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Center for Nonproliferation Studies
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Panel: Educating the Public:
The Role of Foundations, NGOs, and the Media

Thank you, Bill Potter, for the chance to address this conference. It's an honor to be here to mark the 20th anniversary of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies and to express my gratitude to this organization for all you have done to contribute to NTI's success these last almost nine years.

Our organization, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, now known globally as NTI, is a private, non-profit organization that was founded to reduce the threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. That's a big goal for a small group, especially when we're trying to move levers that are largely in the hands of government.

Our success depends not just on what we do, but on what we can convince others to do. So we try to persuade governments that there is a dangerous gap between the threat and our collective response.

Now for a government official, "threat" can mean different things. "Threat" could mean a danger that could end the lives of thousands of people. Or "threat" could mean a danger that could end the political life of one elected official.

The most persuasive argument comes when you can make a case for a threat of both kinds.

That is why we focus on the education of both the public and policymakers about the threats from weapons of mass destruction. We believe that if the public understood the danger, they wouldn't stand for it. If policymakers truly understand the stakes, they would advance to the highest rank this priority among all others. As we often say, this danger is not just a threat to life but to a way of life. If we fail in this mission, the balance between security and civil liberties will shift radically against civil liberties, perhaps for present and future generations.

The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies has been a trusted partner -- supplying NTI with expert, objective scientific information that serves us in our mission of public education.

Today, if it's up on our website, our "readers" know it's objective -- not because of us -- but because of you at CNS and your dedication to objective, non-partisan and disciplined scholarship.

Of course, it's not objective because we use it; we use it because we are convinced it is objective. NTI has a board of directors and staff, funders and partners united behind the mission of reducing threats from weapons of mass destruction. These are individuals from many different countries, professional callings, and political views, who are determined to come together to find common ground. To keep this group together, in trust, as collaborators in reducing our most dire threats, the facts we work from must be free of any bias.

So when we publish information on our website, use it in our speeches, cite it in our reports, it's because NTI board members and staff and the many people who rely on us accept the accuracy and objectivity of the information.

And for that, we owe a substantial debt to CNS. Your research has played a vital role in our efforts to educate the public.

If I may, I'd like to offer you a brief review of those efforts.

On our website, we post *Issue Briefs* that offer analysis of a wide range of international security issues, *Country Profiles* with information on nuclear, biological, chemical and missile programs for more than 35 countries, and *Self-guided Tutorials* on a range of complex topics.

We also offer a free daily news service -- called the *Global Security Newswire* -- that covers developments in nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and terrorism, independently reported by the National Journal Group.

Millions of people from more than 150 countries take advantage of these offerings by visiting our website.

In a separate initiative, we have worked with the non-profit group "Families of September 11" on a public education project to highlight the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, with a particular focus on accelerating efforts to lock down nuclear weapons and materials around the world.

In 2005, we produced the docudrama "Last Best Chance," which illustrated the threat of a terrorist nuclear attack and aired on HBO. We developed post-secondary-level teaching materials and distributed them to more than 200 college professors. We aired Public Service Announcements and held more than 50 briefings with Members of Congress, Congressional staffers, and National Security Council staff.

We believe that NTI had a role in helping shape the political debate in the 2008 Presidential campaign -- through an NTI-commissioned series of Harvard University reports on "Securing the Bomb," and through the 2007 and 2008 Wall Street Journal op-eds by George Shultz, Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger and William Perry. The opinion piece re-asserted the vision

of a world free of nuclear weapons and outlined the steps to build the trust and confidence to build the foundation to get us there.

It's a tricky business to try to trace the origins of the policy opinions of Presidential candidates, but in the summer of 2008, a nuclear weapons expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists told the *National Journal*: "The fact that McCain and Obama are both speaking about the elimination of nuclear weapons shows you how hard it is to overstate the importance of that op-ed by the four horsemen."

The opinion piece of the so-called "four horsemen" was widely read because of the high stature and public service of each of the individuals, to be sure. But it had the impact it did because the four hailed from different political parties and came together on a vision and a series of steps. These four men could never have come together if they had not been working from the same set of facts. That, again, demonstrates the overriding importance of authoritative, reliable, objective science as an indispensable guide to the public and policymakers in a democracy.

Conclusion

Last month, the world marked the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – and the end of the Cold War. We fought that War over fundamental beliefs – including the right of public opinion to shape public policy, and the right of the people to guide the actions of their leaders. The governments on the eastern side of the Wall believed a society would be stronger if freedom were limited, information was censored, and decisions were made by the few. Governments on the western side believed a society would be stronger where freedom was expansive, information was widespread, and decisions were made by the many.

We won that war. But we have to keep proving our point. When citizens have reliable, relevant information, they make the right decisions. That's the defining idea of democracy. This doesn't relieve us of our duty; it gives us our duty. We have to do all we can to deliver honest, objective facts on society's most serious issues to the public and to public officials – so we can make the decisions we need to create a future of security and prosperity.

The role of political and physical scientists in this process is great; so, too, is the role of diplomacy. CNS has provided both. In NTI's global activities, we meet your graduates everywhere – from Vienna to Astana, Paris to Moscow. Thank you for your work to make a safer world.