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TRANSCRIPT

The Negotiator Files: A Conversation with Susan Koch

FEATURING

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INTERVIEWED BY

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Amy Nelson:

Dr. Susan Koch, welcome. Today we're here to talk about the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, which were, of course, unilateral measures announced by President George H.W. Bush to reduce nuclear arsenals, ease tensions, and precipitate reciprocity on the part of the Soviet Union.

You've written extensively about how these measures were significant. They were unprecedented and produced non-treaty based arms control that was unilateral initially and highly successful. What role did you play in the process of their development or implementation? Where were you in the government at the time?

Susan Koch:

I was the Assistant Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency for Strategic and Nuclear Affairs. May I just call them the PNIs? It makes it easier. When The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives were developed over three weeks in September of 1991, I had no role whatsoever. It was a very small group initially set in motion by the President himself. The name Presidential Nuclear Initiatives is not a misnomer.

It really was Bush 41's Initiative. And the first group that developed the package was in the Joint Staff of DOD. And then a few people in the Office of the Secretary of Defense policy shop were brought in. I heard rumors. I asked the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, what's going on, and he said, "Don't ask." He as the director of ACDA was aware, if not directly involved.

I became involved when a week after the president announced the first PNIs, a group of us went to Moscow. Our mission was to persuade the Soviets to reciprocate.

Amy Nelson:

Tell me more about that. How did that go?

Susan Koch:

Well, it was a lot easier than we expected because we arrived on Saturday, October 5th. Sorry for the detail, but this was... We were going to begin our meetings with our Soviet counterparts on the Monday. Except shortly after our arrival, our head of delegation was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and given the text of a speech that Mikhail Gorbachev, then General Secretary, was going to give on television that evening, basically agreeing to almost everything we had asked the Soviets to do reciprocally.

So we still met on the Monday and probably into Tuesday and Wednesday, I can't remember, but it was to talk about implementation and data exchanges, that kind of thing.

Amy Nelson:

I'm inferring that these were pretty agreeable conversations.

Susan Koch:

Oh, they were very, very friendly. Yes. Yes.

Amy Nelson:

Could you talk about what you think was driving President Bush 41 in the PNI decision process? It's both necessary, as we know from history, for high-level presidential-level involvement to really drive successful arms control endeavors, but it can also be quite rare. Can you tell me about him personally?

Susan Koch:

Well, I don't know if we've ever had another President who was as deeply involved with these issues, given his background as CIA Director, as Ambassador to the UN, and I think just his own interests. After ACDA, I worked on his National Security Council staff, and it was extraordinary when the boss really is interested in what you're doing. It's a great motivator.

But the specifics, we had, of course, beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in '89, a time of continual cosmic change, or seismic is a better word, I suppose, in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. And until then, in late August, you had the coup against Gorbachev with the hardliners who did not want to have the Soviet system loosened up. The coup, of course, collapsed within just a couple of days.

But I believe President Bush was very concerned about first command and control of nuclear forces. Because during the coup, Gorbachev was under house arrest at his dacha in I think Crimea. I don't know that we know to this day what the command and control arrangements were during those few days. And it was very clear that the Soviet Union did not have long to exist.

As it turned out, it was three and a half months or not quite four months after the fall of the coup. And if the Soviet Union fell apart, another great concern is what happens to the warheads outside of Russia. Our estimates are rough. I have heard that Ukraine upon independence had 4,400 nuclear warheads. And to give you a sense of scale, we now have about 3,400.

So it was huge. Belarus had 1,000 or so, and Kazakhstan around 1,500. So those two, the command and control and the danger of nuclear proliferation coming from the likely fall of the Soviet Union.

Amy Nelson:

And you feel President Bush understood these threats acutely as a result of his background and intelligence, for example?

Susan Koch:

Yes. He also had the most extraordinary national security advisor at his right hand in General Brent Scowcroft. They were quite a pair.

Amy Nelson:

Let's talk about the significance of each of the categories of reductions announced in the PNIs. There were tactical nuclear weapons. Some of the initiatives affected strategic nuclear weapons, and then still some affected nuclear alert status. Could you talk about the significance of say the tactical nuclear weapons reductions and eliminations?

