

## **The Gulf Crisis: A Lesson In Preparedness**

Government and industry are both culpable for the environmental and economic disaster resulting from the uncontrolled oil leak at the bottom of the sea in the Gulf of Mexico, that daily poses an ever growing threat to the flora and fauna of the Gulf states and to the livelihoods of their inhabitants. The Gulf crisis also threatens the larger national economy that depends on oil, and is still so fragile from the recession and high unemployment that it can ill afford to absorb another major shock.

The culprit for the current crisis is a habit of mind in Government and Industry that fails to prepare adequately for catastrophes that are unprecedented. They knew that an oil leak could happen from drilling in the deep sea bed. They knew that a leak was theoretically possible. Government and Industry even had some untested regulations and safety precautions that they hoped would address the problem, if it happened.

But because a major oil leak from deep sea drilling in the Gulf was regarded by Government and Industry as merely a remote, theoretical, possibility, they failed to invest sufficient planning and resources in advance to address the problem, if it happened. And now we have an environmental and economic catastrophe..

The Gulf crisis is an object lesson that Government and Industry must better prepare for non-routine catastrophes that, though they may be unprecedented, are predictable and foreseeable threats.

Government has a greater responsibility than Industry, tasked upon Government by the Constitution, to provide for the common defense and the general welfare of the people. Yet Government at all levels--especially in Washington and the White House--has demonstrated bipartisan incompetence in preparedness for non-routine catastrophes, whether man-made or natural. The 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and now the Gulf oil crisis--all took Government by surprise, and found it unprepared.

Waiting in the wings is another unprecedented catastrophe, yet of foreseeable and even inevitable occurrence, for which we as a nation cannot afford to be caught unprepared. It is called electromagnetic pulse (EMP).

The Congressionally mandated EMP Commission warned the Congress in 2004, and again in 2008, that terrorists and rogue states armed with a single primitive nuclear missile that could be launched off a ship could inflict an EMP that could stop the operation across the entire United States of all the critical civilian infrastructures--electric power, telecommunications, transportation, banking and finance, food and water, that sustain our modern civilization and the lives of the American people. The EMP Commission further warned that Mother Nature can also cause an EMP catastrophe, by means of a solar flare generating a "great" geomagnetic storm--and that such a natural EMP occurs every century or so, the last called the "Carrington Event" in 1859.

The EMP commission warned that a "great" geomagnetic storm is inevitable. Some scientists think we are overdue for another--which would be the first to occur when civilization has become dependent upon electronics--and could afflict an EMP catastrophe on the northern hemisphere of our planet.

In 2009, another Congressional Commission, the Strategic Posture Commission, independently verified the nuclear EMP threat from terrorists and rogue states and urged immediate implementation of the EMP Commission's recommendations. In 2009, the National Academy of Sciences in a blue ribbon report for NASA independently confirmed the natural EMP threat from a "great" geomagnetic storm, and urged immediate implementation of the EMP Commission's recommendations. In June 2010, the U.S. Department of Energy released a joint study with the North American Electric Reliability Corporation that, again, confirmed the EMP Commission's warning about a potentially catastrophic threat from nuclear and natural EMP.

So we have been warned, repeatedly, about EMP. What is to be done? Those of us concerned about the EMP threat would like to see the following happen:

--By Congress: Passage of HR 5026 "The Grid Reliability and Infrastructure Defense Act" (the GRID Act) that would protect the national bulk electric power system against cyber and physical threats, including EMP--a necessary first step toward protecting all the nation's critical infrastructures.

--By Congress: Re-establishment of the original EMP Commission, that spent 8 years crafting a cost-effective plan to protect U.S. critical infrastructures from EMP and all other hazards, including cyber attacks and natural disasters, and is our nation's single greatest body of expertise on how best to proceed with protecting the critical infrastructures.

--By Congress: Passage of HR 4842, "The Homeland Security Science and Technology Authorization Act of 2010" that establishes a new Congressional Commission--that can draw upon the expertise of the original EMP Commission--to advise Congress and the Department of Homeland Security on how best to protect the national electric grid from EMP, cyber-attack, sabotage, natural disasters, and all hazards.

--By the President: An Executive Order directing the Department of Homeland Security to immediately implement the recommendations of the EMP Commission.

--By Congress, the President, and Industry: As a matter of national and homeland security policy, the urgent re-establishment in the United States of an industrial base to manufacture large electric transformers and other components vital to U.S. critical infrastructures domestically, so that the U.S. is no longer dependent for these vital components upon their manufacture and importation from overseas. Technologies indispensable to the operation of U.S. critical infrastructures should be made in America.

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