

The Doomsday Playbooks

The Federal Government's "Continuity of Government" Plan & the Continuity of America Plan

"All political power is inherent in the people, and governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and are established to protect and maintain individual rights."

"A frequent recurrence to fundamental principles is essential to the security of individual right and the perpetuity of free government."

--The Constitution of the State of Washington

By Theodore Dana Hall, Ph.D.

You wake up early some morning, say July 12th, 2007, turn on the radio and hear some terrible news ... Washington D.C. has been devastated by a terrorist attack. "Moments after the attack," the newscaster says, "the government's 'Dooms Day Plan' was activated. The leadership of the United States is now in the hands of 'capable individuals' appointed by President Bush. Still no word on the fate of the president...."

The government has a plan to ensure the survival of its central command capability in case the nation's capital suffers a catastrophe of one sort or another. This essay takes a quick look at the government's *Doomsday Continuity of Government* playbook, and goes on to suggest that a complementary plan is necessary and readily within our grasp. I call it the *Continuity of America* plan.

The Government's Plan

On March 1, 2002, CNN reported: "Nearly six months after the September 11 attacks, a 'shadow government' of senior federal agency officials remains in place at secure locations outside Washington as precaution against a catastrophic attack on the nation's capital.... Guidelines date back to Cold War preparations for the prospect of a

devastating nuclear attack on the United States, and were last *significantly revised* [italics mine] in the Reagan administration.”

The contingency “shadow” government, which operates under the direction of the Office of the Vice President, remains in place today. Clearly, it is prudent for the government to have a back-up command center. It would not take much to bring the city of Washington to a grinding halt, a single Ebola-infected America-hater dropping dead on a D.C. street, for instance.

Information as to the history and nature of the back-up system has been available to the public since November 17, 1991, on which date CNN televised a Special Assignment report titled “The Doomsday Government.”

“In the United States today, the report begins, “there is a hidden government about which you know nothing.” The report goes on to provide an overview of the “hidden government”: “Of all the black programs [*black* meaning highly secret, not necessarily negative] almost none is more hidden than COG. Continuity of Government. It is our government’s plan to make sure it survives a nuclear attack. Its nickname is—the Dooms Day Program. The secret Continuity of Government programs are managed by a super-secret agency known as the NPO—or National Program Office.”

The CNN report on the continuity apparatus is not favorable. It identifies two major failures:

*”Sources tell CNN that as much as \$8 billion dollars has been spent on the NPO program since 1982. Much of this on high-tech, nuclear-resistant communications gear. To build this post-nuclear communications system, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hired the Harris Corporation. The CIA hired McDonnell Douglas. [The Department of] Defense hired T.R.W. The State Department used government equipment. [M]ultiple sources say that the systems were technically incompatible. In other words, they couldn’t talk to each other.”

*”Our sources told us that the NPO’s immunity from oversight allowed problems [such as the above] to spiral so out-of-control that an outrageous fraud was perpetrated by the NPO on the very Senators and Congressmen who were authorizing taxpayer money to pay for the program....”

The fraud? In late 1985, Washington bigwigs, including Tip O’Neil and Robert Byrd, were invited to view a test of the communications system. “NPO officials were afraid the system would fail in front of their powerful guests, so they rigged the test.”

CNN cites an insider who is called “Bob”: “*At one point information was supposed to be sent out and even though lights were blinking and the wheels were turning, a message was being sent by pay phone about a block and a half from the site where the exercise was taking place.... Millions of dollars worth of equipment failed to function correctly, and 25 or 50 cents worth of change in a pay telephone got the message through.*”

This fraud was not the item I found most disturbing in the CNN report. For me, the really disturbing item was one that CNN glossed right over: “Ronald Reagan authorized the National Program Office when he signed a top secret Directive in 1982.”