Susan Koch:

We should mention that implementation was not what we hoped for from the Russian side. It first ran smoothly and then it did not. We eliminated all of our ground-launched short-range nuclear forces. The Soviets and then the Russians undertook to do the same, but they didn't.

Amy Nelson:

Fully.

Susan Koch:

Fully. They did some, but also the United States removed all nuclear weapons from naval ships, except for submarine-launched ballistic missiles. So mostly cruise missiles. The nuclear Tomahawk cruise missile all removed, half were destroyed and half put in storage. Ultimately under the Obama administration, those in storage were also destroyed. Very little change to air-delivered short-range systems initially.

So the first PNI was September 27th, 1991. In late October, NATO agreed to do, as I recall, the word was substantial reduction in air-delivered weapons. And then publicly it was said that that meant about half. So because of the PNIs, and to this day, our only short-range systems deployed now in Europe are air-delivered weapons that are a small percentage of what they were 30 years ago.

Amy Nelson:

And on the strategic nuclear weapons front, the US through the PNIs canceled planned modernization programs for ICBMs, for example. Could you talk about that?

Susan Koch:

Well, now, some of that I think was another factor behind the PNIs was political reality. Our NATO allies were not much interested in modernizing our systems on their soil, given the end of the Cold War. And Congress was not much interested in funding a lot of new systems. Plus, it's hard to imagine, at least for me now, we had very serious plans to deploy mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles, both the Peacekeeper and the small ICBM.

So the first move was to cancel the mobile small ICBM and Peacekeeper. I do believe Congress was not interested in funding those. Later in the second PNIs in January of '92, the small ICBM was canceled entirely and land silo-based Peacekeeper was limited to 50 missiles.

Amy Nelson:

And then finally, nuclear alert status.

Susan Koch:

Oh yes. The most notable, we took our bombers off alert. They had been on continuous alert since 1957, as anyone who's ever seen the movie Dr. Strangelove is well aware. So on September 28th, 1991, they were off alert. And a colleague of mine, who was then a colonel and retired as a four-star Air Force General, was at I think it was Minot Air Force Base, one of the North Dakota bases.

And he watched the crews come out. There were the bombers on alert, ready to roll, and the crews came out and rolled them back to their hangars. And they had little kind of ceremony, and they have never gone back on alert.

Amy Nelson:

That's quite significant. So reducing the readiness of strategic forces, this is an arms control 101 course. Talk about how that's viewed as stabilizing and why.

Susan Koch:

Well, I go back to Strangelove. There's always the possibility of an accident. And also it's a very visible signal known to everybody. I actually spent my college years in a very small town in Massachusetts, that while a very small town was seven miles from the second-largest strategic air command base in the country, the East Coast headquarters of Strategic Air Command, and the B-52s were in the sky all the time because they were on alert. It was constant.

So there's safety. There's a political gesture of goodwill. The US government has never gone to de-alerting our land-based ICBMs. Now, that has been a frequent aim of many arms control advocates, but that for us was a bridge too far. And all administrations have agreed. Now, it's not part of the PNIs, but in 1994, we did de-target our ICBMs. Now, again, that's political and that was a mutual... We and the Russians both agreed to do it.

And it meant you had no targeting information in... I'm a political scientist, so I don't know how things work, but no automatic targeting information. It would have to be put back in. And for Minuteman, I think it was they had to have some targeting information. So the targeting information was into the broad ocean area. I don't know if the Russians still do the same thing.

Amy Nelson:

Hard to verify.

Susan Koch:

Impossible to verify. At the time in 1994, we trusted each other.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah, hard to imagine that today.

Susan Koch:

Yes.

Amy Nelson:

Absolutely. All right, thank you. I want to turn to the reciprocal Russian measure that followed. Gorbachev initially announced parallel reductions that were later carried out by Yeltsin after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And these, of course, included the withdrawal of Soviet tactical nuclear weapons from Eastern Europe, as well as some other locations, the dismantlement or destruction of many Soviet nuclear warheads, and a reduction in strategic forces, including the decommissioning of certain ICBMs and heavy bombers.

This expectation of reciprocity worked out pretty well, at least in theory, in the announcement of it. Can you talk about the US government's reaction to the Soviet announcements?

