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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 charts the evolution of the Federal Emergency Management Agency under the leadership of its third director, Julius W. Becton, Jr. The monograph reviews: (1) the Agency and the environment he inherited; (2) Becton, the man; (3) his policy goals; (4) his approach to implementation; (5) obstacles encountered; (6) his scan of the future for emergency management in the U.S.; (7) an assessment of the Becton administration at FEMA; and (8) conclusions relevant to Becton's impact on national policies for emergency management.

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## **Preface**

In late 1985, General Julius Becton took charge of FEMA where the Agency's structure and programs were now generally in place. At the same time, the Agency was one with some turmoil concerning his predecessor and one where the national environment in which he had to operate was to change during his term.

As President Ronald Reagan's second and last FEMA director, Becton brought to the job strengths in terms of experience and character that were much in tune with the Agency's needs. This monograph describes the setting in which Julius Becton provided leadership to the national emergency response structure. It concludes with comments on progress made and the unfinished agenda.

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership makes a difference. Good leadership makes a difference for the better. These truisms about leadership apply to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) just as they do to any organization.

Each director of FEMA has the potential to shape in significant ways the national policies not only of FEMA as an agency but also of America's emergency response structure overall. Whether or not a director actually does make a difference and does leave a major legacy is the measure of that director. This monograph describes the very positive term and impact of General Julius W. Becton, Jr., as FEMA director.

## **The Agency and the Environment Becton Inherited**

FEMA was slightly more than six years old at the time Julius Becton took charge of the Agency as its third director. President Jimmy Carter founded the agency in 1979 by Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1978, effective April 1, 1979, Executive Order 12127, and Executive Order 12148. In doing so, he brought together five different agencies from four Federal departments:

1. Defense Civil Preparedness Agency from the Department of Defense;
2. Federal Disaster Assistance Administration from the Department of Housing and Urban Development;
3. Federal Preparedness Agency from the General Services Administration;
4. U.S. Fire Administration from the Commerce Department; and
5. Federal Insurance Administration from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

By the time Becton arrived in November 1985 as FEMA's third director, the Agency's programs and most of its structure were in place. Becton's predecessor, Louis Giuffrida, had consolidated the component units from seven separate buildings around Washington, D.C., into a single new office building. Giuffrida had made extensive outreach efforts to the academic world to try to get emergency management "on the map" in terms of academic recognition and respectability. But even though the turmoil that attends the birth of any organization was generally over, the situation that Becton inherited posed some major external challenges and serious internal problems.

The external environment affecting FEMA was dominated by four factors or trends:

1. The Federal budget deficit;
2. An eroding industrial base;
3. Growing foreign dependencies; and
4. President Reagan's preference for emphasizing the States and localities and the private sector as service providers.

As will be seen later in the discussion of obstacles encountered, the budget deficit had many ramifications for FEMA (as it did, of course, for the entire Federal Government). These included Congressional failure to fund increases for civil defense favored by the administration.

The matters of an eroding industrial base and growing foreign dependencies both affected the nation's capacities for industrial mobilization. The combination of more products being produced off shore and the growing American dependence on raw materials from abroad posed special challenges for one charged with a readiness responsibility. By 1988, however, American manufacturing, fueled by the declining value of the dollar was making a rather strong comeback.

President Reagan's policy objective of returning as many functions as possible to States and localities provided a philosophical framework that was later to have strong implications for the U.S. Fire Administration and for the disaster assistance programs. The President's emphasis on the private sector as service provider was to have implications for the Federal Insurance Administration.

But it was FEMA's internal rather than its external environment that needed quick and decisive action when General Becton arrived. FEMA was an organization in deep trouble in November 1985.

Louis Giuffrida, President Reagan's first FEMA director, resigned under fire two months prior to Becton's arrival. FEMA's budget had not been approved, and Becton had to cut it by \$13,800,000 in his first 10 days on the job. Two grand juries were looking into alleged questionable practices in the Agency. More than 30 investigations by the inspector general were underway. FEMA had not had travel, recruitment or training funds available for the prior 10 months. Congress had put almost total constraints on personnel transfers, and the Agency was a regular feature in Washington, D.C., area newspapers.

Worse than all the preceding ailments, however, was the low state of morale in the Agency and its loss of credibility. A key, veteran staff member observed: "The state of morale was at a low, low point. It couldn't have been any lower." According to Becton, there were "we/they problems," "headquarters/field problems," and "credibility problems with Congress, the Administration, States and local governments and with constituency groups." Many Federal agencies didn't trust FEMA or, just as bad, they didn't take the Agency seriously. In speaking of the FEMA staff, Becton said, "...most of them were, when I arrived, in a slump... and full of depression. The morale of the 2,300 people who make up this agency had to be lifted and restored."<sup>1</sup>

### **Becton: The Man**

At age 62, Becton starts each day with 60 pushups and 60 situps. He also "tries to" run two miles, three times a week. Becton's emphasis on personal fitness and personal readiness is emblematic of his philosophy of and approach to directing FEMA — indeed, of his approach to life.

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, he enlisted in the Army during World War II. During his 40 year military career, he rose from Private to Lieutenant General. Along the way, he found time to earn a Bachelor of Science degree from Prairie View A & M College in Texas and a Master of Arts degree from the Institute of Defense Analysis in conjunction with the University of Maryland.

Becton's military career ingrained in him the doctrine of preparation, of readiness. That he brought to FEMA a strong emphasis on training was thus entirely natural. "It grew out of 40 years of preparing," he says. "If we have everything in place, we might convince a would-be aggressor to stop," he explains.

His military background has been a major asset to Becton even beyond giving him the strong preparedness mind set. The need to have excellent liaison with the Department of Defense and the National Security Council was immediately apparent to him. He was able to draw upon the network of high level people with whom he had worked and the respect he had earned to strengthen greatly FEMA's working relations with those two agencies. An example is the friendship of Becton with National Security Director Colin Powell. Both were generals. Today, FEMA's role in the national security apparatus has won respect. The NSC has, for example, given General Becton the overall responsibility for coordinating the development of a new National Security Emergency Plan.

1. *Remarks of Julius W. Becton, Jr., before Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Staff, National Emergency Training Center, Emmitsburg, MD, June 12, 1986.*

Although brief by comparison with his four decades in the military, Becton's 22 months as Director of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in the State Department was another important preparation for his FEMA role. He is quoted in *Hazard Monthly* for September 1985,<sup>2</sup> as noting parallels between OFDA and FEMA in "hazard analysis...vulnerability analysis...preparedness programs...technical assistance...technology transfer...and training in certain areas of disaster relief management." While at OFDA, he was in charge of the U.S. portion of disaster relief at the time of the first Ethiopian drought. At the time of his appointment as FEMA director, he was coordinating the U.S. response to the 1985 Mexico City earthquake.

