

A RACE BETWEEN
COOPERATION
AND CATASTROPHE

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

An Exchange Between Senator Sam Nunn and Professor Graham Allison

Senator Sam Nunn is co-chairman and chief executive officer of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI; www.nti.org), a charitable organization working to reduce the global threats from nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. He served as United States Senator from Georgia from 1972 to 1996. He was chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. He also served on the Intelligence and Small Business Committees. His legislative achievements include the landmark Department of Defense Reorganization Act, drafted with the late Senator Barry Goldwater, and the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which provides assistance to Russia and the former Soviet republics for securing and destroying their excess nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. To date, the program has deactivated more than 5,900 nuclear warheads. In 2005, Senator Nunn teamed up with former

Senator Fred Thompson to promote a new docudrama, *Last Best Chance*, on the dangers of excess nuclear weapons and materials. Senator Nunn was a recipient of the 2007 IGL Dr. Jean Mayer Global Citizenship Award.

Graham Allison is Director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Dr. Allison served as Special Advisor to the Secretary of Defense under President Reagan and as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy and Plans under President Clinton, where he coordinated Department of Defense strategy and policy towards Russia, Ukraine, and the other states of the former Soviet Union. His publications include, *Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material* and *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe*.

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Graham Allison

Senator Nunn, as you think about [the just screened film], *Last Best Chance*, how realistic is the threat of terrorists getting the nuclear bomb and actually bringing it across a border like Canada to a city like Boston or New York and blowing it up?

Sam Nunn

The theme in the beginning scenes related to the effort by a group of Russian members of organized crime to buy a bomb. There were two other plots that evolve in the 45 minute film, both of them dealing with not a bomb itself but nuclear material, which to me is the most likely course. Highly enriched uranium is not only in Russia and the former Soviet Union, but over 40 countries around the globe have enough highly enriched uranium to make a weapon. Much of it is not properly secured, so this [threat] is very realistic. The real dangers end up being the nuclear materials rather than the weapons.

Graham Allison

Imagine that terrorists succeeded in buying 100 pounds of highly enriched uranium. Tell us the rest of the story between there and the explosion in one of our cities.

Sam Nunn

We've had highly enriched uranium and plutonium around for a long time. Those are the two ingredients that are required to make a nuclear weapon.... The thing that's changed in recent years is that we now have the proliferation of knowledge and technology of how to make these weapons. It used to be thought that only a Manhattan Project by a government could bring this about. Now there's a wide consensus in most of the military intelligence circle, not only in our country but abroad, that a group of people could find out how to make a weapon if they had reasonable intelligence and had access to some technical expertise. It

would be much easier to make a weapon out of highly enriched uranium than plutonium. So if you had to set a priority between the two and both were important, protecting highly enriched uranium at the source is the most important job for us to do around the globe. It's not an impossible task. We've done more than anyone else by far, [but] it will take a lot more political will than has been displayed so far by our government [and others around the world].

The thing to remember, and this is stressed throughout this film, is that the hardest job for a terrorist is to find the material or the bomb itself. From that point on, it gets easier and easier for them, and it gets harder and harder for us. So the most effective and efficient way to prevent catastrophic terrorism — and Graham wrote the book on this one — is to secure the material at the source. That requires cooperation and leadership around the globe, and that cooperation and leadership needs a lot more focus than we are seeing right now. And again, we are doing more than anyone else, [but] we're not doing enough. So this is a huge challenge. Interestingly enough, President Bush and Senator John Kerry in their debate on international matters and security, both of them agreed that keeping weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists was the number one security challenge that we face in the world. I completely agree with that.

Graham Allison

Sam, in the docudrama there are basically three plot lines. One is how could terrorists get a bomb [or highly enriched uranium]? The second story line is how do they get it into the U.S.? In the film, they drive it across the northern U.S. border. And then the third is what could we do about it or could we have done about it? So let me go just to the second question. How realistic is the notion that if terrorists got a bomb somewhere else, in Russia or in South Africa, or the material from which to make a bomb, they could actually get it to Boston or to DC?