Susan Koch:

We couldn't believe it. The reciprocity was a last-minute add to the PNIs. It came from Office of the Secretary of Defense. It was phrased initially as a challenge, which tells you something about we were in a transitional time. The word challenge was dropped quite quickly, but certainly we did not...

Those of us who went to Moscow a week after the announcement to try and persuade them to do something, we had very low expectations. We were flabbergasted, pleasantly so. I'm glad that we didn't know at the time that they wouldn't be... They were really implemented honestly for a year or two.

Amy Nelson:

By the Soviets.

Susan Koch:

Yeah.

Amy Nelson:

By the Russians. That's fascinating about it being the challenge or the reciprocity being a last-minute add-on. I didn't know that.

Susan Koch:

May I? I'm sorry. I at least found it wonderful reading the transcripts of the Bush-Gorbachev discussions of the PNIs before they were announced, where actually the two of them worked out the language that Bush would use that night to describe the Soviet reaction, which was...

I don't have it in front of me and I haven't committed to memory, but it was basically General Secretary Gorbachev said his government needed to discuss it, but their initial reaction was positive. Words to that effect. It's so funny to read the transcript, and then you have the transcript of the speech. And yeah, they're the same words. Heads of government as action officers.

Amy Nelson:

We talked a little bit about the significance of the PNIs for nuclear risk reduction. Could you talk about the legacy of that concept in US policy since that time?

Susan Koch:

The background is, nearest I know or recall, of course, the concern with nuclear risk reduction really dates from the Cuban Missile Crisis. The first little step you have is the hotline to have some form of communication, which was a fax. Oh no, it wasn't even a fax machine. It wasn't a fax machine until the '80s. It was low-tech, but it was a step. But the concern just grew leaps and bounds with the coup, and with Ukraine's Declaration of Independence in 1991.

The concern, as we mentioned, about both proliferation and command and control. Tremendous overlap between the two, but also each one is broader. And then we get in December of 91, the Nunn-Lugar program, later called Cooperative Threat Reduction. In a sense, I guess the name says it all. It's interesting, I don't know if people know, the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers, which were established just I think at the entry into force of the INF Treaty for the data exchange.

Is my memory correct here? Well, the proposal for the Risk Reduction Centers came from the Senate Armed Services Committee, and particularly from the then chair Sam Nunn. It was the first project I was given when I was first on detail to OSD in the early '80s. So this had been a concern of the senator for a very long time. And just everybody really believed him by '91.

Amy Nelson:

Tell me about that detail to OSD. This was one of your first jobs?

Susan Koch:

It was my first policy job. I had been an academic. My field was French regional politics. And then I was a CIA analyst supposedly for one year, but I never went back to academia. And my field was West European politics. So Ron Lehman, who was in OSD policy at the time, requested that I come on detail to work for him to advise him on the European politics of intermediate-range nuclear force deployments in the year of the missile 1983.

And so that was my introduction to arms control. And I didn't go back to the agency and I still follow French politics, but not nearly as closely as I used to.

Amy Nelson:

Fascinating. Thank you. All right. Dr. Koch, oftentimes plans for arms control treaties or initiatives differ at their inception or this inception of the idea relative to what you get in the end. The PNIs were no exception. In this case, there was a difference between what the President wanted and what he got in the end. Are you familiar with any of that lore?

Susan Koch:

Not at all. Not from the US policy perspective.

Amy Nelson:

Minor refinements, the retention of B61 nuclear bombs in storage, some naval tactical nuclear weapons retained in inactive storage as a hedge.

Susan Koch:

Oh, that was the SLCMs, submarine-launched cruise missile. Absolutely. That was a compromise. I don't know that the President was that specific about what he wanted, but the Joint Staff proposal was for submarine-launched cruise missiles to do what ultimately happened, which was eliminate them all. And OSD policy said no.

Amy Nelson:

Because?

Susan Koch:

Again, I'd have to read my own monograph to remember the details. And I think OSD policy wanted to keep them all and keep them deployed. And as I recall, it was Secretary Cheney who said okay. It was a Solomonic decision for what the DOD proposal back to the President would be, which was remove all, keep half in storage.

Amy Nelson:

Fascinating.

