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Emergency Management

A National Perspective

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This is another in a series of monographs on the subject of emergency management. The purpose of this series is to share new ideas and information in the field of emergency management.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

ABSTRACT

This monograph describes the establishment and early development of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an agency established by the unique dynamics of a Presidential reorganization plan. The primary focus of this monograph is the leadership of FEMA's first Director, John W. Macy, Jr. The monograph: (1) traces the events leading to the President's submission of the reorganization plan; (2) presents the contemporary view from the Executive Office of the President; (3) summarizes the Congressional contribution; (4) describes the pre-activation events and FEMA's early months; (5) comments on the John Macy term; (6) compares Macy's FEMA with where FEMA is today; and, (7) presents conclusions that may be relevant to any FEMA Director's leadership and institutional policy.

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PREFACE

Agencies established by Presidential reorganization plans have unique institutional characteristics and development patterns which operate as both advantages and constraints.

The greatest advantage undoubtedly is that the President's proposal to the Congress must be accepted or rejected as tendered, unlike traditional legislative proposals which when finally enacted often bear little resemblance to the original proposal. Another distinct advantage is the significant amount of flexibility usually afforded the head of a new agency to organize the structural components of the agency, free of detailed instructions often found in statutes.

The greatest constraint is that the head of the new agency has to work with the missions (often narrow in scope) that are already in existence in the statutes governing the organizations transferred to the new agency. Additional programs have to be authorized *de novo* by new legislation. Another collateral constraint is the budgetary structure that is inherited from the transferring organizations; — it often bears little relevance to the needs of the new consolidated organization.

John W. Macy, Jr., the first permanent* Director of FEMA, experienced practically all of these advantages and constraints in concentrated doses during his relatively brief tenure. His rich background in public management and his own view of his mission as FEMA's first Director impacted heavily on the Agency's early development, both as a national emergency agency and as a federal organization.

This monograph provides a summary and an appreciation of Macy's role and contribution as FEMA's first Director.

* Gordon Vickery, the head of the U.S. Fire Administration, served as Acting Director until Macy's term began.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

John W. Macy, Jr. was the first permanent Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Taking office on August 1, 1979, four months after FEMA was created and a year after President Jimmy Carter had proposed its establishment by reorganization plan, Macy faced a formidable task in shaping this new agency. He came with a background of distinguished public service. He had been Chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission and had a reputation as "Mr. Public Administration." He needed all of his skill and knowledge — and more — considering what he faced in leading the new emergency management agency.

The early days of FEMA and the tenure of John Macy cannot be adequately discussed without first describing what it means to a federal organization to come into being under a Presidential reorganization plan. From a public management perspective, it is a unique method of creation. A May, 1980, Congressional Research Service report¹ described the process as follows:

The President may, under authority of the Reorganization Act of 1977, ... submit Reorganization Plans for realigning agencies or agency authority, transferring administrative units or functions from one department or agency to another, or abolishing old agencies and creating limitations on the types of reorganization that can occur and the procedures that must be followed ... [I]t is the President who initiates a proposal and Congress which reacts. If Congress does not approve a resolution of disapproval within 60 days, the Plan goes into effect.

Most departments and agencies are established by statute enacted by the Congress and come into existence as a product of the legislative process. Their charters sometimes originate with a Presidential proposal, but they are always a product of debate and compromise which is the essence of this process. By statute, the Congress can create an organization, assign it a unique mission, and grant authority for the development of new programs. Conversely, when FEMA was created, a Presidential plan could only transfer and rearrange programs by consolidating existing functions and resources (e.g., people, dollars, and equipment) into a different organizational setting — with missions already approved by the Congress. This meant that the new emergency management agency and its first permanent director were severely constrained in setting out in new directions.

The conventional wisdom was that a key advantage of a Presidential reorganization plan was the nature of the approval by Congress — it could only approve or disapprove the plan as it was presented. The President did not have to trade away important policy points or internal management considerations as a part of gaining acceptance by the Congress, as might occur with the statutes establishing the Departments of Transportation, Energy, and Education. However, this advantage was sometimes more apparent than real. Gaining overall Congressional acceptance of a reorganization plan sometimes entailed a price that the President was loath to pay. In FEMA's case, this price included concessions on other pending legislative issues.

There were also some practical problems, especially those experienced by the political and career officials tasked with the responsibility of implementing the reorganization. New organizations like FEMA were built piecemeal — often shredded from their parent agencies and transferred to

1. U.S. Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1980): "The Federal Executive Establishment: Evolution and Trends" pp.18-19.

their new homes with inadequate administrative support resources and workforces of mixed quality. The initial reality was an administrative hodgepodge, and the new leadership could only try to do its best.

Inheriting existing missions, the new leadership found it extremely difficult to create new activities without obtaining new Congressional authority. This condition was reflected in and exacerbated by the appropriations structure. Most of the time, this situation made little sense in terms of trying to achieve the stated objectives of the reorganization, and it denied Macy needed managerial flexibility. If the political setting was benign and the President's budget office and the Congress were amenable, a newly-created agency could request and receive a new appropriations structure during its initial years. That did not happen with FEMA.

Two other points need to be made at the outset regarding the new FEMA director's ability to exercise effective organizational leadership. The first deals with the amount of public awareness and support given a new agency. Like FEMA, most other agencies created by Presidential reorganization plans in recent years — the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (1970); ACTION (1971); the Office of Personnel Management, the Federal Labor Relations Authority, and the Merit Systems Protection Board (1978) as the three successor agencies to the U.S. Civil Service Commission — had highly specialized missions with relatively narrow constituencies around the country on whom they could count for support. The one obvious exception was the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — created as a result of a great public groundswell and born and bred in controversy. EPA had a much broader public constituency that gave the new agency head a "bully pulpit" from which to engender support for new initiatives and changes.

Second, and just as important, is the history of FEMA's forebears. Figure 1 exhibits the development of FEMA. The federal preparedness programs had been reshuffled periodically in the Executive Branch in the years following World War II.

Perhaps the best summation of the creation and mission of the agency was presented in an address delivered before the World Future Society in New York on July 15, 1986, by FEMA's third Director Julius W. Becton, Jr.

This action combined five agencies with such responsibilities as civil defense, disaster response and recovery, governmental and resource mobilization, flood insurance, and service to the professional and volunteer fire fighting community. In addition, several orphan functions, such as earthquake planning and dam safety, were thrown into FEMA for good measure.

