



Written by [James Heiser](#) on December 17, 2010

Surviving Nuclear Attack: “Duck and Cover” Is Back

The real reason anti-nuclear activists want you to believe that a nuclear war would kill everyone on the planet is political: even though they know their claims are mere hyperbole, exaggerations, or even false, they believe making these claims is still beneficial because it increases the public outcry and opprobrium against military planners who build nuclear weapons. It's a case of believing that the ends justify the means. But this lie is a particularly dangerous one, because it leads to cynicism, despair, and paralysis.



Nuclear weapons are complex machines whose workings can be easily disrupted, and in the future, scientists will undoubtedly find ways to put into practice the ways that are already theoretically available for reducing their effectiveness as weapons. But for the moment limited nuclear warfare is as real a possibility as it was in the 1950s. In those days, little was known about the magnitude of the risks of cancer and other medical consequences of radiation. It is easy enough to ridicule their lack of knowledge. The images of soldiers courageously advancing over fallout-covered terrain are scary. But in those days, people were expected to take personal risks to preserve Western civilization. And they did. That's a concept many in this country would do well to reacquaint themselves with.

But then, the nuclear hysteria crowd is not very keen on the notion of “personal risks to preserve Western civilization”; one need not be *too* old to remember hearing citizens actually make the “Better Red than Dead” argument.

But now the administration of President Obama, the man entrusted with the hopes and dreams of generations of American leftists, may be failing to uphold one of the central tenets of the dogma of those who put him in power: Suddenly, “duck and cover” is back.

The *New York Times* for December 15 carried the breathless headline “U.S. Rethinks Strategy for the Unthinkable.” It appears that science is in danger of trumping sentiment — at least for the moment — as defense planning recognizes that the notions of past generations were not that far from perfect. [In the words of the Times:](#)

Suppose the unthinkable happened, and terrorists struck New York or another big city with an atom bomb. What should people there do? The government has a surprising new message: Do not flee. Get inside any stable building and don't come out till officials say it's safe.

The advice is based on recent scientific analyses showing that a nuclear attack is much more survivable if you immediately shield yourself from the lethal radiation that follows a blast, a simple tactic seen as saving hundreds of thousands of lives. Even staying in a car, the studies



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show, would reduce casualties by more than 50 percent; hunkering down in a basement would be better by far.

That's right: the old Civil Defense booklets about basement shelters and staying indoors were not only scientifically accurate, modern emergency planners are admitting that maybe, just maybe, preparing for a disaster before it happens might actually be a good idea.

Except, of course, for the pesky political problem of running counter to decades of the Left's *Strangelove*-esque propaganda. Thus, the Times notes, the problem for President Obama is how to prepare for a nuclear attack without people becoming agitated by the notion of a nuclear attack:

But a problem for the Obama administration is how to spread the word without seeming alarmist about a subject that few politicians care to consider, let alone discuss. So officials are proceeding gingerly in a campaign to educate the public.

"We have to get past the mental block that says it's too terrible to think about," W. Craig Fugate, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said in an interview. "We have to be ready to deal with it" and help people learn how to "best protect themselves."

The question is: How do you suddenly help people get ready to "deal" with a problem which you and your allies have spent generations claiming was an insurmountable problem? The answer is simple: Invert reality, and claim that the "problem" was created by those who were actually preaching preparation a generation ago. Thus, we read in the *Times*:

Administration officials argue that the cold war created an unrealistic sense of fatalism about a terrorist nuclear attack. "It's more survivable than most people think," said an official deeply involved in the planning, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "The key is avoiding nuclear fallout."

But it was not the "cold war" which created such an idea; instead, that notion was created and fortified by those who sought to sap the will of the West to defend itself. The "unwinnable" nature of nuclear war was not a notion created by the event of the "cold war": It was propagated, at least in part, by those who intended to prevent the West from having the will to mount a defense.

Now, as the administration revises the past and tries to make "duck and cover" the nation's defensive strategy once again, the Homeland Security department is busy dressing up the same old fallout data in bright modern publications:

The administration is making that argument with state and local authorities and has started to do so with the general public as well. Its Citizen Corps Web site says a nuclear detonation is "potentially survivable for thousands, especially with adequate shelter and education." A color illustration shows which kinds of buildings and rooms offer the best protection from radiation.

In June, the administration released to emergency officials around the nation an unclassified planning guide 130 pages long on how to respond to a nuclear attack. It stressed citizen education, before any attack.

Without that knowledge, the guide added, "people will be more likely to follow the natural instinct to run from danger, potentially exposing themselves to fatal doses of radiation."

Grandpa's backyard shelter is back, and given the spirit of the current administration, you'll probably be able to get a federal subsidy to build your own — as long as it draws its power "green" energy.



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