

April 15, 2020 Conference Call
Nuclear Energy and National Security Coalition
Opening Comments by Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr.

Welcome to today's Nuclear Energy and National Security Coalition Member's Call.

We are meeting today via Zoom at this time of a horrific worldwide health crisis—COVID-19. The pandemic is devastating societies and economies around the world.

It is a major threat in itself, but in its emphasis on the importance of government competence and international cooperation, it causes one to think of those two truly existential crises that are with us potentially and will remain with us: climate change and nuclear proliferation and possible conflict. If we can't manage the Covid-19 pandemic, what chance will we have to manage a huge and immediate crisis from either one these two existential threats. Government capability to manage large civilization-scale catastrophes is not what it once was and international cooperation has greatly declined.

For example, a September 2019 report by the World Health Organization's Global Preparedness Monitoring Board issued a warning in September 2019. The warning concerned the lack of international preparedness for a dangerous and rapidly spreading pandemic due to a lethal respiratory pathogen. This warning was largely ignored. Imagine for a moment the different situation the world would be in if this warning had been heeded.

But climate change can do even more damage to the world community than the COVID-19 and it deserves the close attention of all governments, competence, respect for science and preparedness need to be emphasized. Delay in the future could force governments to have to choose between hasty, difficult and expensive energy transitions involving significant lifestyle

changes and enormous, unmanageable climate impacts. Climate change today in the aftermath of COVID-19 should be addressed in the same manner that issues were addressed during World War II, large production projects strongly backed by the government. Vic Reis in a current paper has suggested one such goal, the replacement of all coal fired energy plants by small nuclear reactors (SMRs) in 20 years. Nuclear power will be essential to substantially mitigate the impact of climate change and we must find ways to move it forward.

On today's call, we will be discussing the U.S. military and new nuclear technologies including SMRs and micro reactors. The military's needs are of course special, but the issues are broadly the same for the civilian sector with respect to the need for nuclear power.