



## Strengthening Civil Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** Alongside its electoral mandate, a key component of the Kremlin’s legitimacy rests upon its perceived ability to protect the Russian people from external threats. Defending against these ever-present dangers is a major theme in the Kremlin-sponsored media, with maintaining a robust civil defense (CD) program as a natural response to this besieged-fortress mentality. The accompanying excerpt from the Russian government news source, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, describes a recent interview with “Aleksey Chirikov, head of the Russian Emergencies Ministry Institute for Problems of Civil Defense and Emergencies.”

The article begins by talking about how the specific nature of the risks facing Russia have changed since the Cold War ended, and that therefore CD officials “are developing and rehearsing options to protect against new threats.” As the excerpt elaborates, the modern strategy of civil defense approved by the President remains “an integral part of defense building,” focusing upon three major areas: social (“ensuring the protection and life of the population”), defense (“preserving human mobilization resources and the country’s military-economic potential”), and economic (“preserving facilities essential for sustainable functioning of the economy, the survival of the population, and protection of material and cultural values”).

The most revealing part of the interview deals with how the CD chief perceives the new threats confronting Russia. Since nuclear parity has been preserved, Russia’s “potential geopolitical adversaries” ... “are developing new strategies.” According to this Russian official, “Western political strategists have learned with the use of neurolinguistics and psychological training, ideological brainwashing, even hypnotic suggestion, how to make these rear sectors themselves go and sweep away their governments, as well as those who are on the front line of defense.” He goes on to point out that “gas masks” and “bunkers” will provide little defense against these new dangers, and that therefore, the 1.2 million involved in Russian CD “are preparing for and calculating all the [new] threats.” The Kremlin leadership wants to ensure that the Russian population knows where to look for and defend against foreign threats. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

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**Source:** Timofey Borisov, “Защита выходит из бункера: Гражданская оборона меняется вслед за возникающими вызовами,” [Protection Is Leaving the Bunker; Civil Defense Is Changing in Wake of Emerging Challenges] *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 4 October 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/10/03/kak-grazhdanskaia-oborona-menietsia-vsled-za-voznikaiushchimi-vyzovami.html>

*Gas masks are no longer relevant, and also nuclear shelters? This question set the stage for a conversation between your “RG” correspondent and Aleksey Chirikov, head of the Russian Emergencies Ministry Institute for Problems of Civil Defense and Emergencies....*

**[Question]** *On 20 December 2016 the Russian president approved the Principles of State Policy in Civil Defense for the Period up to 2030 that regulate the conceptual provisions of the shape of the country’s civil defense today. Out of habit, many people expected that bomb shelters would be refurbished, that the population would be reminded about flashes from left and right, and would purchase new gasmasks. But the path to the nuclear bunker was not newly built that way. So, does it mean that things are different and protection from nuclear attack is no longer relevant?*

*Aleksey Chirikov: It is thought that generals always prepare for past wars. Fortunately, that is not the case with us, although until nuclear weapons in the world disappear, today’s civil defense is obliged to take this factor into account. But recently other threats have emerged and continue to emerge.... In a changing world nothing is static, and we are developing and rehearsing options to protect against new threats....*

**[Question]** *What does the new concept of civil defense say?*

*Aleksey Chirikov: The principles of state policy define strategic directions. Civil defense as an integral part of defense building and ensuring of state security performs three essential functions: social, defense, and economic. First, ensuring the protection and life of the population, rescue, and rendering assistance to victims. Second, preserving human mobilization resources and the country’s military-economic potential. And, third, preserving facilities essential for sustainable functioning of the economy, the survival of the population, and protection of material and cultural values....*

**... [Question]** *But this is about natural threats, but let us take manmade one, so to speak. Is there no protection against sanctions?*

*Aleksey Chirikov: Clearly, the danger of nuclear attack now is not as great as during the cold war years. Nuclear parity is preserved. And our potential geopolitical adversaries know this, which is why they are developing new strategies.*

*Whereas decades ago our enemies faced the challenge of destroying the rear to weaken resistance, now none of that is required. There is no need to launch missiles. Western political strategists have learned with the use of neurolinguistics and psychological training, ideological brainwashing, even hypnotic suggestion, how to make these rear sectors themselves go and sweep away their governments, as well as those who are on the front line of defense. The whole world sees this in the scripts of the so-called color revolutions in different countries. And you cannot protect yourself against them with a gasmask or hide from them in a bunker....*

*We in the Russian Emergencies Ministry are preparing for them at a modern level. The forces of civil defense today comprise trained specialists, modern equipment and appliances, a significant aviation segment, and units that work on water, under water, on land, and in the air. The total grouping of civil defense forces today comprises more than 1.2 million people.... And we are preparing for and calculating all the threats.*