Homeland Securities New Model of State Repression

In the aftermath of the 2003 FTAA Ministerial, in which Miami Mayor Diaz called his city’s para-military assault on free speech “a model for homeland security,” many journalists and activists have come to use the “Miami Model” as shorthand for an emerging set of “enhanced” law enforcement strategies aimed at preventing or denying public assembly, marginalizing dissenting voices, and insuring that high-profile government and corporate meetings take place without a hitch. The culmination of 20 years of militarizing domestic law enforcement values, ideals and technology, the Model is promoted by the highest levels of the Federal government and made possible by the Homeland Security Act, the USA PATRIOT Act, as well as other Federal legislation and executive orders.

What the Feds orchestrated in South Georgia in June was taken straight out of the Miami playbook (see “How to Suppress Political Dissent in 10 Easy Steps” above). Just as millions of federal dollars paid for Miami security, at least $40 million of federal money was allocated to keep the Summit safe from “terrorists and violent protesters.” (At a cost of $100,000 per protester, it would have been cheaper to have paid them not to show up.) In Georgia, the Model picked up a new trick. The G-8 Summit was designated as a National Special Security Event (NSSE) by the Secret Service and—thanks to Clinton’s 1998 Presidential Decision Directive 6—therefore security aspects fell under their jurisdiction. That classification permitted Georgia Governor Purdue to preemptively declare a state of emergency, which, in turn, allowed the Feds to subjugate local authority, curfews to be imposed and military units to “guard” the streets. The state of emergency would have made it easy to declare martial rule, detain and arrest all demonstrators until the “emergency” is over, and escalate the of use of force, if those tactics proved necessary. To many, it would seem that declaring a preemptive state of emergency, deploying thousands of troops and dispensing with the Bill of Rights was absurdly unnecessary. Yet, in a brilliant twist of logic, the Model’s champions will say that a smooth-running Summit only proves that the model was a successful deterrent. If, as was the case in Georgia, the model can thwart violent protestors simply with the show of overwhelming force and masterful propaganda, and without having to fire a round of tear gas, then so much the better. But if, as was the case in Miami, mass arrests and hundreds of projectiles are needed to quell protest, then it’s a damn good thing we went to DEFCON 2. The Model is self-justifying, and that is especially insidious because it also makes the Model self-perpetuating.

A blueprint for the DNC and RNC

Bill Hitchens, the Department of Homeland Security official who directed G-8 security operations, has said that the G-8 experiences are easily “transferable” to upcoming national political conventions. In addition, several articles have reported that police from NYC an Boston were on hand to observe the way things were handled at the G-8 Summit, just as G-8 law enforcement visited the FTAA Ministerial to learn from the Miami experience. Already, indicators of Miami- and Georgia-style repression are being seen in preparations at the DNC and RNC. In Boston, police have shut down meetings of the Black Tea Society and the DNC security plan heavily restricts public assembly and movement during the convention. In New York, the city has yet to approve any permits for RNC protests, making it difficult for organizers to plan their events. Moreover, in the city that has remained on high alert ever since 9/11, it is difficult to imagine that authorities would not declare a pre-emptive State of Emergency around the NSSE as was done in Georgia.

Many people are only dimly aware of these emerging police state tactics and the threat to democracy that they pose. If the Miami Model goes unchallenged, we will witness more and more collusion of government, law enforcement and the corporate media, leading to greater corporate power over our every day lives, widening inequality and more social injustices. For more information visit: www.saveourcivilliberties.org, atlanta.indymedia.org, and www.noG8.org.

- David Meieran

How to Suppress Political Dissent in 10 Easy Steps
1. Establish a Unified Command and Control Center to coordinate the efforts of dozens of law enforcement agencies.
2. Pass repressive ordinances in order to constrain public assembly and the types of materials activists can bring to demonstrations.
3. Collaborate with the corporate media to produce a disinformation campaign about “violent anarchists coming to town” and how “brave, well trained officers” will keep the peace.
4. Organize public training drills to show overwhelming military power.
5. Harass, intimidate, and conduct surveillance of activists. Disrupt their meetings and media centers.
6. Reserve public spaces and threaten local residents so that activists can’t find housing or meeting spaces.
7. Delay issuing permits until the very last minute.
8. Surround protesters with thousands of riot cops armed with the latest high-tech weaponry.
9. Take political prisoners and deprive them of food, water and medical attention.
10. **NEW!** Declare a state of emergency. Call in the National Guard and other Armed Forces.