

Obama Authorizes Himself to Declare Martial Law

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Obama listens to a question in Seoul, South Korea, Sunday, March 25. Obama's executive order, "National Defense Resources Preparedness," issued on March 16, essentially "states that, in case of a war or national emergency, the federal government has the authority to take over almost every aspect of American society," writes columnist Jeffrey T. Kuhner. Photo Credit:

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President Obama has given himself the powers to declare martial law — especially in the event of a war with Iran. It is a sweeping power grab that should worry every American.

On March 16, the White House released an executive order, "National Defense Resources Preparedness." The document is stunning in its audacity and a flagrant violation of the Constitution. It states that, in case of a war or national emergency, the federal government has the authority to take over almost every aspect of American society. Food, livestock, farming equipment, manufacturing, industry, energy, transportation, hospitals, health care facilities, water resources, defense and construction — all of it could fall under the full control of Mr. Obama. The order empowers the president to dispense these vast resources as he sees fit during a national crisis.

"The United States must have an industrial and technological base capable of meeting national defense requirements and capable of contributing to the technological superiority of its national defense equipment in peacetime and in times of national emergency," the order says. "The domestic industrial and technological base is the foundation for national defense preparedness. The authorities provided in the act shall be used to strengthen this base and to ensure it is capable of responding to the national defense needs of the United States."

In short, the order gives Mr. Obama the ability to impose martial law. He now possesses the potential powers of a dictator. The order is a direct assault on individual liberties, private property rights and the rule of law. It is blatantly unconstitutional. The executive branch is arrogating responsibilities precluded by the Constitution without even asking the permission of Congress. The order gives Mr. Obama a blank check to erect a centralized authoritarian state. This is a law one would expect to find in Hugo Chavez's Venezuela or Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The backdrop to the executive order is the looming showdown with Iran. The administration says the "window for diplomacy is closing." Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta warned Tehran's mullahs that "all options are on the table" — including military intervention. Mr. Obama stresses that his patience is running out. He vows that Iran will not acquire the bomb. Mr. Obama wants several more months for sanctions and international isolation to bring the ayatollahs to heel. Yet the signals are clear: Mr. Obama may be ready to launch devastating airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities...

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