



Real or Imagined? A Critical Review of the SPLC's List of Conspiracies

No. 1: Chemtrails

This, the notion that jet plane contrails are often in fact government planes seeding the skies with pathogens to lobotomize or even cull the American population, is one of the wackier beliefs in extremist circles. There is not a shred of evidence to suggest such a program is afoot. However, well-documented programs from decades past, in which the government did indeed test chemical and biological agents on human beings, sometimes without their knowledge or consent, certainly shows that the US government, or elements within it, is capable of actions akin to what chemtrail true believers warn about.



No. 2: Martial law

Patriot groups are supposedly delusional in their insistence that plans are afoot to institute martial law following a crisis, whether real or manufactured. "A longstanding and central plank of the Patriot catechism," writes Zaitchik, "is the belief that one day — very soon! — federal forces, in league with the states, will suspend constitutional government and institute a police state."

While it is impossible to know what event might trigger attempts to impose martial law, concerns derisively dismissed by Zaitchik are very plausible. We wonder whether Zaitchik knows anything about American history beyond grade-school platitudes; or has he conveniently overlooked well-known facts about the Civil War, such as President Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus, his arrest of legislators and journalists, and his invasion and occupation of the American South by a military government (aka martial law)? And for a more recent precedent, we need look no farther than Hurricane Katrina and the imposition of de facto martial law in New Orleans. So yes, concerns about martial law are very real and amply substantiated by historical precedent.



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on August 12, 2010



Above: Japanese Americans board a train bound for the Manzanar concentration camp where they will be interned during World War II. Below: A view of the Manzanar camp.
(© Government Photos)



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No. 3: FEMA concentration camps

Think the federal government, and more specifically, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, are laying plans to intern American dissidents in concentration camps as part of an imminent crackdown? Then, according to Zaitchik, you've bought into the foolish notion, fueled most recently by anti-Obama paranoia, that the federal government, after imposing police-state rule, might try to do what most other police states in history have done, namely, set up concentration camps for undesirables. While fears of enlisting the aid of urban gangs to round up white-bread Americans are probably over the top and quite possibly driven by racist sentiments in some quarters, the notion of American concentration camps in a coming time of crisis is not at all far-fetched — just ask any Japanese-American.

No. 4: Foreign troops on US soil

Writes Zaitchik:

While “urban gangs” are considered a leading candidate to enforce a New World Order (NWO) lockdown, they are not the only threatening force clouding the Patriot mind. There is also a belief on the radical right that treasonous government officials are colluding with other governments to suppress Americans with the use of foreign troops. Patriots believe this foreign assistance will be necessary due to the patriotism of America's own troops. As explained on the Patriot website [libertyforlife.com](#), many U.S. active military personnel and veterans would likely refuse orders to suppress the rights of their fellow citizens, and so “the US/NWO/UN government is importing foreign troops into the USA to do what US soldiers did to Iraq.

Again, while hard evidence is scanty that such a turn of events is as imminent as the hard-core extremist militia types allege, who can doubt the plausibility of such a scenario? The use of foreign mercenaries to quell a revolt is as old as autocracy. Roman emperors surrounded themselves with praetorian guards often imported from Germany, while Byzantium brought in Catalan mercenaries (Roger de Flor's “Catalan Company”) to police its own citizens when the empire was in crisis in the Middle Ages. During the Revolutionary War, the British government imported crack Hessian troops to fight against the American forces. In modern times, the United Nations always uses foreign troops to carry out its various military occupations. Whether things could come to such a pass in the future



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United States remains unclear, but the soaring recruitment of foreign nationals into the US military, as well as the involvement of the US in foreign alliances like NATO and the United Nations, cannot be lightly dismissed.

