

Operation Falcon and the Looming Police State

By Mike Whitney

02/26/07 "ICH" --- - On 29th June, 1934, Chancellor Adolph Hitler, accompanied by the Schutzstaffel (SS), arrived at Wiese, where he personally arrested the leader of the Sturm Abteilung (SA), Ernst Roehm. During the next 24 hours 200 other senior SA officers were arrested on the way to Wiese. Many were shot as soon as they were captured but Hitler decided to pardon Roehm because of his past service to the movement. However, after much pressure from Hermann Goering and Heinrich Himmler, Hitler agreed that Roehm should die. At first Hitler insisted that Roehm should be allowed to commit suicide but, when he refused, Roehm was shot by two SS men. (Spartacus.schoolnet.co)

Later, Hitler delivered a speech at the Reichstag in which he justified the murders of his rivals saying:

"If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice, then all I can say is this: In this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby I became the supreme judge of the German people. It was no secret that this time the revolution would have to be bloody; when we spoke of it we called it 'The Night of the Long Knives.' Everyone must know for all future time that if he raises his hand to strike the State, then certain death is his lot."

The Night of the Long Knives is seen by many as the turning point where Hitler made it clear that he was above the law and the supreme leader of the German people.

Operation Falcon: Blueprint for removing dissidents and political rivals

The Bush administration has carried out three massive sweeps in the last two years, rolling up more than 30,000 minor crooks and criminals, without as much as a whimper of protest from the public.

Operation Falcon is the clearest indication yet that the Bush administration is fine-tuning its shock-troops so it can roll up tens of thousands of people at a moment's notice and toss them into the newly-built Halliburton detention centers. This should be a red flag for anyone who cares at all about human rights, civil liberties, or simply saving his own skin.

Operation Falcon was allegedly the brainchild of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and his counterpart in the US Marshal's office, (Director) Ben Reyna. But its roots go much deeper into the nexus of right-wing Washington think tanks where fantasies of autocratic government have a long history. The name, Falcon, is an acronym for "Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally." It relates to the more than 960 state, local and federal agencies which are directly involved in the administration's expansive criminal dragnets.

Typically, law enforcement agencies are protective of their own turf and wary of outside intervention. The Falcon program overrides these concerns by streamlining the information-sharing processes and setting up a chain-of-command structure that radiates from the Justice Department. This removes many of the traditional obstacles to agency interface. It also relocates the levers of power in Washington where they can be manned by members of the Bush administration.

Dictatorships require strong centralized authority and the Falcon program is a logical corollary of that ambition. It creates new inroads for Bush to assume greater control over the nationwide police-state apparatus. That alone should be sufficient reason for alarm.

The first Operation Falcon took place during the week of April 4 to April 10, 2005. According to the US Marshal's official website, "The emphasis centered on gang related crimes, homicides, crimes involving use of a weapon, crimes against children and the elderly, crimes involving sexual assaults, organized crime and drug related fugitives, and other crimes of violence." More than 10,000 criminal suspects were arrested in a matter of days. It was the largest criminal sweep in the nation's history and, according to U.S. Marshall chief Ben Reyna, "produced the largest number of arrests ever recorded during a single initiative." The Washington Times noted, "The sweep was a virtual clearinghouse for warrants on drug, gang, gun and sex-offender suspects nationwide."

The emphasis was clearly on quantity not quality.

Still, this doesn't explain why state and federal agencies had to be integrated with local law enforcement simply to carry out routine police work.

More importantly, it doesn't explain why local police ignored their duty to protect the public just so they could coordinate with outside agencies. According to one report "162 accused or convicted of murder" were picked up in the first sweep. That means that the police knowingly left murderers on the street and put the public at risk while they orchestrated their raids with federal agencies.

That's irresponsible. It also suggests that there may be a more sinister motive behind the program than just ensuring public safety. The plan appears to have been devised to enhance the powers of the "unitary" executive by putting state and local law enforcement under federal supervision. Once again, it's an attempt by the administration to extend its grip to the state and local level. We saw a similar strategy unfold after Hurricane Katrina when the Bush administration used the tragedy to seize control of local police and National Guard units so they could establish de facto martial law. Troops, armored vehicles and mercenaries were deployed to New Orleans to fight lawlessness and looting even though desperate people were still stranded on their rooftops waiting for food, water and medical attention.

Operation FALCON II was another massive dragnet which covered the western half of the country and focused primarily on "violent sex offenders". The raids took place from April 17-23, and succeeded in apprehending 9,037 alleged fugitives. The US Marshals web site boasts that the operation "took some of the country's most dangerous wanted criminals off the streets and made America's communities safer".

