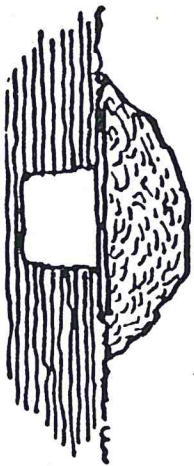


# Dangerous Deception:

## Civil Defense Planning in the Nuclear Age



Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Government

"Everybody's going to make it if there are enough shovels to go around... Dig a hole, cover it with a couple of doors and then throw three feet of dirt on top. It's the dirt that does it."

T.K. Jones, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense  
Interview in *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1982

Produced by the National SANIE Education Fund, in conjunction with Traprock Peace Center and the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy.

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**"ATTENTION! ATTENTION! The United States may soon be under nuclear attack. Prepare to evacuate! Take the time you need to pack. Prepare your home as if you were leaving for a vacation. Draw your curtains. Take along all perishables. Bring your credit cards. All shift workers should stay on their jobs until the end of their shifts."**

These are some of the instructions the government has prepared for you in the event of a nuclear war. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Reagan Administration is trying to convince the public that nuclear war is survivable. The Administration has proposed a 7-year, \$4.2 billion civil defense program that they claim would save 80 percent of the population.

But civil defense in the nuclear age is a hoax. Tens of millions would be killed immediately in a nuclear war, with tens of millions more dying from the after-effects. The American Medical Association, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment have all concluded there is no effective way to save our people in the event of nuclear war.<sup>2</sup> But the government is moving ahead with elaborate plans for evacuating the population, constructing blast and fallout shelters, and protecting key industrial workers and government leaders through complex communication and transportation systems.

### Head for the Hills

"Drive to your designated reception area, using the route given by your local officials. Remember that several days should be available for relocating all those living in the high risk areas."

So instructs the citizens handbook distributed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the agency responsible for civil defense.<sup>3</sup> FEMA works on evacuation, or "Crisis Relocation Planning," as they call it, in conjunction with local government officials.

FEMA envisions an orderly and calm exodus of the American population into rural areas during a time of impending nuclear attack. The government's evacuation plan would take over a

#### IN A NUCLEAR WAR...



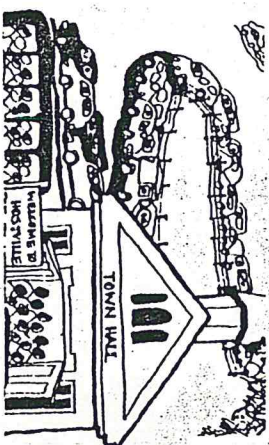
THESE TARGETS ARE LIKELY TO BE HIT...

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week to implement, although Soviet missiles can reach the U.S. in just 30 minutes. Even with a week's warning, it is doubtful the evacuation plan could succeed.

According to FEMA, over two-thirds of the American people would be moved from "high risk" areas, including cities with 50,000 or more people, and key industrial/military sites, to "host" areas in the countryside. Every state in the nation contains high risk areas (see map).

During an international crisis threatening nuclear war between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., you would be told to leave your home (if you are from a "high risk" area) and literally head for the hills. In addition to the possessions you would take on a family camping trip, you would be expected to bring along insurance policies, stocks and bonds, bank account books and, just in case, your will. In addition you should pack shovels and building materials, to construct fallout shelters in your "host" area.



The plan assumes that post office workers would be on hand to accept change of address cards. Auto mechanics would be available to assist with stalled cars. Bus drivers would go back and forth between risk and host areas transporting those without private automobiles. It has even been suggested that those with odd-numbered license plates would allow the even numbers to go first, to alleviate highway congestion.

In addition to the obvious logistical nightmares an exodus of 150,000,000 people would cause, a recent report to the Secretary General of the United Nations noted these flaws in civil defense planning:<sup>4</sup>

- Missiles could be reprogrammed to attack the "host" areas [The computer reprogramming required for this would take only 20 minutes—our addition.]
- Even if the "host" areas escaped direct attack, they would probably be blanketed by lethal radioactive fallout. Radiation shielding is generally inferior in rural areas.
- To start an evacuation too early would seriously disrupt the economy. To start too late would make the evacuees more vulnerable.
- The very fact that an evacuation had started might provoke an attack, since the other side might conclude that we were preparing to start a nuclear war.
- Even with the best advance planning, the execution of an evacuation would be accompanied by confusion and panic.

# Nowhere to Hide

Almost as unrealistic as the evacuation schemes are plans for blast and fallout shelters.

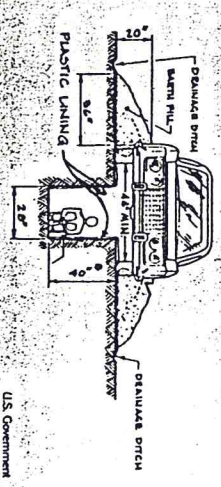
The blast shelter program is aimed at protecting 4 million "essential" workers who would be expected to carry on industrial activity during a nuclear war. Specially hardened shelters to protect key industries would be built in high risk areas. The cost of constructing these shelters has been estimated at \$10 billion and is not included in Reagan's \$4 billion budget for civil defense.<sup>2</sup>

"The shelters are fine except for three things: Getting to them, staying in them, and getting out of them. It is a dangerous illusion to tell the American public that shelters will protect them."

