

Guns Not Butter for Louisiana

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PEJ News - C. L. Cook - Befitting the conduct of this emergency promising disaster, the Bush administration has only now, nearly a fortnight following the unleashing of chaos, decided to accept foreign aid for the victims of Katrina and the consequent New Orleans Flood. But, it's not the doctors and medicines promised by Castro, or the subsidized fuel offered by Chavez, or even the Urban Search and Rescue team unceremoniously sent packing back to Canada from the epicentre of the catastrophe they want; the intrepids at Camp Bush have put out a mayday to NATO, in the form of a deployment of its freshly minted military strike force.

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Yesterday, the Bush administration requested the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) provide aid to the stricken Mississippi delta region. As with the rest of this incredible spectacle unfolding in the aftermath of the killer hurricane, Katrina this belated move by Bush has a queer ring.

Neglecting to respond to numerous offers from around the world these painful past days, and actually "deporting" a foreign rescue team of the highest calibre, what's now thought required by the White House is military reinforcements, drawn from allies. The military hue to the Bush "relief" operation in Louisiana gets greener by the moment.

And, there's an even more macabre side to this fiasco. While refusing an offer of doctors and nurses from less politically incorrect Thailand, the dispatch of coroners and forensic experts from the far off nation was welcomed.

That may be just prudent planning, finally, on the part of the official responders to the unprecedented calamity. After snubbing offers of the usual types of assistance from Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Cuba, Venezuela, and a host of nations too minor to merit, the need for legions to deal with the dead is the most sensible thing done by this baffling band of buffoons yet.

According to the [Associated Press's; Matt Moore](#) , the clarion call that eventually blew from Pennsylvania Avenue was a call for the elite, mobile military strike force, [NATO Response](#)

. NATO describes the saviours of New Orleans on their website thus:

"The Nato Response Force will consist of air, maritime and ground forces which will be rotated on assignment over a period of six months. The size of the force applied will be dependant on

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the mission that is to be carried out, but rough estimates indicate the following as a guideline:

Nato Land forces up to Brigade size.

Maritime forces up to the size of a Nato Standing Naval Force

Command and Control capabilities and Air assets capable of carrying out and supporting up to 200 combat sorties daily.

It is expected that such a force will number roughly 21,000 personnel."

Great.

Those forensic experts are really going to have their hands full! You see, the remaining citizens of New Orleans are not quite dead, yet. But they number in the thousands; thousands living under Falluja-like conditions of deprivation, curfews, and harrassment by heavily armed police, National Guard, reputed "contractors," and various military and State agency enforcers patrolling their neighbourhoods. Add to that mix a willing coalition of foreign military forces and the analogy is complete.

Already, the corporate press is working overtime, in tandem with their erstwhile Iraq embed partners in the Pentagon to paint a picture of those American citizens too afraid, or mule-headed to leave, as the dregs of society, not worthy of concern.

The administration has also attempted, with near complete success, to pull the plug on differing versions of the reality of the situation that may emanate from "unapproved" sources through intimidation of journalists trying to stay in, or get into the city. And, the language used to refer to this draconian turn of events through the usual media mouters is eerily identical to the talk we've heard so often before, if only directed at the distant "others" facing this treatment, and worse.

According to history, the curse of empire is always an imposition of the cruelty and barbarity meted on the reluctant citizens of its distant colonies and outposts coming home with equal force to be landed upon the heads of its own. This is generally during the final desperate throes of its power. One can only hope, the desperate men running the Hell on Wheels show that has been America's recent history are not so determined that they would launch similar "aid" models to other cities following natural, or otherwise disasters.

Chris Cook hosts [Gorilla Radio](#) , broad/webcast from the University of Victoria. He also serves as a contributing editor at PEJ News. You can check out the [GR Blog here](#)