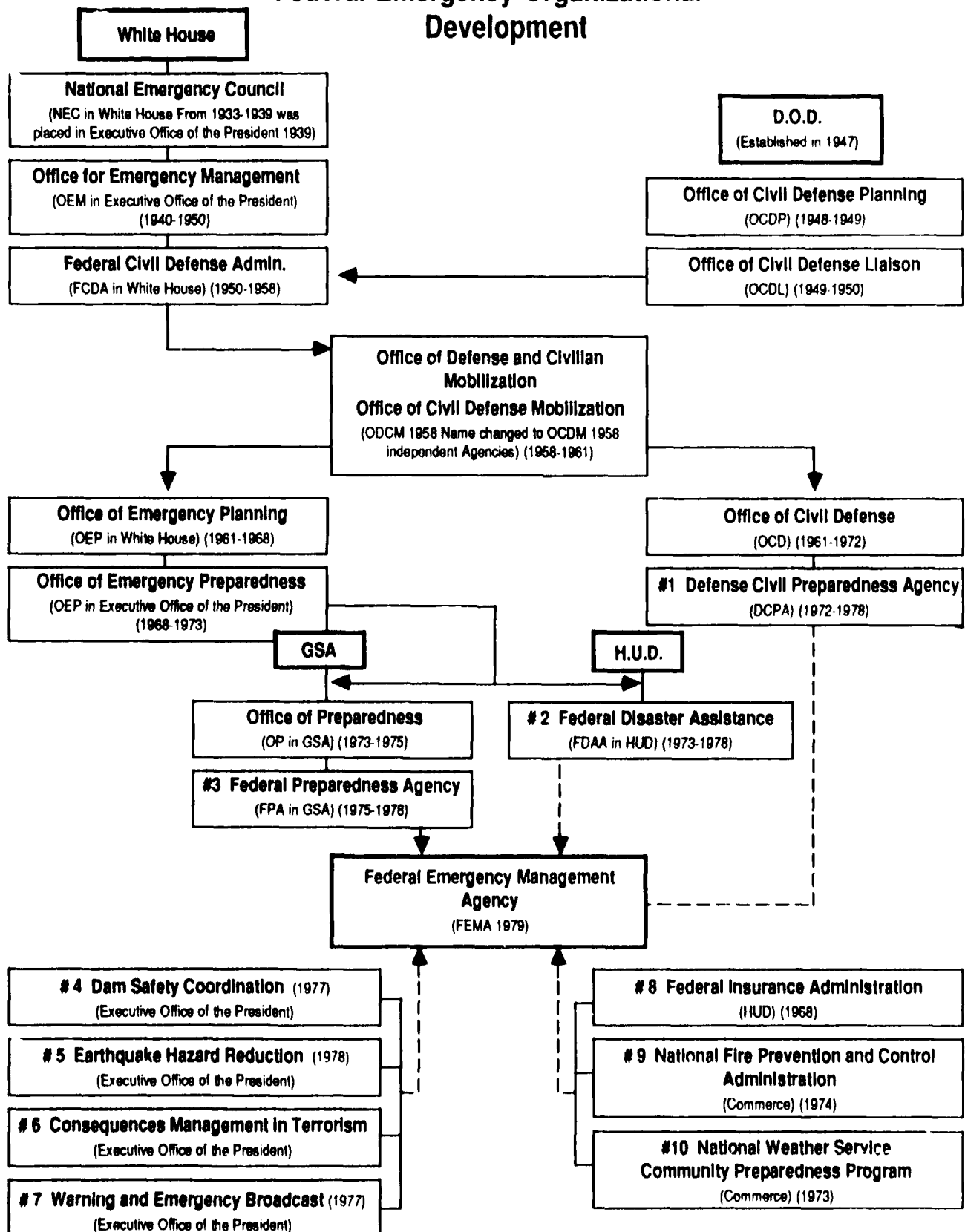
Then and now, FEMA provided a single point within the federal family for state and local officials or others to ask for civil emergency help.

The mission is ... "to coordinate on the civil side of our society the preparedness, response and recovery activities of federal, state, and local governments and the private sector to deal with major peacetime emergencies and those of a national security nature."

Converting this broad mission into operational terms and creating that single point within the Federal family were the essence of Macy's challenge. This monograph focuses on John W. Macy, Jr. and his contribution to the Nation's emergency response structure in the context of this challenge.

Figure 1

Federal Emergency Organizational Development



Source: David McLoughlin, "A Framework for Integrated Emergency Management," *Public Administration Review* 45 (January, 1985), p. 167

A VIEW FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

The Carter Administration sought to redeem one of its campaign pledges early by establishing the President's Reorganization Project (PRP) within the Office of Management and Budget. The Carter campaign had promised increased efficiency and cost savings by reducing and consolidating the number of organizational units in the federal bureaucracy.

The PRP lost no time in searching for reorganizational opportunities. By memorandum of August 25, 1977, to heads of departments and agencies, the President announced a "reorganizational study of Federal Preparedness and response to disasters." It said:

In national emergencies the resources of the entire Federal Government are on call, but they must be deployed effectively ... and effectively coordinated to be able to assist State and local authorities without delay.

A PRP study report of October 1977,² and ensuing discussions and negotiations led to the development of Reorganization Plan No. 3,³ which was transmitted to the Congress by President Carter on June 19, 1978. The study report recommended a scope for the ensuing discussions that was hardly modest. The project would "address the role, capability, and organization of the Federal Government in preparing for and responding to events that physically threaten the lives or property of the civilian population on a large scale." It would focus on preparedness for and response to: (1) nuclear/conventional war, (2) human-caused accidents, (3) terrorism, and (4) natural disasters, all looking toward improvements in planning and coordination, operation, and long-term recovery.

Further, this "October prospectus" suggested that the following might also be considered: economic dislocation, foreign natural or manmade disaster, energy resource shortages, and selective service considerations.

Justification of this ambitious agenda for reorganization was based on the perceived failures of the then prevalent state of Federal emergency management as evidenced below:

1. The structure frustrated development and implementation of coherent emergency planning, preparedness, response, and recovery by:
 - issuing confusing and inconsistent policy interpretations that were changed unpredictably;
 - failing to articulate/coordinate relationships between preparedness and response activities;
 - failing to provide a single point of contact for state/local private individuals and organizations;
 - perpetuating duplicate administrative requirements and excessive paperwork; and,
 - failing to provide a comprehensive overview of resource allocation and use.

2. U.S. Office of Management and Budget, President's Reorganization Project, "The Federal Emergency Preparedness and Response Study," Internal Memorandum (October 1977).

3. "Federal Emergency Management Agency: Message to the Congress (June 19, 1978), transmitting Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1978," Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 14 (June 26, 1978): 1129 - 1133.

2. Demand by States and localities was for high levels of disaster protection and relief, but they were repeatedly disappointed with the results.
3. Civil Defense, ignored by states who used their own resources for natural disaster preparedness, was ineffectual in fulfilling its statutory purpose.
4. Wartime government continuity, communication, and response management planning was isolated from day-to-day decision making and irrelevant.
5. Existing legislative and executive order authorities were confusing and out-of-date for civil emergency preparedness.

With this indictment of the existing situation, the conclusion was foregone — structural reorganization of the existing Federal organization for emergency management. The questions were how much, who was to be included, and what organizational format would be proposed. These questions were not entirely academic. Rather than the creation of a new agency several approaches could have been proposed, including consolidation within an existing department or agency or a coordinating role for the Executive Office of the President. The PRP staff set various “principles” and criteria for designing change:

- *Dual Use.* Preparedness should make use of peacetime and Attack resources.
- *Executive Responsibility.* A highly visible leader is necessary
- *Mitigation.* Prevention rather than reaction should play a key role.
- *State-Local Role.* Emergency management should depend on existing resources at the State and local levels.

Principles for considering alternative organizational format were the standard public administrative maxims, principally:

- (1) reduce fragmentation and overlap of responsibilities;
- (2) clarify authorities and enforcement capabilities;
- (3) increase capability for centralized crisis management;
- (4) decrease potential for policy conflicts; and,
- (5) minimize program disruptions.

The PRP staff criteria stressed that change should enhance recognition of emergency preparedness and response as a national priority.

The organizational options considered included those that were most obvious in logic and least threatening to strongly entrenched bureaucratic fiefdoms. They were:

1. *Maintain the Status Quo.* This option was always included and almost never considered.
2. *Merge the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (DCPA), with the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (FDAA).* The former was within the Department of Defense, and the latter was then within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This could have been

accomplished with a new agency or within a sub-agency in an existing department. The *Federal Preparedness Agency (FPA)* within the General Services Administration (GSA) and its responsibilities for Federal continuity planning would have remained separate. There would have been no focal point for all Federal disaster policy planning coordination.