The Reagan administration does not have many high-level minorities. Becton, a black, is one of the highest. He doesn't emphasize his race, but he doesn't forget it either. In a February 17, 1986, interview with the *Washington Times*,<sup>3</sup> after mentioning that a son had just graduated from Valley Forge Military Academy as a 1st Captain, Becton said, "You know when I grew up in Pennsylvania, I couldn't even go on campus."

Does Becton see himself as a role model? He replies first with a Webster's Dictionary definition: "a model is a small imitation of the real thing." He goes on to say that he doesn't deliberately do things as a role model but is aware of problems of failure. By implication, a personal failure could be taken as a loss for blacks generally, and he's not going to let that happen on his watch if he can possibly help it.

Becton has addressed minority groups in or related to FEMA. In January 1987, he was the principal speaker at the Pentagon at the second observance of the national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "The significance of this man — and the reason why we celebrate a holiday in his name — is the fact that he dreamed dreams of understanding — all people trying to understand each other. By trying to understand each other — or at least make the attempt to live in peace with one another — we come to realize what true freedom is all about," said Becton.<sup>4</sup>

Becton also spoke at ceremonies during the Asian/Pacific Heritage Week at FEMA and to the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters. To the black firefighters he said: "While recognizing your commitment to equal opportunity, I want to make you aware of my lifetime dedication as well. Since coming to FEMA, I have elevated the management and staff involvement in equal opportunity to high managerial levels with positive results thus far. Our immediate goal is to strengthen the reversal in affirmative action gains that often occur during reductions in the work force and to increase the representation of minorities and women at the higher management levels." said Becton. Then commenting on the tragedy of 6,000 American fire deaths a year, he noted that statistically the black citizen is at greater risk from fire and injury in both the inner city and rural America.<sup>5</sup>

Our final note about Becton the man. He says, "I do what I do because I feel it is important." That says quite a bit about the man.

2. James W. Morentz, "New FEMA Director Nominated," *Hazard Monthly*, Vol. VI No. 2. (September 1985); 1.
3. S.J. Masty, "War Hero Fights Disasters with Calm Under Fire," *The Washington Times*, February 17, 1986.
4. Address by Julius W. Becton, Jr., "Living the Dream: Let Freedom Ring.: to the Martin Luther King Observance Breakfast, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C., January 14, 1987.
5. Address by Julius W. Becton, Jr., to International Association of Black Professional Firefighters, Buffalo, N.Y., August 27, 1986.

## **His Policy Goals**

Becton says he had carte blanche from the White House as he took charge of FEMA. This freedom of action probably applied particularly to straightening out the situation he inherited within the Agency. Certainly, he was immune from neither the constraints of the budget deficit nor the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act budget balancing requirements. Nor was he operating outside of the President's policy preferences for a reduced role for government and the placing of more responsibility with State and local governments.

About six months after his arrival at FEMA, Becton published a mission statement for the Agency. Brief and to the point, it is reproduced on the following page. The mission itself is, of course, even more brief:

## Federal Emergency Management Agency Mission Statement

Under the direction of the President, the mission of the Federal Emergency Management Agency is to plan for and coordinate the protection of the civilian population and resources of the Nation, to include planning for the continuity of constitutional government in time of emergency.

To accomplish its mission, FEMA acts as the focal point for all levels of government in developing a national emergency management capability that can deal effectively with any major emergency. Toward the creation of this capability, FEMA:

- \* develops and coordinates programs and activities to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural, technological, and attack-caused civil emergencies.
- \* develops program guidance and plans to assist government at all levels in planning to cope with and recover from emergencies.
- \* supports State and local governments in disaster and emergency planning, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts.
- \* coordinates Federal assistance from Presidentially declared disasters and emergencies.
- \* develops programs for population protection including warning, shelter, and evacuation planning, and emergency public information.
- \* administers the United States Fire Administration program, aimed at reducing the nation's loss of life and property from fire through better fire prevention and control.
- \* administers the National Flood Insurance and Federal Crime Insurance Programs and directs floodplain management activities.
- \* develops programs to lessen the effect of natural and technological hazards.
- \* develops and provides training and education for Federal, State, and local fire service personnel and emergency managers to enhance the preparedness and professional development of all levels of government.

May 14, 1986

Becton runs FEMA in accordance with that May 14, 1986, mission statement. In his transmittal memo to all headquarters and regional personnel, he said: "The mission of the Federal Emergency Management Agency is one of critical importance to this nation. We have been entrusted with planning for the protection of our people and resources and the continuation of our constitutional form of government."\* Becton believes that, and his people are beginning to believe and act upon that belief as well. Former White House staff member Ralph Bledsoe says, "[the FEMA] people are serious about their mission. There's lots of dedication there."

6. *Julius W. Becton, Jr., Director, "Mission Statement" Memorandum for All Headquarters and Regional Personnel, May 20, 1986.*

On numerous occasions Becton has stated that the continuity of government and the protection of the civilian population are his top priorities. Attack preparedness is at the heart of Becton's approach. Is he rowing against the tide? Very much so, or so it would seem, when it comes to State and local governments. Although the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 clearly established attack preparedness as the reason for Federal action in this program area, the evolution of the doctrine of dual use and the passage of time had many people, including many FEMA staff members, operating in an "all hazards but nuclear" mind set prior to Becton's arrival.

William Chipman, former Chief, Emergency Management Planning Division of the Office of Civil Defense (now retired), says for many States and localities, "Federal Civil Defense funds had come to be viewed as an entitlement." Chipman adds that "General Becton has been forceful in emphasizing the attack preparedness priority."

Becton was not alone in believing that the fundamental premise of the civil defense program was not being adequately supported. On July 29, 1985, a House and Senate Armed Services conference committee expressed concern "...about an apparent lack of focus and direction in the current civil defense program. The situation is manifested in the funding emphasis on state and local civil disaster programs which, while meritorious, are a questionable use of national defense budget resources..." (House Report No. 99-235).<sup>7</sup> The General Accounting Office criticized FEMA for not placing more stress on attack-related civil defense: "...we found that in fiscal year 1985, peacetime emergency preparedness efforts appeared to be emphasized over attack preparedness at all levels — FEMA headquarters, the National Emergency Training Center, regional, State and local levels."<sup>8</sup>

In response to the conference committee report, FEMA conducted a review of the nation's civil defense program. Begun under the Giuffrida administration, the review and subsequent report to Congress on July 3, 1986, concluded that the civil defense program was in deep trouble. According to Becton, the report detailed a gradual deterioration of attack-related civil defense capability in the United States and asserted that "U.S. Civil Defense capabilities are low and declining...National survival would be in jeopardy after a major nuclear exchange. State and local governments, lacking the capabilities to survive, would be unable to provide citizens even the most basic life-sustaining support."<sup>9</sup>

As we shall see in a later discussion of "Obstacles Encountered," Becton was to take his stand over the matter of nuclear attack preparedness exercises in funding confrontations with the governors of Oregon and Washington in 1987 and 1988.