Susan Koch:

The B61, the only warhead discussion that I'm aware of was another one where, hey, it was just acceptance of reality. And that was the end to W88 production, the submarine-launched ballistic missile warhead. Because W88 was produced at Rocky Flats and the Environmental Protection Agency had shut down Rocky Flats because of horrendous pollution. So we added an end to W88 production in the second PNI. The production had already ceased. I'm sounding cynical. I don't mean to sound cynical.

Amy Nelson:

Interesting. You're fine. So this debate about removing submarine-launched cruise missiles, it sounds like it had been settled, right? We moved on to eliminate them completely under Obama and they're back now. Do you have thoughts on the return of the submarine-launched cruise missile?

Susan Koch:

I mean, this is Susan Koch, who has no role whatsoever in anything. I am actually a great supporter of this.

Amy Nelson:

Of redeploying.

Susan Koch:

Because the tremendous disparity in short-range systems between us and the Russians. If anyone wanted to redeploy ground-launched short-range systems, if the US wanted those to be nuclear, I don't know who would accept them. Possibly Korea. But then the impact that would have would be great. Whereas SLCM can be anywhere without knowledge of its location. So for extended deterrence, I think SLCM is quite important at a time when our extended deterrence commitment is subject to question.

Amy Nelson:

The Navy wasn't too fond of SLCM then and they aren't now.

Susan Koch:

Understood. Understood.

Amy Nelson:

Do you have thoughts on that?

Susan Koch:

Well, if I could think of an alternative to reinforce our extended deterrence capabilities. From an arms control and proliferation standpoint, everybody forgot that extended deterrence was one of the key pillars of the NPT at the time it was signed. But unfortunately in recent years, we have had cause to be reminded of that.

Amy Nelson:

Absolutely. I want to pivot a little bit. We talk a lot in the field of arms control about the need for formal treaties with provisions for verification. Was verification not an issue here? Were there concerns about verification of the Soviet's announcements?

Susan Koch:

Not at all. And the Presidents had signed the START I at the time, START I, then just became START Treaty -- just two months earlier in July of '91. The INF Treaty was a couple of years before, of course, covered 500 kilometer range, between 500 and 5,500. We did not know how we could verify short-range systems. And I don't think we were ready for the kind of intrusive verification that would be required.

Views started changing in the '90s, particularly with the access we had under CTR over time. So we just couldn't imagine ability to verify, but thought, and we were right for a while, that the Soviets and then the Russians agreed with us about how important it was to... In the first place, of course, they always agreed to get the short-range systems out of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Well, Ukraine and Belarus. Kazakhstan had almost none Ukraine and Belarus agreed that their shorter range warheads would be transferred to Russia in May of '92. And it seems quite clear that the PNIs were essential to that. Because they had confidence that by doing that, they were not just strengthening the Russian arsenal.

Amy Nelson:

Terrific. Pivoting again, Dr. Koch, we talked about how Russians didn't complete their implementation. They may not have fully dismantled their stockpiles of tactical nuclear weapons. Indeed, reports suggested that Russia retained or deployed certain tactical nuclear weapons in subsequent years, especially as relations with NATO and the US deteriorated with NATO expansion. Could you talk about that a little bit, please?

Susan Koch:

I don't see that NATO expansion had much to do with it. And I can really only talk about when I was directly involved. I left government in the very beginning of the Obama administration, but I was particularly directly involved in the '90s. And here, there becomes a real overlap between the PNIs and the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, if I could.

And when we first discussed Nunn-Lugar program with the Russians in January of '92, just PNI time as well and real concern about command and control, we did not talk to the Russians about the security of nuclear warheads. We talked about security of material, and particularly security of material that would be freed up by the dismantlement of warheads under the PNIs. But we thought it was a bridge too far to talk to them, way too sensitive to talk about warhead security.

They came to us in the summer of '95, because by then we had been working together very well. Trust was building up. And it was the head of the 12th Main Directorate of the Ministry of Defense, the part of the ministry responsible for warhead security, one Lieutenant General named Evgeny Maslin came to us asking for help with warhead security and saying, "Because you are not the enemy, proliferation is."

Amy Nelson:

Wow!

Susan Koch:

And Evgeny, bless his heart, believed that to the end of his life. It was great. Those were great times. I'm glad we didn't know they wouldn't last. But the 12th Main Directorate starting with Maslin and then his successors were very concerned about warhead security in general. I'm trying to think because they wanted some new storage sites and they wanted us to help with the security for those new storage sites.

