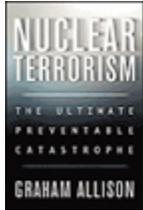




Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe

Graham Allison , Joanne J. Myers

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Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Merrill House Programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council I'd like to welcome our members and guests and thank you for joining us for the discussion with Dr. Graham Allison discussing nuclear terrorism.

When the Cold War ended, many believed that the dangers of an accelerating nuclear arms race would disappear. But this idea has proved short lived. In fact, if anything, the 21st century seems to be even more dangerous and less predictable than the 20th century ever was. Although there may be fewer nuclear weapons in the collective stockpile of America, Russia, Britain, France, and China, the risk that someone, somewhere, might detonate a bomb in anger or with malice is arguably greater than any time since the [1962 Cuban missile crisis](#). The number of rogue states and terrorist groups seeking to acquire nuclear weapons is increasing. [Osama bin Laden](#) has talked about acquiring nuclear weapons as a "religious duty," and the confessions of [Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan](#), the Pakistani scientist, have shed light on a vast underground quietly spreading nuclear materials.

While everyone, including the two candidates of the recent presidential campaign, agrees in principle that the continuing spread of weapons of mass destruction poses a chief threat to international security, in practice there is little international accord on how to deal with that threat. We can only hope that Professor Allison's book, [Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe](#), widely acknowledged as the single best book addressing the single most serious threat to American national security, will change this impasse.

Our speaker is a leading expert on nuclear weapons and national security, who in this writing presents an attainable blueprint for eliminating the possibility of nuclear terrorist attacks. This volume is based on the knowledge he amassed over the past three decades as one of our country's leading analysts of U.S. national security and defense policy.

As Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy and Planning in the first Clinton Administration, Dr. Allison received the Defense Department's highest civilian award for his work in reshaping relations with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to reduce the former Soviet nuclear arsenal. His efforts resulted in the safe return of more than 12,000 tactical nuclear weapons from the former Soviet republics and the complete elimination of more than 4,000 strategic nuclear warheads previously targeted at the United States and left in the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus when the Soviet Union collapsed.

As Director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and the Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at Harvard, as well as the Founding Dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of

Government, his research and interest have always been focused on national security issues. In addition to his recent publication, *Nuclear Terrorism*, I would like to call your attention to [*Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*](#), which since its initial publication in 1971 has been among the best-selling political science books of all time.

At a time when the gravest challenge to American lives and liberties is a threat of weapons of mass destruction, it is with great interest that we welcome Dr. Allison to present his strategy for preventing an ultimate catastrophe. Please join me in giving a very warm welcome to Dr. Allison, who flew down from Boston this afternoon to be with us. Thank you.

Remarks

GRAHAM ALLISON: Thank you very much, Joanne, for that very generous introduction. Not all those things are true, but in any case they sounded very nice and I appreciate the generosity.

It is now just six weeks since the first presidential debate, though it's hard to believe. But if you remember, in that first debate, Jim Lehrer, the moderator, asked the two candidates, "What is the single most serious threat to the national security of the United States?"

The two parties agreed in answering nuclear terrorism. Here is what President Bush said, after Senator Kerry had gone first: "I agree with my opponent that the biggest threat facing this country is weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist," and then he went on to talk about nuclear weapons.

This moment of agreement was so surprising to Lehrer that he went back at it again and said, "Wait a minute, excuse me. Do you two agree about something?" And the answer was "Yes," which led a wag at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to write the following: "The two most disagreeable men in America, at least with each other, agreed on something terribly important when they met in their first debate. John Kerry and President Bush both asserted that the single greatest danger facing the United States is nuclear terrorism. Their synchronized skating on this issue excited even the unexcitable moderator, Jim Lehrer, so much that he even paused to confirm it."

In the final month of the presidential campaign which just concluded, Vice President Cheney picked up this theme as part of his stump speech. In various cities, including the small city of Carroll, Ohio, to take an example, he proposed to the citizens gathered there that, as he said, "This is the ultimate threat. The biggest threat we face now as a nation is the possibility of terrorists ending up in the middle of one of our cities with nuclear weapons that could threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans." And he went on to say, "For us to have a strategy that's capable of defeating that threat you've got to get your mind around that concept."

So that's the preamble to the discussion tonight. What I will try to do in about twenty-five minutes or so, so we have time for debate and discussion, is to help us get our mind around that concept—that is, the concept of a nuclear bomb going off in an American city. That's the subject that I address in this book.