No. 5: Door-to-door gun confiscations

“One of the defining features of Patriot/militia subculture is an obsession with firearms,” Zaitchik observes. Well, actually, one of the defining features of American culture, writ large - not to mention the writings of the Founding Fathers - is an “obsession,” as it were, with firearms. This is because the Founders, and most Americans with any grasp of history, have understood that would-be despots fear an armed populace more than anything else. If ownership of multiple firearms, unwavering support of the right to keep and bear arms, and willingness to defend one’s own country from tyranny - by armed force if absolutely necessary — is deemed an “obsession,” then this author, and millions of other American lovers of liberty, will happily plead guilty. Door-to-door firearms confiscation took place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and a systematized effort to disarm law-abiding Americans, dating back at least to the 1930s, is manifest in the tens of thousands of “gun control” laws already on the books.

Few other governments in the world, past or present, have permitted their citizens to keep and bear arms. Gun control laws do nothing to restrain crime, as study after study has demonstrated. The sole purpose of such laws - and of the overt confiscation that tends to follow in their wake — is to ensure a fearful, obedient populace, and withal one unable to resist government encroachments.

No. 6: 9/11 as a government plot

To be sure, stories of a missile, rather than a civilian jetliner, hitting the Pentagon, are absurd. Shocking events like a terrorist attack or assassination often precipitate speculation driven by deep-seated (and often justifiable) suspicion of “official” versions of events. 9/11 has been no exception, and there is plenty of evidence showing that elements in the US government were aware that a mega-terrorist attack was coming, that it might involve coordinated takeovers and strikes by civilian airliners, and that terrorist cells were already operating within the United States. FBI agents tried unsuccessfully to draw attention to the fact that Arab men had been training themselves to fly airliners using flight simulators, and the US security community was well aware of schemes hatched in the early 90s to use hijacked airliners as weapons of mass destruction.

But none of this adds up to proof that, as some “truthers” have alleged, the government of George W. Bush knew of 9/11 beforehand and let it unfold, or worse, that American government agents, not Islamic extremists, carried out the attacks. Still, it is safe to say that, as with the Kennedy assassination, the full truth of what happened in September 11, 2001 has yet to be disclosed, and may be left to generations yet unborn to uncover.

No. 7: Population control

Here again, while there’s no strong evidence that the US government has explicitly embarked on a deliberate program of population control (witness the dizzying rise of the US population over the past several decades, to well over 300 million), there can be little doubt of the ideological sympathy such notions tend to garner in the councils of the ultra-elite. Since Malthus, overpopulation has been blamed for many of the world’s ills, and a crisis stemming from overcrowding has been part of the litany of doomsday prophets like Paul Ehrlich for decades. The radical environmentalist lobby has been especially obstreperous in promoting population controls, and the US government’s complicity in UN programs to encourage birth control and family planning in allegedly overpopulated countries suggests



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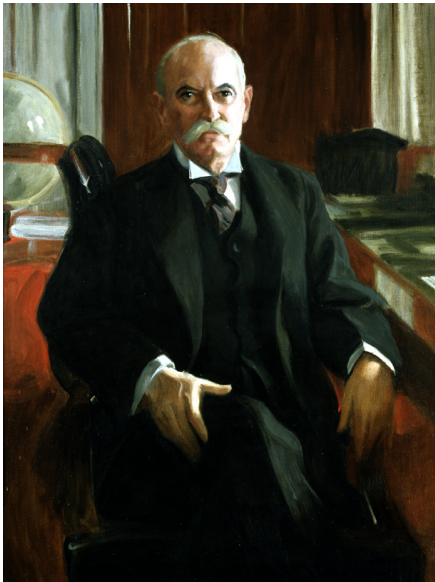
more than a little official sympathy for such views. Thus, while we have little evidence of a cohesive plan, we can have no doubt of the intent.

Incidentally, as one who has spent much time in supposedly overpopulated countries like India, this author can attest that, for the most part, bad government, not an excessive population, is responsible for poverty, overcrowding, disease, malnutrition, and inadequate resources.

No. 8: HAARP

Huh? As a well-read scary right-wing paranoid patriot, this author blushes to confess not having heard of what Zaitchik styles the “‘Death Star’ of the patriot conspiracy galaxy.” Those of you who are familiar with this allegedly core belief of the far right (the “High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program”), judge for yourselves.

