

U.S. Gov't Prepares for Collapse and Disruption

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
20 February 2009

Editor's roundup: Chris Hedges of Truthdig.com wrote a credible column on Feb. 16 titled "Bad News From America's Top Spy." This title did not provide a straightforward warning of the subjects within the article, reproduced below. First let us review three related, earlier stories on government plans for responding to national "disruptions."

In autumn of 2008 I read news reports that "an active military unit has been deployed inside the U.S. to help with 'civil unrest' and 'crowd control' -- matters traditionally handled by civilian authorities. This deployment jeopardizes the longstanding separation between civilian and military government..." according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The deployment was prior to the economy's clearly tanking (after years of punishing, record-high oil prices) and collapse commencing -- so some observers suspected the move was political.

Two months later I was not surprised to see the news story "U.S. Military Preparing for Domestic Disturbances" from Newsmax.com dated December 23, 2008. I had just been somehow added to their mailing list, and did not know they are right wing, so I was not prepared for this kind of story coming from anything but a group very critical of the Bush regime. (Perhaps Newsmax was getting ready to be very critical of Obama and his circle, which has happened.) Excerpt:

The report from the War College's Strategic Studies Institute warns that the U.S. military must prepare for a "violent, strategic dislocation inside the United States" that could be provoked by "unforeseen economic collapse" or "loss of functioning political and legal order."

The architect of the preparation does not sound like he appreciates the Posse Comitatus Act that restricts federal troops from carrying out law enforcement domestically. The report was by Jim Meyers, newsmax.com (links below).

Excerpt of the related story "Congress Seeks To Authorize & Legalize FEMA Camp Facilities":

...it appears as if these so called national emergency centers will be used in a national emergency but only if the national emergency requires large groups of people to be rounded up and detained. If that isn't the case, than why have these national emergency facilities built in military installations? ... the facilities will be used to meet other appropriate needs as determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security. This could mean anything. - Lee Rogers, Jan. 26, 2009
roguegovernment.com.

The article quotes from and critiques the bill in the U.S. House of Representatives called the National Emergency Centers Act or HR 645. Some particulars:

This bill if passed into law will direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish national emergency centers otherwise known as FEMA camp facilities on military installations. This is an incredibly disturbing piece of legislation considering that the powers that be have already set in motion an agenda to setup a nationwide martial law apparatus through U.S. Northern Command and the Department of Homeland Security. Apparently, the fusion centers, militarized police, surveillance cameras and a domestic military command is not enough. Even though we already know that detention facilities are already in place, they now want to legalize the construction of FEMA camps on military installations using the ever popular excuse that the facilities are for the purposes of a national emergency.

With the phony debt based economy getting worse and worse by the day, the possibility of civil unrest is becoming a greater threat to the establishment. One need only look at Iceland, Greece and other nations for what might happen in the United States next.

The U.S. government as well as civil society are relying on more than military/law enforcement to deal with collapse and disruptions, as evidenced by helpful programs for work and transitioning away from fossil fuels. Community groups and individuals are helping others to cope with poverty and related stress, and there's a vibrant movement for sustainable

living that goes to the root of most of the issues facing us as never before. Whether the government can turn around from its disgraceful role and policy regarding Katrina, and be a positive force in a time of unprecedented change, may be asking too much. But we can hope and agitate for the best.

- Jan Lundberg, founder Culture Change, oil-industry analyst

Bad News From America's Top Spy

By Chris Hedges, Feb. 16, 2009

Note: Below the article are comments on it from the Global Warming Crisis Council listserve..

Original photo blurb:

"Riots have become common occurrences in many countries as the financial meltdown continues. The U.S. military is preparing to quell civil unrest at home."

We have a remarkable ability to create our own monsters. A few decades of meddling in the Middle East with our Israeli doppelgänger and we get Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaida, the Iraqi resistance movement and a resurgent Taliban. Now we trash the world economy and destroy the ecosystem and sit back to watch our handiwork. Hints of our brave new world seeped out Thursday when Washington's new director of national intelligence, retired Adm. Dennis Blair, testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He warned that the deepening economic crisis posed perhaps our gravest threat to stability and national security. It could trigger, he said, a return to the "violent extremism" of the 1920s and 1930s.

It turns out that Wall Street, rather than Islamic jihad, has produced our most dangerous terrorists. You wouldn't know this from the Obama administration, which seems hellbent on draining the blood out of the body politic and transfusing it into the corpse of our financial system. But by the time Barack Obama is done all we will be left with is a corpse—a corpse and no blood. And then what? We will see accelerated plant and retail closures, inflation, an epidemic of bankruptcies, new rounds of foreclosures, bread lines, unemployment surpassing the levels of the Great Depression and, as Blair fears, social upheaval.

The United Nations' International Labor Organization estimates that some 50 million workers will lose their jobs worldwide this year. The collapse has already seen 3.6 million lost jobs in the United States. The International Monetary Fund's prediction for global economic growth in 2009 is 0.5 percent—the worst since World War II. There are 2.3 million properties in the United States that received a default notice or were repossessed last year. And this number is set to rise in 2009, especially as vacant commercial real estate begins to be foreclosed. About 20,000 major global banks collapsed, were sold or were nationalized in 2008. There are an estimated 62,000 U.S. companies expected to shut down this year. Unemployment, when you add people no longer looking for jobs and part-time workers who cannot find full-time employment, is close to 14 percent.

