

**Former Senator Sam Nunn
Co-Chairman, Nuclear Threat Initiative
Remarks at Carnegie Moscow Center
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Thank you, Dmitri Trenin, for the kind introduction, and thanks to the Carnegie Moscow Center for hosting this important event on U.S.-Russian cooperation challenges and opportunities.

I am delighted to be back in Moscow, though I wish I could be here under better circumstances. Bilateral cooperation has largely been frozen and channels of communication are few and far between – with the important exception of the recent agreement in principle on Syria which awaits execution. As my friend Igor Ivanov wrote in *The Moscow Times* last week, “Our will to work together has not only weakened, it has sunk to an historic low.”

Unless we change course together, we risk leaving behind a more dangerous world for our children and our grandchildren than the one we inherited.

At the height of tensions of the Cold War, we worked together to maintain strategic stability by fostering an open, direct military and policy dialogue. If we could do it then, why can't we do it now?

Our challenges are both clear and dangerous:

- There is a corrosive lack of trust undermining cooperation between U.S. and Russia leaders.
- Aggressive rhetoric regarding nuclear weapons is being used.
- There is no agreed process or an agenda for next steps on nuclear arms control and risk reduction. Both the U.S. and Russia have announced major and very expensive nuclear modernization programs -- new missiles, new subs, new bombers.
- Nuclear security cooperation has largely come to a standstill at a time when threats from terrorist organizations are on the rise.

- The CFE treaty has eroded, but strategic stability and crisis prevention continue to require clear understanding of intentions and force postures.

No doubt strong disagreements over Ukraine and Syria have severely damaged the U.S-Russian relationship, as well as trust across the Euro-Atlantic region. These disagreements have led to military forces deployed in close proximity and an increased danger of accident or miscalculation. This is a high-risk situation in a region with a significant concentration of both conventional and nuclear forces.

Our friend Alexei Arbatov recently wrote that: “The great paradox of our times is that since the late 1980s, the number of nuclear arms has been reduced almost by an order of magnitude, but the threat of their use is presently higher than a quarter century ago.”

Alexei, in a recent article, also raised a number of important questions that are worth reflecting on by our leaders:

- Can our leaders still agree there can be no winners in a nuclear war?
- Can our leaders still agree that strategic stability is of utmost importance to our bilateral relations?
- Can our leaders agree to cooperate on common interests, like nuclear security and the fight against radical extremism?
- And can our leaders set aside Cold War “zero-sum” thinking to advance our mutual security and reduce major risks?

I would add one more question: Can our leaders and our citizens recognize that we are in a new era where nation-states no longer have a monopoly over weapons of mass destruction and disruption?

The bottom line is that we are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe, and cooperation seems at best to be taking a very slow walk.

So how do we get the ox out of the ditch? Let me offer just a few thoughts:

- **First**, prominent leaders must realize that reckless rhetoric creates an atmosphere that could lead to dangerous misunderstandings and miscalculations, including throughout the military chain of

command. As Henry Kissinger reminded us recently, “the fate of U.S. and Russia remain tightly intertwined.”

- **Second**, the United States and Russia must revive and strengthen channels of communication. We can no longer afford to treat dialogue as a bargaining chip. “You upset us and we will punish you by not talking” is not a sound strategy for two countries that control 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons and materials. Continuous dialogue is essential between our military leaders and our intelligence communities. The NATO-Russia Council should be utilized effectively or disbanded. And as a former member of the U.S. Senate, I strongly recommend beginning a dialogue between our parliamentary leaders as we had even during the Cold War.

Common sense would seem to tell us that it is counterproductive for both the U.S. and Russia to have sanctions on individuals and policymakers who need to talk to each other to protect the security of the citizens they represent.

- **Third**, the United States, NATO and Russia should expand mechanisms that reduce the chances of military misunderstandings between us. Last year’s events in Turkey related to the unfortunate shoot-down of the Russian jet serve as a powerful wake-up call that we need to reduce the chances of accidental encounters between NATO aircraft and Russian aircraft as well as ships at sea.
- **Fourth**, the United States and Russia should agree on confidence-building measures to reinforce strategic stability and further reduce the chances of miscalculation, including bolstering military-to-military communication. We should also utilize more robustly the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers that we set up decades ago.
- **Fifth**, the United States and Russia must work together in the fight against ISIS and violent extremism. The threat posed by ISIS directly affects the core national interests of both our countries. **In particular, Russia and the United States must work together to ensure that ISIS never acquires nuclear or radiological weapons, as well as other weapons of mass destruction.**

Our two countries have the technical expertise and unique knowledge to lead this effort. We have been doing such work in our own countries for two decades.

This mission seems to me to fit well under the legal framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 as well as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Most importantly, we must lead on a bilateral basis by developing a prioritized list of actions that we can take together to prevent catastrophic terrorism. This is urgent and must be a front burner issue.

- **Finally**, when we do work together – as we did recently with the Iran agreement – we must learn to express our appreciation publicly so that political leaders, the media, as well as ordinary citizens of both of our countries recognize not just disagreements and confrontations, but also points of mutual interest and areas of success. As Igor Ivanov recently said, “We must identify areas where our interests converge such as combatting international terrorism, preventing political extremism, managing migration flows, and solving the refugee problem, strengthening cyber and food security, tackling environmental issues and coordinating on climate change.”

Once trust is lost, it must be rebuilt step by step by solving problems and reducing risks together. Two front burner steps: first, both our countries and our partners in the region need to work together to fully implement the terms of the Minsk Agreement. And second, all sides must make a good faith effort in ensuring the effective implementation of the “Cessation of Hostilities in Syria Agreement” announced yesterday by Secretary Kerry and Minister Lavrov.

Let me conclude on a positive note by saying when the United States and Russia do manage to cooperate on regional or global issues, great things can happen for the mutual benefit of both our countries and indeed the world.

To avoid catastrophe, we must choose cooperation, not confrontation. As former U.S. Secretary of Defense Bob Gates said, “One Cold War was enough.”

Thank you.