Sam Nunn

Well, once they got it in the Boston Harbor or the New York Harbor, then it's too late. You've got to stop it before it gets here. I think it's very realistic to think that could happen. Now, I certainly think stopping it at the source is the primary and the most effective and efficient way to deal with this,

... a nuclear terrorist group that is suicidal to begin with is not going to be deterred. So deterrence as we've known it does not in my view have relevancy to the kind of threat we face today.

but we need *tier* defense, we need to at least have a chance to stop it elsewhere. In terms of delivery system, we spend about ten or 12 billion bucks a year

in our government to have a missile defense system. I am in favor, and always have been, of a limited system that would be able to stop an accidental launch or a small launch. I don't think it's affordable or realistic to think of stopping a very large launch. But nevertheless, in terms of likelihood of occurrence, a strike by a country with a missile against the United States is much less likely than a terrorist bomb in an SUV or a ship coming offshore. That is a much more likely event. And we're not doing nearly enough on that threat. So I think we have to sort out the priorities in terms of where the greatest dangers are. I think most people would agree that a country with a return address would be much less likely [to attack us], because they would be destroyed if they hit us with a nuclear weapon, and they know it. But a nuclear terrorist group that is suicidal to begin with is not going to be deterred. So deterrence as we've known it does not, in my view, have relevancy to the kind of threat we face today.

Graham Allison

[Imagine], as in the film, a terrorist with a bomb in a case in the back of an SUV [driving] across the border [from] Canada.

You saw the customs fellow with a Geiger counter looking for signs of radioactivity. The fact is that with the shielding of a bomb so that it would not be discovered by our current technology, even if it were coming across a portal like [a border checkpoint], we would be unlikely to discover it. That's point one. *And point two:* there are huge gaps between these portals. Along the Canadian border, about one percent of the space is covered by places like that. And the same is true for the Mexican border. Many people think, "Well, there must be some magic shield that prevents [nuclear weapons from] coming into the U.S." But you're saying that the situation in the film is basically...

Sam Nunn

Is very realistic. You can shield a weapon or material, particularly highly enriched uranium. It's paradoxical but a radiological type weapon would be much easier to detect than [a nuclear weapon]. There would be much less damage — it would be a conventional explosion with radiological material. We've got to work on that. We've got to increase the ability technologically to be able to do that. But it's still a needle in a haystack. We can't inspect every cargo box coming in. If we tried to inspect even 15 to 20 percent of all the cargo boxes under today's technology, we would bog down

commerce to the point the economy would come to a halt. We can't keep drugs out. We know tons of marijuana come across the border in spite of a huge expenditure there. So the odds are against us stopping it, but the odds are not impossible and we need to make them more favorable to us. But again, securing the material, never letting anyone get that kind of material to begin with — that's where the efficiency is and that's where we have to put our focus.

Graham Allison

One more question from the docudrama. We see Fred Thompson playing president and members of the National Security Council deliberating about their discovery that the terrorists have gotten the bomb and are trying to bring it to an American city. So if you imagine, God forbid, that scenario...if you imagine you are now a part of this deliberation, tell us about that.

Sam Nunn

Well, I think Fred Thompson did a great job of acting in this movie. And I think as the movie unfolds it becomes

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very apparent that he says all the things he wished he had done, wished the United States had done, and wished the United States and Russia had done. As he has conversations with his Russian colleague, they begin to realize during this film what is really apparent: the U.S. and Russia, having been confrontational enemies during the 40-50 years [of the Cold War], have a lot in common now, security-wise. In fact, we probably have more in common with them security-wise than we do with any other country; they could also be a target, they also have their extremists, they have their enemies, and so forth. We have a lot in common. That's one of the themes coming out of this. We can only deal with these problems with cooperation, as I've mentioned. But the cooperation has to start with Russia.

Back in the old days, the Soviet Union and the United States both supplied highly enriched uranium to countries around the globe for research purposes. That was an era when we did not think the technology was going to be available for them to make weapons. Now that stuff is spread all over the place, and we have to work with Russia to get it back. It's very slow, as you heard in the script, at the rate we're going right now just the most dangerous of these sites are going to take us 15 years. Now that effort is beginning to speed up, but we still have a long way to go. The bottom line is cooperation between the United States and Russia is absolutely essential in this arena....