I am going to organize my remarks under three headings: first, a pair of stories from the introduction to the book; secondly, the argument of the book in a nutshell; and thirdly, just a final question that actually picks up very closely Joanne's introduction.

First, the two stories. One is under the label "Dragon Fire," and the other "Four Million."

One day to the month after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, George Tenet, then the Director of CIA, walked into the Oval Office and as part of the morning President's daily intelligence briefing informed President Bush that a CIA agent code-named Dragon Fire had reported that al-Qaeda had acquired a small nuclear bomb from the former Soviet arsenal and currently had it in New York City.

There was a moment of catching breaths, after which there was a series of interrogatories, basically getting at the question "Could this be real?" "Did the former Soviet arsenal include small nuclear weapons of the sort that Dragon Fire said was in New York City?"—Answer, "Yes." "Were all of those weapons accounted for?"—Answer, "Uncertain." "Could al-Qaeda have acquired one of these small weapons?"

—Answer, "Certainly." "Could al-Qaeda have such a weapon in New York City in October of 2001, on that day, without CIA or anybody else in the U.S. government knowing anything about it?"—Answer, "Yes."

At the end of this series of questions, there was no basis in science or technology or logic for dismissing Dragon Fire's report that there was a small nuclear bomb in New York City. That's the occasion when Vice President Cheney evacuated Washington, and with him several hundred members of the U.S. government, who went to a secret alternative site where they would constitute a government if a nuclear bomb happened to be in Washington rather than New York, and if it exploded and if the consequence of that was to kill the current U.S. government. Vice President Cheney, as you remember, stayed in his cave for some period of time thereafter.

At the end of the week, NESS [Nuclear Explosive Safety Study] teams, the nuclear experts, were dispatched to New York City to look for signs of radiation, to see if they could get any clues to confirm or deny this Dragon Fire report. They finally concluded that Dragon Fire's report was probably not correct, but it could have been. The message relevant for us here is there was no basis for dismissing it as a real event and it had to be taken as such.

The second story I tell in the introduction is the story of "Four Million." What is four million? Four million is the answer to the question "How many Americans does Osama bin Laden intend to kill?" This is kind of hard to believe, but I would say you should read it and look at it carefully.

About four months after the 9/11 attack, Osama bin Laden's press spokesman, a fellow named [Abu Ghaith](#), put up on the al-Qaeda web site al-Qaeda's objective to "kill four million Americans, including two million children." And he goes on to explain that this is not picked out of thin air, but is the result of a gruesome calculus of what's required to "balance the scales of justice," as he sees it, for the number of Muslims who have been killed by what he calls "the Jewish-Christian Crusaders," by which he means the Israelis and the Americans. You can read this in my book, where I reproduce it.

He goes through the various events: [Shatila](#), [Jenin](#), [Somalia](#), sanctions against Iraq—does a body count of how many Muslims he thinks were killed by this activity, and calculates it out, and it comes to four million.

Now, some people find it hard to believe that anybody would want to kill four million people, but I would remind ourselves—and I think this group is old enough and knows enough history to recognize this—that there have been previous instances in which madmen made extraordinary claims that were hard to believe. So I would say believe it. There's every reason to believe that this is a serious adversary, and that the adversary is quite serious about balancing the scales of justice, as he sees it, and that that could lead to a desire to kill not just 3,000 Americans. Would Osama bin Laden, as we saw him on the tape, have been happier if 300,000 people had died on 9/11? I believe for sure that he would have been, if you listen to him in his own words. And four million is not too small a number.

For those of you who watched the "60 Minutes" show last Sunday, a fellow named [Michael Scheuer](#), a CIA bin Laden watcher who has just recently resigned, told a little bit more about this. He said that not only has Osama bin Laden stated this objective, but he has succeeded in getting a Saudi cleric to give him a *fatwah* which said that the use of nuclear weapons to accomplish this objective would be legitimate in terms of Shari'ah law as interpreted by this particular Muslim cleric.

If you ask yourself: if you're trying to kill four million Americans, how many 9/11 attacks would that take? You can do the math; it is about 1,400. So you're not going to get there by hijacking airplanes and crashing them into buildings. You need to go upscale, and upscale might be something like the small nuclear bomb that Dragon Fire warned about as potentially being in New York City.

That bomb would have made a 10-kiloton explosion. How big would the bomb be? Well, it would be about this big [indicating], and would fit very well in the back of a SUV.

