New York Times again mocks concerns over Jade Helm domestic military exercise

Thomas Gaist
19 September 2015

In a column for the *New York Times* published Wednesday, “Jade Helm Military Exercise Ends, With Little Fanfare,” Manny Fernandez has authored the latest in a slew of articles published by the *Times* and other liberal publications aimed at discrediting concerns, widespread in the American working class and rural poor, over the constantly intensifying tempo of Defense Department exercises being conducted in and around US cities and towns.

Fernandez has penned a series of hit pieces against residents concerned about JH 15, including “Conspiracy Theories Over Jade Helm Training Exercise Get Some Traction in Texas,” “Military Exercises and Paranoia in West Texas,” and “As Jade Helm 15 Military Exercise Begins, Texans Keep Watch ‘Just in Case’.”

Following the lead of the *Times*, similar articles, invariably light on facts and heavy on condescension toward a US population which remains fiercely protective of its democratic rights, have appeared throughout the liberal and corporate media.

The haughty tone of such pieces aims to conceal an underlying anxiety within the media establishment over the intensity of popular suspicion and anger provoked by the publication of internal US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) slides covering the JH 15 drills by the *Houston Chronicle* during the spring.

The slides, titled “Realistic Military Training” and inscribed with the motto, “Mastering the Human Domain,” gained notoriety for their labeling of areas of Texas, California, and other southwestern states as “insurgent territory.”

Ordinary citizens across the region responded by denouncing the drills as the first stages of a military takeover, speaking out at town hall meetings to angrily accuse US military public relations officers of lying.

Even before the drills began, the *Times* and other corporate media outlets embarked on a concerted campaign to discredit criticisms of the exercises and disparage the widely held concerns that the drills represented preparations for the imposition of military-police rule across the continental US.

Continuing along these lines, the Times’ latest offering on JH 15 includes no new or substantial information about the content of the drills.

Far from anything resembling analysis or investigative journalism, Fernandez's latest article presents presents a haphazard series of anecdotes and quotations from government sources in an effort to paint opposition to JH 15 as the exclusive preserve of a handful of right-wing paranoiacs.

Fernandez strains to brush aside fears over what amount to barely concealed preparations for counterinsurgency warfare against the US population, comparing popular opposition to the accelerating militarization of the continental US to “doomsday predictions” over Y2K.

“In the end, the soldiers rumored to be going after people’s guns handed out plaques and offered handshakes. Conspiracy theories of a military invasion, with trains to transport shackled political prisoners and Blue Bell ice cream trucks doubling as portable refrigerated morgues, fizzled as the most controversial Special Forces activity eyewitnesses saw was some service members, on a lake, on Jet Skis,” Fernandez writes.

Fernandez’s vacuous gloating, based on the most superficial notion that martial law preparations associated with JH 15 are “over,” stands in glaring contradiction to the deadly serious reality behind the exercises.

Touted by Pentagon statements as “unique” in scale, the JH 15 drills saw US commandos practicing infiltration of urban areas and conducting dry runs for targeted assassinations.

US military forces involved in JH 15 practiced “blending in” to the urban environment, wearing civilian attire and driving unmarked civilian vehicles.

Operations also included rendezvous with mock informants, and late night kidnapping raids of the sort carried out by SOCOM against populations throughout Central Asia, the Middle East and beyond, as official statements by the architects of the drills and Pentagon public

© World Socialist Web Site

relations teams openly acknowledged in the lead-up to the exercises.

Given that the majority of US special forces operators are highly conspicuous American soldiers, mostly English speaking whites and African-Americans, one is entitled to ask of Fernandez and his cohort, where precisely could such teams realistically hope to blend in outside the borders of the US?

Can anyone really believe that the months-long rehearsals for infiltration and targeted murder in cities and towns throughout the Southwest conducted as part of JH 15 are simply practice for killing alleged terrorists in foreign countries?

In reality, the JH drills represent a significant advance in the preparations of US finance capital and its military apparatus to impose new forms of police-state rule within the US itself, including, ultimately, through the suspension of the US Constitution and the deployment of combat units to patrol US streets.

Jade Helm in particular was singled out as a media event because of the flagrantly authoritarian content of the slides acquired by the *Chronicle*.

This has served to obscure the fact that essentially identical drills are now conducted throughout the US on a continuous basis and are rooted in the a process of militarization of American society stretching back decades.

Systematic planning for the deployment of military and police forces against US cities assumed its present form during the late 1960s, in response to the political radicalization of the working class that erupted into urban rebellions and other forms of mass struggle from 1968 to1975.

In 1967-68, the Pentagon oversaw the establishment of the US Army's Civil Disturbance Directorate, known colloquially as the military's "domestic war room," in direct response to the political radicalization of the working class, acknowledged by the government officials at the time to represent a revolutionary threat to the entire social order of US capitalism.

The new command immediately launched plans, codenamed Operation Garden Plot, for violent repression of domestic unrest. Garden Plot has since been updated under every successive presidential administration up to the present, and was partially activated on numerous occasions, including during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots and the 2000 Republican National Convention.

After 9/11, the Bush administration activated plans for transfer of power to a "shadow government" staffed by select cadres drawn from the executive administration and military-intelligence establishment.

Plans for rule by a shadow government, referred to in official jargon as Continuity of Government (COG) planning, had emerged out of Garden Plot nearly two decades prior, in the form of REX 84, a secret update to the Pentagon civil disturbance plans that was developed during the early 1980s by Lt Colonel Oliver North while he served on Reagan's Emergency Mobilization Preparedness Board. The secret plan was exposed during Congressional hearings over the Iran-Contra scandal.

From the early 1990s onward, as part of its "Urban Warrior" program, the US Marine Corps began conducting tactical and reconnaissance training in major metropolitan areas including Oakland, California, and Chicago, Illinois.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration oversaw the establishment of Northern Command (NORCOM), the first integrated combat command covering the interior of the US. NORCOM has since overseen comprehensive preparations for domestic repression and martial law, including a massive expansion of the US military's domestic intelligence gathering systems.

During the Bush and Obama administrations, COG planning has become a central preoccupation of the most powerful agencies within the federal government.

In the form of the TOPOFF drills (2000-2009), the National Level Exercises (NLE) (2009-2012), and the National Exercise Program (NEP) (2012-present), plans for declaration of a "state of emergency" and formal suspension of bourgeois democratic rule and transfer of sweeping totalitarian powers to the military, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), have been continuously expanded and updated throughout the post-9/11 era.

In light of all this, which represents only a thumbnail sketch of the vast and Byzantine complex of plans and agencies developed by the US ruling elite in preparation for the emergence of revolutionary struggles by the working class, the outpouring of popular mistrust over the JH 15 exercises is as healthy and rational as the propaganda exercises of the *Times* are contemptible.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site