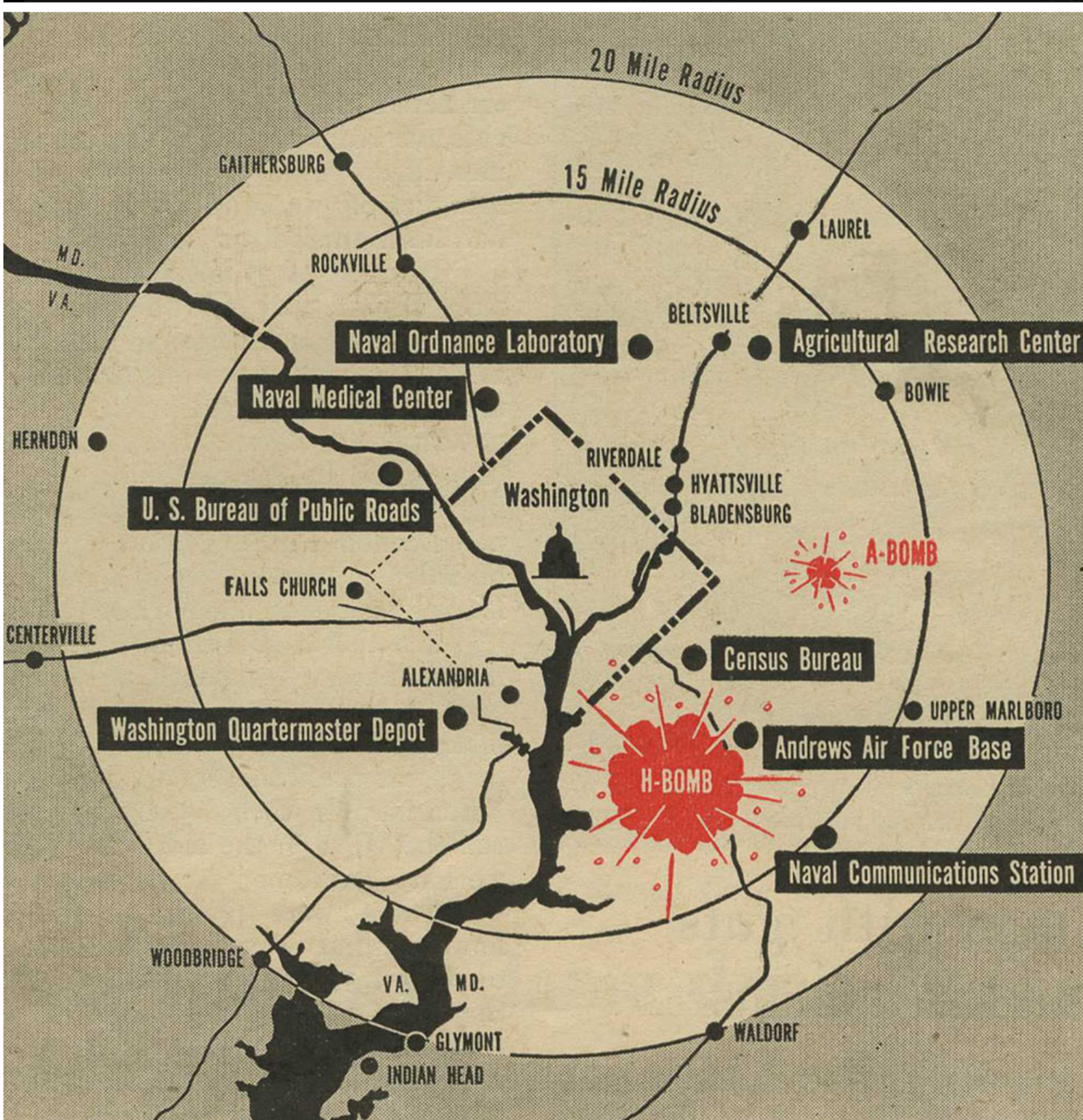


Pathfinder

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Washington: If you can't dodge, disperse



GSA's plan. Ring Washington with satellites, 15 to 20 miles out.

Washington, D.C.—atom target No. 1

Dispersal of Government might take two years; NSRB pins hopes on its emergency plan

“Invisible above the murky clouds, the enemy bomber nosed along the radar-track of the Potomac like an industrious beagle, shrugged off the hail of flak, released its A-bomb. Tumbling in a long arc, the monstrous cylinder plummeted midway between the Highway and Memorial bridges, exploded at 2,500 feet.

“In one white-hot instant, the two bridges crumpled into the river; generals and privates alike burned to death behind the windowed walls of the Pentagon; destruction visited the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, the Federal Reserve, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Navy, the Agriculture Department.”

Such might well have been the pattern of the attack—which for a few moments last fortnight—the capital awaited: From India a Thanksgiving Day cable had crackled a warning, “Alert all U.S. cities they are due to be bombed within the next 24 hours.” Top officials stood by at emergency stations. Then the panic was punctured. The message’s author was a holiday-happy tourist.

atom target No. 1

The alert served, however, to underline one baleful fact: The nation's capital is just as much of a sitting duck this week as it was on the day 15 months ago when the Russians first set off an atomic blast.

To the Suburbs. Over the past decade several auxiliary employment centers have moved out of the District of Columbia. In Bethesda, Md., are the National Institute of Health and the Naval Hospital. The Navy hydrographic office and the Census Bureau have moved to Suitland, Md. Just beyond Alexandria, Va., is the Army's big quartermaster depot.

To transplant more important echelons of the Government, the General Services Administration has concocted an over-all plan for the selection of eight widely separated sites 15 to 20 miles from the White House. These will contain office buildings capable of holding a total of 400,000 Federal employes. Buildings will be of simple "block" construction, three or four stories high, wingless and without interior courts.

Into these eight sites would move vital personnel from at least 20 agencies. Last September, confronted with an earlier version of the plan, Congress refused to grant the \$139 million sought; one Representative dismissed it as a boondoggle to assure the safety of 40,000 "Washington Wafflebottoms."

Now, however, some lawmakers take the appropriation for granted but are considering a more immediate problem:

It would take GSA 18 to 24 months to complete its plan. What would the Government do if the enemy struck not next year, but next week?

Today's Plan. Given any warning at all, the National Security Resources Board now seems confident it can preserve at least a skeleton Government. But as for the run-of-the-mine Federal employe, he'll just have to take his chances amid the irradiated rubble. Former acting Civil Defense Director James J. Wadsworth said there'll be no "taking to the hills" if he can prevent it.

Bluntly, Wadsworth warned: "It is time we get tough with ourselves. . . . It would be physically impossible to evacuate a modern American city following an atomic blast. . . ."

"There can be no mass stampede. . . . If and when the chips are down, every strategic target area in America

atom target No. 1

will be manned. . . . There will be no voluntary surrender of a single machine, or a single home, that might help our armed forces to wage war.”



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