Graham Allison

Sam, let me just drill down a little further with it. You referred to the first of the televised presidential debates in 2004 between President Bush and Senator Kerry. And the moderator asked the two candidates: What's the single most serious threat to American national security? And both said nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists. Actually, I like to quote President Bush on it, because he came second and he said, quote, "I agree with my opponent." And there was almost a gasp from the moderator. Because that was the only time in a rather bitter campaign that those words were used by either candidate. He said, "I agree with my opponent that the greatest threat to the U.S. is nuclear weapons in the hands of a terrorist network." So for students in particular, you're wondering, "Am I going to see a nuclear bomb go off in an American city?" What's the likelihood of this happening if you look at where we are now?

Sam Nunn

You know, some people set odds on it. I testified in a House committee on this overall subject, and an eminent physicist by the name of Richard Garwin said that the chances in any one year in the United States were 20 percent that a city would go up. I don't know. I have no idea what the odds are. What I do know is we've got to reduce the risk. If the risk is one out of a thousand now, we've got to get it to be one out of ten thousand, one out of ten million. The stakes are enormous. It's not just a city going up, it's the whole economy of the world, the confidence of the world. As soon as one bomb goes off anywhere in the world, even if it's not in the United States, every terrorist group under every rock around the world is going to claim they've got the second one, and the third one. It's going to be very destabilizing for the confidence that's required for the economy. So the stakes are very high....

Warren Buffet has a good way of expressing it. He's very helpful to us and our foundation and believes that this is the number one security threat. And he's been a pretty good mathematician over the years. He says if there is a ten percent chance in any one year that a U.S. city could go up in smoke, and that chance persists for 50 years, then you only have one half percent chance of avoidance over that 50 year period. But if you can change that and reduce the ten percent odds in one year to one percent, and you project that over 50 years, then you move that one half of one percent to 67 percent of avoidance over that 50 year period. This is about risk reduction. It's not about absolute guarantees.

You mention young people — I want to mention this too, because I think young people need to be concerned about this. But the young people should put it in perspective. We went through a Cold War of 40 or 50 years where the United States and the Soviet Union were armed to the teeth and were bitter enemies. We were ideological enemies. We had very large military forces confronting each other in Europe through NATO and the Warsaw Pact. That ended in, basically, about 1991. Any kind of conventional, non-nuclear war between us, even if it started by accident, in my view, was going to escalate very rapidly to battlefield nuclear weapons and then the big stuff. We were in a position called "extended deterrence." We had our frontline forces over [in Europe]. The Soviets were much stronger than we were, conventionally

speaking, but we were in effect viewed in Europe as a tripwire. That is, if something happened and the U.S. forces got hit, we were going to escalate to nuclear war. That meant the United States had a "first use" policy. Not a first strike policy, not hitting the Soviet Union, but a "first use" policy. That is, using battle field nuclear weapons. Most American people did not know that during that period of time, although it was open and public. That was called "extended deterrence" if it worked. And it did, thank God. It would have been called Armageddon if it had not worked.

That period is behind us. What we're talking about now is not an all out war between the United States and Russia. We're talking about a terrorist-type attack, or accidental launches, or that sort of thing which [is] still deadly serious. But I don't think young people in this generation should say, "Oh, my God, we can't do anything about this." We are much safer now from all out war than we have been in the last 50 years. And that perspective needs to be brought to bear.

Graham Allison

Let me get you to expand on that a little bit, because I think there are two stories here. One is how to feel the existential reality of nuclear danger as part of the life that we live. The second is some perspective on how things actually didn't turn out as badly as they could have. But you were telling me how you were 24 years old and you were working at your first job as a staff member for the House...

Sam Nunn

House Armed Services Committee.

Graham Allison

Tell us a little bit about that.

Sam Nunn

Well, I was 24-years-old and things that happen in that stage of your life have a pretty big effect on the future. I was right out of law school [and] my great uncle was the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, so with my skill and my grades in law school plus my kinship, I got a job in Washington. It was good, old-fashioned nepotism that in my case had a profound effect. In Washington, I had an Irish boss by the name of John J. Courtney. He came to me about four days

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before he was supposed to go on a high-level staff trip by the Air Force to Europe, a NATO tour. He said he couldn't go and asked if I would like to go. I'd never been north to New York, never been out of the country, so I said, "Absolutely, I will go."

