

The K.F. Stone Weekly



(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")

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WHAT SOME PEOPLE WON'T BELIEVE

It is a fact -- a maddeningly, stupifyingly, frightening fact -- that for every off-the-wall paranoid conspiracy, there are thousands upon thousands if not millions, of "true believers," who are being spoon fed the fiction of fear via rabid radio talk shows,



newsletters, and hundreds upon hundreds of poisonous blogs and websites. There are classic conspiracies such as the [Illuminati](#) and One World Government, The [Protocols](#) of the Elders of Zion, and of course, the [Bilderberg Group](#), and the [Council on Foreign Relations](#). Then again, there is a new generation of conspiracies guaranteed to keep the gullible up at night. A handful of examples:

Believe that the Obama administration is planning on confiscating everyone's guns as a prelude to a Soviet-style takeover? Just log on to the Internet, where you will find [allies](#) aplenty who will more than validate your belief.

Positive that despite all of the denials -- and what you and like-minded folks refer to as "so-called documentation" -- that President Obama is really, truly a foreign-born Muslim . . . or the love child of Malcom X . . . or actually of the Rothschild bloodline? You are by [no means alone](#).

Certain that Obamacare mandates "death panels" that are paid for by the taxes of hard-working Americans? Shake hands with [Alex Jones](#).

Know for a fact that FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), "America's secret government," is planning on kidnapping patriots and flying them in black helicopters to concentration camps and prisoner boxcars which can be found throughout Montana? Well, good news; you have lots and lots of [friends who agree with you](#).

Now mind you, none of the above-referenced conspiracies -- whether of the classic or new generation variety -- pose much of a threat to America -- especially if viewed as individual phenomenon. In the main, they provide anti-government, low-information people with a relatively easy way to make sense of a complex world. Or, in the words of Princeton University Psychology professor Sander van der Linden, "*Conspiracy theories offer easy answers by casting the world as simpler and more predictable than it is.*" Ominously, he also notes "*Their popularity may pose a threat to societal well-being.*"

I fear that this may be the case with the latest, wackiest and potentially most dangerous conspiracy taking place right before our very eyes:

OPERATION JADE HELM 15

For the uninitiated, here is Jade Helm 15 in a nutshell: Beginning in July, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command plans a series of training exercises with other military units across Texas and six other states in the Southwest. The plan, Army officials say, is to develop new warfare tactics and procedures in a landscape not unlike the shifting terrain of combat zones in the Middle East and Afghanistan. In announcing the 8-week exercise, the Pentagon explained "*The diverse terrain in these states replicates areas special operations soldiers regularly find themselves operating in overseas.*"



Almost immediately, the Internet was abuzz with conspiracy theories as to the "true nature" of Jade Helm 15. There was all kinds of talk about training in abandoned malls and secret tunnels connecting five closed Walmart stores and other very American-dystopia sounding silliness. And then, less than a week ago, the Jade Helm 15 conspiracy made the jump from the minors to the majors when Texas radio talk show host -- and world-class conspiracy ghoul -- Alex Jones and his buddy, "America's dumbest Congressman" [Louie Gohmert](#), announced that indeed, there *was* reason to be fearful; that Jade Helm 15 was in fact, an administration plot to put those parts of the U.S. it considers hostile (i.e. made up of conservative Republicans) under martial law. It all came to a head when Texas GOP Gov. Greg Abbot -- who presides over a state that is home to 1.7 million military veterans, along with Ft. Hood and Ft Bliss -- ordered the commander of the Texas State

Guard to monitor the exercises and give him "regular updates" on the "progress and safety of the operation." *"It is important that Texans know their safety, constitutional rights, private property rights and civil liberties will not be infringed upon,"* the governor said in announcing his order to the State Guard.

The pentagon sent an army colonel down to Bastrop, Texas to address a gathering of the paranoid. The poor officer probably just thought he was going to give a regular briefing, but instead 200 patriots shouted him down, told him he was a liar and grilled him about the imminent federal takeover of Texas and subsequent imposition of martial law.

In other words, they firmly believed that he was part of the conspiracy.

Unlike most of the conspiracies mentioned above, this one could conceivably pose a threat to America. For despite the fact that the fear of Jade Helm 15 is based on about as much reality as the fear of the Bilderberg Group, Death Panels or the Illuminati, it provides potentially malignant fodder for the *Posse Comitatus-Christian Identity-Militia Movement* segment of America -- a segment which is heavily armed and has been calling for revolution against the very country which guarantees their right to have arms and broadcast virulently obnoxious opinions. Again, in the words of Professor van der Linden, *"Their popularity may pose a threat to societal well-being."*

To be certain, there *are* many conservatives both in Texas and around the country who have flatly stated that the fear of Jade Helm 15 is utter twaddle; that its purpose is not to impose martial law. However, to the best of my knowledge, these aren't the people getting the press coverage. Moreover, none of the Republicans seeking or contemplating their party's nomination for president has likewise made the assertion that there is no conspiracy. When asked about it, Texas Senator - and announced presidential candidate Ted Cruz said that although he had "no reason to doubt" personal assurances from the Pentagon that Jade Helm 15 is a military training exercise, he nonetheless told [Blumberg Politics](#), "I understand the concern" raised by citizens. *"It's a question I'm getting a lot"* Cruz said, *"and I think part of the reason is we have seen, for six years, a federal government disrespecting the liberty of the citizens. And that produces fear, when you see a federal government that is attacking our free speech rights, or religious liberty rights, our 2nd Amendment rights, that produces distrust as to government."*

How's that for playing both ends against the middle?

People like Senator Cruz, Congressman Gohmert, Alex Jones, Michael Savage and a ton of others are spoon feeding fear to a psychologically vulnerable slice of America. Whether these supposedly intelligent people really, truly believe Jade Helm 15 is part of a vicious conspiracy to impose martial law is open to debate. My gut tells me they are opportunists, gleefully striking matches in a room filled with conspiratorial

kindling. The maddening, stupefying fact is that they know better than most, that there are few things some people won't believe . . . and the more preposterous, the better. And for using this knowledge for their own perverted purposes, they should be loudly and roundly condemned.

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