And we have few tools left to dig our way out. The manufacturing sector in the United States has been destroyed by globalization. Consumers, thanks to credit card companies and easy lines of credit, are \$14 trillion in debt. The government has pledged trillions toward the crisis, most of it borrowed or printed in the form of new money. It is borrowing trillions more to fund our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. And no one states the obvious: We will never be able to pay these loans back. We are supposed to somehow spend our way out of the crisis and maintain our imperial project on credit. Let our kids worry about it. There is no coherent and realistic plan, one built around our severe limitations, to stanch the bleeding or ameliorate the mounting deprivations we will suffer as citizens. Contrast this with the national security state's strategies to crush potential civil unrest and you get a glimpse of the future. It doesn't look good.

"The primary near-term security concern of the United States is the global economic crisis and its geopolitical implications," Blair told the Senate. "The crisis has been ongoing for over a year, and economists are divided over whether and when we could hit bottom. Some even fear that the recession could further deepen and reach the level of the Great Depression. Of course, all of us recall the dramatic political consequences wrought by the economic turmoil of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, the instability, and high levels of violent extremism."

The specter of social unrest was raised at the U.S. Army War College in November in a monograph [click on Polycypointers' pdf link to see the report] titled "Known Unknowns: Unconventional 'Strategic Shocks' in Defense Strategy Development." The military must be prepared, the document warned, for a "violent, strategic dislocation inside the United States," which could be provoked by "unforeseen economic collapse," "purposeful domestic resistance," "pervasive public health emergencies" or "loss of functioning political and legal order." The "widespread civil violence," the document said, "would force the defense establishment to reorient priorities in extremis to defend basic domestic order and human security."

"An American government and defense establishment lulled into complacency by a long-secure domestic order would be forced to rapidly divest some or most external security commitments in order to address rapidly expanding human insecurity at home," it went on.

"Under the most extreme circumstances, this might include use of military force against hostile groups inside the United States. Further, DoD [the Department of Defense] would be, by necessity, an essential enabling hub for the continuity of political authority in a multi-state or nationwide civil conflict or disturbance," the document read.

In plain English, something bureaucrats and the military seem incapable of employing, this translates into the imposition of martial law and a de facto government being run out of the Department of Defense. They are considering it. So should you.

Adm. Blair warned the Senate that "roughly a quarter of the countries in the world have already experienced low-level instability such as government changes because of the current slowdown." He noted that the "bulk of anti-state demonstrations" internationally have been seen in Europe and the former Soviet Union, but this did not mean they could not spread to the United States. He told the senators that the collapse of the global financial system is "likely to produce a wave of economic crises in emerging market nations over the next year." He added that "much of Latin America, former Soviet Union states and sub-Saharan Africa lack sufficient cash reserves, access to international aid or credit, or other coping mechanism."

"When those growth rates go down, my gut tells me that there are going to be problems coming out of that, and we're looking for that," he said. He referred to "statistical modeling" showing that "economic crises increase the risk of regime-threatening instability if they persist over a one to two year period."

Blair articulated the newest narrative of fear. As the economic unraveling accelerates we will be told it is not the bearded Islamic extremists, although those in power will drag them out of the Halloween closet when they need to give us an

exotic shock, but instead the domestic riffraff, environmentalists, anarchists, unions and enraged members of our dispossessed working class who threaten us. Crime, as it always does in times of turmoil, will grow. Those who oppose the iron fist of the state security apparatus will be lumped together in slick, corporate news reports with the growing criminal underclass.

The committee's Republican vice chairman, Sen. Christopher Bond of Missouri, not quite knowing what to make of Blair's testimony, said he was concerned that Blair was making the "conditions in the country" and the global economic crisis "the primary focus of the intelligence community."

The economic collapse has exposed the stupidity of our collective faith in a free market and the absurdity of an economy based on the goals of endless growth, consumption, borrowing and expansion. The ideology of unlimited growth failed to take into account the massive depletion of the world's resources, from fossil fuels to clean water to fish stocks to erosion, as well as overpopulation, global warming and climate change. The huge international flows of unregulated capital have wrecked the global financial system. An overvalued dollar (which will soon deflate), wild tech, stock and housing financial bubbles, unchecked greed, the decimation of our manufacturing sector, the empowerment of an oligarchic class, the corruption of our political elite, the impoverishment of workers, a bloated military and defense budget and unrestrained credit binges have conspired to bring us down. The financial crisis will soon become a currency crisis. This second shock will threaten our financial viability. We let the market rule. Now we are paying for it.

The corporate thieves, those who insisted they be paid tens of millions of dollars because they were the best and the brightest, have been exposed as con artists. Our elected officials, along with the press, have been exposed as corrupt and spineless corporate lackeys. Our business schools and intellectual elite have been exposed as frauds. The age of the West has ended. Look to China. Laissez-faire capitalism has destroyed itself. It is time to dust off your copies of Marx.