[That trip] was in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was in Germany right at the peak of the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was sitting by the head of U.S. Air Force Europe for dinner one night, and he told me that his aircraft had nuclear weapons on them — not bombers, but fighter aircraft. One-way missions. They didn't have the range to get back so, theoretically, [the pilots] were going to bail out [when they reached the target]. Each one was going to [de-tonate] one or two nuclear warheads in Russia. He had two minutes to get them off the ground because, had we gone to war with Russia, in two minutes they would have been Russia's first targets. Usually, the pilots are on standby, but that night they were sitting in the planes.

That had a profound effect on me. To this day, I think one of the [most important] things we need to do is to increase warning time to make sure that the president of Russia is not confronted with a situation where a general comes in and tells him, "We only have a few minutes to use our nuclear weapons. We think we are under attack. We're not absolutely sure. But if we wait for certainty, it's going to be too late to launch them. They're going to be knocked out." That's not in our interest. It's fundamentally against

our interests today for the Russians to be in that situation. And vice versa.... Let's just assume they've got ten minutes to make a decision. Is it in our interest for the president of Russia to have ten minutes when it could be a mistaken warning? We have an existential stake in their warning system working correctly and their decision-making working correctly.

We've changed relationships, but we haven't changed our nuclear postures to reflect the end of the Cold War in any appreciable way. If the warning time is ten minutes, the presidents ought to be telling the leaders of the military in Russia and the United States, "Go off and study this for six months. Come back and tell us how we can both increase warning time without in any way jeopardizing our security. Give us an hour." For goodness sakes, in recent years, we had a Russian president who was reported to have imbibed alcoholic beverages rather heavily and frequently. Is it in our interest for a Russian president who is inebriated to have only a few minutes to make up his mind? I want him to be able to walk around the block and have a cup of black coffee. And the same thing for a president of the United States. This is serious stuff. But we still are in that posture and most people do not realize it.

Graham Allison

There are actions the U.S. government could take that would significantly reduce the risks, but we're not [taking them]. There's something wrong with that picture. How can that be?

Sam Nunn

Well, we are doing things. One thing we did after the fall of the Soviet Union was pass legislation called the Nunn-Lugar bill. We're still using [that legislation] to encourage the four countries that ended up with nuclear weapons — Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus — to get rid of them. We got three countries to get rid of all their nuclear weapons in a verifiable way. [We were successful] because we told them they would get their monetary value out of the highly enriched uranium, which was taken out of those bombs and blended down into low enriched uranium which is burned by power plants all over the globe. We bought the [low enriched uranium]. That program is about halfway through. Twenty percent of America's electricity today comes from nuclear power. Fifty percent of the low enriched uranium that is burned in power plants in the United States comes from former Soviet warheads that were aimed at us. So theoretically, if you look at those light bulbs up there, one out of every ten of them is being powered by the nuclear material that was 20 years ago aimed at us in the form of missiles.

So there is hope. We have done some things. In terms of getting the materials and weapons under control in the former Soviet Union, if ten is a perfect score, over the last 15 years we've done about five — we and Russia. If you look at other measures, the materials around the globe, in terms of getting those under control, we haven't done as well. On a scale of ten we are about three or four there, although we are working on them. There are some crucial things missing

from the agenda though, [such as] doing anything about battlefield nuclear weapons, the kind they were trying to buy in this film. We don't know how many the Russians have, and we don't know where they are. They're not subject to any arms control agreements. They've had thousands of them. We had thousands of them. We've gotten rid of a lot of ours, but we need a regime of transparency and accountability between the United States and Russia on battlefield nuclear weapons. It doesn't have to be public for the whole world, but we really need to know where they are and how many there are, because if you don't know how many you've got, you don't know when one of them is missing.