3. *Merge the DCPA with the FPA.* This could have been accomplished under the Department of Defense or a civil agency. The FDAA responsibilities for Federal disaster assistance would have remained separate. There would have been no overall Federal focal point.

4. *Merge the FPA with FDAA.* Civil defense would have remained with the Department of Defense. Although the other civil function responsibilities could have been combined under GSA, HUD, or a new agency, there still would have been no Federal focal point.

5. *Merge DCPA-FPA-FDAA.* This would have combined all of the apparent candidates either within an existing department or in a separate new agency. There then could have been a federal focal point for all Federal disaster policy, planning, and coordination authority established within the new organization. (With some additional embellishment, this is what eventually happened.)

6. *Provide for Executive Office of the President Oversight* This central role was another executive management approach that was often included in organizational options dealing with functions that cut across various departments and agencies. It was seldom advocated by the Executive Office of the President. If it happened, it usually was due to a Congressional initiative that could not be thwarted by the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive's lack of enthusiasm for direct responsibility for another agency was understandable. The Office of Management and Budget (and its predecessor, the Bureau of the Budget) traditionally opposed adding more and more functional responsibilities as a direct burden on the President's Office.

The PRP proposed to treat the problems and satisfy its criteria by creating one agency for emergency management, with official responsibility to the President. The agency would provide one point of contact for States and localities and programmatically would enhance dual use of emergency preparedness and response activities at all levels for domestic and attack emergencies. This was the proposal of the Executive Office of the President as represented by the PRP. Its support within the Federal family was microscopic, but existing organizations seldom support structural change.

Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps and Secretary of Housing Urban Development Patricia Harris wrote jointly to OMB Director James McIntyre on April 6, 1978, in opposition:

The reorganization proposal is not in the best interests of either efficiency or civil emergency management or the administration of our respective departments Insufficient attention has been given to the potential for real embarrassment to the Administration that some of these recommendations contain.

In a letter of February 16, 1978, commenting on the PRP's draft proposals, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) opposed the recommendation "to transfer its program of assisting State and local governments in radiological emergency response planning and its lead agency role among Federal agencies in this area." However, the NRC was much more generous with the turf of other agencies. It said:

In summary, NRC supports the recommendation for the consolidation of [the] Federal Disaster Assistance Administration, [the] Defense Civil Preparedness Agency and [the] Federal Preparedness Agency as a means of providing a focal point for the coordination of civil emergency preparedness and assistance. We also support the idea of this proposed new organization becoming involved in the coordination of radiological emergency response assistance to State and local governments. But, we strongly oppose the total removal of this function from NRC.

Another comment in the NRC letter points to the always interesting phenomenon of what is left out of a reorganization proposal as well as what is included:

Nor is it clear to us why the report, which purports to provide for a comprehensive reorganization of the Federal government's civil emergency planning and preparedness functions, omits consideration of these functions in other Federal agencies, such as the Department of Energy, [the] Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Department of Defense expressed concern over the transfer of its civil defense program. It was later reassured, however, by a Presidential statement at the announcement of the reorganization plan, that DOD and the National Security Council would oversee the civil defense program.

Even the other side of the Office of Management and Budget — the budget examiners — was not enamored with the PRP proposal. This reaction, like that of other agencies, was not unusual.

Notwithstanding all of these objections, the reorganization proposal approved by President Carter substantially incorporated the recommendations of the PRP. Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1978, as it was formally entitled, was transmitted to the Congress on June 19, 1978. Like other Presidential reorganization plans, the document that proposed the establishment of the Federal Emergency Management Agency was relatively brief.

The plan included a Director, Deputy Director, and not more than four Associate Directors, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The duties of the Deputy Director and the Associate Directors were to be prescribed by the Director. The plan included 10 non-career regional directors.

The plan gave the Director the flexibility to determine the internal organization of the new agency. The transfers to the new agency included:

- the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (civil defense program) from the Department of Defense;
- the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (natural disaster relief) from HUD;
- the Federal Preparedness Agency (civil planning for national emergencies) from GSA;
- the Federal Insurance Administration (flood insurance) from HUD; and,
- the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration (NFPCA) and its Academy from the Department of Commerce.

The reorganization also included six smaller programs: the community preparedness program for weather emergencies from the National Weather Service; earthquake hazard reduction, dam safety

coordination, and the emergency broadcast system from the Office of Science and Technology in the Executive Office of the President; coordination of emergency warning; and coordination of the Federal response to the consequences of catastrophic terrorist incidents.

If not disapproved by the Congress, the reorganization plan was to become effective no later than April 1, 1979.

Now that the President had made his proposal public, it was time for the Congress to respond.

THE CONGRESS, THE INTEREST GROUPS, AND THE MEDIA

From the Chief Executive's perspective, a clear advantage to the reorganization plan approach was the requirement that the Congress approve or disapprove the President's proposal without making changes to it. However, the importance of the Congressional role was not thereby totally diminished. There was nothing that prevented Congress from exacting significant commitments from the Administration as its price for approval of the plan. In the American political tradition, the time for Congressional consideration also was the time for the media and interest groups to go on the record. Thus, the Congress played a critical role in laying the foundation for an agency's early operating style and initial policy goals. FEMA was not to be an exception to this part of the Executive-legislative process.

An early analysis of the Congressional "climate" was prepared for the PRP leadership in February 1978, four months before transmittal of the plan by the President. Briefings had been conducted for key Senators and Representatives and their staffs by White House staff. Their assessment was that there was "general acceptance of both the problems identified ... and the primary proposal to consolidate FDA, DCPA, and FDAA into a single agency."

Congressional hearings on Reorganization Plan No. 3 were held immediately after the President's transmittal on June 19, 1978. The Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs held hearings on June 10 and 21. The Subcommittee on Legislation and National Security of the House Committee on Government Operations held its hearings on June 26 and 29.

Press coverage greeting the proposed reorganization was brief, and it inferred different objectives than those formally proposed. The New York Times saw the thrust of the reorganization proposal as a "shift in strategic policy ... that would place new emphasis on civil defense in what administration officials said was a response to a major Soviet effort to protect its civilian population from the hazard of nuclear war."⁴ A Baltimore Sun article emphasized the consolidation into "one unit for emergencies" and the need for one agency to coordinate emergency planning and relief.⁵

In opening the Senate hearings, Senator Edmond Muskie's remarks reflected a need for economy. He said:

4. Martin Tolchin, "Civil Defense Plan Proposed by Carter," The New York Times (June 20, 1978), A15:1.

5. Lynne Olson, "Carter Wants One Unit for Emergencies," Baltimore Sun (June 20, 1978), p.1.

Public expectations of Federal disaster relief are growing. Unchecked, they have enormous and unpredictable implications for Federal spending ... Federal resources for these activities are not unlimited and ... careful attention must be paid to the impact that this Agency may have on Federal expenditures.⁶

Chairman Muskie set forth three tests that the reorganization plan needed to meet. It should provide:

- (1) balance among the important and different kinds of authorities and responsibilities in the new agency;
- (2) reasonable flexibility; and,
- (3) no false expectations or changed presumptions about the scope of the Federal response or level of expenditures.