No. 9: The Federal Reserve conspiracy



Senator Nelson Aldrich (Click to Enlarge)

Sorry, Mr. Zaitchik, but this one has no merit whatsoever. Yes, the creation of the Federal Reserve was the introduction of “European-style central banking into the United States,” and no, it wasn’t a Jewish conspiracy carried out by some Zionist cabal. But dismissing the ultra-secret confab at Jekyll Island as a mere hashing out of plans for an American central bank is akin to calling Pearl Harbor a Japanese probe of American naval strength. The Federal Reserve was born in secrecy and secrecy has been its byword ever since. As Bertie Charles Forbes, the founder of *Forbes Magazine*, wrote a few years after the meeting at Jekyll Island:

Picture a party of the nation’s greatest bankers stealing out of New York on a private railroad car under cover of darkness, stealthily riding hundreds of miles South, embarking on a mysterious launch, sneaking onto an island deserted by all but a few servants, living there a full week under such rigid secrecy that the names of not one of them was once mentioned, lest the servants learn the identity and disclose to the world this strangest, most secret expedition in the history of American finance. I am not romancing; I am giving to the world, for the first time, the real story of how the famous Aldrich currency report, the foundation of our new currency system, was written... The utmost secrecy was enjoined upon all. The public must not glean a hint of what was to be done. Senator Aldrich notified each one to go quietly into a private car of which the railroad had received



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orders to draw up on an unfrequented platform. Off the party set. New York's ubiquitous reporters had been foiled... Nelson (Aldrich) had confided to Henry, Frank, Paul and Piatt that he was to keep them locked up at Jekyll Island, out of the rest of the world, until they had evolved and compiled a scientific currency system for the United States, the real birth of the present Federal Reserve System, the plan done on Jekyll Island in the conference with Paul, Frank and Henry... Warburg is the link that binds the Aldrich system and the present system together. He more than any one man has made the system possible as a working reality.

The men who met at Jekyll Island represented a lion's share of the world's total wealth back in 1909, and acted in secrecy because they were well aware that the project they were designing represented a collusion of public and private (financial) interests. The Federal Reserve allowed the federal government, along with the banking sector, to manipulate the money supply just as European banks had become accustomed to doing. Had Americans any inkling of what was being urged on them in the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, they would have prevented the formation of the "money trust." But they were, and to some extent still are, kept in the dark about the Fed's purpose. If that's not conspiratorial, then the word has no force.

No. 10: The North American Union

"Since the passage of NAFTA in 1993," Zaitchik writes, "fears of economic dislocation and loss of sovereignty have animated both sides of the political spectrum." But of course, that isn't what's happening at all, he hastens to assure us; there is absolutely no merit to claims that the elites are planning to merge Canada, the US, and Mexico into a single political entity, abolishing national sovereignty along the way.

Mr. Zaitchik, whether deliberately or out of willful naivete, treats the credibility of such claims on the basis of what political leaders say they intend to do, not on what in fact they have done or are doing. Several facts which Zaitchik conveniently omits help to explain why many sober observers have concluded that, in fact, there *is* a plan to merge North America into a single polity, of which NAFTA is only the first step. For one thing, shortly after NAFTA came into effect, plans were drafted for the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), which was touted as a free-trade zone along the lines of NAFTA that would extend from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. It was modeled on the European Community, the old Europe-wide free trade zone that just happened to morph into a full-fledged European government, the European Union.

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, European leaders insisted that the Common Market was nothing more than a free-trade zone, and that it would never be used as a platform for regional government. Succeeding generations have learned the lie of such claims. Likewise, *pace* Zaitchik's vaporings, we pay little attention to what our leaders say they intend to do, and look at what they're doing. And we think that our leaders' actions — the creation of NAFTA, the drive to create a superhighway through the three countries, and the now-languished plans for the FTAA, for example — speak much louder than their words.

Zaitchik's screed is a plea to abandon all suspicion, even healthy suspicion, of our leaders and their motives. Suffice it so say that, had the American Founders been as trusting as Zaitchik's frame of reference requires, we would still be British citizens.



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