

University of Delaware  
Disaster Research Center

PRELIMINARY PAPER #1a

COMMENTS ON THE INTEGRATION OF  
CIVIL DEFENSE INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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1967

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT\***

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**\*Statement prepared on March 21, 1967 as member of the  
NAS Advisory Committee on Civil Defense**

# I

It has been and continues to be the explicit position of the U.S. Office of Civil Defense that civil defense is "civil government in emergency." Sometimes this is phrased a little more broadly such as civil defense being "civil government responding to an extraordinary emergency." But whatever the phrasing, civil defense (CD) is officially equated with civil government in a particular kind of situation.

However, this kind of formulation leads to a rather confusing kind of statement when one turns to an examination of the question of the integration of civil defense into local government. For what happens when the term CD is replaced by the right hand side of the equation? The result is a statement that one wants to look at the integration of (civil government in emergency) into local government.

This is not a meaningful statement at all. However, the game played above does highlight the fact that OCD, despite its explicit formal position, does use the term civil defense in several ways in different contexts. There is no need to spell out three of the major ways because this is very well done in an IDA Study S-184 by Gessert *et. al.*, "Federal Civil Defense Organization: The Rationale of Its Development." On pages 2-5 they suggest that the problem of civil defense organization can and does encompass three different meanings of the term organization: (1) as a structure of relations, (2) as a group or agency, or (3) as the process of organizing.

It seems that the question of integrating CD into local government presupposes the second meaning of the term, i.e., as a local group or agency. On the other hand, when CD is equated with local government in emergency the assumption of organization appears to be the third possible meaning of the term. That is, in that context CD is the label applied to the process of organizing the local response in an emergency. However, it is not possible to talk of integration in such a context.

There is an additional complication. Civil Defense responsibility has been divided between the federal government and other political subdivisions, the states and local communities. For obscure reasons, OCD consequently finds it impossible to visualize itself, given this relationship, as an operative organization at the local level. From this, there follows a denial that CD is a group or agency, the "something" which could be integrated into the local government. Therefore, to have some relation to the local effort, the doctrine is that CD is involved in the organization of the effort at the local community effort.

The reason for all this discussion, of course, is to argue that unless the referent is clear almost all remarks about the integration of civil defense into local government will be totally

meaningless. The rest of the following comments will assume that CD is some sort of local group or agency and the problem is to integrate its structure and functions into local government operations. This is not in harmony with the federal CD view, but it is the actual perspective of most local government organizations. At least in natural and technological disasters, to the extent that community public officials think of civil defense--and they do not always do so--they think of some group or in many instances, the official or two that constitutes the local CD office. This is the reality of the current situation in almost all American communities insofar as local government agencies are concerned.

## II

There is little doubt that CD has the image within most American communities of having some degree of responsibility in the event of a military attack, particularly a nuclear attack. Even though community attitudes anticipate its involvement, how CD will be come involved, in the absence of actual experience, can only be approximated. The most realistic approximation of how CD will become involved in future situations can come from an examination of the role it plays on a day-to-day basis within the community and, more particularly, from the way in which it becomes involved in other emergency situations--such as natural disasters.

Insights into the anticipated involvement can be initiated by the observation that it has been difficult to institutionalize CD activity within most American communities. There are variations, of course, in the degree to which CD is integrated into the existing patterns, but, in general, community response to CD can be characterized as being apathetic, occasionally hostile but seldom enthusiastic. High levels of community interest in CD activities, such as was evidenced immediately after the Cuban missile crisis, have generally been spasmodic and short-lived. One reflection of general apathy toward CD is revealed by the 17 percent yearly turnover rate in local CD directors. Such turnover is probably both an effect of community apathy and a cause of its continuation. Such a high rate of personnel turnover is only one reflection of the fact that the local CD has had difficulty in being accepted on the local level.

Certainly one of the major difficulties in institutionalizing CD is the very basis for its existence--that its operation may be necessary in the future in a situation which has varying degrees of probability at different times. Developing an organizational form is particularly difficult for future problems which are dimly seen, agonizing to contemplate, and horrible to consider. Almost all other community organizations deal with problems which are present and obvious. Such problems are also seen as being subject to remedial and rational solutions. Even when problems within the community are long-run in nature, certain aspects of them can be seen and acted upon on a day-to-day basis. For example, while the

suppression of crime is exceedingly complex and subject only to long-range solutions, police action can be organized and action is possible every day on some of its manifestations. In general, organizations within the community which deal with long-range abstract goals--such as churches--experience great difficulty in developing organizational continuity. To a large degree, such organizations must depend upon volunteer personnel to achieve their goals. The continued involvement of such personnel is often sustained by activities which are intermediate or even irrelevant to the longer range goals. This might be illustrated by the involvement of those who serve church suppers or play on the church basketball team.