Senator James Sasser later reinforced these views.⁷ Senator Walter Huddleston supported the plan before the Subcommittee because it offered a focal point for the States and a direct link between them and the White House.⁸

Support for the new agency by the interest groups was mixed, some of it quite interesting in view of the directions FEMA programs would take in the ensuing years. Groups such as the American Red Cross and the National Governors' Association (NGA) gave strong support to the plan, largely based on the prospect of a single Federal focal point that it would provide for States and localities. George Elsey of the American Red Cross said the FEMA approach would "mitigate the confusion the Red Cross faces in its efforts and improve mitigation itself in the process."⁹

Governor Mike O'Callaghan of Nevada (who was to be considered later as a leading candidate to become the first FEMA director) spoke on behalf of the NGA:

Every employee must understand that he or she is part of a comprehensive emergency management team. Headquarters staff should be as small as possible, consistent with providing policy, research, and information guidance, and the minimum necessary administrative support. Regional/field staff people who coordinate with State emergency offices should be a strong point. The considerable agency focus should be to support and strengthen local and county emergency operations.¹⁰

An interesting divergence of views occurred in reaction to the proposed transfer of fire prevention and control functions to the new agency. The National League of Cities opposed the plan, stating "the reorganization plan shows a serious misunderstanding of the nature of the fire problem, the congressionally mandated mission of the NFPCA, the way institutions operate and the needs of

6. *U.S. Senate, Hearing on Reorganization Plan No. 3, Committee of Government Affairs, Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations, 95th Congress, Second Session (June 20, 21, 1978).*

7. *U.S. Senate, Hearing on Reorganization Plan No. 3, Committee of Government Affairs, Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations, 95th Congress, Second Session (June 20, 21, 1978).*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. *U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing on Reorganization Plan No. 3, Committee on Government Operations, 95th Congress, Second Session (June 26, 29, 1978).*

cities.¹¹ Fire service organizations did not agree. William McClennan, President of the International Association of Fire Fighters, supported the reorganization, saying:

We are convinced that the Federal Fire Agency and its programs will receive far more favorable attention from the administration in an agency principally dealing with emergency-related services, and more importantly, in an agency which contains only five primary elements of which the NFPCA will be one instead of fourteen, as presently contained in the Department of Commerce.

While the Department of Defense was concerned about the transfer of the civil defense function to the new agency, William Smith, President of the U.S. Civil Defense Council, supported the transfer for its "simplifying effects, its potential to save dollars, and its potential to better serve the public when affected by a peacetime emergency."¹²

On the House side, Chairman Jack Brooks introduced a resolution of disapproval¹³ — the routine step taken to initiate hearings and provide an up-or-down vote. During the hearings, comments by members of the House mirrored concerns previously stated by others. They included:

- Transfer of the flood insurance program would disrupt the program unnecessarily.
- Shift of the NFPCA to the new agency would change the program from one of fire prevention to one of fire suppression.
- Why could not the emergency management functions be consolidated within an existing agency?
- The reorganization plan did not go far enough.

OMB Director McIntyre added the interesting comparison of the proposed new agency with the last agency that had represented a consolidated approach — the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP)¹⁴. OEP had been split into the Federal Preparedness Agency and the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration in 1973. The two Agencies were to be brought together again under the FEMA umbrella, which went beyond the old OEP charter to add the civil defense program, hazard reduction response functions, and increased planning and coordination authorities.

McIntyre, the principal Administration witness testifying for the reorganization plan, fielded Members' questions with position statements that had been well prepared by the staff of the PRP.

Thus, the stage was set for the maneuvering that was to take place before FEMA began operating on April 1, 1979. Although Congress accepted the plan without change, promises were made to the committees to gain their support. John Macy would have to live with those promises when he became Director. There was to be no reduction in the multitude of committees exercising oversight of the programs inherited by FEMA. A complex appropriations structure was to remain in place. There was little or no chance of streamlining the legislative process with respect to FEMA's future operating mode.

11. U.S. Senate

12. Ibid.

13. U.S. House

14. Ibid.

The resolution of disapproval was rejected by the House on September 14, 1978, thus making the reorganization plan official¹⁵. The Congressional phase, including the interest group and media input, had raised the curtain on what was to come.

PRE-ACTIVATION EVENTS AND FEMA'S EARLY MONTHS

John W. Macy, Jr., did not become Director of FEMA until ten and a half months after the Congress had approved Reorganization Plan No. 3 in September, 1978. An understanding of this interim period is crucial to an appreciation of the operating framework Macy found on his arrival.

Executive Order 12127 was signed by President Carter on March 31, 1979, declaring Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1978 effective the following day and declaring that its purpose was "to provide for the orderly activation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency." Documents of that time and most of those interviewed for this paper who were intimately involved in the months preceding and immediately following activation have indicated that the period could hardly have been characterized as "orderly."

An "Activation Group" was constituted, chaired by William Harsch of the PRP and consisting of the heads of the transferring organizations — William Wilcox of FDAA, Bardyl Tirana of DCPA, Joseph Mitchell of FPA, Gloria Jimenez of FIA, and Joseph Moreland, Acting Administrator of NFPCA. It quickly became evident that the heads of these organizations were strong personalities intent on protecting the integrity and status of their individual programs within the new agency. A rationale developed, which was reinforced by the legislative history of the reorganization, that each program had its own culture and its own requirements and that organizational actions taken to undermine those legacies would place their missions at risk. Thus, the psychology of the new emergency management agency as a "holding company" was ingrained at the outset. Figure 2 depicts the organization chart of June 1978 that reflects this early thinking.

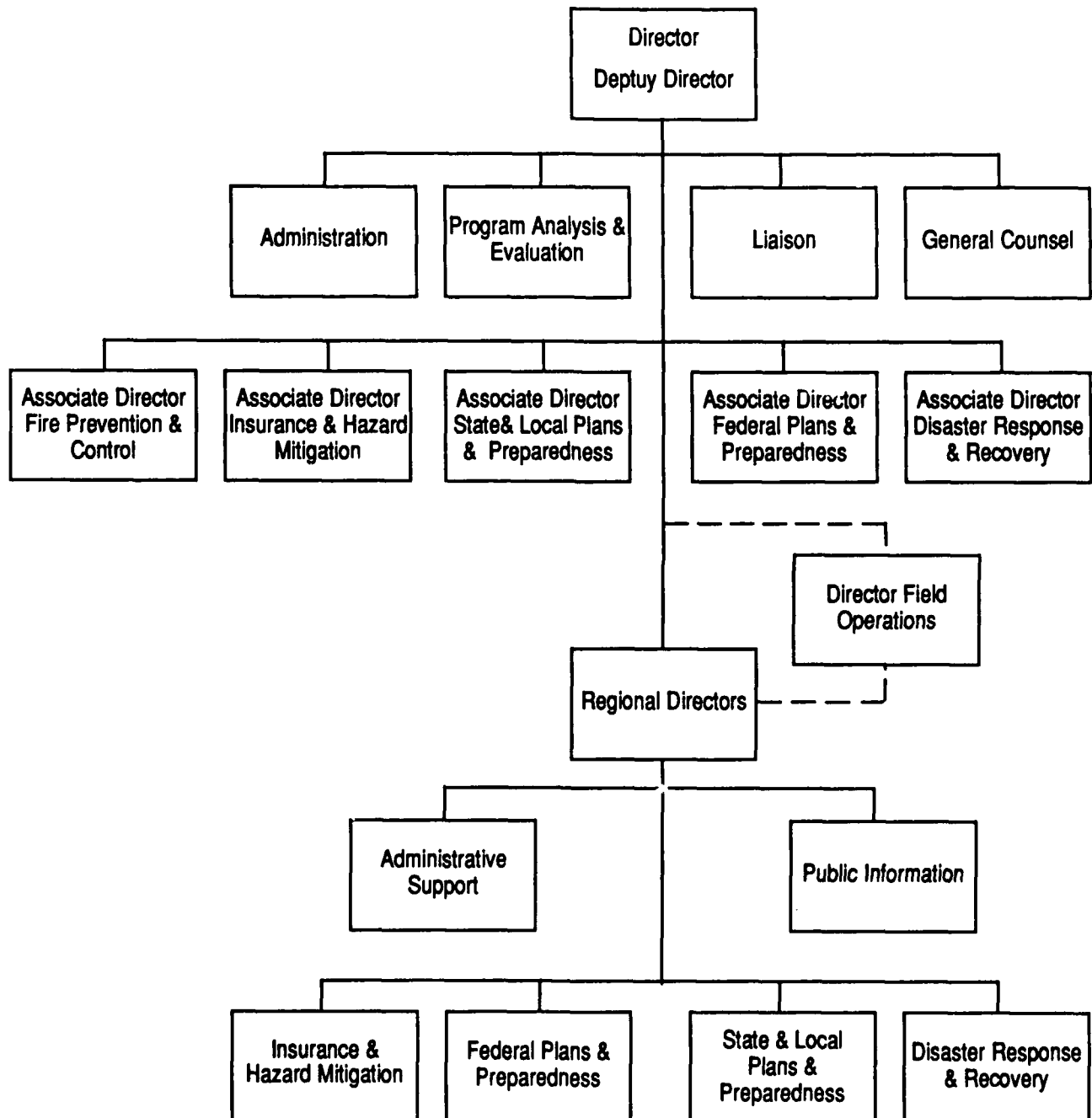
Former colleagues of the late Director Macy who were actively involved during that early period recall the "climate" at the time and the expectations. Those who remained with FEMA, some of whom still occupy senior-level positions, felt almost unanimously that the new agency was not well served by the PRP. This was especially the case in the failure to adequately think through administrative management systems, a defect that forced John Macy to spend most of the early months of his tenure focusing on this area rather than on program issues. It also did not provide FEMA with any base of strength from which it could deal with other executive agencies.