If parked in Times Square on a workday, it could instantly kill 500,000 people, as everything from ground zero out to a third of a mile would disappear instantly, consumed in a ball of fire that reaches 540,000

degrees Fahrenheit, and out to a mile buildings would look rather like the Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City. So that would take you, if it was in Times Square, to the UN building on one side and the tunnel on the other.

For those of you who are interested, in conjunction with the book I have put up a web site with my associates, called www.nuclearterrorism.org, and you can put in your own Zip Code or a Zip Code of interest and see what the similar consequences would be in a neighborhood of particular interest.

So that's point one. Two things to remember: "Dragon Fire" and "Four Million."

Point two, is the argument of the book in a nutshell. The book consists of two parts, Part I and Part II. Part I says "inevitable" and Part II says "preventable." Now, that's a little paradoxical, but let me try to explain.

Part I says that if the U.S. government just keeps doing what it has been doing for the last half-dozen years—so this is not just under the Bush Administration, but under the Clinton Administration before it—and the other governments just keep doing what they are doing today, it is inevitable that a nuclear bomb will explode in an American city.

Indeed, I make my analysis and offer my judgment that such an event is imminent—and by imminent I would mean more likely than not in the decade ahead. So I would bet 51 against 49 that if everything stays the same, on autopilot, such an event will occur before a decade is up.

Now, how could one come to such a conclusion? In Part I of the book, I take you through just the logical steps. Who could do it? That's Chapter 1. What could they do it with? That's Chapter 2. Where could they get it? That's Chapter 3. When could they have it? That's Chapter 4. How could they get it here? That's Chapter 5. So when you go through:

- Who? — for example, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda;
- What? — a bomb like the bomb that Dragon Fire said was here, or it could be a homemade bomb, but a real bomb, made out of 100 pounds of highly enriched uranium, and I describe how that would work.
- Where could they get it? — The most likely place I believe would be Russia—not because the Russians want to lose anything, but because that's where the largest number of nuclear weapons and potential nuclear weapons and highly enriched uranium and plutonium are to be found, and particularly to be found in conditions where they might be vulnerable to theft. This is what I call the "Willie Sutton principle". Remember, Willie Sutton was a very famous American bank robber, and in his trial they asked him why did he rob banks, and he said, "Well, that's where the money is." So Russia would be the place to go looking first. But not only.

In the "where" chapter I take you through Pakistan, where there are fifty nuclear bombs and enough material for another fifty weapons. And in the circumstances in which the President of Pakistan, [President Musharraf](#), has come within a second and a half of being killed twice in the past year, is it likely that Pakistan's nuclear weapons are protected more securely than their President? I don't think so. Also, there are risky research reactors in a number of countries, including Uzbekistan and Belarus. So I take you through the "where."

- When could such an event occur?—If the terrorists had bought the bomb last week and brought it to New York, it could be here today. If they got 100 pounds of highly enriched uranium—that is, a lump smaller than a football—they could make a bomb within less than a year with materials otherwise available off the shelf and the design that was basically used at Hiroshima, which is such a simple design that it was never tested. Hiroshima was the demonstration of that design, and the scientists involved were so confident about it working that they didn't need to test it.

- And finally, how could you get the weapon here?—Well, when I started that chapter, I thought, "This is going to be interesting." I found three ways, then I found thirteen ways, then I found thirty-nine ways, and then the thing just got out of control. So I organized it under two headings: (1) follow the golf clubs and (2) follow the drugs.

Say a lady in Jakarta wants to play golf here in the United States, in one of the fancy clubs here near New York City, and she wants to bring her golf clubs on the plane. How does she get them there? She looks in the Yellow Pages. She finds a freight forwarder and calls them up. If she needs her golf bag there within the week, they come and they pick it up, put it in one of those cargo containers and then they put that in the belly of a jumbo jet. It flies to Kennedy Airport in New York City, and then somebody there unloads it. They put it in a truck, and they take it to the golf club, and there it is. When she arrives she finds it. If it needs to be there only in a couple of months, or maybe six weeks, they do the same thing, but they put it in one of those larger cargo containers that come on a ship, and the same process happens. What's the likelihood that anybody touches, inspects, examines that bag of golf clubs between Jakarta and the fancy club here in Westchester? The answer is less than 1 percent, almost not at all.

Secondly, drugs. If you have any doubt about the ability of terrorists to bring a small nuclear bomb to New York City, they could always hide it in a bale of marijuana, which we know comes to New York City and every other city. So how do people get drugs illegally into the United States? Well, work on that one for very long and you'll find a long list of ways.