Another missing part of the agenda is cutting off the production of fissile materials. We're spending billions of dollars to try to get this stuff under control, but countries are still producing more of it. We need an agreement around the whole world to not produce any more fissile material. We've got plenty of it in the world and we need to secure what's out there [already].... I would also like to add that we and the Russians need biological transparency. In my view, they're not going to use biological weapons against us — if they were, they would have done it during the Cold War — but they made everything. They had tons and tons of weaponized smallpox. They even made a smallpox strand in violation of the biological treaty that was resistant to all known vaccines. They have tremendous knowledge here. We've got to be partners in dealing with the biological threat, not just in the form of the Soviet Union, but around

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the globe. We are doing things [but] we just aren't doing them rapidly enough or with enough focus, and we don't have enough leadership at home or from other countries.

Audience Questions

Jason Blackstock

Hi Senator. My name's Jason Blackstock. I'm a student of Graham Allison's over at the Kennedy School. You just started with a list of some of the things that can be done, but I wanted to ask more particularly about the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The 2005 Review Conference illustrated a lot of the differences between the United States' position and the positions of different parts of the world, particularly on things like fissile cutoff and whether or not there should be a comprehensive treaty. And we see countries like Brazil, Iran, and North Korea continuing [nuclear proliferation]. What are the steps that the United States in particular can take in order to prepare for the next Review Conference in 2010? What steps should we be taking to reassure the other countries of the world that they'll be able to develop civilian nuclear technologies — which are necessary for environmental reasons in some cases — [in light of] their concerns that that will not be allowed by the rules that the United States is looking for?

Sam Nunn

Well, that's a really good question. We were not prepared in the last conference at all, and we were blamed for the breakup. We probably weren't the only culprit, but we really weren't prepared. Our own government says that now. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968-1969. Every president since then, including the current president, George W. Bush, has endorsed that treaty. That treaty has three legs on the stool. One leg is that the countries that have nuclear weapons basically pledge to get rid of those nuclear weapons over time. The second leg of the stool of the Non-Proliferation Treaty...which how many countries signed?

Graham Allison

One hundred and eighty-three.

Sam Nunn

One hundred and eighty-three countries — almost unprecedented. The second leg is that the countries that did not have nuclear weapons would not seek nuclear weapons. And that's what Iran and North Korea are now violating, in my opinion. The third leg of the stool is that every country that signed [the treaty] would have access to nuclear technology. That is, the ability to be able to produce nuclear power, the good side of the nuclear equation. All three legs of that stool are now eroding. My own view is that we could tell the world that we have a vision of a non-nuclear world. Now that vision is on the top of a mountain if you look at it as that. We can't see that mountain now, but what we can see is we're heading the wrong way. We're heading downhill. The nuclear powers are emphasizing nuclear weapons rather than deemphasizing. The least we could do under our treaty obligation Article 6 is to deemphasize nuclear weapons, making [them] less relevant. And the increased warning time would be one way of doing that. So Director El-Baradei won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, head of the IAEA — that's the International Atomic Energy Agency. He said that it's very hard to keep people from smoking and to keep them from starting to smoke if you're chain-smoking yourself. And that's the way we and Russia and the other nuclear powers are viewed in the world.

A vision coupled with steps is all-important to create a climate where we can get the cooperation we need on these

other areas, like the fissile material cutoff and not having more and more countries get into enrichment, which about eight countries now are thinking about [doing]. Leadership requires example, and we, being the nuclear powers, [must provide that example]. There are at least ten to 15 crucial steps, including the step of verification, that we've got to work on very hard if we're ever going to get to the top of the mountain. So what I would say is we need to recreate the vision that was encompassed in Article 6, but we need to have the steps laid out that are going to be required to get there, which are not part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. So in effect, by rising above the Non-Proliferation Treaty, I think we can strengthen it. That's the way I would approach it.

Graham Allison

For those of you who don't know, there's a very provocative op-ed that was in *The Wall Street Journal* on the fourth of January by four of the wisest heads in American national security policy: Sam Nunn; Bill Perry, the Secretary of Defense under Clinton; Henry Kissinger; and George Schultz, who was the Secretary of State under Reagan. [The article] lays out both this vision and a program of action. So that's January fourth, *The Wall Street Journal*. I'm just putting in an ad here.