Becton's civil defense and other major program goals for FEMA are spelled out in the document entitled "Agency Goals," which appears on the following pages.

7. *U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, Committees on Armed Services Conference Report, July 29, 1985, as quoted in Report for the Senate and the House Committee on Armed Services on National Civil Defense Program, Federal Emergency Management Agency, July 3, 1986.*
8. *United States General Accounting Office, "Civil Defense FEMA's Management Controls Need Strengthening," December 1987, 27.*
9. *Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Report for the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services on National Civil Defense Program," July 3, 1986.*

## **Agency Goals**

### **Civil Defense**

To develop protection plans and functional emergency capabilities to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from nuclear and other attack-related hazards in a manner, which to the extent practicable, is adaptable to other natural and technological hazards.

### **Comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Planning**

To enhance State and local capabilities to prepare for, respond to and mitigate natural and technological disasters and emergencies in an all hazards context.

### **Radiological Emergency Preparedness**

To enhance State and local capabilities to plan for and respond to radiological emergencies offsite at fixed nuclear facilities.

### **Preparedness Programs**

To ensure that the Nation is ready and able to respond, manage and recover from peacetime and wartime national security emergencies, prepare to preserve the continuity of constitutional government and to enable government, at all levels, to cope with the consequences of accidental, natural and man-made occurrences.

### **Training and Fire Programs**

To reduce national fire loss and train Federal, State and local officials and their supporting staffs, emergency fire responders, volunteer groups and the public to meet the responsibilities and challenges of domestic emergencies through planning, mitigation preparedness response and long-term recovery.

### **Disaster Relief**

To deliver the disaster assistance programs of FEMA and coordinate the disaster relief activities of other Federal agencies in support of State and local governments in Presidentially-declared major disasters and emergencies and to encourage State and local government disaster preparedness and mitigation activities.

### **Flood Insurance**

To facilitate the availability of flood insurance that minimizes the general taxpayer burden through an equitable sharing of the cost of flood losses.

### **Management**

To establish and maintain personnel policies and practices that foster FEMA's ability to accomplish its mission and care for its people.

To provide for efficient and effective practices within FEMA with emphasis on the highest standard of fiscal integrity and public accountability.

To ensure an organizational structure that is capable of accomplishing FEMA's mission.

An altogether different kind of goal is Becton's desire to see emergency management become a profession. In a speech to the National Coordinating Council on Emergency Management in October 1986, Becton said: "Our hope for the future is that emergency management as a profession will begin to gain the recognition it so justly deserves. FEMA's contributions toward this hope becoming a reality have been our efforts to standardize the basics of our trade, and we certainly support your efforts to help develop a common base of understanding of what emergency management is, how it can be evaluated, and how it can be improved."

He went on to say that "until we have some basis for building our profession on solid and commonly understood principles, it will not be understood by either the public, our funding authorities, or even fully by the emergency management community itself."<sup>10</sup>

One long term FEMA staff member said that General Becton wants to see emergency management as a career, as a profession. "It is a career but not yet a profession." The staff member noted that only a small percentage of the Giuffrida outreach effort to higher education remains in place today.

### **Approaches to Implementation**

In many ways, to write about Julius Becton's approaches to implementation is to write an extension to the earlier discussion of "Becton: The Man." Other than a statement that "the chain of command works if you use it" and a command presence, his management style does not carry a particular military stamp to it. Realist. Pragmatist. Good manager. These are words that seem to fit. Ralph Bledsoe, formerly Special Assistant to President Reagan and one who has observed Becton in action, says that Becton's approach in his dealings with other Federal agencies is one of coordination — a collaborative effort. Becton recognizes that FEMA doesn't have the troops, so he must see that each Cabinet department is prepared to do its job in emergency management. He is a real team player, says Bledsoe.

In discussing approaches to implementation, Becton says there is no "one best way." We have 135 different programs and activities. What works for earthquake preparation for California Governor Deukmejian doesn't work for nuclear power plant evacuation planning for Massachusetts Governor Dukakis, according to Becton.

But it is the more personal side of the man that gets the attention and frank admiration of many of his FEMA staff members. One veteran says: "The single most important thing he brought to the Agency is integrity. He has helped reestablish the agency as viable." Another senior staff member ranks "personal integrity and excellent rapport with the other agencies in town" as Becton's high points.

"He is personally secure and thus can listen. Becton is accessible. The staff can give him bad news because he's not threatening. He doesn't kill the messenger. He has restored morale. A real

10. Address by Julius W. Becton, Jr., "Emergency Management: The Profession," to National Coordinating Council on Emergency Management, Dallas, October 22, 1986.

shot in the arm. I give him extremely high marks," says a staff member who has served all three FEMA directors. The comment about listening fits in with Becton's own assertion that he wants an open approach in the Agency.

Becton says that among his highest priorities when he began work at FEMA was the establishment of integrity and credibility among the FEMA family. To help restore or build credibility with the different groups with which FEMA works, he met with the heads of all Federal agencies and did fence mending. He held similar meetings with State and local organizations and other constituency groups "to learn how we can develop better rapport, how we can work together." And he worked hard on restoring credibility with Congress. There he says he prefers to meet one-on-one "so I can understand what they want and they understand what I can do or not do. I made it clear I didn't plan to become an expert in 135 programs. If they want me, I come, but I send an expert to testify." Among his list of personal objectives for FY 1988 was to "improve FEMA's credibility with Congress through focus on our ability to deliver goods and services."<sup>11</sup> Another of those personal objectives is to "incorporate sound management practices to ensure full responsibility and accountability and maintain an ethical and legal approach to public administration." How many political appointees in Washington have similar personal objectives or even a concern for "...an ethical and legal approach to public administration?"

One of Becton's management tools is the briefing. He started the briefings for newcomers, for prospective vendors. The briefings now include old timers as well. At these monthly sessions, various staff members may conduct the briefing, but General Becton handles the questions. His list of "mosts" offered at an April 1988 briefing reveal much about his experiences at FEMA and comprise a shorthand kind of assessment:

*Most humane and visible program* — disaster assistance

*Most contentious* — radiological preparation such as the Seabrook and Shoreham nuclear power plants

*Most potential for great argument* — disposing of chemical weapons

*Most expensive* — flood insurance

*Most disappointing* — 6,200 fire deaths per year, concentrated among the aged and the very young

*Most challenging* — Training at the Emmitsburg facility because we can reach large numbers of people

*Greatest potential* — programs in NATO

Becton's favorable comments about training reflect upon another of his approaches to implementation — trying to help educate the public. He is excited when he talks of the potential of educational television on EE Net with 2-way audio and one-way video. FEMA has the largest TV training program in the Federal Government.

