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NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 259

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U.S. CIVIL DEFENSE

It is the policy of the United States to have a civil defense capability as an element of our overall national security posture.

PRINCIPLES, CONCEPTS, AND OBJECTIVES

The civil defense program will continue to support all-hazard integrated emergency management at State and local levels, to the extent that this is consistent with and contributes to preparedness of the Nation in the event of an attack, whether by nuclear or non-nuclear means.

The civil defense program must be clearly communicated to the American public.

The civil defense program will provide improved prospects for protection of the population and resources of the Nation in the event of nuclear attack and improved ability to deal with any occurrence, including natural, technological, or other emergency, which seriously degrades or seriously threatens the national security of the United States. The program will emphasize development of a civil defense infrastructure capable of rapid expansion in a national security emergency. The objective of the civil defense program will include:

(1) Population protection capabilities, with the Federal Government providing guidance and assistance to enable State and local governments to develop the requisite plans, systems, and capabilities.

(2) State and local government crisis management capabilities to effectively support the population in national security emergencies.

(3) Information to promote a clear understanding by the public of threats, including nuclear attack, which may affect their localities and on actions they should take to increase their chances of survival.

(4) Information to assist U.S. business and industry in taking measures to protect their work forces and physical assets in national security emergencies.

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(5) Voluntary participation by citizens and institutions in community civil defense activities and emphasis on citizen protective actions.

(6) Plans for sustaining survivors and for postattack recovery.

(7) Plans which include provisions both for incremental or gradual mobilization of civil defense capabilities in a period of gradually increasing world tensions, and for a civil defense surge in an international crisis.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, as amended (50 U.S.C. App. 2251 et seq.) provides that responsibility for civil defense is vested jointly in the Federal Government and the States and their political subdivisions. Accordingly, the U.S. civil defense program will be based on the following:

(1) The Federal Government will focus on guidance to the public and to State and local governments to improve preparedness for national security emergencies. Financial assistance will be provided in cooperation with State and local governments.

(2) The Federal Government will encourage States to develop agreements to furnish mutual aid in the event of an attack or disaster.

(3) The States have the primary responsibility for developing their capabilities for peacetime emergencies and share responsibility for attack preparedness. They should support development of civil defense plans, systems, and capabilities for themselves and their political subdivisions. States will assure that where Federal civil defense funds and assistance are applied to natural and technological disaster preparedness, such use is consistent with, contributes to, and does not detract from attack preparedness.

(4) Local governments have the primary responsibility for developing their capabilities for peacetime emergencies and share responsibility for attack preparedness. They should develop under State guidance the capability to provide protection for their citizens in all emergencies which may affect their communities.

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(5) Government at all levels should make information available to citizens on threats, including nuclear attack, which may affect their communities as a basis for individual and family plans and preparations to improve chances of survival.

(6) The program will utilize to the maximum extent the existing facilities and resources of the Federal Government and, with their consent, the facilities of States and political subdivisions thereof, and of private sector organizations and agencies.

Federal funds and assistance for all elements of the civil defense program will be applied to develop capabilities required for attack preparedness and other disasters having national security implications.

Under the general policy guidance of the National Security Council, the Federal Emergency Management Agency will have overall responsibility for development and implementation of civil defense programs authorized and funded under the Civil Defense Act of 1950 as amended. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will emphasize coordination with State governments and their local political subdivisions, as well as with appropriate Federal departments and agencies which are responsible for civil defense concerns within their areas of substantive responsibility.

This NSDD supersedes both NSDD-26, SECRET, dated February 25, 1982 and the UNCLASSIFIED version dated March 16, 1982.

Ronald Reagan

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