide range of national security threats and warnings."

Over the last months, a new FEMA command structure, dominated by Bush's old pals in the intelligence community, has been put in place. On Aug. 4, the Senate confirmed Wallace E. Stickney as the new FEMA director. Stickney was the Commissioner of Transportation of New Hampshire under Gov. John Sununu. He had earlier served as an Interior Department bureaucrat.

FEMA's new deputy director, confirmed in May, is Jerry Jennings. Jennings's background includes nearly a decade of White House service as an adviser to the President's assistant for national security affairs under four administrations, beginning in 1973. Prior to that, he worked for the CIA in the Far East (1965-68), and for the FBI, where he specialized in drugs.

Under Jennings in the FEMA command structure is Antonio Lopez, a retired Air Force colonel, who was sworn in as associate director for national preparedness programs on Nov. 21, 1989. Lopez retired from the Air Force after 27 years in 1982, and was involved in international corporate operations in Latin America. In 1988 he was deputy director of research for the George Bush for President and the Bush-Quayle campaign committees.