

What if Coronavirus was nuclear?

By Cristopher Cruz.

Coronavirus is a massive undertaking for the health care system worldwide, at all levels. Therefore, efforts to combat it must be taken at all levels of society (from the individual level where social distancing and hygiene are vital, to the larger organized sections of government where transparency and leadership play an important role, to the overarching international level where diplomacy and science are of use for global partners.

Coronavirus is unique in that it comes off as a never before seen threat that will forever change our everyday lives. Even for countries prepared to take on the virus and help contain it, it has proved to be capable of overwhelming even the strongest of nations. But just as it has the ability to be challenged, society's next tackle would be recovery. The virus is ever-evolving, but so is our ability to cope, and communicate. It is how we as a society have managed to accomplish advancements in medicine among other things.

But what if it were nuclear?

Even basic nuclear testing (non-sub-critical tests; full-on explosions) have massive ramifications for global impact, not just in the political sense, but in the environmental and health aspects as well. The radioactive contamination cannot be necessarily contained as the radioactive isotopes could be dispelled into the air to travel around the world; such was the case for Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant where the contamination was able to be detected from as far away as the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in San Onofre, USA.

Nuclear War, even a brief limited one, would be disastrous as it would create a complete collapse of society in the affected areas. A societal and governmental response to address all sides of this issue would be near futile as an atomic detonation would not just leave a large concentration of radioactivity but raze the entire infrastructure and impair communications to and from that area as a result of a simultaneous electro-magnetic pulse. No amount of hygiene or social distancing can help mitigate the effects of radiation; hospitals and health care facilities would be overrun with radioactive patients that would make the current overwhelming number of coronavirus patients at a given hospital look like a normal weekday. The current challenges we as a world face with coronavirus would only be exacerbated by nuclear explosions, if we think we have it bad now, it would be much worse with nuclear explosions at play.

If there is no recovery, what can we do to ramp up our precautions?

CTBTO champions science as a tool for diplomacy and now more than ever, we are seeing a surge of international cooperation in the midst of distrust and surge of fake news. A crucial step in preventing future nuclear explosions from happening would be to ensure all non-signatory members sign and those who have not ratified the treaty to do so immediately. The Treaty plays host to a series of technological and scientific assets that promote accuracy and viability for transparency which are key to ensuring that global cooperation runs smoothly. The International Monitoring System and International Data Centre are the key programmes that are helpful in combating accusations of nuclear testing and/or violations of the treaty agreement.

While no system is fail-proof, the mentioned systems are the best assets at the world's disposal run by the best of the best in the fields of science, diplomacy, and communication that have undergone rigorous training to ensure that the network is running to the best of its ability.

Just like Coronavirus has pushed for governments to react at all levels--as mentioned at the start of this report--we are to react at all levels and do our part to prevent another worldwide peril from erupting. The pandemic has begun to shed light on the cracks in our societal walls, which is not a reason for disappointment, but for empowerment; to prove that we are all capable of engaging a threat in unity for the benefit of our individual selves, our society and our environment. We are just one body with many parts, and we must take advantage of that synergy.

With the CTBT in force, we will be one larger step at preventing another global catastrophe from unfolding.

## Sources of Inspiration:

- Health impact of Nuclear Weapons:
    - <https://www.psr-la.org/nuclear-threats/>
  - CTBTO helps out Member states with Supplies:
    - <https://twitter.com/SinaZerbo/status/1250083015319080962?s=09>
    - <https://twitter.com/SinaZerbo/status/1246072245019013120?s=09>
  - Jeffrey Lewis interview with Bulletin of Atomic Scientists; DPRK Nuke Attack and Coronavirus:
    - <https://thebulletin.org/2020/03/how-the-coronavirus-outbreak-is-like-a-nuclear-attack-an-interview-with-jeffrey-lewis/>
  - After Coronavirus article by Medium:
    - <https://marker.medium.com/7-predictions-for-a-post-coronavirus-world-aaac052c8514?source=social---tw.marker>
  - Intersection of Coronavirus and Climate Change:
    - <https://today.ttu.edu/posts/2020/04/Stories/hayhoe-covid>
  - My presentation for high school classrooms back when I was a student:
    - <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qAzPv4CpyUs-LWjxOBDtvQrUbr9tiOcJSYrMpvUWyxM/edit?usp=sharing>
  - University of Southern California's Webinar on South Korea's measures for Covid-19
    - <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/event/crisis-management-pd-during-coronavirus-lessons-south-korea>
    - [Notes from USC's Webinar on South Korea's measures for Covid-19](#)
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