FEMA was one of the first reorganizations produced by the PRP. It was viewed by many within the Office of Management and Budget as an accomplishment — pulling programs together and carrying out President Carter's campaign promise to consolidate and reduce the number of agencies. The opposing view was that the plan was put together in "desperation" — over the objections of many knowledgeable people. Opponents further purported that Congress was clamoring for something from the Chief Executive, and the program substance or lack thereof was a secondary consideration for many.

15. The vote was 327-40 to disapprove the motion.

Figure 2

Organization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency June 1978



Some directly affected by the reorganization felt in retrospect that there was more interest in establishing the organization than in the program substance — a preoccupation with “shrinking” the number of organizational units as a measure of success. This psychology of organization also led, as it almost inevitably does, to unrealistic promises of savings in staff and program dollars. Those committed to the programs believe still that meritorious goals have not been accomplished due to the fact that the resource base at the start-up was lower than required to fulfill the basic mission.

During this interim period, the activation staff faced formidable challenges in creating the administrative apparatus for the new agency. Staff members’ anecdotes recounting those times include financial and personnel records in chaos and inadequate administrative resources transferred to FEMA by the losing agencies, a phenomenon endemic to the Presidential reorganization process.

The greatest single influence on the formative months of FEMA, and to a large extent its future, was the selection of its first director and the extended period of delay involved in making the selection. In October 1978, the PRP summarized the results of its effort to identify potential candidates for the job in an internal memorandum.

... we have focused our efforts on identifying individuals who have a good working knowledge of the Federal Government from both a civilian and military perspective and who have a personal stature that can gain the respect of department and agency heads and the White House Staff. The candidate should also be able to stand up and ward off intense political pressure for new disaster programs or requests from Governors for disaster declarations (2 of 3 are now refused) and have demonstrated competence in Congressional, State, and local and public relations matters.¹⁶

An unpublished article prepared for the Baltimore Sun indicated the reorganization was losing momentum because the White House could not find anyone considered qualified to take the job. “The director was to have been appointed before Christmas to plan the transition. But up to this point the White House Staff has received nothing but rebuffs from potential candidates.” The draft article attributed the difficulties in filling the position to the “expected problems in bringing together all the disaster and civil defense programs in one agency; new obstacles in Federal initiatives from the budget holdown and the high cost of living in Washington which makes it more unattractive to some — even for \$57,500 a year.”¹⁷

As of mid-April, 1979, when the nomination of a permanent director was thought imminent, the heads of the organizations to be transferred were still squabbling with the PRP transition staff, presided over by Gordon Vickery of the U.S. Fire Administration who had been serving as acting director of FEMA. However, the transition staff was busy evolving ideas as to program priorities and agency organization.

With John Macy finally nominated to be FEMA Director, the transition staff’s May 1979 suggested program priorities included:

- (1) improved personnel and training — e.g., training of local emergency personnel and cross-training of DCPA and FPA personnel in disaster response;

16. U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Internal Memorandum (October 4, 1978).

17. Stephen Nordlinger, “New Disaster Agency Faces First Crisis — No Director,” Draft of an unpublished article (June 29, 1979).

- (2) improved mitigation activities;
- (3) better pre-disaster training;
- (4) increased sensitivity to human issues in disaster response; and,
- (5) improved linkage between post-disaster response and long-range community development.

Rather than a single administrative organization as had been proposed in an earlier version, the proposed FEMA organization of that month showed changes that separated insurance from hazard mitigation and created separate personnel and budget and management services units.

This transition period ended with the issuance of Executive Order 12148 of July 20, 1979, by which President Carter formally ordered the transfer and reassignment of the functions vested in the President to FEMA. It also gave the Director of FEMA broad management and coordination responsibilities for emergency planning and assistance.

Reorganization Plan No. 3 had transferred the U.S. Fire Administration, the Federal Insurance Administration, and oversight of the Emergency Broadcast System. The President's July 1979 Order transferred the civil defense and national emergency preparedness programs, the disaster response and recovery program, the oversight and coordination of earthquake hazard reduction and dam safety programs, the coordination of disaster warning systems, and the responsibility to assist communities in developing plans for severe weather emergencies.

Finally, the Order established the Federal Emergency Management Council, chaired by the FEMA Director, with membership drawn from top Presidential advisors. The Council was to "advise and assist the President in the oversight and direction of Federal emergency programs and policies" and provide guidance to the FEMA Director. (This Council ended up being poorly attended by the principals and provided little or no support to Macy.)¹⁸

In summary, much good work was accomplished in getting the new agency ready for operational status but not enough to enable the "new" Director or his staff to begin the substance of their mission quickly or effectively.

THE JOHN MACY TERM

John Macy's term of office began on August 1, 1979. Those who had struggled with the problems of the pre-activation period and the first months of operations recounted their first thoughts and impressions of Macy. Some of his colleagues who worked closely with him still have vivid memories of him over eight years later. There was unanimity among them in stating almost at the outset of a conversation that John Macy was a "real gentleman — a man of integrity." He wanted to know what was going on — wanted to make sure the "best people possible were being hired. Because of

18. *Executive Order 12148 of July 20, 1979, "Federal Emergency Management,"* 44 *Federal Register* 143 (July 24, 1979).

his background as Chairman of the Civil Service Commission,¹⁹ Macy was always interested in the personnel aspects of an agency's programs. He particularly examined the qualifications of individuals recommended for key regional positions.

In the minds of some, however, Macy's statesmanlike qualities sometimes had their limitations. Some of his colleagues felt he did not have a strong command of his organization — that he did not have enough staff around him and that he needed a strong assistant who could enforce discipline, a quality they said he did not have. Some believed his vulnerability extended to his political communications within the Washington bureaucracy. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that John Macy compensated for some of these "weaknesses" by his courage and unbelievable "gift" in facing very difficult situations that would have daunted most others.