Nonsense. Despite the claims of success, only 462 "violent sex crime" suspects were arrested, along with 1,094 "unregistered sex offenders" and other minor "sex crime" suspects. That leaves 7,481 suspects who were rounded up for other unrelated reasons.

Who are they and what crime did they commit? Were these drug violations, dads who were delinquent on child-support payments, traffic tickets, jay-walking?!?

7,481 people who were incarcerated are unaccounted by the government's estimate. This means that the bulk of them were probably undocumented workers who were shunted off to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization) or dispatched to Cheney's tent-city gulags in western Texas. (See: Democracy Now "Human Rights Groups Call for Closure of Texas Jail Holding Undocumented Immigrants" 2-23-07)

Similar inconsistencies appear in "Operation FALCON III, which covered the eastern half of the country from October 22 - 28, 2006." State, local and federal police-units arrested 10,773 fugitives; including 1,659 sex offenders, 971 unregistered sex offenders, 364 gang members, 140 homicide suspects, and 3,609 drug violations. Once again, the US Marshal's

official tally doesn't pencil out. This time, 4,030 extra people were rounded up without any further explanation.

Who are they and have they been charged with a crime?

Furthermore, sex offenders, drug users and gang-bangers are not what we normally consider "some of the country's most dangerous wanted criminals". In fact, there are indications that the great majority of these people are not violent at all. For example, of the 30,110 total fugitives who were apprehended in all three Falcon sweeps, a measly 586 firearms were seized.

Clearly, the people who were arrested for the most part were not "armed and dangerous" nor were they a serious threat to public safety. They were probably just the unwitting victims of an overzealous US Marshals office and an ideologically-driven Justice Department.

So, what was the real impetus for the Falcon raids? Was it just a bean-counting exercise to see how many people would fit in the back of a Paddy-wagon or are they a dress rehearsal for future crackdowns on potential enemies of the state?

Bogus News Reports

The Falcon operation illustrates the incestuous relationship between the media and the state. They are two wings on the same plane. The Justice Department provided the TV networks with official footage of policemen and government agents raiding homes and handcuffing suspects; and the media dutifully aired the video on stations across the country. The scenes were accompanied by a reassuring commentary lauding the administration's new crime fighting strategies and linking homeland security with the nebulous war on terror.

Attorney General Gonzales told reporters, "Operation FALCON is an excellent example of President Bush's direction and the Justice Department's dedication to deal both with the terrorist threat and traditional violent crime." He added, "This joint effort shows the commitment of our federal, state, and local partners to make our neighborhoods safer, and it has led to the highest number of arrests ever recorded for a single initiative of its kind."

So far, not one of the more than 30,000 victims has been charged with a terror-related crime.

The media-hype surrounding the raids has been celebratory and uniform; cookie-cutter articles appeared throughout the US press (most of them unsourced) highlighting the cooperation between the diverse agencies while providing an upbeat account of what amounts to police repression. Thousands of nearly identical articles appeared in the nation's newspapers which seem to have been authored by high-ranking officials at Homeland Security and protégés of George Orwell; although the difference between the two is far from certain.

Even stranger, most of the articles in the mainstream media can no longer be retrieved via a Google search. They seem to have vanished into the black-hole of Homeland propaganda.

No matter. If the media was supposed to make Gestapo-like crackdowns look like normal police operations; they succeeded admirably. Mission accomplished.

Former Governor of Louisiana, Huey Long once opined, "When fascism comes to America, it will come wrapped in an American flag." Indeed, he could have added that the corporate media will gladly provide the flag and the public relations campaign as they have with Falcon.

Falcon; new drills for a new world order

The Falcon operations can only be understood in the broader context of the ongoing assault on the constitutional system of checks and balances; including the repeal of habeas corpus, warrantless wiretaps and searches, and the use of torture.

For the last 6 years, the Bush administration has been busy dismantling the legal safeguards which protect the citizen from the arbitrary and, oftentimes, ruthless actions of the state. To that end, detention camps are being prepared by Halliburton within the U.S., secret courts have been established which deny due process of law, American citizens are arrested without charge, law enforcement is increasingly militarized, and the media has strengthened its alliance with the central government.

Additionally, in October 2006, George Bush quietly changed the Insurrection Act, which prevented the President from deploying troops inside the United States. Bush's revision effectively overturns the Posse Comitatus Act which put strict limits on the executive's power to use US troops in domestic situations. Just days earlier Bush signed a similar bill, "The John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007" which gives Bush the power to take command of National Guard units across the country which are traditionally under the control of the state governors.