Thomas Swythe

Hi, I'm Thomas Swythe. I attend Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and I'm originally from Augusta, Georgia. I agree with you, Senator, that my generation has not inherited that Cold War mentality of the existential threat. And we're, I think, more worried about radiological terrorism — the sort of low-level [threat], shipping a dirty bomb into a city and contaminating several blocks rather than killing thousands of people. So my question is: What's the Nuclear Threat Initiative doing to address radiological terrorism? And what can our government do to address that threat?

Sam Nunn

Good question. Very quickly, I think that number one, it's a more likely threat than a fissile bomb going off because that kind of material is much more obtainable and much less protected. Number two, it's not going to kill a huge number of people in all likelihood. Number three, it's probably better — easier to detect because it is radiological and

has a lot of emission. Number four, we're not prepared for it psychologically. This is one of those things [for which] we really need to work with public opinion. We're not going to close down every single ounce of radiological material around the world. There's too much of it out there — it's used in commerce and everywhere else. We need to try, but we're not going to get it all. We need to prepare people to be able to distinguish between [a dirty bomb] and a real nuclear detonation so that we have our priorities correct, but also so that people don't panic when that happens. A panic after one of those attacks would be much more damaging than the attack itself. So you're exactly right to be concerned about that. This is something we can do something about. I would like to see a radiological-type war game in every major city in the country involving police, public health officials, fire officials, and the news media so that people can understand what it's all about. Understand that we're going to do everything we can to stop it, but it cannot be allowed to panic our nation. That's very important and we haven't done that.

Graham, what's your prediction about the likelihood [of a nuclear attack on the U.S.]?

Graham Allison

In the nuclear terrorism book I say more likely than not in the decade after 2004, so 51 percent likely over the course of the whole decade. So you'll live to see it, God forbid.

Sam Nunn

The consequences are so great and the destabilizing effect on the economy is so great. 9/11 was a terrible thing — I don't want in any way to diminish that — but a nuclear weapon going off in a city would make 9/11 look like a minor tragedy. The consequences are huge, so you have to look at consequences when you're looking at priorities on defense.

Matt Schubert

Thank you, Senator Nunn. My name is Matt Schubert. I also go to Phillips Academy in Andover. Some might argue that the U.S.'s perceived aggressive presence in the Middle East contributes to the animosity of al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. Are there ways that you see [in which] the U.S. might remodel its foreign policy in the Middle East to decrease that animosity?

Sam Nunn

Well, one of the things that we've done on that score in recent times is we've dramatically reduced our ground presence and our footprint in countries that are highly religious and also highly symbolic to the Muslim religion. After the first Persian Gulf War — I thought it was a mistake then, and I still think it was — we had a large number of military forces that stayed there stationed in Saudi Arabia. We have a vital stake in that region, but in my view, [our troops] ought to be on ships offshore. They should be able to come back. And I think we've moved to that posture.

We don't have to get into [a debate about the war in] Iraq, but I think right now our biggest challenge in that region is to prevent a civil war from spreading around the whole Persian Gulf. That means keeping other forces and other countries from intervening in Iraq. It also means trying to do everything we can to prevent Shiite-Sunni conflict all over the Middle East. Preventing regional conflict would be my top priority over there. That means military power but it also means diplomacy. It means talking to people. I think there's some kind of strange theory in this administration that the way you punish your enemies is not to talk to them. I think if you don't want

to get into a shooting war you have to have diplomacy. We talked to the Soviet Union the whole time, and they threatened our existence. After Nixon went to [talk to] China, it was viewed as one of the great things he did. Before that we didn't have communication. I think we've got to talk to Iran. I think we've got to talk to Syria. We may not make progress. And we certainly would have a difficult kind of communication. But nevertheless, I think it's a mistake to basically take diplomacy off the table.

To the administration's credit, we have coalitions with a number of countries and we're having discussions in that kind of forum about their nuclear programs. I'm all for that, but there needs to be a bilateral element when required, even if it's informal. For a long time we had a policy of not talking to North Korea. We were doing it all in the Six Party Talks. Fortunately in the last eight months the administration changed that. They had bilateral discussions within the framework of the Six Party Talks. Those discussions led North Korea back to the table and led to an agreement within the Six Party Talks.