Dr. Robert Ulfson, Research Professor of Psychiatry, Yale University  
FEMA oversight hearings, April 22, 1982

An unsolved problem with blast shelters is protection from firestorms. During World War II, hundreds of thousands of people hiding in blast shelters were found suffocated and cremated from the oxygen being sucked out by firestorms.<sup>3</sup>

The Administration scenario depends on the willingness of workers to commute from their "host areas" back to ground zero. Since major industrial sites are likely targets, the workers may have nothing to do but sit through the rubble. To address this problem, far-fetched schemes are being developed to dismantle machinery and move it to "safe" locations.

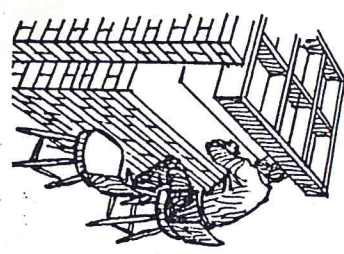


For the 226 million Americans not considered "essential," the government has come up with a wide range of makeshift fallout shelters. They include digging a trench under your car, building a log cabin and hiding under a table.

For those who like to plan ahead, there's the "preplanned snack bar shelter" for your basement or the outside concrete shelter adjoining your patio.

According to FEMA, shelters will protect you in the short run and "in most cases, the fallout radiation level outside the shelter would decrease rapidly enough to permit people to leave the shelter within a few days."<sup>4</sup>

But the ravaging effects of nuclear war—contaminated food and water supplies, millions of corpses, epidemics, raging fires, ozone depletion—would make post-attack life unrecognizably grim.



Preplanned Snack Bar Shelter Plan D  
U.S. Government

# Government Underground

While you and your family are waiting in bumper to bumper traffic, top government leaders will be whisked away to secret command posts so that they can continue to conduct the war. The Continuity of Government, or COG, program is setting up scores of fallout shelters specially equipped with sophisticated communications systems and computer technology. Elaborate nuclear war games are periodically carried out to practice war strategy, population control and to ensure the survival of government leaders.

President Reagan requested \$148 million for fiscal year 1982 to protect the government bureaucracy. This compares to a request for \$252 million to protect the entire population. As Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll (Ret.) of the Center for Defense Information points out: "Our leaders have requested \$1.10 per person to protect the public, but thousands of dollars each to protect themselves.... Do we want our leaders to feel confident that they can survive a nuclear war? Will this make them more aggressive in the face of an impending nuclear conflict?"<sup>5</sup>

"... few civil defense professionals think the plans will actually work. Many of them will tell you quite candidly that they are writing the plans only because their federal funding is contingent upon it."

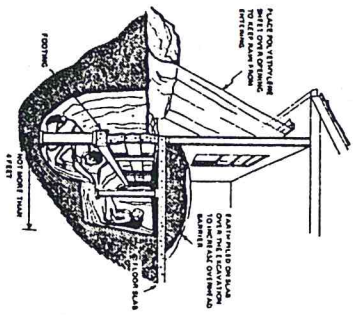
Dr. Bruce Clayton, FEMA-certified Radiological Defense Officer  
Survive Magazine, Winter 1981

# Soviet Civil Defense: "An Absolute Disaster"

Similar to the discredited missile and bomber "gaps" of years gone by, the rationale behind beefing up civil defense is that the Soviets are way ahead of us. While the Soviets spend more of their resources on civil defense than we do, the figures have been greatly exaggerated. Civil defense advocates claim the Soviets spend \$2 billion a year on their program. But the \$2 billion figure is based on what it would cost the U.S. to duplicate the Soviet program—a faulty methodology which overprices Soviet labor and technologies.<sup>6</sup>

Allegations of Soviet civil defense superiority are baseless. There is no evidence that the Soviets have been able to protect key industries by dispersing them throughout the countryside or "hardening" the factories. The relative inadequacy of their road network would make evacuation even more difficult than in the U.S. The Soviet program, like our own, relies on the use of shovels to construct makeshift shelters—a formidable task in the frozen Russian climate. Public apathy is as big a problem for Soviet civil defense planners as it is here. The Soviet people refer to their civil defense program "Grazhdansky kray: Oboronny" by its acronym, "grab"—the Russian word for coffin.

A 1978 CIA report<sup>7</sup> concluded that the Soviet civil defense program does not "adversely affect the strategic balance" between our two countries. "We do not believe that the Soviets' present civil defenses would embolden them deliberately to expose the U.S.S.R. to high risk of nuclear attack." And according to Rep. Peter Poyser (D-NM), the CIA recently revealed in a secret briefing that the effect of a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union would be an absolute disaster.<sup>8</sup>



U.S. Government