So that's the "how."

When you finish the who, what, where, when, how of this, the only question is: Why has this not already happened? The factors that would lead to such an action I think lead one to a conclusion that this could have happened already, for sure—maybe that it should have happened already. It leads me to the view that we're living on borrowed time.

So that's the end of Part I, and that's the bad news of the book. If you buy the book, which I hope you will, do not only read Part I. Part I could be depressing; it *is* depressing. But this is a "good news" book, not a "bad news" book, so let me turn quickly to Part II.

Part II is the more controversial part of the book. The book's conceptual advance has largely gone unrecognized, certainly by the U.S. government, which is that this ultimate terrorist attack, this attack that could kill hundreds of thousands of Americans in one fell swoop, is preventable.

However, there is no way, no level of activity, no degree of security, that we could organize that would prevent some future terrorist attacks on America. That will happen 100 percent in my view, and I think most of the national security community is unanimous about that.

But the good news with respect to the worst form of terrorist attack, the ultimate terrorist attack, is that that kind of attack is preventable. So how can that be? The answer is because with respect to this ultimate terrorist catastrophe, there exists a strategic narrow to the problem, a chokepoint in effect, which we could choke, and which if we did choke would lead to the reduction of the likelihood of such an event to nearly zero.

Now, how does that work? Fortunately, in order to make a nuclear explosion you have to have one of two very rare items or materials, either highly enriched uranium or plutonium. Neither of these materials exists in nature. Neither can be made in your bathtub or in your back yard or in your basement. Each requires a multibillion-dollar investment and a decade-long substantial facility in order to produce highly enriched uranium or plutonium.

Iran, for example, has been working on this project for about eighteen years and is just now coming to conclusion. So it's not impossible for a state to do, but it requires a big and substantial—and, indeed,

visible—effort.

Now, unfortunately, if a terrorist short-circuits this process by starting with highly enriched uranium and plutonium, the rest of the process is rather straightforward. So with respect to the highly enriched uranium that exists today, which is a finite amount of stuff—a lot, but a finite amount—do human beings know how to lock up things successfully that we don't want people to steal?

I ask: Does the United States lose any gold from Fort Knox? —Answer: not an ounce. Does Russia lose any treasures from the Kremlin Armory? —No, none. So could you imagine locking up nuclear weapons and material as good as gold?

I've been in a debate about this with a senator, whose name will go unmentioned, who says, "This is just too ambitious. We're not going to lock up nuclear weapons as good as gold." I say, "What is gold? Gold is something that has monetary value. But a nuclear bomb? After the first nuclear bomb goes off, we'll think that anybody who said, 'Well, it was good enough the way we were securing them before' will seem silly and will seem misguided, I believe."

So in Part II of the book, I propose a strategy for preventing nuclear terrorism organized under a "Doctrine of Three No's":

- (1) No loose nukes;
- (2) No new nascent nukes—that is, no new national production of highly enriched uranium or plutonium;
- (3) No new nuclear weapon states.

Let me say just a word about each of them, and maybe in the question period people will want to debate the particular items. Each of these is ambitious, each of them is complex, but each of them I believe is feasible and achievable, and none of them are expensive.

So, no loose nukes. No loose nukes means locking down all nuclear weapons and all nuclear materials, wherever they are, to a new gold standard. I propose that the United States and Russia jointly develop a new gold standard and that then the two presidents commit themselves to bring all of their weapons and materials to a level of security that meets this gold standard on the fastest technically feasible timetable; and even that they test each other's systems, so that each president can say to his own citizens, "We're not going to be killed by a nuclear bomb from that country because they have secured their weapons and materials adequately." Then they go around the rest of the club and lock up the rest. Places where you can't lock it up, you clean it out, particularly those risky research reactors in transitional and developing countries. That's a big agenda, but very straightforward, I believe.

Secondly, no new nascent nukes, no new national production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium. The test of this comes with Iran, and that test is running in real time today. Iran, which was years away from completing its factories that will allow it to produce uranium and plutonium, is now only months away from that goal line. In the agreement that was announced yesterday between the Europeans and Iran, Iran has suspended voluntarily for an indefinite period the completion of these facilities that will allow it to enrich uranium and reprocess plutonium.