Who made Ronald Reagan *King of America*, with the power to issue proclamations, indeed secret proclamations? As the said directive is “top secret,” how are *We the People* to know it’s authentic? Indeed, how do we know it even exists? Further ... what other secret directives did Reagan sign? And what about subsequent presidents? What secret directives did they sign?

At the moment, we are learning that President Bush has issued a series of classified directives that authorize domestic surveillance and who knows what else. “Though the details remain highly classified, the ‘National Security Presidential Directives’ called for an all-out war on terrorism, including, it is generally believed, expanded electronic surveillance....” (*Newsweek*, 22 May 06)

Another quite disturbing matter is reported by CNN: “*The Constitution of the United States and other supporting laws clearly spell out the line of presidential succession, so that no matter what happens there will always be a continuity in leadership. But in our year-long investigation, Special Assignment has learned that the National Program Office, the hidden bureaucracy that manages the most secret parts of these Continuity of Government plans, has created another top-secret succession plan which is completely unknown to the people of the United States. And known to only a few in government.*”

The point of this essay is not to reiterate the view that the COG plan was ill-conceived and ill-executed (CNN has already done that), but to remind the American public that on the day after the devastating event, the day after the nullification of normal governmental operations in D.C., they will have *no* contingency plan.

Don’t you think you, your family, your community, your state ought to have some sort of continuity plan? You (personally) are, after all, “government”—in the sense that the power of government is inherent in you. As the constitution of my home state declares, “*All political power is inherent in the people, and governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and are established to protect and maintain individual rights.*”

Further, the “mission” of this essay (everyone and everything seem to have a *mission* these days) is to indicate that there are important precedents in our history that can assist us in the development of a “Continuity of America” plan--a plan far more inclusive than the COG plan. So ... let’s start by taking a brief look at the historical record.

Nullifications One and Two

You may recall from your history books that the federal government has been nullified before. Twice, in fact. During the War of 1812, the British invaded Washington, causing our elected officials and their kin to run for their lives, literally. The city of Washington was left in smoking ruins, but as the old-time politicians were pretty good runners, unlike most of our current politicians, the government was re-assembled in no time at all.

In the second case, the federal government was nullified by a group of Southern states that decided to secede from the Union. Congress adjourned without setting a date for re-convening, and President Lincoln found himself having to run the country, what was left of it, all by himself. This he did, by inventing a device called the “Executive Order.” It was Lincoln alone who decided, against the advice of many, to go to war against the rebel states. Thus was born the “imperial presidency.”

Let us suppose now the Confederate army had followed up its win at the first battle of Bull Run by invading Washington and capturing President Lincoln, which would have meant the *complete* nullification of the federal government. What would have happened to the *Union cause*?

The Union cause would have been sustained, with the leadership of that cause falling to the governors of the Northern states, some of whom were more hawkish than Lincoln. Lincoln asked for 75,000 recruits for the war effort; the Northern governors recruited some 300,000! The Northern governors would have met in council, and acting as the provisional government, the council would have appointed a contingency president and re-established a federal government headquarters in one of the Northern cities, probably New York or Boston.

The Constitution being in abeyance, the contingency government might well have established itself, provisionally, on the precursor document to the Constitution—the Articles of Confederation. The Articles served as supreme law of the land between 1781 and 1789. That brief period was not *long, long ago* to the people of Lincoln’s time; no, it was *just yesterday*. Interestingly, the Articles did not establish a presidency, which gives us a clue as to what the first constitution-makers thought of chief executives. They thought them dangerous.

What the Northern governors would have done had Lincoln been captured is, of course, a matter of speculation. What the Southern governors managed to do, however, is a matter of historical record. In very short order, Southern leaders adopted a constitution and established a central government, one that proved capable of fighting a five-year war against the North, which had a far greater advantage in men and war materiel.

A point to underline: Our history bears witness to the fact that the nullification of the central government is in no way synonymous with “Doomsday.” Nullification may be a great inconvenience, but it’s not the end of the world.

(continued in Part II)