

# The Establishment of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The following text comprises footnote 23 in Chapter 8 of *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States*, by Ward Churchill & Jim Vander Wall, *South End Press*, updated edition 2002.

An earlier edition of the book is available in its entirety thanks to the work of Paul Wolf, at [www.cointel.org](http://www.cointel.org):

Preface -- **The Face of COINTELPRO**  
Introduction -- **A Glimpse Into the Files of America's Political Police**  
Chapter 1 -- **Understanding Deletions in FBI Documents**  
Chapter 2 -- **COINTELPRO -- CP/USA**  
Chapter 3 -- **COINTELPRO -- SWP**  
Chapter 4 -- **COINTELPRO -- Puerto Rican Independence Movement**  
Chapter 5 -- **COINTELPRO -- Black Liberation Movement**  
Chapter 6 -- **COINTELPRO -- New Left**  
Chapter 7 -- **COINTELPRO -- AIM**  
Chapter 8 -- **Conclusion: COINTELPRO Lives On**

A development roughly corresponding with the emergence of the JTTF was the establishment of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through Jimmy Carter's E.O. 12148, in 1979. This was an extension from the Federal Emergency Preparedness Agency (FEPA), created in 1976, under Gerald Ford's E.O. 11921.

In 1980, with the advent of the Reagan administration, FEMA was used as the vehicle for creation of a quasi-secret, centralized "national emergency" entity, headed by a federal "emergency czar." Appointed into the latter position was Louis O. Giuffrida, the former national guard general and counterinsurgency enthusiast who had built up the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) and contributed heavily to the Garden Plot and Cable Splicer plans of the late 1960s and early '70s, before going on to serve as a government consultant during the repression of AIM and during the 1979 "counterterrorism conference" held in Puerto Rico, among other things (see Chapters 4 and 7).

While FEMA's charter called for planning and training activities concerning "natural disasters, nuclear war, the possibility of enemy attack on U.S. territory, and incidents involving domestic civil unrest," Giuffrida focused his agency's energy and resources entirely upon the last category. By January 1982, this emphasis had led to the preparation of a joint FEMA-Pentagon position paper, entitled "The Civil/Military Alliance in Emergency Management," which effectively voided provisions of the 1877 Posse Comitatus Act (prohibiting military intervention in domestic disturbances).

The plan was considerably reinforced by Reagan's top secret National Security Decision Directive (NSDD 26) during the spring of 1982, a pronouncement which appears to have formally interlocked FEMA, not only with the military but with the National Security Council (NSC).

By 1984, Giuffrida had installed his old friend General Frank S. Salcedo, another counterinsurgency expert, as head of the agency's "Civil Security Division" (CSD) and had established a "Civil Defense Training Center" -- based on the CSTI model -- near Emmitsville, Maryland. Here, more than 1,000 civilian police from around the country received what FEMA euphemistically referred to as "military police methods" for quelling domestic political unrest.

Meanwhile, in cooperation with the Pentagon and various federal and local police agencies, CSD engaged in a series of national training exercises -- "Proud Saber/Rex-82, "Pre-Nest," and "Rex-84/ Night Train," etc. -- in preparation for a suspension of the constitution in case of massive domestic political turmoil. The exercises envisioned "at least 100,000" U.S. citizens, identified as "national security threats" being rounded up and thrown into concentration camps for unspecified periods.

Simultaneously, FEMA was opening files on the U.S. activists who would comprise those interned whenever the exercise plans were put into "real world" practice. This last placed FEMA in direct conflict with the FBI, precipitating a power struggle in which Bureau Director William Sessions ultimately prevailed, compelling Giuffrida to turn over the more than 12,000 political dossiers his agency had already assembled.

The contest had also brought Attorney General William French Smith into the fray, a matter which led the Justice Department to conclude that FEMA's activities were openly unconstitutional and "seek to establish new Federal Government management structures or otherwise task Cabinet departments and other federal agencies."

The structural outcome of this dispute is unclear. However, the issue seems to have been resolved in immediate sense by the FBI -- well aware of the personal venality often associated with those who make a fetish of enforcing political orthodoxy opening an investigation into the possibility that Giuffrida had misappropriated government funds.

The Bureau was quickly able to determine that the FEMA boss had engaged in "de facto nepotism" by placing only his cronies in key positions within his agency, and had mis-spent taxpayer monies by, among other things, lavishing \$170,000 in furnishings upon an opulent bachelor pad for himself.

In 1985, Giuffrida quietly resigned, taking most of his "crew" with him when he went. Since then, FEMA has been more-or-less back-burnered, its core political activities incorporated under the mantle of the FBI-dominated JTTF.

For further information, see Reynolds, Diana, "FEMA and the NSC: The Rise of the National Security State," *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, No. 33, Winter 1990.

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