I believe that if Iran reaches this goal line we will have lost this hand in a very important way. And so I lay out a strategy that is a collective effort, in which not just the Europeans (building on the very good work that they have done), but also the Americans and the Russians participate in a strategy that would use all the carrots. This would include include the carrot consisting of a U.S. guarantee not to attack Iran to change its regime as long as it complied with the rest of the agenda. But this strategy would also include a stick, consisting of a credible military threat to destroy these facilities before they actually come to operate. This threat that would probably come most plausibly from Israel, which is quite interested in posing such a threat, and maybe even conducting such an action in any case.

So it's a complex game, but it seems to me that's a hand that is there to be played. We'll see with the

new Bush Administration, I think rather quickly, whether they decide to try to play this hand. I hope they do. But I think if they're going to do it, they have to engage with Iran, they have to get the other parties on-board, and they have to be willing to put carrots on the table as well as sticks.

Third, finally, of the "Three No's" is no new nuclear weapon states. The vivid test of that today is North Korea. North Korea has since January of 2003—so in the last eighteen months—taken these 8,000 fuel rods, which used to be under IAEA 24-hour-a-day observation, away from the facilities to factories for reprocessing and has been producing enough new plutonium for six new bombs. If North Korea completes this effort, which on the current path they will, and also completes its construction of facilities that are going to allow it to produce another dozen bombs a year, we are soon going to be dealing with "Nukes-R-Us."

North Korea is demonstrably the most promiscuous proliferator on earth. They sell whatever they make to whomever will pay. They will sell nuclear material, and maybe even a nuclear bomb, to groups maybe even like al-Qaeda. We will not know that such a transaction has occurred, because it will occur in a small facility—the material could be less than a football—and we won't know indeed, if the bomb were to go off in Boston or New York or Washington, where such material came from. There's not a fingerprint. Nuclear forensics are not yet, unfortunately, that well developed.

So again in the case of North Korea, I lay out a strategy in the book for freezing North Korea where it is right now and backing it down on a step-by-step basis in a verifiable fashion. That's a harder hand to play, but it's also one that I believe should be played out now.

So to summarize, Part II says: a nuclear attack is inevitable if we just keep doing what we're doing—that's the bad news. But it is preventable by a finite punch list of specific actions that are feasible and affordable, unfortunately some of which we are not now taking.

Third and lastly, my final point is a question. There's a strategy group that meets each summer called the [Aspen Strategy Group](#). It consists of Democrats and Republicans, across the full spectrum of the middle. The topic last summer was nuclear terrorism, and this book was a substantial part of the basis for the debate. There were two or three former secretaries of defense, several former secretaries of state, several former national security advisors, that went from [Brent Scowcroft](#) to [Sam Nunn](#).

At the end of the week, when we were working through all these various angles, when we were going around saying, "What are we taking away from this?" former Secretary of Defense [Bill Perry](#) said: "Just in my personal view, we are racing towards an unprecedented catastrophe. The American public has no sense of this danger." Then he asked this question, "What in the world can we do to awaken the public and energize an administration to act to prevent this?"

I'd say that's a good question for the house. It is my hope that this book, and public discussion and debate about it, will take us some part of the way to awakening the public to this reality, and maybe even to energizing our government to address it.

JOANNE MYERS: Thank you very much for that very sobering discussion.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Do you think that Osama bin Laden would want to set off a nuclear weapon and kill four million Americans purely for the purpose of retribution, or do you think that there are some political purposes that might enter the calculus?

And if I may, I'd like to ask you a second question. In the current *Atlantic Monthly*, James Fallows has [an article in which he describes a war game](#) in which planners at the Pentagon try to think through what could be done about Iran. The conclusion was that there are no military options. There are too many sites, and it's unlikely that, let's say, an Israeli strike or an American strike would be able to knock out all the weapons; and, therefore, if Iran does have weapons, that it would be able to retaliate, and that the costs would be extremely high. But the conclusion really was that the option that you put on the table

really does make sense.

GRAHAM ALLISON: Two very good questions, and each deserves a long answer. But let me give the brief answer.

I'll start with the second one and then come back to the first one. I was one of the observers at that war game. In the article, Fallows quotes me on several of the points. I found that part of the conclusion of the war game, which was the way it had been designed by the person who designed the game, to be unrealistic in my view.

If one were trying to pose a credible military threat to Iran, in the first instance, is one interested in attacking Iran or persuading Iran? For my purposes, it's persuading. But to pose a credible military threat means that you need to be able to make it plausible, something that you can actually do. I believe that as part of this package, that "stick" will be an important part of the persuasion to get them to freeze and to back off in a step-by-step basis, as I outline in the book.

