

The American President's speech on nuclear weapons (Prague, in April 2009):



The existence  
of thousands of nuclear weapons  
is the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War.  
No nuclear war was fought between the United States  
and the Soviet Union, but generations lived with the knowledge  
that their world could be erased in a single flash of light.  
Today, the Cold War has disappeared  
but thousands of those weapons have not.  
In a strange turn  
of history,  
the threat  
of global  
nuclear war  
has gone down,  
but the risk  
of a nuclear attack  
has gone up.  
More nations  
have acquired  
these weapons.  
Testing has  
continued.  
Black market  
trade in nuclear  
secrets and  
nuclear materials abound.



The technology to build a bomb has spread. Terrorists are determined to buy, build or steal one. Our efforts to contain these dangers are centered on a global non-proliferation regime, but as more people and nations break the rules, we could reach the point where the center cannot hold.

Now, understand, this matters to people everywhere. One nuclear weapon exploded in one city -- be it New York or Moscow, Islamabad or Mumbai, Tokyo or Tel Aviv, Paris or Prague -- could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And no matter where it happens, there is no end to what the consequences might be -- for our global safety, our security, our society, our economy, to our ultimate survival.

Some argue that the spread of these weapons cannot be stopped, cannot be checked -- that we are destined to live in a world where more nations and more people possess the ultimate tools of destruction. Such fatalism is a deadly adversary, for if we believe that the spread of nuclear weapons is inevitable, then in some way we are admitting to ourselves that the use of nuclear weapons is inevitable.

Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century. And as nuclear power -- as a nuclear power, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it, we can start it.

So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. I'm not naive. This goal will not be reached quickly -- perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist. Yes, we can.

**weapon:** arms  
**legacy:** heritage  
**erase:** delete  
**threat:** danger  
**acquire:** buy  
**trade:** buy and sell  
**determined:** decided  
**to contain:** reduce  
**non-proliferation:** export control  
**matter:** importance  
**survival:** save  
**to argue:** disagree  
**to check:** test, control  
**destruction:** demolition  
**adversary:** enemy  
**inevitable:** necessary  
**to admit:** to say yes  
**to stand for:** promote  
**nuclear power:** atomic force  
**responsibility:** in charge  
**endeavo(u)r:** effort  
**to state:** to confirm  
**conviction:** belief  
**commitment:** order  
**goal:** aim  
**persistence:** duration