



**Hessian Peace Prize  
Former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn  
Co-Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative  
Wiesbaden, Germany  
June 11, 2008**

President Kartmann, Premier Koch: I want to thank you both for your remarks and for the gracious welcome I've received here in Hesse.

I am deeply grateful to the Albert Osswald Foundation – and Karl Starzacher, Professor Muller and the members of the Board of Trustees – for this prestigious award and wonderful honor. Through this award, I believe that you are sending a clear signal around the globe that we must work together to reduce nuclear risks, which threaten mankind.

It is a great honor for me to join your impressive list of past recipients and to be introduced today by Hans Blix. After a remarkable career of public service, Hans came out of retirement to take on the role of Chief Weapons Inspector for Iraq. He took unjustified criticism from certain sectors, because he did not find ... what was not there.

Hans is a man of honor and courage dedicated to making the world safer and a real hero. Hans, I thank you for your outstanding service to mankind, and I am honored to follow in your footsteps in receiving this award.

Some have received this prize for a mission accomplished. I can assure this audience that I do not confuse this wonderful recognition with a completed mission. There is an increasingly dangerous gap between the growing threat and our response. Today, we must ask ourselves, have we learned the lessons of the Cold War?

The role that nuclear dangers have played in guiding my professional life began to unfold 45 years ago – near Wiesbaden, at Ramstein Air Force Base. Let's flash back to October 1962. I was 24 years old and working as a staff lawyer for the House Armed Services Committee on a three-week trip to Europe. Our small group was touring NATO bases when the Cuban Missile Crisis broke out. During this period, while the world held its breath, our delegation met at Ramstein with the head of U.S. Air Force Europe. He explained that, in the event of war, he had only a very few minutes to launch all of his Quick Reaction Aircraft, or they would be destroyed. These planes were the first target for the Soviets because they would deliver the first nuclear weapons to strike the Soviet Union.

The fact that the fate of mankind rested on the shoulders of a few people, who had only moments to decide whether to launch, made a deep and lasting impression on me. From that early period of my life, I have been dedicated to doing everything possible to

increase warning time for both sides and to take other steps to avoid the chance of a nuclear war, including war by accident or a catastrophic mistake. Today, we still have thousands of weapons on hair trigger alert with very little decision time for those with their fingers on the nuclear trigger. Our job of risk reduction is far from complete.

Let's flash back to 1974 -- my first trip to NATO as a newly-elected Senator. It was clear that the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact had a large advantage over NATO in manpower, tanks, artillery and other equipment. NATO had developed a nuclear "first use" strategy to deter the aggregation and use of large tank formations across NATO's eastern border and prevent an invasion of Germany and Western Europe.

In late-night informal discussions, I learned that we not only had a "first use" policy -- but an "early first use" policy. Those in charge made it clear to me that in the event of a Soviet invasion, they were going to seek immediate authorization for the use of short-range battlefield nuclear weapons. They expected that any U.S. President would not grant release authority for at least a couple of days, and therefore, they intended to make the request at a very early stage. The bottom line -- in the event of a war, we would move up the ladder of escalation very rapidly. I spent much of my time in the United States Senate working to strengthen the conventional forces of NATO, so we could move away -- both operationally and psychologically -- from early nuclear first use with tactical nuclear weapons.

Today, there is no Warsaw Pact or Soviet Union -- we have greatly reduced political tension and military confrontation. However the erosion of Russia's conventional military capability has led it to increase its dependency on nuclear weapons, including short range battlefield nuclear weapons. As NATO did during the Cold War, Russia has now declared that it may use nuclear weapons first.

Welcome to the end of the Cold War -- battlefield nuclear weapons are still in vogue and for the first time, both Russia and NATO have reserved the right to use nuclear weapons first, even if not attacked with nuclear weapons. In today's world, any nuclear conflict between Russia and NATO is much more likely to be by accident than by design, and nuclear first use policy by both Russia and NATO needs a major rethinking. Short-range battlefield nuclear weapons are a terrorists' dream. I believe that it would be in NATO and Russia's fundamental security interest to agree on transparency and accountability for all such weapons. Today, this discussion has not even begun.

Fast back to 1991. Just after President Gorbachev was released from house arrest following the failed August coup, a Russian friend contacted me and invited me to make an urgent trip to Moscow to meet with the new Russian leaders and President Gorbachev. In my previous meetings with President Gorbachev, I always found him to be candid and direct. As I left the meeting, I asked him: "Mr. President, did you retain command and control of the Soviet nuclear forces during the coup attempt?" President Gorbachev looked away and did not answer. That was answer enough for me.

The Soviet Union was coming apart. I believed that the end of the Soviet empire would speed the march of freedom and reduce the risk of war, but I left Moscow convinced that it would also present a grave global security challenge. The Soviet Union had tens of thousands of nuclear warheads and enough highly enriched uranium and plutonium to make 40,000-60,000 more -- stored in over 250 buildings in more than 50 sites, across 11 time zones. In addition, they had a huge stockpile of chemical weapons and biological materials and thousands of scientists who knew how to make weapons of mass destruction. As one strategic nuclear power turned into four – Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus – the security future looked both uncertain and ominous.