We're in real trouble in terms of credibility around the world. We don't need to be loved but we need to be respected and

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We spent, by my last computation, something like three trillion dollars defending Europe, including Germany, from 1945 until 1991. Three trillion. And 48 percent of the people are saying that.... / Senator Sam Nunn

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we need to be viewed as credible. And right now — I saw a poll last week that was just almost amazing. The question was asked in Germany: Do you fear the United States more, or do you fear Iran more? Forty-eight percent of the people in Germany said the United States was feared more; 32 percent said Iran. Now that's a country where we spent, by my last computation, something like three trillion dollars defending Europe, including Germany, from 1945 until 1991. Three trillion. And 48 percent of the people are saying that. And it's even worse in countries like Turkey and others. We've got a lot of repair work to do around the globe, and we're going to have to do a lot more listening to other people. I think to lead successfully you have to listen, not just talk.

Graham Allison

I think the question is in the case of countries that may not be eager to cooperate in the first instance, like Iran or North Korea, how to secure weapons or materials at the source. Does the U.S. need to get to the mountaintop first in order to give them an example?

Sam Nunn

No, I don't try to make the case that Iran and North Korea would change if we announce a vision and steps to get there to the mountaintop, to use my analogy. What I do believe is we'll get the help we need much more readily from other countries to put pressure on countries like Iran and North Korea to, as in the case of North Korea, get rid of the weapons

they already have and, as in the case of Iran, not to develop them. It's a matter of enlisting opinion all over the world. I don't expect — no matter what we say — that Iran is going to run out and get rid of their weapons. I do think we need cooperation in that area of the world and all over the world to put the kind of squeeze on them that they can really understand is going to do damage to their country unless they get out of the nuclear weapon making business. Now there's inevitably going to have to be some kind of backup fuel supply, some kind of bargaining if Iran is going to do that. Also, you always have to keep on the table the possibility of military force if everything else fails because it would be a very serious blow to that whole region, and I think it would cause a number of other countries to go nuclear if Iran ends up with nuclear weapons. So I think it's a really serious problem and we're going to have to use all the tools, [but] I think the military tool would be the very last resort. And I also believe that while we're bogged down in Iraq — and we are bogged down over there — it would be very difficult for us to have military action against Iran that would not pour right over into Iraq to the great detriment of our military forces that are there.

Adam Chekov

I'm Adam Chekov. I go to Pace Academy in Atlanta, Georgia. And this is actually, in a sense, an extension of the question about Mid-East foreign policy. A lot of antagonism is generated by what is perceived as blind U.S. support to Israel,

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considering we give as much aid to Israel as we give to Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean. My opinion is that U.S. support to Israel is inherently a good thing. But on the other hand, Israel has been covertly — although it's pretty obvious now — developing a nuclear weapons program of their own, and they have a stockpile of their own right now. The U.S. is covering Israel's nuclear program and blindly giving support to Israel no matter what its actions are in the Middle East or in the occupied territories, the West Bank, Gaza, etc. Doesn't this antagonize the situation with Iran so that it is motivated to get nuclear weapons as a way to stand up to what it perceives as U.S.-Israeli imperialism?

Sam Nunn

Well, there's no question, number one, that we are going to remain very friendly to Israel. We're going to be a steadfast ally to Israel and we have a vital stake, as we've said so many times, in their continued existence and their continued sovereignty. Having said that, I do not believe it is in the United States' interest or Israel's interest for us to agree with every single thing they do. And in this administration, I have to say, we have pretty much done that. I think it is detrimental to Israel and I think it is detrimental to us. We lose the credibility we need to bring pressure to bear on Israel's neighbors to make some kind of reasonable peace agreement on the Palestinian question and others. So is it a problem? Yes, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict pours over into, not just the Middle East, but the whole Muslim world in terms of perception. It's used as an excuse for a lot of leaders who avoid being held accountable. And there would still be a lot of problems in the Middle East, even if you solved the Israeli-Palestinian problem. But I think we ought to be viewed as a friend, as a steadfast friend of Israel, who's not unwilling to tell Israel

when they go too far. I've thought for a long time that the settlements were not in the United States' interest. Many of the settlements, in my view, are not defensible, and therefore, not in Israeli interest. So I think we need to be a more reliable partner by being willing to say things to the Israeli government when they go too far in any direction.