11. *FEMA Annual Program and Reporting Summaries, FY 1988, September 1987.*

When it comes to media relations, Becton has just one rule — he's against debate in the press. It backfires. He says he's very leery of the media and doesn't feel very comfortable talking to the press. He fears misquotes and misunderstanding.

## Obstacles Encountered

During Becton's term, he has faced a number of obstacles to the successful implementation of his program goals. When asked, he turns immediately to some of the internal obstacles present in the FEMA he inherited. In addition to the low staff morale, lack of credibility and abysmal Congressional relations, he found the Agency to be permeated with what he calls "stovepipeness." This Dr. Seuss-sounding disease is characterized by a total lack of lateral coordination. Program managers look up and down for the interests of their very own programs but not sideways. Becton set a goal to do away with stovepipeness.

According to one senior staff member, Becton identified the problem and is trying to do a great deal about it. He combined three directorates — state and local programs and support, national preparedness and emergency operations — into two and that helped. (See page 21 for FEMA Organization as of January 4, 1988.) He also started an intern program in which the trainee moves from unit to unit. Over time, that will help break down turf barriers.

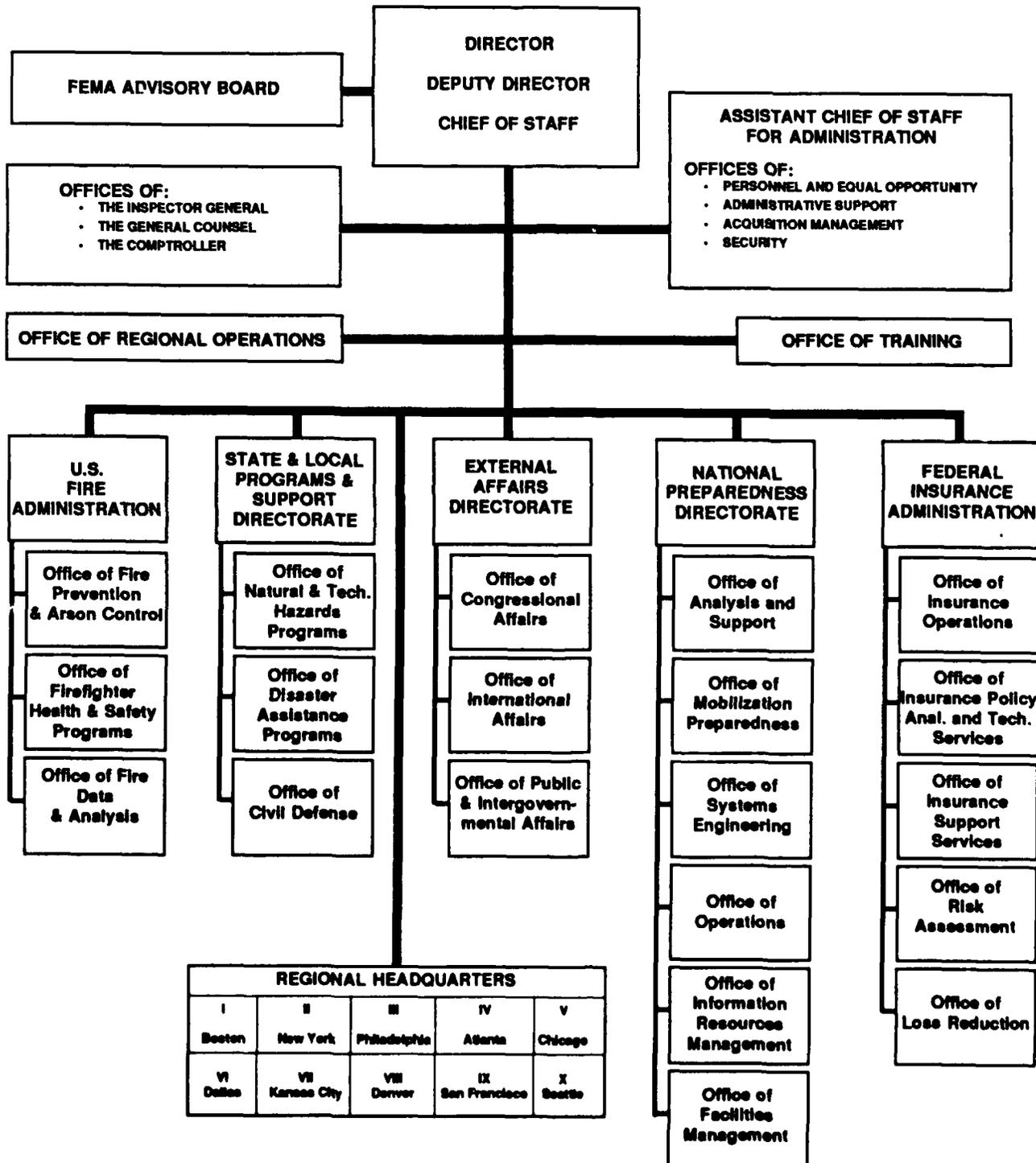
Another veteran staff member says he doubts any of the pre-existing organizations were enthusiastic about the 1979 reorganization. There was vigorous turfing at the start. It has decreased but it is by no means gone. General Becton has had a salutary influence in this regard. A pervasive obstacle has been the deficit. Just as the deficit caused cutbacks in all other Federal agencies, it did so in FEMA as well. Rather than chronicle each program reduction, we shall concentrate here on a few that had the greatest impact.

While Becton consistently has listed continuity of government and protection of the civilian population as his top priority, this is a costly objective and one that has not fared well with Congress.

William Chipman of the Office of Civil Defense claims that if that office had stayed in the Defense Department, the civil defense budget would no doubt have more than doubled in FY '82 while riding the wave of the Reagan honeymoon and the then-popular defense buildup. Chipman says that in 1979, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown was opposed to the transfer of the Office of Civil Defense to the new FEMA because civil defense would become submerged in an agency with primarily a peace purpose. Whatever the reason, Becton inherited FEMA when the civil defense budget was at an all-time low in constant dollars. As recently as FY '83, the Reagan administration's civil defense request had been for \$252 million as the first year of what was to be a seven-year enhanced civil defense program. The request represented approximately a 70 percent increase over the prior year. Opponents labeled the program a war-fighting strategy. Although the House Committee on Armed Services recommended the entire \$252 million, Congress ultimately appropriated only \$147.8 million, about a 6 percent increase. By the time Becton arrived in November 1985, OMB and Congressional anger with Giuffrida and the effects of the deficit had teamed up to lower the budget to \$130.815 million.