Without fanfare, Bush has taken control of all armed forces and militias inside and outside of the country and now has a monopoly on all the state-sanctioned tools of organized violence. It's a coup that could never have succeeded without the tacit cooperation of the media.

Bush is now free to declare martial law in response to a natural disaster, a pandemic or a terrorist attack. The congress is powerless to stop him.

Also, Bush recently signed the Military Commissions Act of 2006, which allows the president to arbitrarily declare citizens and non citizens "enemy combatants" and imprison them indefinitely without charge. The new law gives Bush the authority to disregard the Geneva Conventions and the 8th amendment's ban on "cruel and unusual" punishment and apply "harsh interrogation" which may include torture. The act effectively repeals habeas corpus, the cornerstone of American jurisprudence and the Bill of Rights.

The Military Commissions Act cannot coexist with the US Constitution; the two are mutually exclusive.

The Military Commissions Act, The John Warner Defense Authorization Act, the Homeland Security Act, the Patriot Act, and the myriad presidential signing statements have conferred absolute power on George Bush. The question is whether or not some incident will arise that will persuade Bush to use his extraordinary new powers.

General Tommy Franks predicted that a "massive, casualty producing event" might cause "our population to question our own Constitution and begin to militarize our country;" a scenario that many see as likely now.

Is that it? Will another terrorist attack provide the rationale for overturning republican government and declaring martial law?

If so, then we should know what to expect.

According to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) it would mean "the suspension of the normal functions of civilian government, implying the cancellation or postponement of state and federal elections." (Global Research) It would also "close public and government facilities not critical for continuity of essential operations." (FEMA)

Northern Command would assume control and under "the classified 'Continuity of Government' (COG) Operations Plan' a secret 'shadow government' would become functional, redeploying key staff to secret locations." (Global Research)

Also, “all forms of public gatherings or citizen's protests which question the legitimacy of the emergency procedures and the installation of a police state” would be banned. The military would be deployed to carry out “police and judicial” functions.

Martial law in the US would be applied with the utmost attention to public sensibilities and perceptions, avoiding the garish display of force we see in Iraq. It would be a “kinder and gentler” martial law with a limited number of military personnel on the streets (just enough to remind us that things have changed) and an emphasis on “preemptive” policing operations. (Expect Falcons’ 4, 5 and 6 etc) It would probably be disguised by a carefully crafted public relations campaign and a predictably cheery moniker, such as, “The Security Enhancement and Homeland Fortification Act”. The possibilities are limitless.

The Bush administration is also prepared if some unforeseen tragedy befalls congress, like another anthrax attack.

In fact, the American Enterprise Institute, to which the Bush team is closely aligned, has already "issued proposals for the operation of Congress following a catastrophic terrorist attack". They advocate the "APPOINTING" of individuals to the House of Representatives "to fill the seats of dead or incapacitated members, a first in American history" "The Continuity of Government Commission is self-commissioned', its members being neither elected nor appointed by any government body and mostly made up of professional lobbyists". (Read the whole article: <http://www.conservativeusa.org/cog-ronpaul.htm>) (Coincidentally, Newsweek article “White House Rehearses for Domestic Attack” 2-23-07; “The White House is staging a high-level exercise Saturday to test responses to the prospect of a massive domestic terrorist attack.” These drills are a critical part of the C.O.G. regimen dating back to the Reagan administration)

According to the AEI’s plan, the future United States congress will be comprised of lobbyists and industry representatives. What else would one expect from an organization that believes that corporate interests should determine policy?

These are the chilling precedents which have paved the way for further government lawlessness and abuse. They foreshadow the ominous transition from representative government to autocratic rule; from inalienable rights to martial law.

The Falcon operations are just a small part of this larger paradigm. The program is not designed for rounding up minor crooks and drug dealers, (which no one really cares about anyway) but for removing leftists, dissidents and political rivals. These are the real targets. The power of the state is measured in terms of how effectively it defeats or eliminates its enemies. And, the Bush administration has shown a remarkable aptitude for crushing its rivals.

The Crawford Fuehrer

One day, after a particularly savage domestic purge; we can expect President Bush to stride to the presidential podium and reiterate the same words that were uttered by his German predecessor 60 years ago:

"If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice, then all I can say is this: In this hour I was responsible for the fate of the American people, and thereby I became the supreme judge of the American people....Everyone must know for all future time that if he raises his hand to strike the State, then certain death is his lot."

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