[comments from Culture Change readers further below]

* * * * *

Federal troops for law enforcement is illegal:

from Wikipedia:

The Posse Comitatus Act is a United States federal law (18 U.S.C. § 1385) passed on June 16, 1878 after the end of Reconstruction, with the intention (in concert with the Insurrection Act of 1807) of substantially limiting the powers of the federal government to use the military for law enforcement. The Act prohibits most members of the federal uniformed services (today the Army, Air Force, and State National Guard forces when such are called into federal service) from exercising nominally state law enforcement, police, or peace officer powers that maintain "law and order" on non-federal property (states and their counties and municipal divisions) in the former Confederate states.

The statute generally prohibits federal military personnel and units of the National Guard under federal authority from acting in a law enforcement capacity within the United States, except where expressly authorized by the Constitution or Congress. The Coast Guard is exempt from the Act.

Discussion on Global Warming Crisis Council listserve (founded by Culture Change; sign up on our website) Feb. 20 2009 regarding "Bad News From America's Top Spy" that the listserve simply called "Collapse" in the Subject line:

The only aspect of Hedge's article I disagree with is the concluding sentence. Boning up on Marxism isn't the path to a sustainable future. At a fundamental

level Marxism and Capitalism are both systems of economic determinism. While Marxism at least admits the natural world has intrinsic value, all it does is substitute who rules the means of production. The paradigm of Industrialism escapes pretty much unscathed. Force-based ranking hierarchies of domination and control remain untouched, unexamined, sacrosanct.

Of course, you're quite correct Wanda that the question remains of how do we prepare? Either for the inevitable collapse of the current system of Western civilization -- characterized by free-market ideology, elite rule and military imperialism -- or for the creation of a systemic alternative of equity and cooperation with the entire web of life while we still have some resources remaining and the ability to widely disseminate the necessary information.

I think the answer is quite literally staring us in the face, we've simply been indoctrinated to believe it isn't possible. And we must deeply examine that story. We're being told that thinking and acting the way that nature works is unnatural. That it will bring a halt to human progress and we'll plummet into global poverty and barbarism.

Does that actually make rational sense without blindly accepting the bedrock assumptions of bankers and generals?

* * *

If you have a true economic collapse you will have roving gangs of thugs with guns. There is a reason why people have formed societies paying taxes to support a militia, police dept, etc.

* * *

[response] Perhaps... though I think we can make the case that, in "society", the "roving gangs of thugs with guns" are still very much in evidence. They simply happen to wear nice suits and hold positions of authority and influence in government, the military, and the corporations. And they have a larger mission (larger than the feared post-collapse gangs out to take your food and rape your women-folk), which is to exploit the living planet to the last life available in an insane and doomed attempt to enrich themselves.

I guess I'd prefer my thugs to work on the local level, rather than be empowered by fossil fuels, the consensus delusion, and the global industrial machine to kill pretty much everything. Dealing with local thugs feels like a suitable karmic task, one which I will undertake gladly in the ruins of that larger machine.

* * *

[another response to the "roving gangs" post]
That's very true, but I'm not sure it's the reason you're thinking of. The PoliceState will be more likely to round me up than to protect me should collapse and chaos ensue from our cultural inability to act fully human.

What we consider to be an economy today is nothing more than a story. It could blow away on the next gentle breeze with little notice within the underlying fabric. Of course, considering the power of stories, it is unlikely to do so without active cooperation.

* * *

There are already roving gangs of thugs with guns. They're called the military and police. The reason "people have formed societies paying taxes" is because long ago (at the start of cities) some people began controlling the food supply (the first cities had walls NOT around the outside to protect from mauraunders, but around the grainaries, so "kings" could control food) which meant they controlled labor (If you don't work for me, you starve to death).

Yes, as current society collapses, different gangs will take over. We need only look at Democratic Republic of Congo to see what happens to women when a patriarchal society undergoes massive organized collapse. The rapes (which are already happening elsewhere: 25 percent of all women in the US are raped in their lifetimes, and another 19 percent fend off rape attempts) become what one woman calls "more organized." What we should do to prepare for this: it's another form of relocalization: we should start forming communities where rape is unacceptable, and where it is defended against. We can generalize this such that our defense against the new thugs as this culture collapses is to have viable communities capable of many things, including self-defense.

References and further reading:

"Bad News From America's Top Spy" by Chris Hedges:

truthdig.com

"U.S. Military Preparing for Domestic Disturbances":

newsmax.com

"Congress Seeks To Authorize & Legalize FEMA Camp Facilities":

roguegovernment.com

Text of H.R. 645: National Emergency Centers Establishment Act:
govtrack.us

"ACLU Demands Information On Military Deployment Within U.S. Borders: Deployment Erodes Longstanding Separation Between Civilian And Military Government" Oct. 21, 2008:
aclu.org

"US Army unit deployed to home front: Nonlethal force for civil unrest" by Andrew Orlowski, Sept. 25, 2008:
theregister.co.uk

"Mystery Prison Buses in the Desert" by Ellen Brown, Jan. 22, 2009:
globalresearch.ca

This article is published under Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. See the Fair Use Notice for more information.