# Organization Federal Emergency Management Agency

January 4, 1988



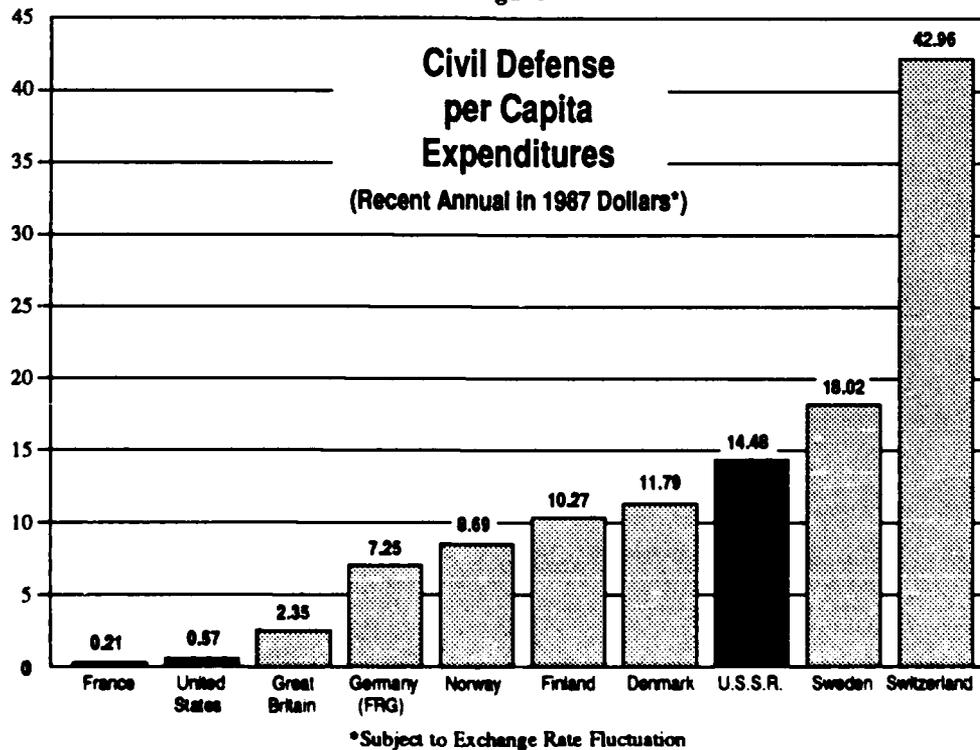
Becton sought increases in the civil defense program with each budget request he made, but he had only modest success. Each year, the deficit situation became a greater obstacle.

For the late 1980s then, civil defense was just another in the long list of deficit victims.

Figure 1

U.S. Civil Defense Appropriations FY 1985-1989 and FY 90 Requested		
	Current Dollars	FY 88 Dollars
FY 85	\$177.954M	\$196.852
FY 86	130.815	139.610
FY 87	139.391	144.297
FY 88	133.572	133.572
FY 89	145.226	140.000
FY 90	151.535 (requested)	

Figure 2



Chipman says small growth is possible in the civil defense budget, but it would take a major event — with the Soviet Union or terrorists or a giant California earthquake — to change attitudes on Capitol Hill. As Becton said in a speech to the Virginia Military Institute in February 1987: "Civil defense is the most difficult challenge which FEMA faces and farthest away from its objectives of protecting the U.S. population from a whole range of major hazards, up to and including nuclear attack."<sup>12</sup>

Another example of a deficit-related obstacle is the case of the U.S. Fire Administration, but in this instance, the deficit was only one obstacle. The philosophical preferences of the Administration were at least as important.

David McLoughlin, formerly Deputy Associate Director for State and Local Programs and Support and currently Director of the Office of Training, who worked for two years on the task force creating FEMA, says "...the people in the U.S. Fire Administration were afraid they would be swallowed up. To counter this fear, they were told there would be value if they joined. It hasn't happened."

With its strong State and local emphasis, the Reagan Administration has not given much support. One year, OMB zeroed out the U.S. Fire Administration entirely. In his March 5, 1986, testimony before the Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Becton said:

*The 1987 request proposes the elimination of the U.S. Fire Administration for a savings of \$7,364,000 and 22 workyears, made necessary to reach Gramm-Rudman-Hollings targets*

*In calling for elimination of the U.S. Fire Administration in 1987, we are asking State and local governments, the private sector and volunteer organizations to share in supporting and maintaining the fire safety programs*

*Let me state very clearly that the elimination of the U.S. Fire Administration does not reflect on the quality of the programs. The reality of the deficit is such that in developing this budget, all programs have been scrutinized.<sup>13</sup>*

The Joint Council of National Fire Service Organizations, a group of 11 organizations which supported the creation of FEMA, feels that all of the understandings and commitments made to the fire service at the time of FEMA's establishment have since been breached. Not surprisingly, the Joint Council had a beef with the Reagan Administration. The Reagan transition team said the fire programs were a negative appendage to FEMA. Some fire service sources speculate that the Administration was concerned about the influence of the International Association of Fire Fighters, the large fire union.

Eight years after the creation of FEMA, at its 1987 meeting in St. Louis, The International Association of Fire Chiefs adopted a resolution calling for the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Academy to be removed from FEMA's control. The Joint Council adopted a similar

12. *Remarks of Julius W. Becton, Jr., at Dining-In, Virginia Military Institute, February 20, 1987.*

13. *Statement of Julius W. Becton, Jr., before the Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, March 5, 1986.*

resolution in the fall of 1987. The latter's resolution was perhaps more significant because of its earlier support for the creation of FEMA.

Becton clearly feels badly about poor relations with the fire service, and in his wish list for the future of emergency management, he gives improved rapport with the fire service as one of his top five items.

U.S. Fire Administrator Clyde Bragdon doesn't object to the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Academy being included in FEMA, but he believes fire shouldn't be subordinated to other emergency management programs. A priority such as protection of the population from nuclear attack does subordinate fire programs, according to Bragdon.

Some sources in the fire service feel that Becton got off on the wrong foot with the fire community by not opposing the fire budget cuts with the Office of Management and Budget. Instead, he reportedly told the Joint Council: "If you want more funds, you can get them from Congress." That was an open invitation that didn't need to be repeated.

Congress has regularly restored much or all of the fire funding in FEMA that the Administration had proposed for reduction or elimination. And the new Congressional Fire Caucus has already become the second largest of 89 caucuses in Congress with 328 members. Some feel it will soon be the largest. As a possible sign of changing winds, President George Bush addressed the Fire Caucus on April 12, 1989, and Vice President Dan Quayle attended their reception in what one fire official described as a first for the fire community.

