

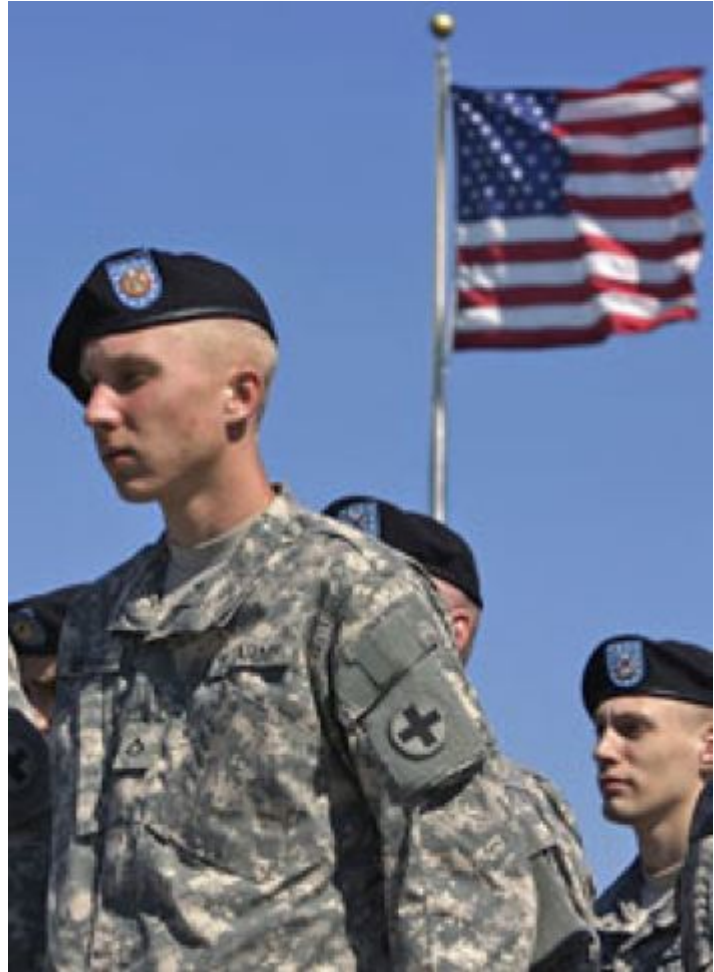


Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on December 3, 2008

20,000 Troops To Be Deployed in United States

The *Post* article notes there are some critics who worry that the new move may “possibly undermine the Posse Comitatus Act, a 130-year-old federal law restricting the military’s role in domestic law enforcement.”

However, the Bush administration’s new policy of deploying federal troops in American cities and communities does more than “possibly undermine” the Posse Comitatus Act; it guts the act and the protections that it provided American citizens against military dictatorship. The Posse Comitatus Act, passed in 1878, in response to abuses by federal [troops](#) during Reconstruction after the Civil War, forbade the president’s use of U.S. Army troops as “a posse comitatus, or otherwise, for the purpose of executing the laws” without expressed authorization from Congress.



The *Post* article reports:

Before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, dedicating 20,000 troops to domestic response — a nearly sevenfold increase in five years — “would have been extraordinary to the point of unbelievable,” Paul McHale, assistant defense secretary for homeland defense, said in remarks last month at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. But the realization that civilian authorities may be overwhelmed in a catastrophe prompted “a fundamental change in military culture,” he said.

A major component of this “fundamental change in military culture” has been the federalization of the National Guard for the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This has stripped many states of Guard units and leaves states and communities without the trained military personnel, equipment, and first-responders they would need in the event of natural disaster or severe terrorist attack.

In an address to the National Guard Association’s 130th General Conference on September 22, 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates gave an indication of the extent to which the National Guard has been increasingly drawn upon for foreign conflicts. Secretary Gates remarked:



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Today the Guard is engaged in more than 40 countries around the world, in places such as Bosnia, Kosovo, the Sinai, the Horn of Africa, and Guantanamo Bay. Since September 11th, 2001, more than 660,000 have been mobilized – the largest since World War Two and the first extended mobilization of both the Guard and the Reserve since the establishment of the all-volunteer [force](#).

The question that logically springs to mind is: “Why not bring the National Guard home from Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, etc. so that they will be available for deployment in emergencies by the state governors, rather than go down this dangerous road of nationalizing and militarizing our police powers?”

Among those who are alarmed by the announced deployment is radio/TV commentator [Glenn Beck](#), who told his radio audience on December 1:

While the rest of the world is going to pay attention today to Barack Obama and Senator Hillary Clinton and they are going to make this the big story, the big story today, at least for those people that are following the world, should be Pentagon to deploy 20,000 troops inside the U.S. for domestic security....

Now, these guys are being deployed for security for chemical, biological, terrorist activity, natural disaster. But this is what the National Guard is for. The reason why our founding fathers said there would be no standing army is because the federal government has no place in your town. The power to order troops, the power to be able to have people with weapons in your neighborhood must not ever be in the hands of the President or the congress. It must be in the hand of the individual governors. Our founders knew this. 20,000 — this is a battalion. This is something entirely new....

The announcement of the domestic troop deployment indicates that the proposals of a bipartisan commission launched a decade ago are continuing to be adopted. [The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century](#), more commonly known as the Hart-Rudman Commission, was launched in 1998 by President Clinton. The Commission produced several reports with policy recommendations. One of the most important pertaining to the matter at hand, *Road Map for National Security*, was delivered to President Bush on January 31, 2001. *Road Map* was the original source for the idea of creating the Department of Homeland Security, and idea that President Bush pushed through Congress after 9/11 — with the help of the influential backers of the Hart-Rudman Commission. *Road Map* also recommended federalizing the National Guard for both foreign and domestic service, with an emphasis on assuming more domestic police powers. The deployment of military troops — whether Army, Marines, or National Guard — for policing of America’s streets is an ominous development, one that certainly runs contrary to the letter and spirit of the constitutional checks and balances embedded in our system of government by the Founders.

As noted above by assistant defense secretary for homeland defense Paul McHale, prior to 9/11 a proposal of this sort “would have been extraordinary to the point of unbelievable.” Perhaps it still should be. Perhaps there ought to be a great deal more outcry, a great deal more scrutiny, and great deal more debate — before these “extraordinary” measures of tyranny are allowed to become ordinary, business-as-usual features of our political landscape.

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