

Presidential Nuclear Initiatives

Remarks

On the 25th Anniversary of the

Reagan/Gorbachev Reykjavik Summit

Global Zero Summit

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

October 11th – 12th, 2011

Jennifer Allen Simons, C.M., Ph.D., LL.D
President,
The Simons Foundation

Good Afternoon,

My name is Jennifer Allen Simons. I am President of The Simons Foundation - Principal Sponsor and Founding Partner of Global Zero, and Principal Sponsor of this Summit.

My task today is to introduce the subject of the panel, The Media and the Global Zero campaign. But first I would like to say a few words about the Reykjavik Summit. Though its possibilities eluded us, the Summit created a new paradigm of Presidential Nuclear Initiatives to further realization of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

We are here to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Historic Reykjavik Summit. And to pay tribute to two great men who shared a vision of a nuclear free world – to President Ronald Reagan, and to the brilliant former General Secretary of the Soviet Union, and now Global Zero signatory, President Mikhail Gorbachev, who I am truly sorry to say is unable to be at this meeting.

Eleven months prior to the Reykjavik Summit, these two men met in Geneva, agreed that the United States' and the Soviet Union's common enemy was nuclear war,¹ and that “a nuclear war could never be won and must never be fought.”²

At Mikhail Gorbachev's invitation, they came together again at Reykjavik, to attempt to transform this shared vision of a nuclear free world, into a reality. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in Reykjavik with his three-phase plan – announced in January of that year - for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000 - a plan similar to that of Global Zero but with a more radical – a fifteen year - time frame. He arrived with a package of proposals designed to achieve this goal³ -proposals for an immediate 50% reduction of strategic offensive arms, for the complete elimination of medium range missiles, for negotiations on missiles in Asia, and for a comprehensive test ban treaty.

The package also included commitment to *not withdraw* from the ABM Treaty for at least 10 years; for strict and full adherence to this Treaty; and for research and development of the Strategic Defence Initiative to be limited to laboratories.

¹ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Toward a Better World*, 1987, p.8

² Mikhail S. Gorbachev, “A Joint Soviet-American Statement” *The Coming Century of Peace*, p.28, 1986

³ 50% reduction of strategic offensive arms; complete elimination of medium-range missiles in Europe; freeze on missiles with a range of less than 1000km; continued negotiations on missiles in Asia; obligate to not withdraw from ABM Treaty for not less than 10 years, and strict adherence to the Treaty; research and testing of weapons to be retained in laboratories; agreement on a comprehensive test ban

The intention was to restrain the development of space weapons for as Gorbachev said “If we disarm on earth, we cannot at the same time arm in outer space.”⁴ He rejected the invitation from the United States to participate with them in the Strategic Defence Initiative. He rejected their proposal to augment the ABM Treaty with provisions that would create specific defensive weapons which both sides would have; and he expressed strong disbelief with the promise from the U.S. to share any “defensive weapons that [it would be] able to create”.⁵

Mikhail Gorbachev had the wisdom – the foresight- to know that to participate in the system would *legitimize* the militarization of outer space; that it would accelerate the nuclear arms race on earth, and transfer the arms race to outer space, creating a new danger of equal or greater magnitude than nuclear weapons on earth.⁶

The two men were a few steps from agreement⁷; but ultimately President Reagan would not agree to Mikhail Gorbachev’s proposal to strengthen and fully adhere to the ABM Treaty, despite the fact that at the third meeting President Reagan said – and I quote – *what the hell use will ABM’s or anything else be if we eliminate nuclear weapons.*”⁸

As we know, the talks which were so close to accomplishing a historic task, collapsed at this point.

It was George H.W. Bush, Vice-President to Reagan, and the next President of the United States, who became the one who changed the course of nuclear policy. This was not, perhaps, a consequence of the same visionary thinking and profound wish to rid the world of nuclear weapons. His Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, nevertheless, changed the course of the US nuclear posture and reversed the arms race.