Now, there are probably fourteen or fifteen sites that would have to be attacked in a plausible military attack. The argument is: well, could you attack fourteen or fifteen sites? The answer is: Excuse me, how many sites did we attack just next door in Iraq?

So the Americans, in any case, have a huge hammer that's very good at destroying things, not very good at building things—and it may not be a great idea to be destroying things—but if the question is only to try to persuade the Mullahs that we can do such a thing, there has been a powerful demonstration next door.

Secondly, people say, "But how will you be sure that you've gotten all of the facilities?" That was one of the things that was brought up in the Fallows piece. To which the answer is: I don't need to do this on a single day. How many sorties did the United States fly over Iraq from 1991 until the recent war? The answer is more than 40,000. How many times did we bomb Iraq during that period? The answer is several thousand.

So the proposition is if the task is making credible to Iran that there could be an attack on those facilities, I believe that is something that I could do persuasively—not for the purpose of attacking them, but for persuading them that what they have now even entered into in a temporary basis is their best option; they just need to extend it.

Is this a permanent solution to Iran? No, this is not a permanent solution to Iran. This is a solution that might buy us several years during which we need to then have a much bigger discussion about Iran and about Iran's security concerns, which include some very legitimate security concerns from my point of view.

But if we don't get the short-term problem frozen for a period long enough to give us a chance to work on the longer-term problem, we are going to wind up with a nuclear Iran; and if we have a nuclear Iran, we're going to see very quickly a set of dominoes follow suit in the Middle East, which will start with Egypt but will also include Saudi Arabia I believe, which will buy weapons from Pakistan, not make them themselves—it's too hard for them—and maybe Syria. And we also know that Iran has a very tight relationship with [Hezbollah](#), and Hezbollah is the "A Team of terrorism," as I describe in the book.

There are many, many problems with the Middle East today. None of them would be better if Iran has nuclear weapons in my view, and almost all of them would be exacerbated in a big way.

On your first question, which is a very good question, and which Americans mostly miss—and I think the Bush Administration has not been helpful in this regard—is Osama bin Laden just a killer who hates us and wants to kill people; or is this a person who has a political agenda, maybe a grandiose political agenda, but one that starts with narrower objectives and goes to more elevated one?

I think the second is clearly correct. I don't think any reading of Osama bin Laden's *fatwahs*, which are not much read in the United States, would lead you to any other conclusion. In fact, in his tape where he

was trying to say, "Hey, don't forget about me," right before the election, he spells it out about as deliberately as you can, and says, "We're not attacking Sweden. We're attacking countries that occupy our countries."

Now, he has a rather grand idea about what are "his" countries, and in his grandiose version he would have a caliphate that would run all through northern Africa and the Middle East. But his initial objective was Saudi Arabia. He wanted American troops out of Saudi Arabia.

I discuss this in the book. You can win money from any American audience on this. When will American troops yield to bin Laden's demand that they leave Saudi Arabia? When could that happen? The answer is it happened on the second anniversary of 9/11. We left.

Now, why was that? Well, we didn't need the troops there; we repositioned the troops. Well, excuse me. He had a demand. It was driving him crazy. He attacked us. We repositioned our troops. Now, I don't think our troops should have been staying in "the land of the two holy sites," as he said, so I wasn't necessarily in favor of where we were before. But I think those political objectives are driving him.

Is there a price, therefore, that Americans would be willing to pay, for which he would settle? I think now you can get into a more complicated thing because his objectives are likely to expand. He does have some grandiose objectives as one goes in a step-by-step fashion, but he certainly is politically calculating.

The test that he has put to many of our allies in Europe is: "If you've got troops occupying there, you're going to be on the target list. If you don't, you can get off the target list." That has affected political calculations in Spain and in a number of other countries, and may do so in more countries in the future.

QUESTION: I apologize if my mind wandered and I missed the answer to my question, or if I'm asking you to give away the plot, but in the case of North Korea, with their ability to incinerate Seoul, what would you suggest? Is the proliferation security initiative enough, or what else can we be doing to neutralize that threat?

GRAHAM ALLISON: The North Korean case is the toughest case. It is described in the book in some detail, but it won't leave you very comfortable.

