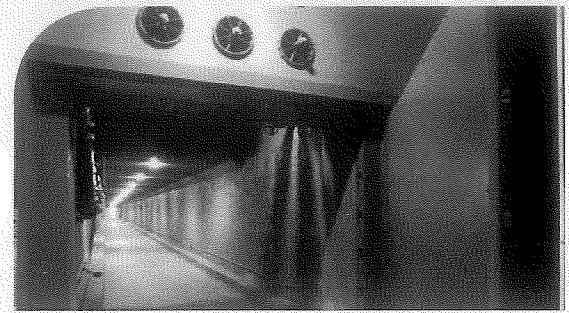


The Secret Bunker Congress Never Used

NPR

NEWS ARTICLE



Alex Wong/Getty Images

This text is an alternate version of the original text, which appears in your student edition.

- 1 In a series of reports in 2010, *Washington Post* reporters Bill Arkin and Dana Priest revealed that since September 2001, 33 groups of buildings for top-secret intelligence work are under construction or have been built. The buildings are in Washington, D.C., and in the surrounding area.
- 2 Before that building boom, however, another secret bunker lay waiting for a gigantic disaster. It hid behind a giant armored steel door. For 30 years, it was kept secret. The bunker was hidden in West Virginia's Greenbrier Resort. It was a huge bomb shelter stocked with supplies for members of Congress to use in case of an emergency.
- 3 Welcome to Capitol Hill, the Day After. Except this isn't Washington. It's a giant concrete box resting in a hillside in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.
- 4 The story of how the bunker was kept secret for 30 years, and how it even got here is very strange. For one thing, it was built as an addition to one of America's most famous luxury resorts, the Greenbrier. This resort is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.
- 5 Bankers, industrialists, and government advisers all relaxed at the resort. They did not know that they were right next door to the postapocalyptic¹ bunker. When the Greenbrier's official historian, Bob Conte, arrived in 1978, people in town started asking him questions.
- 6 "Why is there a 7,000-foot landing strip for a town of 3,000 people?" he remembers. Mostly, he told them there was no such thing. But he knew it was so that "the government could fly their people in here in case of war and go to the bunker that's under the Greenbrier."

A Secret Home for the House and Senate

- 7 The thing is, Conte didn't really know anything about it. He knew every inch of the Greenbrier's property. He knew where all the records and documents were kept. He knew about historic photos of presidents and kings and prime ministers drinking cocktails on the porch.

1. **postapocalyptic** (pohst uh pahk uh LIPH tihk) *adj.* referring to a time after a nuclear war or other disaster causing the collapse of civilization.

NOTES

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8 But just a few yards from Conte’s own office was the reinforced bunker. It was there to care for every member of the House and Senate in case there was a nuclear attack.

9 Behind three-foot-thick concrete walls is a space about the size of a WalMart. The air-intake system is very complicated. It was meant to filter out radiation. It creates a vacuum-like effect when you walk in. Wind howls around you and sucks all the doors shut.

10 The sleeping area includes rows of metal bunkbeds.

11 “All they had for private items that you could lock up were a small drawer, right underneath the beds, in which you could put your personal items,” Conte says. “For 30 years, every one of these 1,100 beds was assigned to somebody.”

Built in an Atomic Age

12 You have to go back to the mid-1950s to understand why and even how this bunker was built. It was built—right under the noses of America’s vacationing aristocrats. At that time, a whole industry had been built around the construction of fallout shelters.

13 In the late 1950s, President Dwight Eisenhower started to worry about how to keep law and order in America in case of a nuclear war.

14 “I feel impelled to speak today in a language that, in a sense, is new—one which I, who have spent so much of my life in the military profession, would have preferred never to use,” he said. “That new language is the language of atomic warfare.”

15 Eisenhower decided the Greenbrier would be a perfect place to hide a congressional bunker. In 1958, government workers broke ground on what they called “Project Greek Island.”

16 It was just about a four-hour drive from Washington. Hotel workers and guests were told that a new conference space would be built in the giant hole in the ground. In fact, it *would* be a new conference space. At least part of it would.

17 “In the 30 years, thousands of people walked in and out of a secret bunker not knowing they were in a secret bunker—which was part of the original design,” Conte says. He was speaking in a room used as an “exhibit hall.” “You would have the West Virginia Medical Association meeting here, and a lot of car companies have met here over the years,” he says.

19 Down another hallway is a room that was to be the floor of the House of Representatives. “There were microphones,” Conte says. “You can see