CD operations are oriented toward long term goals. Since the community has never experienced the specific problem, such goals are somewhat alien and difficult to understand. The problems which may be confronted do not seem "real" nor are they evidenced in ways which can be considered daily concerns. This being the case, intermediate activities--even those oriented to the ultimate reason for the existence of CD, have a sense of unreality about them. Given such conditions, it is difficult to sustain continued involvement and motivation of personnel in such activities. This is true not only of volunteers but is also reflected in the turnover rates of the paid permanent personnel.

Because of difficulties in sustaining organizational activities oriented toward vague, long-range goals, CD doctrine at the national level anticipates building on existing community organizations, and considers all activities of the civil government in its response to a nuclear attack to be, in effect, CD activity. In other words, any governmental activity within a community subsequent to a nuclear attack is, in effect, CD activity. Such a doctrine recognizes, then, the difficulty of maintaining an inclusive viable organization called CD to cope with the problem of nuclear attack. It also recognizes that, in such an emergency, the involvement of almost all existing community organizations would be necessary.

It is likely that there would be a considerable gap between the articulation of national doctrine and its actual implementation in local communities in the event of a nuclear attack. One reason for this gap would be the way in which this doctrine comes to be interpreted by local CD directors in specific communities. A more important factor in anticipating this gap would be the way in which other organizations within the local community would normally perceive the role of CD. In general, as said earlier, at the local level there is a tendency to see CD as a separate functioning organizations. This definition of CD as a separate group, rather than as an integrated activity, raises questions of the ways in which this separable organization can be integrated into the activity necessary in the event of a nuclear attack.

The problem of integrating CD into the on-going pattern of community activity has many aspects. An important one is the fact that, if CD becomes active only in nuclear events, involvement at this time cannot have had the benefit of previous experience. In other words, the types of cooperative relationships necessary among community organizations in the event of a nuclear attack cannot be based on the experience of cooperation accumulated in other types of community emergencies. The values which stem from such realistic experiences of cooperation are probably more important than the types of cooperation which can only be anticipated or simulated. There is no reason to think that a shift in the source of the crisis impact will result in a shift in the way in which community relationships will evolve. This means that the involvement of CD solely in nuclear situations will result in problems of integrating new elements into the existing pattern of community relationships at a time when attention should be given to the accomplishment of the tasks which have been created. Attention instead, would have to be directed to the development of interorganizational procedures.

The disjuncture created for the inter-relationships among community organizations for the involvement of CD only in a nuclear event is also accentuated by its nuclear role which is anticipated--at least by some local CD directors. This anticipated role is one of the coordination of various community organizations in their concerted efforts to cope with the tasks created by a nuclear impact.

The ability of CD to become the actual coordinating focus for the community subsequent to a nuclear event can be questioned on the basis of the position CD occupies in normal peacetime activities. CD is not well integrated into the organizational patterns within most American communities. The fact that its operation is oriented to a future event is only one of the reasons for its lack of integration. Another factor is that CD is not generally considered to be a local community organization but one that originates outside the community. This, of course, reflects a basic dilemma. The organization is not seen as having arisen from needs of the community which were clear and present. Since the need is defined for the community by others and major means of support for the organization come from outside the community, CD, then, is seen to be, somehow, an extra-community organization.

The social distance of CD from other community organizations is accentuated by the models which CD has used in developing its plans for action. The use of military models, concepts and terminology probably further alienates other community organizations. The use of terms such as command and control may describe--even accurately--certain necessary processes in operation, but they tend to be alien to the thinking of people in positions within other local organizations. While it is true that specific community organizations, such as the police, are organized on a para-military basis, this is generally evidenced more in the rank and hierarchical relationships than it is in terms of

operational procedures. Even these para-military organizations, however, have to operate in the more politicalized context of the local community. In addition, most other community organizations, municipal, voluntary, commercial, etc., find that military conceptualization accentuates the unreality of their future possibilities.

This use and misuse of military concepts is perhaps furthered by the activities of local CD personnel. Many local CD directors have had considerable military experience and training. Such experience, while preparing them for certain contingencies, probably also increases the alienation of CD from other community organizations. To the extent that response to a nuclear event is placed in this military contest--it tends to further remove it from the responsibility of action on the part of local communities. If it is continually viewed in a military context, it is assumed that only larger governmental units can provide the basis for future action. While it is true that response to a nuclear event would necessitate action on all levels of organized life, the use of the military model tends to remove it from serious attention within the local community and to imply that other "higher" levels of organization will be the central focus for future action.

The alienation of CD from other local organizations, then, would cast doubts on its ability to become a focal point of coordination within the community in the event of a nuclear attack. Since it is seen as a separable organization rather than a diffuse activity within the local community, either the organization itself or particular people within the organization must be seen as possessing the organizational or personal authority which would legitimize its coordinating function.