A final example of a deficit-driven plan was Becton's proposal in 1986 to change the formula for disaster assistance. FEMA proposed a new approach to reimburse State and local governments that sustain damage to public property in declared major disasters.

FEMA's concept was to establish a floor amount of losses which the State or local government would absorb before Federal assistance became available and to gear the eventual aid to fiscal capacity. Under the guidelines published in the Federal Register on April 18, 1986, poorer jurisdictions could have actually received more funds based on a sliding scale than under then-existent formulas. But wealthier jurisdictions would have received less.

The FEMA staff calculated the proposed formulas would reduce the number of declared disasters and the total amount of Federal funds paid out. The staff determined that only 50 of the 111 disasters certified as eligible for Federal funding during the previous five years would have qualified under the proposed regulations.

FEMA's proposal was designed to support the President's expenditure reduction goals, and the staff had calculated the new formula might save about \$400 million annually. State and local officials were caught by surprise and objected to the formula change. Congress didn't buy the idea that States and localities should assume more of the cost and responsibility of dealing with disasters. As a result, the proposed regulation changes were withdrawn.

Becton said in October 1986 that he still believed the capacity indicators that would have been the basis of the new formulas could provide more continuity and uniformity in the disaster declara-

tion process. He said FEMA's intent was to take the magic out of the disaster declaration process. In withdrawing the regulations, he said that FEMA was looking forward to working closely with State and local governments to deliver an appropriate formula.<sup>14</sup> A new formula has yet to emerge, although a followup meeting was held, and the FEMA staff has worked on one. The National Association of Counties is identified as one constituent group opposed to a new formula.

An obstacle not driven by the deficit but yet challenging to the very foundation of FEMA was a refusal by the Governors of Oregon and Washington to sign the annual Comprehensive Cooperative Agreement (CCA) so long as it required their states to participate in nuclear attack exercises. Former governors of both States had signed, but in early 1987, Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt and Washington Governor Booth Gardner both refused to do so.

CCAs involve a cycle of exercises over a five year period. The 1987 CCA for the Federal Region X (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington) required a national security communications exercise wherein 48 nuclear weapons were detonated in Region X. In the spring of 1987, Oregon began to become concerned about playing in the exercise. It said it wouldn't have a problem with a terrorist exercise involving nuclear weapons, but it objected to the planned exercises.

Word of objections from the Governor's office began to surface in newspapers in the Northwest, and Washington soon joined Oregon in opposing the exercise. By summer, the Oregon and Washington Congressional delegations had taken an interest in the matter. FEMA briefed the Congressional delegations. FEMA held firm. Oregon and Washington did conduct an exercise in September, and the scenarios did involve nuclear attack. But that didn't end the matter.

When drafting the CCAs for FY '88, the FEMA staff, concerned with the recent experience with Oregon and Washington, inserted tightened language in all the CCAs around the country. The new language made it abundantly clear that nuclear attack preparations were required during the exercise cycle. Eventually 49 States signed, but Oregon objected even though Region X was not required to conduct a nuclear exercise in FY '88.

Oregon began to put out news releases and indicated that it would not sign. FEMA decided to wait. No law required Oregon to apply for the money. Then FEMA began to get a lot of Congressional pressure again. The FEMA staff had lengthy internal discussions on the theme "Should we give Oregon any money?" but eventually agreed to fund the State temporarily while the debate continued.

Governor Goldschmidt's office and FEMA began to talk about the language of the CCA. Oregon cut out references to nuclear attack. FEMA reduced some of the nuclear references but still made certain that the CCA met the requirements of the law on the matter of nuclear attack preparedness. The Governor's office said FEMA had caved in, and it put out a news release. After the Governor did not return two telephone calls on the matter from General Becton, FEMA sent him a four-page letter affirming that the CCA most certainly did require nuclear attack planning.<sup>15</sup> A meeting in

14. *Address by Julius W. Becton, Jr., to the National Emergency Management Association, Albany, NY, October 7, 1986.*

15. *Grant C. Peterson, Associate Director, State and Local Programs and Support, FEMA, Letter to Hon. Neil Goldschmidt, Governor of Oregon, January 28, 1988.*

Oregon with FEMA staff from both Washington, D.C., and Region X and Governor Goldschmidt and his staff failed to resolve the issue.

Time passed. Oregon wanted money. Finally, the State signed an agreement that required nuclear attack planning. Governor Goldschmidt still claimed victory and verbally sent conflicting signals to the media about whether the State would do nuclear attack preparedness planning. When Oregon newspapers called FEMA for comment, the staff explained that the signed agreement called for nuclear attack preparedness planning. After reading the document themselves, reporters questioned the governor on it at a news conference. The FEMA staff continues to monitor the Oregon situation for compliance in 1989.

Chief of Staff William Tidball describes the Oregon case as a monumental effort, a test case on what the law says as to the use of civil defense money for nuclear attack preparations. He says he never recalls a State having taken as strong a position as Oregon took on this matter. Tidball says: "Frankly, we have been pretty permissive. A large number of the staff encouraged General Becton to look the other way. But Becton felt someone had to take a stand."

Even as this monograph is written, the dissent goes on. When the 1989 CCAs were formulated, the State of Washington objected on the grounds that Washington interprets its law as preventing the State from engaging in crisis relocation planning for nuclear attack. The FEMA staff tried to work out mutually acceptable language that still complied with Federal law. Meanwhile, the State civil defense director tried to get the state legislature to fund the entire program so that Washington wouldn't have to take any Federal funds. Ultimately, FEMA declined to honor Washington's application as not meeting Federal requirements for nuclear planning. Washington filed appeal briefs in May 1989. The matter is currently pending before a FEMA hearing officer.

The outcome of the State of Washington case will be of major importance to FEMA. For its part, the State may request Congress to amend the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 to delete the requirement for nuclear attack planning. Such an amendment, if enacted, would affect the fundamental mission of FEMA.

Playing on a similar anti-nuclear theme, a group calling itself Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) became a constant presence when FEMA representatives appeared before Congressional committees on the budget of the Office of Civil Defense. Some observers surmise that the group is too small to attack the Department of Defense but finds it easy to pick on FEMA and the civil defense program in particular.

Becton calls the physicians an anti-preparedness group and seems resigned to having it ever present when FEMA is testifying before Congressional committees dealing with civil defense, continuity of government and national preparedness issues. It was also effective in dealing with the governors of Washington and Oregon, he says. Its impact is a lot greater than its numbers would support, according to Becton. But FEMA can fight back too. Becton says FEMA's regional directors pointed out that a recent PSR letter was loaded with inaccuracies. FEMA staff members prepared a response and sent it to the same mailing list so the assertions would not go unanswered.

