

Nov 04, 2016 by [Nicholas J. Cull](#)

The Ghost under the Brooklyn Bridge ^[1]

This week workers at the Brooklyn Bridge chanced upon a forgotten room containing supplies stockpiled against a nuclear attack. Dates on the materials were evocative: 1957 - the year of Sputnik; 1962 - the year of the Cuban missile crisis. This discovery is an oddly evocative interruption from the high point last long war into what future historians will doubtless see as the opening phase of the era-defining conflict. It is like a ghost in a Shakespeare play -- reminding us of just how bleak things were in the era of Sputnik and the Cuban missile crisis, and how different the threats are today. Looking back, when the USSR was the enemy there was some comfort to be derived from imagining the mirror image state with its mirror image concerns. Al Qaeda is a very different proposition. Beyond such musings the room under the bridge is a fascinating comment on the abundance of America's Cold War civil defense. Evidently there was so much material being stockpiled that it was possible to lose track of a supply cache like this. Hardly 'your tax dollars at work.' One wonders what monuments to the defense and homeland security budget of 2006 will turn up to haunt our grandchildren.