Coordination within a community requires the organization or the individual assuming this role to have a solid basis of legitimacy within the community. This is true since an organization which assumes a coordinating role has to be considered legitimate by the organizations which allow themselves to be coordinated. The organization which is "given" this position of coordination is placed in the position of legitimizing each organization within the coordinated pattern. It does this by respecting the claims of specific organizations to particular activities and by rejecting the claims of other organizations to engage in "illegitimate" activities. Since this role of coordination provides an important threat to the autonomy of the involved organizations, it can only be trusted to an organization (or to an emergent group) which has authority within the community.

There are, according to sociologists, at least three different bases of authority: traditional, legal, and competent. In other words, certain organizations have acted in certain ways in the past and other organizations within the community expect and respect this action in the future. Legal authority rests on the enactment of law which specifies procedures to be followed. Authority by competence would come about by the collective definition within a

community that a particular organization possesses the skills and competence to accomplish certain tasks. In other words, its resources make it clear that it can accomplish certain tasks that cannot be accomplished by others. These three bases of authority, of course, often coincide. For example, a police department may have the legal and traditional bases of authority for its activities as well as competency. CD, however, may sometimes have the legal authority for coordination but, in the view of most American communities, lacks the basis of authority of tradition or of competence.

Because of the lack of experience of CD within the traditional patterns of community cooperation, it lacks the traditional authority necessary to assume the coordinative role in the event of a nuclear attack. A major factor in its lack of traditional authority is its "exclusion" from other more "usual" community activities. This exclusion comes about from the definition which delimits the role of CD and from the lack of realistic cooperative experience which results from this definition.

The position of CD is further weakened by its lack of authority by competence. The intention of CD is not to develop a separate organization with a large complement of personnel. This means, however, that CD cannot legitimize its claim to centrality in case of a nuclear event since it does not possess essential capabilities for the community in its response to it. If an organization has important operational capabilities, this tends to make it central to the total operation. For example, a police department with its human and material resources must, of necessity, play an important operational role in any community emergency. In doing this, it tends to legitimize a claim to have a crucial voice in the direction of the resulting structure of coordination. This is why the police department often becomes the center of coordination in focalized disasters.

The suggestion here is that organizations which contribute to the overall community response will feel reluctant to allow themselves to be coordinated by an organization which can only contribute coordination. An organization which expends its resources will wish to retain a degree of control over the ways in which they will be utilized and it will be reluctant to give "control" to an organization which contributes little else. While a nuclear event might legitimize the claim of CD to be an organization with special competence in such matters as fallout, this will not necessarily legitimize its claim to become the central and coordinating organization in response to a nuclear event.

This suggests that, while CD may have legal authority in a nuclear event, it is doubtful that it will possess either the traditional authority which emerges from earlier participation in community activities or even authority by competence based on its operational capabilities. Without the support of the other bases of authority, legal authority is meaningless. In effect, then,

this would suggest that in the instance of a nuclear event, the status of CD within the local community would not change radically. Its ambiguous status would not be changed by gaining legal authority--then it would lack adequate institutionalization, as a separable organization, within the community. Neither would all activity within the community suddenly become defined as CD activity. The ability of CD to coordinate activity within the community would also be extremely doubtful. The previous discussion would suggest that the functioning of CD at the local level subsequent to a nuclear event would be problematical. To suggest alternatives is, of course, more difficult.

Certainly one of the most critical assumptions made by CD is that the differences between events created by a disaster agent and a nuclear agent are of a fundamentally different nature. This tends to restrict CD activities in non-nuclear types of community emergencies. It tends to preclude the development of any traditional authority within the community for the organization. In other words, not being involved in lesser community emergencies militates against effective involvement in nuclear situations. The involvement of CD in a range of community emergencies, particularly in natural and technological disasters, would enhance the possibilities of its more adequate functioning in the event of a nuclear attack. This idea would seem to be supported by the observation that viable CD operations occur primarily in areas of the United States which are disaster prone. The continued involvement of CD in emergency activities within such communities provides a degree of practice and those organizations which are repetitively involved develop a degree of traditional legitimacy. This, in turn, would further legitimize the potential operation of CD in nuclear events.

Authority by competence might be gained for CD by providing facilities, skills, and competence which would be of value to the community in emergency contexts--other than nuclear ones. The development of an Emergency Operations Center in various communities is one example of such facilities with utility in a variety of emergency situations. However, facilities such as these would have to be designed so that their anticipated use in a nuclear event would not preclude their utilization in other situations. Authority could be gained if CD would continue to provide to the community certain technical skills--not only those necessary in the event of a nuclear crisis, but other skills important to community crises not being provided by other extant organizations. In addition, CD might provide a local community with personnel who have several different competencies. Training and experience of CD personnel primarily in military activities may, in many respects, be antithetical to the necessary tasks of the local CD directors which center on problems of a local civilian community organization. Authority tends to accrue in an organization if it comes to be seen as possession the means to accomplish crucial tasks. It would be possible, then, for CD to develop types of authority in usual community emergencies which could support its legal authority in a nuclear event.