Over the next two months, I joined forces with Senator Richard Lugar and other Senators to convince our colleagues in the United States Congress that helping Moscow secure its nuclear weapons and materials, destroy excess weapons, and employ its weapons scientists was not ‘aid to the Soviet military,’ as some called it, but a way to prevent a national security calamity for the United States, Russia, Europe and the world. Congress approved passage of the first Nunn-Lugar bill in the fall of 1991, just months before the Soviet Union formally dissolved.

The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction programs have eliminated hundreds of missiles, deactivated thousands of warheads, secured tons of nuclear materials, and engaged thousands of weapons experts. None of this would have been possible without a shared sense of priority between Russians and Americans.

Unfortunately, in spite of the important gains, our efforts have not kept pace with the threat. Today, the accelerating spread of nuclear weapons, nuclear know-how and nuclear material has brought us to a nuclear tipping point:

- Terrorists are seeking nuclear weapons, and there can be little doubt that if they acquire a weapon that they will use it.
- There are nuclear weapons materials in more than 40 countries, some secured by nothing more than a chain link fence, and, at the current pace, it will be decades before this material is adequately secured or eliminated globally.
- The know-how and expertise to build nuclear weapons is far more available today, because of an explosion of information and commerce throughout the world.
- The number of nuclear weapons states is increasing. A world with 12 or 20 nuclear weapons states will be much more dangerous and make it much more likely that nuclear weapons fall into terrorist hands.
- With the growing interest in nuclear energy, a number of countries are considering developing the capacity to enrich uranium – a capacity that would also give them the means to make nuclear weapons and the raw materials for catastrophic terrorism.

- Meanwhile, the United States and Russia continue to deploy thousands of nuclear weapons on ballistic missiles that can hit their targets in less than 30 minutes – a posture that carries with it an unacceptable risk of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized launch.

Today, we are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe.

With these growing dangers in mind, former U.S. Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Bill Perry and I published an essay in January 2007 in *The Wall Street Journal* that called for a sharp change of direction in our nuclear weapons policy. It laid out the vision and steps for moving toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

The four of us – and the many other security leaders who have endorsed our views – are keenly aware that the quest for a world free of nuclear weapons is fraught with practical and political challenges.

As *The Economist* magazine wrote in 2006: “By simply demanding the goal of a world without nuclear weapons without a readiness to tackle the practical problems raised by it ensures that it will never happen.”

We have taken aim at the practical problems by laying out a series of steps toward the goal of deemphasizing nuclear weapons – for keeping them out of terrorists’ hands and ultimately ridding our world of them.

In broad terms, the steps involve dramatically reducing the number of nuclear weapons; taking weapons off of quick-launch, hair-trigger status; eliminating short-range tactical weapons; and converting the conflict we now have with Russia over missile defense into an opportunity to work together on warning time – decision time and defense against limited attacks whether deliberate or by accident.

We must secure nuclear weapons and materials around the world to the highest standards. We must enhance verification and enforcement capabilities.

We have to limit the availability of highly enriched uranium through a range of cooperative methods, and we in America must work to bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force.

Finally, we need to redouble efforts to resolve the regional confrontations that increase demand for nuclear weapons.

Each of these steps will help reduce the risk of nuclear use, and each will help build a spirit of trust and cooperation. We cannot take these crucial steps without the cooperation of other nations; we cannot get the cooperation of other nations without the vision of ending these weapons as a threat to the world.

Without the bold vision, the actions will not be perceived as fair or urgent. Without the actions, the vision will not be perceived as realistic or possible.

The reaction of many people to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons comes in two parts – on the one hand they say “that would be great.” And their second thought is: “we can never get there.”

To me, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is like the top of a very tall mountain. It is tempting and easy to say: “We can’t get there from here.” It is true that today in our troubled world we can’t see the top of the mountain. But we can see that we are heading down -- not up. We can see that we must turn around, that we must take paths leading to higher ground and that we must get others to move with us.

Let me close with a parable of hope. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the United States began working with Russia to dismantle Soviet nuclear missiles and warheads, our countries struck a deal to reduce excess highly enriched uranium.

Under this agreement, 500 tons of highly enriched uranium from former Soviet nuclear weapons is being blended down to low enriched uranium, and then used as fuel for nuclear power plants in the United States.

When you calculate that 20% of all electricity in the United States comes from nuclear power plants, and 50% of the nuclear fuel used in the U.S. comes through this agreement, you have an interesting fact: today roughly speaking – one out of every ten light bulbs in America today is powered by material that 20 years ago was in Soviet nuclear warheads that were pointed at the United States and other NATO countries.

From swords to ploughshares. Who would have thought this possible in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s or even in the early 90s? It would have certainly been seen as a mountain too high to climb.

Today, we can show our children and grandchildren the beauty and safety of the mountaintop, but only if we have the vision to see the upward path ... and the courage to take it.

Nearly 20 years ago, President Reagan said, “We now have a weapon that can destroy the world -- why don't we recognize that threat more clearly and then come together with one aim in mind: how safely, sanely, and quickly can we rid the world of this threat to our civilization and our existence.”

If we want our children and grandchildren to ever see the mountaintop, our generation must begin to answer this question.

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