Concluding Roundup

Sam Nunn

Now, the nuclear side in Iraq in terms of the allegations of nuclear weapons — I think the evidence was very scant there. And that pretty much blew up on the administration with the African memo and so forth. The thing that I fault the administration for...with the mustering of a considerable amount of military force before the war broke, the Bush administration succeeded in getting the IAEA back into Iraq. And then they basically took the position — and they said this publicly — “The IAEA doesn't know what they're doing. We want them out because we're going to come in.” And in effect, that's what happened. Turns out the IAEA did know what they were doing. They were right, we were wrong. And that has hurt us a great deal around the globe.

The next question — leadership, egos... I think there is entirely too much unilateralism with this administration. It wasn't just on the Iraq war. I think it spreads to global climate change. In my view there were a lot of problems with the Kyoto Treaty but President Bush said we're not going to follow the Kyoto Treaty. Then he said we were going to have an alternative. Well, the world's still waiting on

that alternative six years later, so there is a feeling that the Americans were tossing things overboard that had been negotiated over the years without having a replacement.

I think we were entirely warranted to use military force in Afghanistan. For the first time NATO invoked Article 5, which says if you attack one of us you attack all of us. The NATO alliance had never invoked that during the whole Cold War — never had to, thank God. I think we made a correct military decision in the technical sense, but a profoundly erroneous political decision by saying to the NATO allies who offered to go in with us to Afghanistan, “Thank you very much. We don't need you.” From a purely military point of view we didn't, but it's pretty apparent we needed them after the war. And they're in there, but in a pretty feckless way. I think ego may have something to do with it. September 11 had a lot to do with it. And there's no doubt that we had a tremendous reaction to that, as well we should, but you do need allies. There's a lot of difference between bombing a country and taking military action, and occupying it. “When you occupy,” as Colin Powell said, “you own it.” Now we own it. We own Iraq in many senses, and we're not doing a good job. We are not prepared in this country for post-conflict occupation. That is not what America has done historically. Our military doesn't like the mission. The rest of our government is incapable of doing the mission. We need to be able to successfully occupy Afghanistan and Iraq, we need to have agriculture specialists, health specialists... We needed all that right at the beginning. We needed to take care of the human needs. We weren't prepared for that. A few years back, I asked retired General John Shalikashvili, who was a former Chairman of Joint Chiefs, “What is the biggest need of the U.S. military?” This was long before Iraq and Afghanistan. He said, “The biggest need of the U.S. military is for the other departments of government to be able to play a role in post-conflict resolution. The military is the only one that can do it, and therefore we are saddled with that.”

As far as changing views of other countries, it's going to take quite a while. But I think we ought to lead a world effort with a lot of partners around the globe in the fight against infectious disease. And that would include clean water for the globe. I think those ought to be goals that our country announces as goals that we're going to work on hard. I think

that would have a huge effect on world health. It would also protect our own security because the fight against infectious disease is enormously important to America. What is in the Asian continent or the African continent one day can be in the Boston airport the next, in terms of disease. So those would be my candidates for a broad foreign policy goal that would begin to help shape the image of America. I don't know how many children die around the globe every day from the lack of clean water and infectious disease, but it's huge. It's huge.

The final question was increased enforcement capacity. We've got to go all out to make the old Reagan maxim “trust but verify” a part of our policy. The administration has tossed in the towel saying we can't verify the biological treaty. We're not even negotiating. We need to find ways to verify the biological treaty, even if it's not perfect. Ninety percent verification is a lot better than no percent, zero percent, or ten percent verification. We also need to do the same thing on fissile material cutoff. Our verification provisions are tied to arms control agreements which are expiring over the next two or three years. We need an all out effort technically and policy-wise on verification in our country and in partnership with others.

Thank you very much. I appreciate the honor of being with you.