This leads to a consideration of the relative advantages of CD as a diffuse activity within the community or as a separable entity. Regardless of the official designation of CD as local government in action, it is seen by most local agencies as being a separable, autonomous organization which, in large part, is extra-community in nature. This image is accentuated by the clear labeling of shelter supplies, arm bands, hats, offices, trucks, etc., with the CD emblem. Such organizational identification places it in competition with other organizations which have autonomy. Even though it is viewed as autonomous, its lack of authority precludes it as a separable organization from becoming the center of coordinated activity in disasters and there is no reason to suggest that this would be substantially different in a nuclear event. However, those instances where previous CD involvement in community emergencies have existed can provide a basis upon which it can become involved in coordination. Communities which experience disasters of wide scope do develop mechanisms of coordination. However, this coordination seldom centers around one organization. If it does, it tends to be centered on organizations that have either traditional or competent authority, and usually a combination of both. In such situations, legal authority is often ignored or, at least, it is not sufficient to understand the patterns of coordination which actually emerge in disaster events.

Given these factors, it would seem that the most effective role CD could play would be to facilitate actual community processes evidenced in emergency situations--such as natural and technological disasters. Every American community experiences different types of emergency situations ranging from fires, accidents, explosions, or destruction created by a tornado or a hurricane. They all share the possibility of a nuclear attack. In the most repetitive events--fires and accidents, American communities have developed organizational techniques and a division of labor among the existing community organizations to cope with them. In those communities which experience repetitive disasters, similar patterns of cooperation are developed and elaborated on the basis of the more inclusive involvement of existing community organizations together with those expanded, extended and emergent organizations necessary in this more complex coping action of the community. There is reason to suspect that the pattern of community activities which can be anticipated in the event of a nuclear attack would in many ways be qualitatively different from those actually evidenced in communities which experience disaster agents whose impacts are of a wide scope. Nevertheless, to suggest that it would be totally different is to suggest there is no continuity to human experience. Individual and group behavior in Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed many recognizable similarities to what occurs in disasters and catastrophes.

To summarize: CD is seen as some sort of group. But more important, CD does not have a viable base in American community life. It is simply not viewed as a part of the core of groups and organizations centrally involved in day-to-day emergencies and

peacetime disasters in American communities. As such, CD personnel cannot be integrated into the local government structure through playing a coordinating function, particularly for a future, hypothetical situation when there is no such functioning in ordinary crises. (Yet many statements at the federal level about CD seem to suggest that the integration will take the form of coordination by CD officials--e.g., as stated in Chipman's letter on page 5 where the local CD director is seen as functioning as a chief-of-staff to whoever the community executive is when a nuclear disaster occurs.) Putting it another way, to the extent that CD plays no role or a minimal part in peacetime disasters, it can play no major role in any response to a nuclear event. There is no integration now and there cannot be to the extent that CD denies its group characteristics and does not get involved in peacetime community disasters.

At a gross level, then, integration would be facilitated if CD stopped attempting to label all emergency governmental activities as civil defense operations, and if CD operated more explicitly and extensively in natural and technological disaster situations. Not that this would solve all problems. CD would have to provide something that the other community agencies could not or would not provide in community crises. Again, at a gross level, there would be two possibilities here. For one, CD could more extensively provide what in some respects it is already doing by way of facilities such as communication centers, by way of training exercises such as through the EOST program, and by way of guidance through emergency checklists and plans for individuals and organizations. In another way, if CD groups did get involved in peacetime disasters, in time it could provide personnel relatively experienced and competent in dealing with major community emergencies. It is probably not chance that in those areas of the country where disaster subcultures develop, CD is often viewed more favorably and its personnel seem to be more highly evaluated by other organizations than in those sections of the country where CD seldom gets involved in major community emergencies.

CD, of course, if it followed this path would at best play a supportive and supplementative role rather than a coordinating function in community disasters. But at least in this way it might attain some viability for both peacetime and wartime. As it stands now, CD is almost unused as an organization in one context and that makes it almost unworkable in the other context.

In a study of CD volunteers by Lois Dean, she states that "A broadened civil defense focus which includes all emergency situations, from localized natural disasters to national attack situations, appears essential to any general public acceptance of civil defense." The remarks above go further. Apart from the general public, CD will not obtain a respectable place among other organizations unless and until it shows its value and utility in actual community emergencies.