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P.O. Box 144
23 Main Street
Watertown, Massachusetts
02172



CIVIL DEFENSE FOR THE 80s?

Interest in full scale civil defense programs has waxed and waned for more than two decades in this country. Most adults remember the air raid drills of the late 1950s and early 60s, consisting of school children instructed to duck beneath their desks or huddle in the corridors until the all clear was sounded. Yellow and black "public shelter" signs designated many buildings as havens for citizens wishing to be protected in case of attack by a hostile nation. Home "bomb shelters" enjoyed a short but substantial boom period.

In the 60s nuclear weapons were deliverable mainly by long range bombers, and several hours warning via distant radar systems was a possibility. The world nuclear arsenal was considerably less sophisticated, and the public was substantially less aware of the immediate and long-range effects of these weapons.

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in civil defense. Several years ago the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, formerly the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency) was asked to develop



Nagasaki, 1945. Photograph from the archives of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

a new program. After a number of studies FEMA committed itself to the "Crisis Relocation Plan" (CRP). Under CRP the assumption is made that U.S. intelligence would, at a time of severe international tension, discover the initiation of Soviet civil defense and protective strategic maneuvers. The President would decide that an attack on the U.S. was likely, and would order a "Crisis Relocation." Counterforce target areas and urban centers would be evacuated to pre-designated "host" communities assumed to be outside the range of immediate destruction from direct hits on the target

areas. According to FEMA's estimates, it would require two to three days for preparation of host shelter sites by the evacuees, and another three days for the evacuation process. With this plan, FEMA anticipates sparing 80% of the population from a nuclear holocaust.

Not surprisingly, such a calculation is based on little hard data. Many of the original suppositions that crisis evacuation could work at all were based on experiences with population management in times of natural disaster. The rationale for such

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