And the more I think about it, this was the late '90s by then, and we were wondering about why are they putting these sites there, but there was never any hint of the concern about NATO expansion. There's a lot of noise in the air about how opposed the Russians were. I sure never heard it.

Amy Nelson:

You didn't experience it.

Susan Koch:

Not at all, and that's why I brought up what Maslin said. And now beyond expansion to include the former GDR, East Germany, you don't have the addition of new members until '99 probably. But it was pretty obvious what was happening. We had Partnership for Peace, which was really a training ground for new members, and the Russians were involved too. It wasn't a source of tension, not in my world at least.

Amy Nelson:

Interesting. And Dr. Koch, for you, what would you say looking back on it is the ultimate lesson of PNI?

Susan Koch:

That's hard. That's hard. An easy question is, do I foresee returns of the PNIs, something like the PNIs in the future, or finish what we started? That would be good. And I can't foresee that. Although I think if there's one thing I've learned in being in this business since, what, 1982 or 3, never say never. Because certainly in the '80s it never occurred to me... Well, we were being told

that, hey, we were asking for extensive verification for the INF Treaty because we really didn't want the treaty and we knew the Soviets would never accept it.

Well, guess what? So never say never. But still, even with the extensive verification of INF and START, it never occurred to me that I would be trotting around these super secret Soviet nuclear cities or bases like the SSBN base at Severodvinsk, where they were building the Typhoon submarine undercover so we couldn't see how big it was, et cetera. And then we had a Nunn-Lugar project to cut up the Typhoon. I never ever thought that would happen. And during those days, I never thought we would be where we are now. So maybe it can get good again.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah, striking how much the world can change and hoping it changes for the better. I want to shift a little bit to talking about PNI in the context of the arms control momentum that had been building. PNI in a way built on the START Treaty and led to or PNI 2 then led to START II, could you first talk about your role in all of these initiatives? And second, talk about the value of this kind of continuum or momentum in the arms control process.

Susan Koch:

Well, I think there's no question about the momentum. I mean, first, I was an action officer, and then I still in the later '80s was the principal director for nuclear forces and arms control policy in OSD, and then I went to ACDA. I had a seat at the table as opposed to against the wall. I mean, INF was a surprise, although it was building when...

One of the great coincidences of history because recall that when we started deploying INF missiles in late '83 in Europe, the Soviets walked out of the INF negotiations and the START negotiations, assuming we would say, "Oh, well, we're sorry and we'll stop. Just please come back to Geneva." And of course, we kept on deploying.

So in January of '85, they agreed, okay, we will start up INF, START, and new defense and space negotiations. We started in March of '85. Also in March of '85, General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko died and was succeeded by one Mikhail Gorbachev the same month. Coincidental, but very helpful.

Amy Nelson:

Fortuitous.

Susan Koch:

Fortuitous is exactly the word because he made a huge difference. Would the old guard have done INF? Probably not.

Amy Nelson:

So you have this really intense and cumulative process of arms control that's largely personality driven or leadership driven.

Susan Koch:

I mean, leadership driven was very, very, very important. But also there was just a lot of detailed work. I mean, the details of the INF and START verification because we didn't trust them one inch. So we had verification measures about inches and meters. But you really have, I mean, you have INF, and then you have START. You now also have teams on each side that also work together. When we arrived in Moscow in October '91 to talk about PNIs, they were the same people we had worked with on START and INF. So we all knew each other. That helped a lot.

Amy Nelson:

There's a lot of concern about losing that capacity, that infrastructure within the Department of Defense right now, for example, absent existing treaties, but also pending the New START's termination date.

Susan Koch:

As near as I know, and I'm not close to it, when... This is self-serving in a sense, because I think OSD policy had a really first-rate arms control shop back in the day. But that was under Bush 43, under Secretary Rumsfeld, that arms control shop was taken away and it's not been rebuilt. That's very hard to rebuild. I mean, even from my perspective in ACDA and then on the NSC staff, the arms control people in OSD were good.

