

Don't Look Now, But Here Come the Thought Police

Jon Spitz – December 13, 2007

As the Bush regime's attack on Iran becomes an ever more likely possibility, it then becomes no idle curiosity to ask what the economic and political consequences of this unconscionable act might be here in the United States?

War with Iran would likely shut off the flow of Middle Eastern oil and cause an immediate meltdown of the global economy. This shut off of oil will have a disproportionately devastating impact here in America since our economy and lifestyle is more dependent on oil than any other country in the world. As gasoline supplies run short Americans will panic and a climate of fear and a state of emergency will take hold.

Going to war with Iran has been central to Vice President Dick Cheney's neocon vision for world dominance (see the "Project for a New American Century") since even before Bush seized power in 2001; over the past seven years in office they have been methodically constructing an extra-constitutional authoritarian form of government to maintain control over the state of emergency they know will ensue from their self-induced oil crisis.

Immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Bush began to put in place a series of secret operations that were ostensibly to defend America against terrorism but in fact were major arrogations of constitutional authority.

With the so called "war on terror" as his justification Bush, unilaterally claimed the authority to name anyone he chooses as an "enemy combatant" and to then secretly abduct and detain them indefinitely without any legal right to challenge his detention (the human right known as habeas corpus). Bush further claimed to be exempt from the international Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war and then authorized the secret use of torture by US agents on detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Abu Ghraib, Iraq, and many other secret detention centers around the world. Bush also initiated a secret program of warrantless wiretaps in conspiracy with major telecommunications companies in violation of the "Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA)" and the Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution which prohibits unreasonable searches.

As these unconstitutional secret operations eventually became public through leaks from within the government bureaucracy, the Congress under both Republican and Democratic leadership failed to follow through on their constitutional responsibility to hold the president accountable by passing legislation that retroactively legalized his crimes (see the "Military Commissions Act of 2006" and the "Protect America Act of 2007").

The Supreme Court, on the other hand, has twice ruled against Bush on his denial of habeas corpus to detainees; despite these rulings Bush still detains hundreds of people in detention centers without charge and without any prospects of a trial. A third habeas

corpus case brought by detainees was just heard by the Supreme Court this December in which the Court will decide whether or not a “secret military tribunal” where the detainees don’t even get to see the evidence against them is substantially the same as habeas corpus. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy is the swing vote who will decide this case and so determine the fate of habeas corpus. Gulp.

Most Americans are not concerned about the preservation of their right to a fair trial or their right not to be tortured or kidnapped or spied upon because they figure these kinds of impositions on human rights only happen to the bad guys. Wrong! When the oil crisis hits and the Bush regime wants to suppress public dissent against its fascist rule, there will be nothing to stop them from declaring their political opposition “enemy combatants” and then deny brave and patriotic American citizens these same basic human rights.

On October 17th, 2006 President Bush signed into law the “John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007,” which had hidden among its hundreds of pages a few paragraphs that authorize the president to station military troops anywhere in the United States and to take control of state-based National Guard units without the consent of the governor or local authorities in order to "suppress public disorder" in cases of “national emergency”. This Act effectively repeals the “Posse Comitatus Act of 1878” which placed strict prohibitions on military involvement in domestic law enforcement.

On May 9th, 2007, President Bush, quietly signed the “National Security Presidential Directive 51” which in effect supercedes the “National Emergencies Act of 1976” that gave Congress the final say over the president’s emergency powers. By signing this directive Bush has unilaterally granted himself dictatorial powers to declare a national state of emergency and to take over all local law enforcement functions and direct all private sector activities without any Congressional approval.

The constitutionality of these major expansions of presidential power has not been decided by the Supreme Court, so when the oil crisis hits there will be nothing to stop Bush from declaring martial law and simply suspending the Constitution all together.

Even as Bush has laid the legal groundwork for his fascist takeover he has also ordered various law enforcement agencies to prepare for and actually practice crowd control techniques and mass detentions on the American people.

To control the large numbers of protestors who greet Bush wherever he goes, the US Secret Service, the FBI and local police have all collaborated to create what they call “free speech zones” in which peaceful demonstrators are herded into fenced-off high security areas far out of sight from Bush and the mainstream media. What ever happened to all of America being a “free speech zone”?

Under Bush the Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agency has instituted a policy called (I kid you not) “Endgame” in which they make surprise raids on companies suspected of employing undocumented immigrants and detain hundreds of

people, most of whom are legal residents. In one such military style raid in 2006 heavily armed ICE agents simultaneously entered Swift Co. slaughterhouses in six different States. They separated out the Latino workers from the whites and only detained the Latinos. The detainees were denied access to bathrooms and telephones and the many US citizens and legal residents among them were not told of their constitutional rights. Of the 12,000 detainees only 65 were eventually charged with any wrongdoing. On any given day ICE holds approximately 26,000 people in detention. After the oil crisis hits this control technique of mass detention could easily be expanded to target groups of white resisters against the Bush regime.

Hurricane Katrina provided Bush with the perfect national emergency to practice using Federal control over local law enforcement and to hire private security contractors like Blackwater to protect rich white people and their property while at the same time treating the many tens of thousands of poor black people fleeing the storm as if they were common criminals. Bush has turned the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is supposed to help people during times of national emergency into just another arm of the police state.

San Diego County California has a program called “Project 100%” where local law enforcement agents show up unannounced and without warrants at the homes of welfare recipients and search their homes including the insides of cabinets and closets. Applicants who refuse to let the agents in are generally denied benefits. This program is ostensibly to find welfare cheats but in fact is a blatant violation of our Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches. These homes are being searched merely because the residents applied for a legal government service, not because there is probable cause that they actually committed a crime. The US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, the most “liberal” of the 12 US Circuit Courts of Appeal, ruled against the welfare recipients Fourth Amendment rights claims and in late November 2007 the US Supreme Court declined to hear the final appeal which lets this ruling stand. After the oil crisis hits such court sanctioned unannounced warrantless home searches could quickly be expanded to include any American citizen who stands up in opposition to the fascist state.

House Resolution 1955 called the “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007” is now working its way through Congress (it passed the House on a 404 to 6 vote and is awaiting action by the Senate). Sponsored by Democratic Representative Jane Harmon, this bill is ostensibly for the purpose of protecting the American people against violent extremist political groups that operate within our borders; but in fact what it does is set up a system whereby the government has the unchallenged authority to define what constitutes an extremist ideology and to preemptively target those people for corrective law enforcement simply for having such thoughts. This bill does nothing less than establish a national Thought Police. Ominously, HR 1955 specifically identifies the Internet as the communication network of choice for “homegrown terrorists.” Internet censorship is on the way to stifle political organizing against the Bush regime after the oil crisis hits.

So here we sit, on the brink, with Bush poised to bomb Iran and send the US into an oil crisis that will destroy our economy and create a severe state of national emergency. And in the shock, confusion, fear and anger of the moment Bush is primed to declare martial law and take full authoritarian control over the United States.

You will not find a coherent analysis of Bush's fascist takeover of America in the mainstream media and most Americans remain blissfully ignorant of all this, but there are a number of excellent books now available that do a superb job of chronicling these events and connecting the dots. Here are four: "Shock Doctrine" by Naomi Klein; "The End of America" by Naomi Wolf; "Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic" by Chalmers Johnson; and "It Can Happen Here" by Joe Conason.