A last obstacle encountered was the opening or attempts to open various nuclear power plants, most notably Shoreham in New York and Seabrook in New Hampshire. FEMA's role is to advise

the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on the acceptability of the emergency evacuation plans. New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis not only opposed the plants but refused to allow evacuation plans to be prepared. (The Seabrook plant, while outside of Massachusetts, was adjacent to its border, and evacuation plans thus would have to involve Massachusetts as well as New Hampshire jurisdiction.) Seeing this blocking action, the NRC later changed its rules to let FEMA review utility plant operator-prepared plans where state or localities had refused to cooperate. FEMA subsequently reviewed and approved evacuation exercises for both Shoreham and Seabrook,<sup>16</sup> but the state of New York has made an offer to buy out Shoreham so that it would cease operations, even as the NRC granted a full power license. On November 18, 1988, President Reagan ordered FEMA to take over emergency planning from state and local officials who refuse to do the planning themselves (E.O. 12657).

### **Becton Scans the Future of Emergency Management in the United States**

Becton has a short list when asked for his own hopes for emergency management in the United States:

1. He hopes for standards for emergency managers as there are for firefighters today.
2. He hopes for respectability for civil defenders. We need an acknowledgement and awareness that someone has to do the job. That acknowledgement should come from the States and localities.
3. He hopes the nation can make major reductions in the 6,000 deaths per year from fire. The U.S. currently has the largest number of fire deaths, and they disproportionately strike the very old, the very young and minorities.
4. He strongly desires better rapport between FEMA and the fire service.
5. He hopes and feels optimistic that the flood insurance program will be self-supporting soon.
6. He hopes for a better education program without scaring people. Earthquakes are a good example where widespread civic education is needed. "Get to the kids, and they'll take care of the parents," Becton says.
7. He hopes for improvements in training. While FEMA has the largest television training program in the Federal Government, it still is not broadcast extensively. Such broadcasts ought to be part of the public service responsibility of television stations. As an example of additional kinds of needed training, Becton cites what to do with prisoners in another Chernobyl-type situation.
8. NATO is an emergency management area where a lot needs to be done but where FEMA currently gets zero funding. He lists progress in NATO as having the greatest potential.

Now that FEMA has passed its 10th birthday, what does Becton feel about the Agency? If it were his to do over, would he create a FEMA again?

He replies that, yes, we need a FEMA but that not everything presently in it belongs. An example is food for the homeless. Moreover, the national stockpile, which was transferred to the Department

*16. Shoreham's plan was approved without caveat. For Seabrook, the Massachusetts portion of the plan was approved pending installation of an alert and notification system, while the New Hampshire portion was approved pending an update of the alert and notification system*

of Defense in June 1988, ought to come back. That was a mistake, he feels. Asked to amplify, a senior staff member offered his personal view that other programs should be dropped simply for lack of resources. His idea was that it gives people a false sense of security to think that FEMA is taking care of things when in reality the FEMA capability may be quite small. He cited as examples:

- HAZMATS with only 15 people and \$200,000;
- Dam safety with just 3 people and \$400,000;
- Hurricane preparation with 7 people and \$865,000; and
- Consequences of terrorism.

But Becton has some other adjustments he would make. He finds there are too many political appointees, that the Director's position ought to be statutory as with the FBI director and that one can't respond to emergencies on a partisan basis.

If he had his way, Becton would make FEMA's regional directors civil servants. The regional director position should not be partisan, and continuity is needed. The Agency suffers from loss of expertise each time the White House changes hands, according to Becton. Barring this, his first choice, Becton would restrict the discretion of political appointees and give more authority to the career level #2 position in each region.

As to his successors, if they should be from the military, Becton argues they should be exempt from dual compensation regulations. His military experience is a plus, he says. As it is, his retirement pay is cut to zero, so as to avoid double dipping while he is in an Executive Level 2 position.

What will be the effect of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty and the general lessening of tensions after four Reagan-Gorbachev summits on public support for civil defense? Of a treaty to reduce long range nuclear missiles? Of the Strategic Defense Initiative if it begins to be tested and implemented? Would any or all of these reduce the already weak public support for emergency preparedness?

Becton says that if the public feels it has less reason to fear an attack on the U.S., it would reduce its support for civil defense expenditures. He says FEMA's response should be to emphasize the all hazards approach. He says that as Director of FEMA, he is not against the INF treaty and, "I don't advocate war. But you've got to protect the civilian population." Former White House staffer, Ralph Bledsoe disagrees as to the possible effects of INF, START, or SDI. He says they will have zero impact on public support, give or take 2 or 3 percent. "The reason is that a major earthquake, a Chernobyl or a Mount St. Helens always comes along to remind us of the need."

President Reagan has emphasized a growing role for States and local governments. Authorities such as Wayne Anderson, Alan Beals, and Carl Stenberg<sup>17</sup> feel that States and cities have become stronger over the past 20 years. If so, can these governments take over some of the Federal role in emergency management? One sign is that the traditional 50/50 Federal/local or Federal/State funding match is now in reality about 35 Federal/65 local, according to William Chipman. Becton believes

<sup>17</sup> Wayne Anderson, formerly Secretary for Administration, Commonwealth of Virginia; Alan Beals, Executive Director, National League of Cities; and Carl Stenberg, Executive Director, Council of State Governments in interviews with the author, April 27, May 2, and April 29, 1988, respectively.

that states will have to do more on their own behalf. He believes that work in earthquake preparations by the State of California and its cities and counties in cooperation with Federal agencies has been very positive. And he says we have seen evidence of the states coming to grips with their problems. We hear less talk than two years ago from states grouching "Hell — we're going to do away with FEMA." In fact, we don't hear it at all any more, says Becton.

## AN ASSESSMENT

What does the record look like at the end of the Reagan era? What have Julius Becton and his staff at FEMA accomplished?

From a personal standpoint, Becton responded to the author's invitation to list highlights of his term with the following accounting:

1. Improved morale up, down, and across the Agency;
2. Reestablished credibility with other Federal agencies, Congress and constituency groups;
3. The fact that FEMA is now actively engaged across the board "from Seabrook (nuclear power plant) to Henderson, Nevada (rocket fuels plant that blew up in the spring of 1988)."
4. Having made the National Security Council and Domestic Policy Council aware of our capabilities;
5. Organizational changes that were mostly successful;
6. Improved use of electronic data processing in FEMA and better local area networking;
7. Meaningful quarterly progress reviews within FEMA so that the reports are no longer just "show and tell;"
8. A general strengthening of programs (and here he cited internal security, which was not good three years ago and is now improved);
9. A superb job by the insurance administration with an increased number of people covered — i.e., over two million, the amount of coverage in effect standing at \$173 billion, and with private companies writing policies;
10. The emergency education network at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg broadcasting to hundreds of thousands of people — a superb way to get information out.
11. Outside of the military and AT&T, the finest communications network in the country with all major communications mobile.
12. Current work with other elements of the Federal Government, including the Department of Defense, on industrial and manpower mobilization preparedness. We have the mechanism in hand for surge capabilities. The Graduated Mobilization Response (mobilization as a continuum of progressively increasing activity) is much further along.