Thank heaven that CTR Nunn-Lugar was put in OSD, which I assume was first done because of money. You realize, Nunn-Lugar started with a $400 million authorization and no appropriation. So Secretary Cheney agreed to take $400 million out of hide, out of the DOD budget for the first two years of the program. But not only did they have the money, they had people.

And you had the arms control inspectors who had been on the ground and knew the ground and knew people at the Soviet bases. So it was very important.

Amy Nelson:

A lot of value in that.

Susan Koch:

A lot of value in that.

Amy Nelson:

Well, my last question, I guess, would be what pearls of wisdom do you have on arms control treaty negotiation? Are there any best practices or processes or I don't want to say tricks, but ways of progressing negotiations that you've discovered throughout your career?

Susan Koch:

One of the greatest advantages, but we don't have it now, so I hesitate to mention, is this concept of team building, which I suppose I may have experienced. This is now personal anecdote time if that's okay. For no good reason, our first Cooperative Threat Reduction umbrella agreement, which was required to for all the rules of the road for the program signed in June of '92, this was with Russia, had a seven-year duration.

So it was due for renewal in June of '99. The Finance Ministry said, "We want to be able to tax your CTR assistance." The Interior Ministry and the FSB said, "We don't want your audits and examinations of the work going on." Ministry of Justice didn't want privileges and immunities for our CTR workers. And I was facing a Republican majority in Congress, which would kill us if we gave up any of that.

My lawyer and I started meeting with colleagues from the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Atomic Energy, and the Ministry of Defense, ourpartner agencies, and they worked out a proposal, very creative proposal. If we could live with it,they would try and sell their ministers on it and have their ministers take it to the cabinet and the President.

It worked. We were a last minute signature. We actually had to change the time of day that the agreement would expire. I'm not kidding. You just worked together. It took decades for those kind of relationships to develop. So you can't expect to start them. But I guess just being open to compromise, being open to trying to find ways around where both sides' interests could be accommodated.

Amy Nelson:

Does that mean not letting suspicion and mistrust creep in?

Susan Koch:

Well, Reagan was right about trust, but verify. And unfortunately, trust, it's going to be a hard time for trust to be rebuilt.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah, it's going to take a while

Susan Koch:

On both sides.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah, absolutely. You've said that you're particularly proud of the START II Treaty or your work on it. Is that your proudest accomplishment in here?

Susan Koch:

Well, no, I wouldn't say I was proud of it. It's my favorite treaty.

Amy Nelson:

Your favorite treaty. Why is that?

Susan Koch:

I mean, I worked on it from the NSC staff perspective, so I was involved in some of the final big deal compromises. I mean, particularly to look at where we are now, the core of START II was first to reduce overall warhead levels from well below START I levels, but most important to get

rid of MIRV, multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle ICBMs, because we had long believed they were destabilizing.

The Russians bought it. They agreed with us that they were destabilizing. I remember having a conversation around 2015, yeah, 2015, with a Russian former colleague, and we were at a conference together. And I said something about de-MIRVing was a good idea all those years ago, and it's still a good idea. And he just nodded. It was not the position of his government.

And it was amazing how... START I took a decade. START II was basically proposed on January 28th, 1992, and it was signed on January 3rd, 1993. So it was a very easy negotiation. There were some tough issues, but we were working together. We had the common goal, and it was strategic stability as opposed to get those Russian numbers down. And also, START II is a lesson in how to do a presidential transition.

Beginning of November '92, there's still a lot to be decided, and President Bush loses the election. Of course, the incoming team had no veto, but we also wanted to make certain that they supported the treaty because they were the ones who were going to have to shepherd it through the Senate. We were on the phone constantly for any... And I knew I would've been fired if I hadn't picked up the phone when we were, hey, we're thinking of this move.

How do you react? And they were careful on their side too about what was proper. The treaty was signed on January 3rd. The Clinton team strongly supported President Bush signing that treaty as opposed to saying, "I want my guy to sign this treaty." I don't want to sound cynical, but we took it for granted. Among other things, they did not want the treaty to be lost in the chaos of a transition, friendly transition, but chaotic nonetheless. So it was signed on January 3rd.