To put it briefly, a former program colleague of John Macy described what he felt was Macy's vision of the mission as "building a FEMA out of five diverse programs that had been criticized."²⁰ He expected to achieve the goals of the reorganization as expressed in the plan and in the hearings. Those objectives became the dominant program thrust of John Macy's period at FEMA.

His early budget requests and testimony before various Congressional committees provide valuable insights about John Macy's view of the mission given to him by the President. Transmitting FEMA's fiscal year 1981 budget request to OMB Director McIntyre in a letter of September 15, 1979, Macy outlined his objectives.

The Agency is designed to serve the President across the full range of emergencies.

- *I expect to mobilize designated Federal agencies to act in concert with FEMA in dealing with emergencies.*
- *I intend to develop a partnership with the States and local authorities, realizing that outside of national security matters, they have primary responsibility for responding in emergencies.*
- *I intend to emphasize the role of the regional offices.*
- *I have organized the agency, with the exception of the Federal Insurance Administration and the U.S. Fire Administration, on a functional basis and believe that integration of our programs, as expected by the President, will be the most effective method of carrying out our mission.*

His background in education and his continuing emphasis on its importance were highlighted in the budget request.

Because I believe that training and education activities are a crucial part of FEMA's program, \$11,579,000 of the proposed increase will fund a number of initiatives in this area, including the establishment of an Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

19. Interview of current FEMA official, former colleague of John Macy, December 17, 1987.

20. Interview of current FEMA official, former colleague of John Macy, December 17, 1987.

In his early appearances before Congressional committees, John Macy opened his testimony with a context-setting statement on the goals of the President's reorganization. Thus, in a statement before the House Committee on Science and Technology on January 30, 1980, regarding the agency's research and development programs, he said:

The reorganization was designed to achieve several objectives:

- *To make a single agency, and a single official, accountable to the President and the Congress for all Federal emergency-preparedness, mitigation, and response activities.*
- *To create a single point of contact for State and local governments, which had urged strongly the consolidation of Federal emergency programs;*
- *To enhance the dual use of emergency-preparedness and response resources at all levels of government by taking advantage of similarities in planning and response activities for peacetime and attack emergencies; and*
- *To provide an improved basis for determining the relative benefits and cost-effectiveness of spending for hazard mitigation, preparedness planning, relief operations, and recovery assistance.²¹*

He set forth the six major FEMA programs: (1) Plans and Preparedness; (2) Disaster Response and Recovery ; (3) Training and Education; (4) U.S. Fire Administration; (5) Flood Insurance Administration; and the sixth, the one of interest to the Committee, Mitigation and Research. Macy stated that this last program was a new thrust "increasing the capability of the United States to predict, prevent and respond to emergencies and disasters and recover from their impacts." The program "builds upon the ongoing research and application programs of other Federal agencies and is conducted in coordination with them."

In his statement of February 29, 1980, before the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities of the House Committee on Armed Services, John Macy discussed the new agency's objectives with emphasis on the civil defense programs.²² The objectives he outlined included:

- *The effective application of the concept that whenever possible, emergency responsibilities should be extensions of the regular missions of Federal agencies.*
- *The improved linkage of hazard mitigation programs with emergency preparedness and response functions.*
- *The increased effectiveness of a civil defense system designed to require the most efficient use of all available emergency resources.*

He spoke of a program concept that was to become a major theme during his tenure. He said: "To meet these goals, FEMA's programs seek to improve capabilities for Comprehensive Emergency Management of emergencies of all types."

21. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Science and Technology, "Statement of Mr. John W. Macy, Jr., Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency" (January 30, 1980), p.2

22. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities, "Statement of John W. Macy, Jr., Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency," 96th Cong., 2d sess. (February 29, 1980)

He recapitulated his view of the FEMA mission:

I have concentrated my efforts on developing a truly integrated agency, with a cohesive approach to the preparation for, mitigation of, and timely response to major life-threatening emergencies throughout the United States. My underlying emphases are to provide a single point of contact in the Federal Government on emergency matters — both at the National level and, in particular, for our State and local governments — and to enhance the multiple use of resources in preparedness for and response to emergencies.

He outlined for the Committee the Carter Administration's concept of civil defense,²³ and he went on to stress the multipurpose thrust of FEMA programs.²⁴

Our FY 1981 program in the area of civil defense thus accelerates the achievement of crisis relocation plans and supporting capabilities for the population in counterforce areas. It provides the basis for eventual achievement of nationwide crisis relocation capabilities, in compliance with the Presidential Decision 41 policies for civil defense.

Accordingly, FEMA's programs do not aim at developing special units or groups of people, standing by to save the day only in case of a major disaster or an attack. Rather, we aim to augment local jurisdictions with special systems or capabilities that knit together existing assets, and to commit Federal support in times of major emergency.

Finally, in a statement delivered on March 26, 1980, before the Subcommittee on Water Resources of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Macy again advocated a comprehensive approach in discussing FEMA's disaster relief programs.

A first priority has been to bring about as much physical consolidation of resources and programs as possible, consistent with the particular statutory and administrative mandates imposed by the Congress and the President. This step will integrate functional disciplines for a truly comprehensive approach to emergency management and ensure that we make the best possible use of resources.²⁵

John Macy's organizational and administrative goals closely dovetailed with the mission set forth in Reorganization Plan No. 3. He made mention of them briefly in his budget submission to OMB.

Since becoming the Director of FEMA, I have moved at an accelerated pace to implement Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1978. The internal organization structure has been established with a concerted effort to interrelate programs and eliminate overlapping functions. I plan cross information and training among the organizational elements with the least possible layering, to allow for the best use of talent and expertise.²⁶

23. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities, "Statement of John W. Macy, Jr., Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency," 96th Cong., 2d sess. (February 29, 1980), pp. 4 - 6.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 15 - 17.

25. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Subcommittee on Water Resources, "Statement of John W. Macy, Jr., Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency" (March 26, 1980), p. 4.

26. Letter of September 15, 1979, from John W. Macy, Jr., to Honorable James T. McIntyre, Director, Office of Management and Budget, p. 2.

His colleagues recall his commitment to training. He had an expansive and creative vision of the purpose of training. As his colleagues describe it, John Macy's goal was not to have FEMA teach courses but help people learn something about emergency management. The approach changed after his departure.

Macy also very much wanted an effective program-planning-budgeting system for FEMA. His staff was able to conceptualize one in time for him to issue a planning guidance document on January 19, 1981 — the day before his last day as Director. That document is discussed in detail later in this section.

The Constraints John Macy Experienced

John Macy had little flexibility to manage a new agency or undertake new initiatives that ordinarily would have been expected. Upon his arrival, he discovered an organization structure in place, strong political appointees over whom he was to have little leverage, and almost no reliable support from the political power centers in Washington. These serious obstacles need to be recognized to appreciate the achievements of Macy's 18-month tenure as Director of FEMA.

John Macy was first and foremost an institution builder. That is the task he undertook at FEMA. As one of his former colleagues expressed it: "To have taken a different approach from the one he did would have resulted in a blood bath inside the agency."²⁷ He wanted to do some improvising in FEMA programs, but he never had the time during his term of office. According to his colleagues, one reason was Macy's necessary preoccupation with bringing the agency together as a cohesive unit.