The fact is that when the Bush Administration came to power, the U.S. government thought North Korea had enough plutonium for two nuclear bombs. Whether they have actually made the bombs, how big the bombs are, whether they can deliver the bombs, is a more complicated story. They have been working to reprocess these 8,000 fuel rods that will allow them to produce six more bombs, as I mentioned, and then they are trying to complete their facilities that will produce another dozen bombs a year.

What I suggest in the book is, in effect, a showdown with North Korea sooner rather than later. But that includes a lot of carrots. Most of the carrots come from other people. The South Koreans, the Japanese, and the Brits when they visited Korea, want to provide assistance to North Korea. So the benefits to North Korea include a lot of financial benefits, an agreement from us that we will not attack them to change their regime by force as long as they deal with the rest of the package, and others. That's on the positive side.

But on the negative side, I believe that as well one needs to find a way to make plausible to [Kim Jong-I](#) that there is some military attack that the United States could mount that would make a big difference in the life of North Korea. I think the Clinton Administration looked at this very carefully, because for sure those 8,000 fuel rods in North Korea, which were being watched 24 hours a day, were a perfect target. That is, the credibility about destroying those 8,000 fuel rods was 100 percent. One Cruise missile on that facility and that was the end for sure. And if you needed to be careful, you could do two Cruise missiles. The argument that the North Koreans will make is: "Wait a minute. We'll destroy Seoul." They can do that plausibly with the artillery shells that they have positioned in their hills just forty miles away from Seoul.

Now, one has got to then figure out what's the hand to persuade them that:

- (1) by the time they destroy Seoul there's not going to be anybody there, so people are going to leave if there is a danger;
- (2) that those two artillery tubes will never fire more than once;
- (3) that their vaunted million-man army will never reach South Korea.

We are trying to make this plausible not in order to attack them, but to persuade them what is their best option for survival. Because the bottom line is that if they were to decide to go to war with the United States over this, we would be able to guarantee them that their regime would not survive. I believe—and I have talked to some other people who believe—that if the United States were able to make credible that we wanted to get this resolved, and the Chinese believed that we were serious about resolving it in this manner if we had to, the Chinese would deal with the North Koreans quickly and one would see a freeze in the current situation.

Now, the current Administration has not been prepared to deal with the North Koreans at all—not to put any carrots on the table, not to put any sticks; just simply to ignore them. I just say: "Wait a minute. Every day the North Koreans are sitting there producing a little bit more plutonium and getting a little bit closer to finishing their factories, and I don't think we could live in the world in which that's the North Korea that we have to try to face."

So I say in the book, and I believe, that if North Korea succeeds in breaking into the nuclear club and completing its factories for making a dozen bombs a year, historians are going to judge this the greatest single failure in American national security policy in our entire history

QUESTION: Thank you very much for that very illustrative and somber presentation. I was in fact hoping to hear a fourth "No." "No nukes". But if I may, two questions on the two parts of your book. The first one, on the inevitability part of it. Now, historically, if you look at the use of chemical and biological weapons by non-state actors, it is largely the indigenous non-state actors who use chemical and biological weapons. I have in mind the anthrax letters here in the United States. Why do we think it's going to be different in the case of nuclear? Why does nuclear lend itself to transnational?

That's one question. The second is related to the preventable part of it. I think you have done an excellent job of articulating all the possible scenarios. But one possibility which you haven't raised is a radiological device, which is the one that most everybody talks about as offering great potential. Is that in some ways inevitable? Thank you.

GRAHAM ALLISON: I will try to give shorter answers because otherwise each one of these questions is a great question and deserves a serious and longer discussion. Let me go back through the pieces quickly, because you did ask three questions.

The first one, on the radiological attack—that is, a dirty bomb—is long overdue. It will happen, that's 100 percent certain. Nobody in the community can explain why it hasn't happened already. The good news is it's not a big deal. Mostly it's not going to be a big deal. If somebody brought a shoebox in here tonight with a stick of dynamite and some radioactive material in the shoebox, the stick of dynamite goes off. If it's sitting here, you folks in the first couple of rows and us will be in bad shape, but in the back of the room your ears may be ringing and you may get a little nosebleed, but you go on. The people who are hurt by a dirty bomb are hurt by the blast of the bomb, not by the "dirty" part, the radioactive. Most of the radioactive material that would be disbursed will give you some additional rads, and that affects maybe the chance of your getting cancer over 25 years, but it doesn't have a short-term effect in terms of your morbidity.