In the area of foreign policy, “especially military and national security policy, the President has the constitutional and political power to effect policy change without the need to seek the support of Congress.”⁹

⁴ Gorbachev, *Toward a Better World*, p. 3, 1987

⁵ International Affairs, FBIS-USR-93-087, July 12 1993, p.1, *Transcript of Gorbachev-Reagan Reykjavik Talks*, Second Session

⁶ Gorbachev, *The Coming Century of Peace*. P117 “Imagine what the world will be in this case in ten or twenty years. Waves of all manner of strike weapons will be rushing overhead everywhere ... above all people inhabiting the earth The militarization of outer space will put a heavy psychological burden on people in all countries and bring about an atmosphere of universal instability and uncertainty.”

⁷ *ibid.* FBIS-USR-93-113, August 30, 1993, *Transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Reykjavik Talks: Part 3*, p.1- to reduce by 50% “across the whole spectrum” of nuclear weaponry; to eliminate all intermediate-range missiles in Europe, to freeze missiles with range of less than 1,000 kilometres; to negotiate missiles in Asia

⁸ *ibid* FBIS-USR-93-113, August 30, 1993, *Transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Reykjavik Talks, Part 3*, p.8

⁹ D.Florig, *Ideological Majorities, Presidential Initiatives and Policy Change*. <http://dflorig.com>

In September of 1991, George H. W. Bush, after consultations with his advisors and with British, French, German, and other allied leaders, announced sweeping unilateral cuts of US nuclear weapons.¹⁰

President H.W. Bush availed himself of this right for pragmatic reasons - the changed political situation in the disintegrating Soviet Union, and the attempted coup to displace President Gorbachev, created immense concern about the security of the Soviet nuclear arsenals. As well, President Bush was faced with a weakened economy in the United States – a financial situation similar, though not as severe as the current, fragile state of the economy with which President Barrack Obama is struggling.

H.W. Bush invited the Soviet leadership to undertake similar steps and within five days President Gorbachev responded by initiating equally dramatic unilateral cuts to the Soviet Union nuclear arsenal and, in addition, a 1-year moratorium on nuclear testing.¹¹

There have been several U.S. Presidential Initiatives involving reductions in nuclear arsenals *and all* were met with reciprocal responses from the Soviet Union and then Russia.

In May of 1990, H.W. Bush announced that the United States would not modernize the obsolescent LANCE tactical nuclear missile system or the US nuclear artillery shells deployed in Europe, because of the changed global political situation; and because of the state of the U.S. economy.

¹⁰ Specific steps included: The elimination of the U.S. inventory of ground-launched short-range nuclear weapons, including nuclear artillery shells and short-range ballistic missile warheads. Such weapons deployed abroad were to be withdrawn to U.S. territory and destroyed. Air-launched TNW capabilities were to be maintained, however. The withdrawal of TNWs from naval surface ships and attack submarines, and land-based naval aircraft. These weapons, including nuclear Tomahawk cruise missiles deployed on navy vessels and nuclear bombs on aircraft carriers, would be either dismantled and destroyed or stockpiled in central storage areas. The dealerting of all strategic bombers and all intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) scheduled for deactivation under START. Elimination of these ICBMs would be accelerated once START was ratified, rather than using the seven years allowed under START. The elimination of several ICBM modernization programs, including Midgetman modernization. Future U.S. ICBM modernization would be limited to non-mobile, single-warhead missiles.>. Bush also proposed to eliminate all MIRVed ICBMs on a bilateral basis because these weapons were considered particularly destabilizing. Privately, it was explained that such a measure would be a major step toward denuclearization of Ukraine and Kazakhstan since all ICBMs deployed there were MIRVed. (www.fourthfreedom.org, 30.10.2003)

¹¹ President Mikhail Gorbachev, *Address to the Nation on Reducing and Eliminating soviet and United States Nuclear Weapons*, 5.10.91. The destruction of all nuclear artillery ammunition and nuclear mines, as well as nuclear warheads for tactical nuclear missiles. The removal to central storage locations of nuclear warheads from anti-aircraft missiles and all TNWs on surface ships and multi-purpose submarines. Weapons from ground-based naval aircraft would also be removed to storage. Some of these weapons would be destroyed. The de-alerting of strategic bombers, and the storage of their nuclear weapons. 503 ICBMs, including 134 with multiple warheads, would also be taken off of day-to-day alert status. Development of a short-range missile for heavy bombers would be halted. Abandonment of plans to develop mobile ICBMs and to build new mobile launchers for existing ICBMs. Existing railway-mobile ICBMs would be contained to their basing areas and no longer leave them for patrol. A pledge to eliminate an additional 1,000 nuclear warheads compared to what was required by START. After the 7-year life of START, the Soviet Union would possess 5,000 warheads, rather than the 6,000 permitted under START Agreement. A one-year unilateral moratorium on nuclear weapons testing.