13. Making smoke detectors more than just a symbol. The question at each fire now is "Were there smoke detectors and were they working?"; and

14. SLPS — an earthquake preparedness plan which has been accepted by 25 federal departments and agencies.

In addition to his answers to the author's inquiry, General Becton listed further highlights in his June 1, 1988, remarks to the FEMA Advisory Board, including;

1. Continuity of government policy implementation and update of standby authority documents under the terms of an interagency agreement between FEMA and the Department of Justice to replace extant and out-of-date Presidential emergency action documents;
2. Responsibility of coordinating the development of a new National Security Emergency Plan and for drafting the operating principles for the functional structure it will incorporate (implemented by the President in the latter half of 1988); and
3. Continuing to nurture and facilitate a strong partnership between the military and civil sides of government.<sup>18</sup>

General Andrew Goodpaster, a member of the FEMA Advisory Board through the terms of Macy, Giuffrida, and Becton, said in an interview on June 29, 1988: "It seems to me Becton's done a very effective job of leadership in setting clear objectives and telling how he plans to reach his objectives. He has provided strong leadership without being overbearing. He has thought through goals of policy and has communicated these goals effectively with Congress and the senior echelon of the executive branch "

Ralph Bledsoe says: "FEMA has been on a roller coaster over the years but is on the right track now. Becton deserves credit for it." Bledsoe says Becton has a lot to do with classified national security programs and the results have been very positive. Bledsoe says the domestic side is better prepared for crisis than it has been for a long time. "At least we have paid some attention before an event." Bledsoe notes that FEMA has experienced people but also has a good crop of young people coming along. They have good morale.

Bledsoe adds a larger dimension to the discussion of FEMA itself. Very supportive of the idea behind FEMA, Bledsoe served as the first director of the Emergency Management Institute at Emmitsburg during the Carter administration when John Macy was FEMA's first director. Bledsoe speaks of the concept of FEMA as the Federal Government's fourth executive branch central agency along with the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, and the General Services Administration.

Some FEMA staff members also commented on the Becton years. Chief of Staff William Tidball ranks the increased morale and Agency credibility as the biggest improvements. He also says that the reduction in stovepiping and bringing the Agency together are major Becton achievements within FEMA. Externally, he cites the clarification of FEMA's role through the 1988 Domestic Policy Council document National System for Emergency Coordination as being of great significance. About this document, Becton has said, "Now, for the first time, we have adopted an approach to

<sup>18</sup> Remarks of Julius W Becton, Jr., before the FEMA Advisory Board, Washington, D.C., June 1, 1988, 3-4.

emergency response that is across-the-board, which means that we will no longer face the need to reorganize government in the midst of a crisis."<sup>19</sup>

Frank Reilly, Deputy Administrator and Chief Actuary of the Federal Insurance Administration, amplifies Becton's comment about improvements in the insurance program. First, he says that the private sector initiative has been so successful that private companies were writing 71 percent of the flood insurance policies in 1988 vs. zero in FY 1984.

Second, Reilly says that FEMA is really making its flood insurance self-supporting. The program is currently paying for all losses and administrative expenses. It is virtually to its goal of total self-sufficiency. The insurance fund has accumulated more than \$300,000,000 in the last three years, and it is within 3 percent of its goal, according to Reilly.

Finally, Reilly says almost \$200,000,000 will be saved in mapping and study costs by 1991 under Becton. FEMA is required to map 18,000 communities. Each study is now approached on a cost benefit basis, working closely with other Federal agencies. This has resulted in the big savings, says Reilly.

Certainly not everyone is happy. The fire service fears a dissolution of the FEMA fire programs. With fire related programs representing just 3 percent of FEMA's total budget for FY '89, why do Becton and the Administration put up with all the noise generated by the fire service with the Congress? Some sources feel that Becton has not done a good job of making a case for fire programs with OMB. On the other hand, the fire service is generally happy with the quality of the training being offered by FEMA. Approximately 4,000 individuals per year go through its fire training programs.

## CONCLUSIONS

These are the principal conclusions of the monograph:

1. FEMA makes good sense both in concept and as an actual operating agency of the Federal Government.
2. General Julius W. Becton inherited in FEMA an organization in deep trouble, one suffering from severe losses of morale and credibility.
3. Becton was the right person for the job. His military background, his high level experience in emergency preparedness — both in the military and in the State Department's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance — and his integrity proved keys to his success.
4. Becton restored FEMA to the status of a going concern by reviving staff morale and reestablishing the Agency's credibility with the White House, with Congress, with other Federal agencies and with constituency groups.
5. Becton made progress on getting the various parts of FEMA to work together by reducing the amount of "stovepiping" among the once separate divisions.

19. *Remarks of Julius W. Becton, Jr., before the FEMA Advisory Board, Washington, D.C., June 1, 1988, 6.*

6. In strict monetary terms, Becton achieved only modest progress toward his top program goal of protecting the civilian population from nuclear attack and continuity of government. On the other hand, by standing firm with the States of Oregon and Washington when they refused to sign agreements requiring them to participate in nuclear attack preparedness exercises and by announcing attack preparedness as his top goal in speech after speech across the country, he successfully raised the visibility of the issue with many groups, not the least of which was his own FEMA staff.

7. The Federal deficit has become a substantial bar to progress in FEMA's programs, just as it has with other departments and agencies.

8. Four major White House documents on emergency management were signed during Becton's term: a Presidential Directive in 1987; the National System for Emergency Coordination by the Domestic Policy Council in 1988; and Executive Orders 12656, which provides national security assignments to Federal agencies, and 12657, which deals with planning assistance around nuclear power plants.

9. Becton and the Administration have a problem with the fire service that is not going to go away.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keith Mulrooney is a former local government official who has had experience in building emergency operating centers and integrated communications centers; some brushes with small-scale disaster management, including floods, hillside brush fires, earthquakes, and civil disturbances; and success in implementing a number of mitigation measures for earthquakes, hillfires, and floods. In addition, Mulrooney served for 11 years as executive director of the American Society for Public Administration, which created two interest groups related to emergency management and which devoted a special issue of its journal to emergency management.