A striking characteristic of John Macy was his use of staff. In his desire to improve government and reconcile FEMA programs, he preferred to work closely with career civil servants rather than the agency's political managers. His interests were not the latter's. Appointed program managers were intent — understandably — upon furthering their programmatic interests rather than improving the overall system. Macy was a classical Washington administrator who liked to work with career employees. He did not have the special assistants or others on his immediate staff whom many thought he needed to effectively manage the political processes integral to the agency. He never had a deputy — largely, according to his colleagues, because he did not want to accept the candidates offered by the White House staff and did not want to make an issue of it.

Responding to pressure to reduce the size of FEMA's staff, Macy voiced his frustration with staff inadequacies in his letter transmitting the fiscal year 1981 budget to OMB:

I am most conscious of the desire to reduce the number of positions transferred to FEMA, but have been able to accomplish only a token reduction thus far. I am adhering to the President's policy of not dismissing anyone due to reorganization, but find that there are shortages in some skills and overages in others; an excess of top level types of overhead support and a shortage of others. Because of these situations, I find we actually have to recruit for some positions for which there is no talent.²⁸

²⁷ Interview.

²⁸ Macy letter of September 15, 1979

At the same time Macy was struggling with the problems of building a cohesive FEMA, he had to deal with an unusual number of major natural disasters. These program responsibilities, requiring immediate attention, faced Macy as he was trying to organize the agency's management systems. They included severe hurricanes, mudslides, toxic waste disasters, and extraordinary volcanic activity. He mentioned those which FEMA faced in its first year of existence in testifying before the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation:

Over the past year, disaster activity has been heavy. Hurricanes David and Frederick inflicted severe damage on the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the Gulf Coast. Floods and mudslides caused by heavy rains have taken their toll in California and Arizona. Since April of 1979 when FEMA first came into being, there have been 45 Presidentially declared major disasters and emergencies. Total estimated requirements for these declarations exceed \$713 million.²⁹

In addition, he had to deal with major events as diverse as the volcanic eruption at Mt. St. Helens and the Cuban "boat people" influx into Florida.

John Macy and the Programs

Given the need to spend his time on building an agency and in view of the many constraints on his freedom to act, John Macy took a fairly pragmatic approach to dealing with the major programs of the agency. One senior program official of the time characterized Macy's approach: "He tended to be true to the programs as he inherited them — not to merge them and begin over. He was willing to work with their individual problems and create systems to process those problems."³⁰

John Macy's areas of program interest were varied and his successes were mixed. He tried to make a significant contribution in the training area — much of which was reversed during the term of his successor. Some of the major operating themes of today's FEMA were instituted during John Macy's time. His Comprehensive Emergency Management approach later became known as the Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS),³¹ essentially the same concept. What has remained constant is the basic way in which FEMA conceives, develops, and delivers its services. The use of Federal funds to develop State and local capabilities is still the essential operating philosophy of the agency.

A major frustration of Macy's administration had to be Congress' unwillingness to enact comprehensive emergency management legislation. Without such legislation, there was no way to streamline FEMA's authorization and appropriations structure — key to allowing an agency to use its funds without excessive, detailed restrictions.

Also, according to his colleagues, John Macy never really was able to reconcile effectively FEMA's mission with those of other departments and agencies. He did not make much progress with Defense, Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, or others with emergency management responsibilities. This lack of progress largely was a result of the timing — the Carter Administration was in its fourth year and preoccupied with domestic and international concerns. It may also have been due to Macy's lack of political clout — at least, as his associates saw it.

29. U.S. House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, p. 6.

30. Interview.

31. Interview.

John Macy's Major Themes and His View of the Future

Fortunately, John Macy has left us with a wealth of material summarizing what he wanted to accomplish for FEMA both programmatically and administratively. This legacy is found largely in the materials he had prepared in the last days of his term of office.

On January 19, 1981, Macy transmitted his "Management Guidance for FY 1983" to FEMA managers.³² It was the day before his last day as Director, and this document was the result of the work that had gone into developing a FEMA program-planning-budgeting system.

The importance of the guidance document for purposes of this monograph are the major program and administrative themes announced in it. These were John Macy's themes and, together with other transition documents, constitute his view of FEMA's future and the future of emergency management. They are his legacy to the agency. The following are selected illustrative extracts from the guidance document:

Major Program Themes

- Continued emphasis on civil preparedness as the base of support for mobilization readiness ... in the future, we need to work toward a national recognition and identification of the impact of domestic resource decisions and programs on our national security and readiness. The creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency is the embodiment of the realization that coordination among the entities of civil government, Federal, State, and local, as well as the private sector, is a vital aspect of national strength....
- A stress on State and local preparedness in Emergency Management. This agency must stress anew the development of capability and reliance on emergency management assets close to the very people they will serve. A corollary to this is that with cost-sharing of disaster relief, a higher standard of accountability to these same people will be achieved.
- Readiness for the unexpected ... Few, if any, anticipated that refugee influxes, volcanic eruptions, dam failures and hazardous materials would become major disruptions and emergencies ... We must continue the all-risk/all-hazard approach and organization adapted to deal efficiently and effectively with unexpected crises.
- Mitigation is the central element in saving both lives and the Nation's fiscal and natural resources. This agency's central theme is that by fostering actions that tend to move people and activities out of harm's way, and by actions that tend to lessen damage done if disaster strikes, significant savings in both resources and property and human suffering can be achieved While our ethics as a nation has from early times been community action and humanitarianism, there will increasingly be the realization that those people and their governmental units who choose to live or act in hazardous ways should bear the costs of the risks they choose to court. Mitigation as a fundamental tenet of emergency

32. U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Management Guidance for FY 1983," Director Macy memorandum to FEMA managers.

management is the basis for a move to a more rational and equitable assignment of the risk of loss.

- Continued emphasis and development of the concept of Comprehensive Emergency Management. This kind of integrated approach is critical to the achievement of FEMA's more specific policy thrusts, which deal with clear and present national needs ... The Agency should, as a matter of priority, continue to field a well integrated and designed public education program and develop emergency management as a profession.

Major Administrative Themes

- Manpower management.
- Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of FEMA programs. Efforts should be made to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of FEMA operations and programs through the use of improved management techniques.
- Information processing. Information processing needs and capabilities must be cataloged, analyzed, and coordinated throughout FEMA.
- FEMA headquarters consolidation. Office space for FEMA's Washington, D.C. staff should be consolidated by FY 83, preferably into a single building.

Another perspective of John Macy's view of FEMA's future and of emergency management is contained in his valedictory comments at his last staff meeting on January 19, 1981.³³ These comments were directed at the future and are taken from notes of the meeting.

1. Comprehensive Emergency Management should continue as the Agency's approach.
2. State-local relations need to improve.
3. An environment for the comprehensive approach should be created to ensure its continuation.
4. The Agency should assist the Presidency in a greater measure.
5. National security efforts should be more linked to disaster assistance operations.
6. There should be more thought about terrorism in the future.
7. There should be more money budgeted for research and analysis but not necessarily to be done by FEMA. FEMA should pull the efforts together.
8. The profession of emergency management needs to be created and given substance. Young people need to be brought in. Training and education are the fundamental job of the Agency.
9. The market place can't replace government in these areas of service to the people.

In retrospect, John Macy experienced almost an equal number of successes and frustrations — the successes mostly in institution-building and the frustrations in achieving the kind of programmatic innovations that would have required the kind of political support enjoyed by neither John Macy nor the Carter Administration.

33. *Personal notes of William Jones, a former colleague of John Macy, currently a FEMA official.*

TODAY — WHERE DO WE FIND FEMA?

FEMA has had two Directors since John Macy's departure on January 20, 1981. Louis O. Giuffrida was appointed as FEMA Director by President Reagan and reported to duty in May 1981. He served until his resignation became effective on October 31, 1985, a tenure of over four years in contrast to Macy's eighteen months. General Julius W. Becton, Jr., was appointed as FEMA Director on November 7, 1985. He reported to duty on November 25, 1985, and still serves in that capacity as of this writing.