On the second question, why should we worry about nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists who bring them not just in their own society but abroad, I'd say you have to worry about both. We've had lots of deranged people in the world and lots of people who had political causes for which they were willing to kill lots of people. Mostly, fortunately, they didn't have the means to achieve their most malign intentions. So what this is about is preventing them, whether it's the [Unabomber](#) here in the United States or [Timothy](#)

[McVeigh](#), I have no idea. If McVeigh had been able to kill 100,000 people, would he have done it rather than the 180-odd people that he killed? He might have.

So I think that nuclear weapons are too dangerous both internally and externally. I would agree with you that—and I give this lecture or have this discussion with Russian friends all the time—the reason why Russia ought to be securing its nuclear weapons is that they ought to be thinking about what will happen if Chechens get a nuclear bomb. Are they coming to New York? Moscow is much closer, and they've got many more beefs with Moscow than they have with Americans. Now, if they get a half-dozen bombs, maybe they're going to give one to al-Qaeda and then maybe al-Qaeda is going to come here. But I think they should be thinking about this from their own perspective.

Fortunately, all the nuclear weapon states have problems of local terrorists that can help focus their minds. The Chinese worry about the Uighurs and the Taiwanese, and Indians and Pakistanis know that there are terrorists in the area between them that are attacking them from time to time. So all of us have pretty good reasons if we were looking at our interests.

On your fourth "No," I think that's very interesting. In the last chapter of the book I deal with some part of that issue. What the program I have outlined would do is it would prevent nuclear terrorism in the short run—that is, for a short period of time, to give us maybe several years to work on the larger question of nuclear weapons, including the American nuclear arsenal. I would say a quite plausible part of this ultimate deal would be certainly for the United States to manufacture no new nuclear weapons. So the Bush Administration's proposition that we need a few more different weapons while everybody else needs zero—I can't say it without smiling—I think that doesn't pass the test for me. No new nuclear tests, so the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is a very good thought. Maybe even no first use; there are people who have argued that. I would say, and I do say in the book, we should get nuclear weapons out of the postures of countries and out of the stuff of diplomacy—because nuclear weapons, especially from an American point of view, are bad—but I would say you can make that argument for everybody.

And so, now what do you do with the weapons that are back in the closet somewhere and you're dealing with dismantling the number of weapons? Now you're into a longer story. But this would be part of the shorter term. I am only dealing with the shorter term in order to give us time to work on the longer term.

QUESTION: You gave us a very chilling account and some hope that we might be able to deal with this issue wisely. Have you addressed in your book the question of the types of institutions we need to deal with this, and do you have any faith in the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) to play a role in the strategy?

GRAHAM ALLISON: That's a very good question. I would say yes, indeed, I think the IAEA, and especially under its current Director, [Mohamed El Baradei](#), has played a very positive role across this spectrum. Now, it gets blamed for doing things that it was never empowered to do. The IAEA is not a policeman. It is more like a watchdog; and given the way the treaty is written, it can only watch things that are declared. So the reason why the additional protocol is so important is that it ought to be able to look to see things that people don't want to declare to it.

But I would say that if one were to build a system that is aimed at preventing nuclear terrorist attacks, you start with the [Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), which is an extraordinary accomplishment. A hundred and eighty-four countries have voluntarily signed up to forgo nuclear weapons.

Yet I find and Mohamed ElBaradei would also say that now it is on the brink, because if North Korea and Iran break through, this whole system is going to collapse. So I would say that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is a big piece of the system to prevent attacks and the IAEA and the role that it plays in inspection is another big piece. I think that this cannot be done by the United States alone and the United States can't bully everybody else to do it. It's got to mobilize the interests of the parties, and fortunately, the great powers' interests converge here; and then it has to try to use the institutions that we now have and to build additional institutions in order to make the process work.

But I would say that we should be grateful for the good work that the IAEA has done. And I think, even

while the consensus in the American national security community has been rather negative about international inspectors and their track record, I would say that as we look at the evidence of Iraq—not Iraq before 1991, where the inspection process and the IAEA did a poor job—but if we look at the process after 1991 and those inspections under [Rolf Ekeus](#) and under [Hans Blix](#). I think that the combination of international sanctions and inspections disarmed Saddam.

Saddam gave up his chemical and biological weapons. Why did he do that? Well, it was because there were sanctions and there were people bombing him and there were people inspecting it. So it was a pretty interesting combination. And actually, they did rather better than the American CIA. So I would say there's the record and we should build on it.

JOANNE MYERS: Dr. Allison, I would like to thank you very much for raising our awareness.

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