

Wartime Survival Guide

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22/07/2024

Last year, I flew to Prague to meet an old friend. Sitting in a bar, he told me he was glad to live in one of the safest cities in the EU.

There was a stack of Czech newspapers on the bar counter. I picked one up. As I flipped through it, not understanding a word, my friend talked about the sense of security in Europe.

Suddenly, he pointed to an article. The headline read, *Nothing Has Changed in Czechia Six Months After Brutal Terrorist Attack On Gay Bar*.

After that, my friend talked about the power of NATO. But at the same time, he said that, according to the news, the Czechia is not ready for war; that the Baltic countries have declared unpreparedness. The same is being said by Poland and Germany.

That was when I decided to write a survival guide for ordinary people, turning my wartime experiences into advice. This could save them – or show them how insignificant their current problems are compared to those faced during a war.

So, here is my 20-item survival guide, for anyone who doesn't want to kill anyone else and strives to save their own life:

1. If missiles are falling on your city, the safest places are metro stations (they are deep enough to save your ass), as well as railway stations (transport communications are highly valued during war, even by the enemy).
2. Military facilities and power plants are likely to become targets, so if you live near one, it's best to move.
3. There's no point in taping your windows; in the event of a missile detonation, the shards will scatter throughout the room anyway.
4. Hide behind two walls to protect yourself from explosions.
5. Tiled walls can be as dangerous as glass shards during an explosion.
6. Do not trust government officials. People can commit great treachery if their superiors remove their responsibility by giving them orders.
7. Do not trust patriots. They are friends of the state, not fellow citizens.

8. If you don't want to end up on the front lines, avoid living at your registered address. Move somewhere (in my case it was firstly an office, then a flat rented without a contract). Be sure, the state will use any information it has about you to turn you into a soldier.
9. Don't rush to hide in the countryside. In a big city, there are more people, making it easier to stay hidden. In a village, everyone knows each other, so newcomers stand out and will be reported.
10. If state media spreads rumors about the possible sabotage, every unfamiliar person will seem suspicious, including you.
11. The military protects the state's borders, not you. Their goal is to send you to the battlefield so you can defend the borders instead of them.
12. Don't believe state propaganda. Protecting your family doesn't mean leaving them under bombs to go to war. Protecting your family means ensuring that none of them get hurt.
13. Buy canned food, but don't forget Snickers bars. Food is not only calories but also currency in emergency situations.
14. Don't expect your friends to save you. During wartime, a person saves themselves first, then comments about it on social media, and only after might they come to help. Rely only on yourself.
15. **If your home is bombed and you have to seek shelter, don't rush to the ones provided by the state. The military and police might forcibly take men from there to the front lines, and on TV, they'll present them as a line of volunteers.**
16. Pay attention to what people take with them when leaving their homes. This can reveal things about them they might prefer to keep secret.
17. Limit your time watching the news. In reality, a missile explodes once, but on the news, it explodes thousands of times which can destroy your psyche.
18. Stock up on painkillers. It's unlikely you'll find a dentist willing to treat your tooth when the neighboring building is on fire.
19. If your teeth are fine, you can trade the painkillers for food with those who didn't take care of their health in time.
20. Stock up on lubricant and condoms. War is stressful, and stress often increases sexual desire – not only on the front lines. Sexual activity also increases on the home front.

Europe. NATO. Attack on a gay club. Newspapers lying on a bar counter. I flew to Prague to meet an old friend. Sitting in a bar, he told me he was glad to live in one of the safest cities in the EU. I didn't tell him that during my last visit to Prague, someone tried to rob me on the train. Instead, I smiled and promised myself to write a survival guide that would make others' suffering less than what I once had to endure.

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