The FEMA organization chart has changed over the years but not dramatically. Most of the movement has involved the training and fire programs. While the labels may have been altered, the basic programs are still discernible, and the array of staff support functions, while sometimes elevated and sometimes downgraded, are basically the same. Budget retrenchment has been proposed in recent years in line with major initiatives to reduce the deficit, but here too there has been remarkable stability. The abolishment of the U.S. Fire Administration has been proposed several times, but that agency has survived such proposals. The civil defense program and the resources devoted to it have drawn the most attention.

The considerable controversy inside FEMA and around the country in recent years regarding the civil defense program has involved both its emphasis and its treatment. Director Macy's emphasis on Comprehensive Emergency Management, the multi-hazard approach to emergency management, and the development of a professional emergency management cadre at the State and local levels led many in the civil defense/national security community to feel its interests were relegated to lesser attention while its resources were being used for purposes other than those intended.

The civil defense field organizations in the pre-FEMA period were characterized by a senior FEMA official as an "impotent, unskilled" group and largely irrelevant in their communities, with no operational responsibilities.³⁴ The existence of FEMA and its early program emphases has, according to its critics, produced a situation where the local civil defense directors have become multi-hazard emergency program directors. This has been a significant but double-edged development. The "attack-preparedness" approach and the staffs devoted to it have gained a much broader role and relevance in their communities — a heady feeling for the people involved. As this happened, however, the resources earmarked for civil defense (attack-preparedness) were used more and more on the hazards actually encountered. In the minds of many Federal officials concerned with national security, the civil defense resources were being diverted to other purposes. Civil defense, in their opinion, was worse off for having been made a part of FEMA.

Director Becton has moved to return the pendulum toward attack-preparedness, not without considerable opposition. In his speech before the World Future Society on July 15, 1986, he spoke of the "moderately good state of applying civil defense resources in the United States to peacetime civil emergencies."³⁵ He referred to a FEMA report of July 3, 1986, that had found a "generally dismal state of attack-related civil defense in the United States." He went on to present his view and the position of the Agency:

34. Interview.

35. Julius W. Becton, Jr., "Emergency Management: Where Are We Now? What Lies Ahead?" *Vital Speeches* 52 (September 15, 1986): 719-723.

Modifications were written into the law to allow the common sense use of these resources to cope with peacetime emergencies so long as this use, and I quote from the law, '...does not detract from attack-related civil defense preparedness.' — After I became FEMA Director in November 1985, it became clear to me that FEMA was failing to enforce this provision of the law by not insisting that State and local governments receiving civil defense funding would develop plans and systems usable in attack-related as well as peacetime crises. Too often, the all hazards approach to emergency management turned out to be all hazards but one.

The case for civil defense really boils down to the need for some backup system, even though imperfect, for saving significant numbers of lives if all other diplomatic and military deterrents fail.

This view did not go unopposed, as John W. Moore reported in a National Journal article of April 18, 1987:

Some State officials are worried about a perceived shift in the agency's focus, away from natural disaster help to an emphasis on nuclear war planning and post attack civil defense that is perceived as a vestige of the 1950s.

"There is a holocaust mentality in the FEMA hierarchy which provides first priority to the nuclear attack-related activities and relegates all other natural and peacetime technological disasters to the back burner", Leon McGoogan, Director of Arkansas Office of Emergency Services, wrote in a letter to the federal agency last month.³⁶

Another significant change in program approach, due largely to budgetary constraints, has been the imposition of a higher level of cost sharing by State and local governments for disaster assistance and for the costs of Federal training. As Director Becton indicated in his World Future Society speech:

In the field of emergency management, we have had to become more selective in providing disaster assistance. We are asking States and localities - not without some heated repercussions - to assume more of the cost and responsibility of dealing with disasters which are basically manageable without Federal help.³⁷

FEMA has imposed stricter eligibility requirements and reduced the rate of reimbursement from 100 percent of eligible costs to 75 percent. A proposal to reduce further the Federal share to 50 percent and tighten requirements even more was withdrawn after heavy opposition. The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law³⁸ and the continuing budget deficit make it likely that this reimbursement rate question will be revisited.

36. John W. Moore, "After the Deluge," National Journal 19 (April 18, 1987): 933.

37. Becton, "Emergency Management," pp. 719-723.

38. Elizabeth Wehr, "Congress Enacts Far-Reaching Budget Measure," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, (December 14, 1985), pp. 2604-11.

Some additional extracts from General Becton's speech point to other FEMA policy goals for the future:

In the area of population protection, we will invest some dollars in giving people the training and information to make them more self sufficient but will not have the money to do everything for them. New information and training technology should help us do this less expensively.

There will probably be more stress on greater and more standardized governmental regulation of hazard producing activities to avoid accidents or economic dislocations, and thus seek to reduce legal liability.

There will also be more emphasis on surveillance of potential hazards in our infrastructure to mitigate disaster and liability (building codes in seismic areas, bridges, etc.).

Since the enormous cost of replacing aging infrastructure will probably prevent replacement on a wholesale scale, I believe emergency managers will increasingly resort to more sophisticated technology for detecting, warning, predicting or controlling hazards.³⁹

Thus, recent trends in program emphasis by FEMA include: (1) restoring a greater degree of balance in the resources devoted to the attack-preparedness or civil defense programs versus the natural disaster programs; (2) seeking greater responsibility for State and local governments in cost sharing; and (3) continuing its espousal of a multi-hazard approach to emergency management.

CONCLUSIONS

Reviewing the Macy period, the source materials dealing with the creation and first years of FEMA and the thoughts of those who served with John Macy caused this author to reach several conclusions.

For the most part, the major objectives of the Presidential reorganization plan establishing FEMA have been well-served, notwithstanding the start-up problems John Macy and others experienced. The objectives that were the principal themes of Macy's term are still in evidence as major approaches of the Federal Government in carrying out its emergency management responsibilities. They included:

- the importance of a comprehensive approach: an all-risk/all-hazards approach, multiple use of a resource or whatever other descriptive terms might be used;
- the importance of public education in furthering the objectives of sound emergency management; and
- greater cost sharing with the States and localities so that there will be a greater sharing of responsibility among all levels.

39. Becton, "Emergency Management," pp. 719-723.

Some critics maintain that individual programs have not benefited from having been brought into FEMA. However, an argument can be made just as convincingly that the programs brought together in the FEMA context have been given a more realistic perspective.

As one of John Macy's former colleagues maintains, the creation of a new profession of emergency managers at the State and local levels may have made everything that has happened worthwhile.

From the standpoint of the President, the key is that the existence of FEMA provides a single place to which the President can turn for resolution, coordination, or even just referral of vexing problems of emergency management.

Finally, what were John Macy's signal contributions to all of this — to building the Federal Government's institutional capacity to deal with problems of emergency management? As a former colleague of Macy's put it: "It is something of a small miracle that FEMA even survived, and that isn't appreciated." In the face of great opposition to the very existence of the agency, John Macy fought to keep it together, and he fought his way through its first set of appropriations deliberations. He brought together outstanding career public servants and kept them in service to FEMA through his ability to engender loyalty.

John Macy's management skills might have been more effective as Director of FEMA at a later point in the agency's history when the advantage of a more stable organization could have given him more opportunity to mold the programs of the agency. The reality may be that John Macy's "grit" and integrity made it possible for FEMA to survive and become the agency recognized as the Federal Government's focal point for emergency management.

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