

**Sam Nunn**  
**Eisenhower Institute Awards Dinner**  
**April 26, 2001**

Thank you, Judy (Woodruff), for your kind introduction. Judy and I have been friends since I was a 28-year-old State Representative in Atlanta and she was covering the Georgia Legislature as a child reporter.

President Gordon Haaland, President Susan Eisenhower, Christine Washington and family, thank you for the invitation tonight and for this great honor. Susan, for years, I have learned from your grandfather's life and example. I know he would be proud to see his name on this Institute, and even prouder to see his granddaughter providing such outstanding leadership on the important issues of our time.

In March of 1960, in his final year of service to America, President Eisenhower was asked by a reporter about his top national security concerns. The President spoke of nuclear weapons, and said we need to stop expanding "the size of the club. There are already four nations in it (and the world could get) more dangerous than ever, because of the spreading of this knowledge and this know-how."

Which goes to show that this award is not being given to Senator Lugar and me for original thinking. It's for leading an effort to face a threat we were warned about by President Eisenhower more than 40 years ago.

I appreciate the generous comments about the Nunn-Lugar legislation. In Russia, they think Senator Lugar's first name is "Nunn" and that my last name is "Lugar." But you can't completely judge a book by its cover, and you can't know a bill by its short name. If it told the full story, the title of this legislation would be Nunn-Lugar-Domenici-Levin-Cohen-Warner-Bingaman-Stevens-Kassebaum-Inouye-Byrd-Biden-Roberts-Hagel-Aspin-Murtha-Tauscher-Spratt-Thornberry, and include key staffers like Ken Myers and Dick Combs, and others who made it possible and who have kept it going.

I especially want to express my gratitude to Dick Lugar. Ten years ago, he and I saw the Soviet Union unraveling. We were hopeful that the break up would expand peace and freedom, but we knew it would also present a new set of dangers. We teamed up in the Senate to convince our colleagues that helping Moscow secure its nuclear weapons and materials was not 'aid to the Soviet military,' as some called it, but instead a way to prevent a national security calamity for the United States and our allies and the world.

We have taken important steps in the past, but we need giant strides today. There is an increasingly dangerous gap between the threat and our response. It appears that our policy and our actions are driven more by the public perception of the threat, which is low, rather than the reality of the threat, which is high.

Today our nuclear force posture is based on a strategy designed for a far different era, when the Soviet Union threatened a catastrophic nuclear attack, had the conventional forces to overrun Europe, and championed a communist crusade against the freedoms that define our nation.

The old threats we faced during the Cold War, a Soviet nuclear strike or an invasion of Europe, were threats made dangerous by Soviet strength. The new threats we face today -- increased Russian reliance on early launch and first use and increased Russian reliance on tactical-battlefield nuclear weapons -- are threats made dangerous by Russia's weakness. The threats of today go beyond nuclear forces and include terrorist groups. Much of Russia's nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and materials are poorly secured; its weapons scientists and guards poorly paid. We can't risk a world where a Russian scientist can take care of his children only by endangering ours.

Not only are the threats today different; the means to meet them are different. We addressed the Cold War's threats by confrontation with Moscow, and over the long term, we cannot rule out a possible return to this confrontation. But most of today's greatest threats we can address only in cooperation with Russia. We must maintain and build upon the cooperation fostered by the Nunn-Lugar program. These cooperative efforts deserve more of our resources, not less.

Our task is formidable; our approach must be comprehensive. We must:

- ?? Address the threats of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and multiple delivery systems;
- ?? Update and change our approach to deterrence;
- ?? Move away from the increased reliance and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons;
- ?? Reduce the risk of accidental launch;
- ?? Cut the risk of terrorist attack;
- ?? Counter the threat of a rogue nation attack, and
- ?? Limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

In this time of tumultuous change, it is remarkable to read words of 40 years ago and find in them fresh guidance for today. In his farewell address, President Eisenhower warned: "In meeting [crises], whether foreign or domestic, great or small, there is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties...But each proposal must be weighed in light of a broader consideration; the need to maintain balance in and among national programs."

As President Eisenhower warned, there is no miraculous solution. Our response must be broad-based and balanced. We will not achieve our aims by pursuing arms control treaties at all costs, or by seeking deep reductions at all costs, or by deploying national missile defense at all costs. Each approach is a means to advance our safety, none is a miraculous solution, and none can make us secure on its own. The threats are interrelated; our approach must be interrelated and coordinated with other key nations.

Nor will we achieve our aims without wider public discussion and participation. President Eisenhower warned that the technological revolution, which he saw growing even in his day, presented a risk that “public policy could itself become of the captive of a scientific-technological elite.”

We need greater public awareness of the threat. Consider the public awareness of the nuclear threat during the era of President Eisenhower. Newsstands sold for a quarter a 60-page booklet titled: “You Can Survive Tomorrow’s Atomic Attack.” Three million comic books were distributed featuring Bert the Turtle telling school children to “Duck and Cover.” Awareness of radiation led to the construction of one million fallout shelters. One commentator remembered back in those days seeing a grade school friend offer candy to the least popular girl in the class. When she was asked about it, she whispered: “Her family has a fallout shelter.”

It is ironic that public awareness was high in the 1950s, when awareness could do so little to prevent a nuclear disaster. But public awareness is low today, when awareness could lead to greater support for risk reduction policies that can prevent disaster.

We should heed President Eisenhower’s warning: Our nuclear weapons strategies and our policies to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction should be debated beyond the small club of experts who specialize in these issues. There is no public issue in which every American has a greater stake. Our policy must meet the American citizens’ standard of common sense.

If our aim is to reduce the chance the nuclear weapons will ever be used, common sense should require us to recognize that Russia's weakened economic and security condition, combined with continued U.S. capacity for a rapid, massive strike, has increased the risk of a catastrophic Russian mistake. Today, Russian and U.S. current force postures increase the risk they were designed to reduce.

Common sense should require the U.S. and Russia to make changes in how we operate our forces to give each President more nuclear decision-making time, expanding minutes to hours, then perhaps hours to days – to move our fingers further from the nuclear trigger. As we enter the second decade of the post-Cold War world, common sense should compel us to find ways to move away from a Doomsday posture.

And common sense should require that we and other nations urgently find ways to cooperate more effectively to ensure that nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and materials don't fall into the hands of terrorists and additional nations.

These are broad challenges for the nation and the world. Today, I feel honored to continue my part in this mission through the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

Supported by the generosity of Ted Turner, and guided by a distinguished board on which Senator Lugar, Senator Domenici, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus and Susan Eisenhower

serve, all of whom are with us tonight, the Nuclear Threat Initiative is a new foundation dedicated to reducing the global threat from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Our job is to increase public awareness, encourage dialogue, catalyze action, and promote new thinking about these dangers in this country and abroad.

We will work with others to urge the nation and world to face a critical question: “Is reducing the weapons of mass destruction threat a priority or an afterthought?” If it’s a priority, is that reflected in our effort and investment? If it’s an afterthought, after what? What comes before?

The great danger is not that the world will give the wrong answer to this question, but that we won’t ask the question at all. With your help, we must ask and repeat this question. We must stimulate thoughtful discussion and debate. We must think anew, and we must leave the world safer tomorrow than it is today. Thank you for this wonderful award.

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