

With Military Aid Response, Bush is Again Up To No Good

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With Military Aid Response, Bush is Again Up To No Good
by Jim Fetzer

In case it has not struck you already, President Bush is quietly promoting the idea that the military is the only organization that is prepared to undertake rapid disaster relief. This, of course, is quite absurd, because the military, such as the 82nd Airborne, is trained to kill while the National Guard is trained for disaster relief.

In the past, FEMA has been the organization leading the government's response to natural disasters. Having the National Guard in Iraq and having the 82nd Airborne in New Orleans makes no sense at all - unless something's up.

This is especially true given the long list of voluntary efforts to bring help to New Orleans that were thwarted by FEMA. There are too many for it not to have been deliberate, even to excluding morticians who were willing to come and handle the bodies. Instead, a private company with a history of mishandling bodies was hired to perform this duty. The benefit, I suspect, is being private, they can be controlled by FEMA in ways that voluntary morticians could not be, which might matter if you want to keep the body count down.

Consider some of the headlines that have emerged during this disaster about FEMA's behavior, from news sources including the New York Times, Chicago Tribune and WWL-TV New Orleans, as well as FEMA's own news releases. Notice any pattern?

- . FEMA won't accept Amtrak's help in evacuations
- . FEMA turns away experienced firefighters
- . FEMA turns back Wal-Mart supply trucks
- . FEMA prevents Coast Guard from delivering diesel fuel
- . FEMA won't let Red Cross deliver food
- . FEMA bars morticians from entering New Orleans
- . FEMA blocks 500-boat citizen flotilla from delivering aid
- . FEMA fails to utilize Navy ship with 600-bed hospital on board
- . FEMA to Chicago: Send just one truck
- . FEMA turns away generators
- . FEMA: 'First responders urged not to respond'

This is not the organization that earned the admiration of the world for its efficiency and reliability during the Clinton administration, when its director was not a political hack. But the pattern of turning away sources of assistance that could have substantially reduced the impact of the disaster appears to reflect a deliberate decision to use FEMA to withhold assistance rather than to provide it. Was it intended to turn a bad situation into a worse one and then send in the military to make it look as though only the military could do the job?

What is most troublesome about the 82nd Airborne is not merely that it has no training for disaster relief, but that dispatching it for this purpose -

which is a form of police function -- violates the Posse Comitatus Act, which forbids using the military for such purposes. It appears to me that Bush wants the law to be changed to permit this, so when he begins dispatching the Army to cities and towns across the country (to bring us under military control), it will not be so blatantly illegal.

My fear is that these guys will do whatever it takes to retain their power, which may even include suspending the Constitution.

With the Republican grip on Congress, I suspect that a move in this direction might even pass both houses and could become law, unless there is a filibuster against it by someone who grasps the grave threat it poses to our Constitution and the rule of law. Not that these guys respect the rule of law; they just want to bend it and change it enough to turn it to their own malevolent purposes, no matter how contrary to the good of our country. Perhaps the loss of former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay will weaken support for action of this kind. But Bush is slyly advancing the idea that Congress should change the law to give the military a new role in policing the nation. And this appears to be the reason the 82nd Airborne was in New Orleans.

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