We got the package to the Senate before the 20th of January. I can't remember the exact date. It was like the 19th or maybe the 18th. It was all ready before the Senate. What it said about shared strategic goals by a former adversary and now a partner, what it would have done. I mean, can you imagine what the Russian ICBM force would look like if there were still a START II Treaty in force? What it was like for domestic politics. And of course, it never came into force, but that's a whole other and sadder story.

Amy Nelson:

Could you talk about what it was like to be a woman in such a male dominated field?

Susan Koch:

It was a joy compared to what it was like being the only woman in a 30-person academic department. I mean, this is actually true. I really didn't see it as an issue. I saw it a bit when I was at CIA, so maybe that's just kind of time and tide. CIA was the one time where I was passed over for a promotion because I was a woman. I mean, it was pretty obvious. It was because I was a woman.

The promoter made it clear. I expected it would be a real problem in the Pentagon. Never really felt it. Now, it wasn't a problem because my dealings with the Russian military were closest under Nunn-Lugar. And I think I was kind of an honorary man because I had money, and this is embarrassing to say, and also because at the time I smoked. So I smoked with my male buddies.

Perhaps I'm being naive, but I don't think so. I really didn't feel it. And of course, well, now I have younger colleagues call me a pioneer and it's like, oh dear, put on the bonnet. I mean, it's

great to see that there are now so many. There were always a few of us, but there are now many more.

Amy Nelson:

Absolutely. You've had such an impressive career, Dr. Koch.

Susan Koch:

I've been lucky.

Amy Nelson:

What are you proudest of?

Susan Koch:

I don't know that I'm proudest. I certainly got the greatest sense of satisfaction from the work we did in Nunn-Lugar. And I suppose it's sad to say given what happened eventually, but the denuclearization of Ukraine, that was hard. Well, and actually I'm one of those people who say thank God, because I cannot imagine what it would be like if Ukraine still had all those warheads and all the fissile material.

It took many years later that they got rid of their fissile material. That feeling of making a difference was very strong. And then I guess the most satisfactory job I had was being in Bush 41 NSC staff from late '91 through early '93, because that was the most extraordinary time. Thinking like all of a sudden, we had the Nunn-Lugar program.

Depending on your point of view, it was either given to us by the Congress or foisted on us by the Congress, but none of us had ever done anything like this. And there were poison pills in the legislation designed to prevent the program from ever starting.

Amy Nelson:

Interesting.

Susan Koch:

And I chaired the interagency group that set it up. And also, courtesy of the DOD General Counsel at the time came a way of, I'm going mix metaphors, of defanging the poison pills so that we could get the program underway. Because this was not the kind of thing we had ever done, and that was exciting. And START II was exciting.

And oh, by the way, in our spare time, we did the Chemical Weapons Convention because that was signed in January of '93 as well. We didn't get any sleep, but it was very rewarding. And that's, for me, what this has all been about was the sense of making a difference. And I don't want to overstate my role, God knows, but that you've done what you could to help.

Amy Nelson:

Any words of advice for those interested in arms control and non-proliferation efforts today?

Susan Koch:

Go for it. Because one of my greatest concerns, and we touched on it briefly, was the... People like me are disappearing. But also, I mean, we just do not have the people, the expertise that we had before. And the thing is I think I'm an example of somebody you can... On the job training can happen. That's one of the things I found most rewarding in my career was my ability to change issue areas, but gradually so that I always had a bit of grounding, but I never thought I'd do arms control.

And when I was doing arms control, I never thought I'd be concerned about Iran and North Korea do more proliferation than not. Those are real opportunities. And I just hope the system can recognize that this is really important and it's not just a thing of the past. And my only other advice other than be lucky is take a risk. One of the first jobs I took was the safe job. It was also the worst job I ever took. And every job since then was risky and worked.

Amy Nelson:

A new issue area. A new domain.

Susan Koch:

Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly. And so all the more satisfying because of that.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much. I've learned so much today. I thoroughly enjoyed the conversations.

Susan Koch:

I hope I haven't talked too much. It's been fun.

Amy Nelson:

Do you have any additional questions? Wonderful. Thank you.

Susan Koch:

Thank you. Thanks for what you're doing, speaking of keeping the fires burning or whatever the appropriate analogy is.

Amy Nelson:

The project moving forward as best we can.

Susan Koch:

Thanks for asking me.

Amy Nelson:

Absolutely.

(END)