Thirty-four days later, Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze, surprised the international community by stating that the Soviet Union would unilaterally withdraw 1,500 nuclear weapons from Central Europe. When questioned he said that the decision was made as a response to President Bush's announcement of the termination of the LANCE nuclear missile programme.

President H.W. Bush, in his January 1992 State of the Union message, announced another round of cancellations. And said that he would be meeting with President Yeltsin on the weekend and would say to President Yeltsin that if he would eliminate all Soviet land-based multiple-warhead ballistic missiles, the U.S. would "reduce the number of warheads on Minuteman missiles to one, reduce [by about one-third] the number of warheads on US sea-based missiles," and as well, "convert a substantial portion of strategic [weapons] to primarily conventional use."¹²

President Yeltsin did not wait for the weekend meeting. The next day, he announced that it was Russian policy to eliminate the world's nuclear weapons on a parity basis; and he committed to a series of wide-ranging reductions to the Soviet nuclear arsenal.

These successful events demonstrate that Presidential Nuclear Initiatives are a useful instrument in the President's toolbox. They have reversed the trajectory of the nuclear arms race and have proven to be an effective way of radically reducing nuclear arsenals.

It was very clear in Prague that President Barack Obama shares Gorbachev's and Reagan's vision for a nuclear free world; and shares their desire to eliminate this "most dangerous legacy of the Cold War",¹³ Last month at the United Nations, President Obama reconfirmed his desire and commitment "to lift the spectre of mass destruction"¹⁴ from humanity.

In light of the prevailing nuclear dangers; in light of the present-day grave financial crisis in the United States and its bloated nuclear weapons budget - currently higher than during the Cold War - I appeal to members of Global Zero to urge President Obama to make use of his constitutional powers - his constitutional prerogative - to announce his own Presidential Nuclear Initiatives: to accelerate the reductions committed under the New START Treaty; to remove all nuclear weapons from high-alert status; to reduce by 50% the nuclear arsenal of the United States; to request reciprocal reductions by Russia; and to assure dissenters that more than enough nuclear weapons remain to annihilate the human race.

¹² George H.W. Bush, *State of the Union message*, Jan 28th, 1992

¹³ Barack Obama, *Prague Speech*, April 5, 2009

¹⁴ Barack Obama, *Remarks by President Obama, Address to United Nations General Assembly*, September 21, 2011

These steps will continue a momentum begun - but which seems to be stagnating at the moment - and will be confidence building measures to encourage the United Kingdom, France, China, Israel, Pakistan and India to freeze their current arsenals and to engage in multilateral negotiations to eliminate the entire nuclear arsenals in the world.

Thank you very much!

I now turn to my task to introduce the subject of the panel: The Media and Public Campaign for Global Zero.

A few years ago, The Simons Foundation was a partner in a Canada's World poll and in a meeting with media partners, a journalist from the national newspaper said "why did you tack questions on nuclear weapons to the poll? Nuclear Weapons are so retro." Needless to say media coverage on the poll featured nothing about nuclear weapons.

It is an immense challenge to bring this issue to the attention of the public. A natural disaster like earthquakes, cyclones, and their *predictions and warnings*, garner much media coverage. However, a man-made potential disaster of equal or greater magnitude, is of little interest. Is it necessary for nuclear weapon, with its catastrophic consequences, to explode in the United States in order to evoke the interest of the media and the general public?

My question to media members of the panel is *How can you, as representatives from the media who truly understand the dangers posed by the existence of nuclear weapons, further - in the public realm - knowledge – information - these very real dangers?*

I look forward to your response.

Thank you very much!

*Jennifer Allen Simons, C.M., Ph.D., LL.D.
October 11th, 2011*