

FDCH Political Transcripts

August 3, 2005 Wednesday

**TYPE:** NEWS CONFERENCE

**LENGTH:** 5807 words

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**SPEAKER:**

FORMER U.S. SENATOR WARREN RUDMAN AND FORMER U.S. REPRESENTATIVE LEE HAMILTON

**LOCATION:** WASHINGTON, D.C.

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**SPEAKERS:** FORMER U.S. SENATOR WARREN RUDMAN (R-NH)

FORMER U.S. REPRESENTATIVE LEE HAMILTON (D-IN)

JAMIE METZL,  
CO-CHAIRMAN, PARTNERSHIP FOR A SECURE AMERICA

CHALES ANDRAEA,  
CO-CHAIRMAN, PARTNERSHIP FOR A SECURE AMERICA

RUDMAN: I think I'll leave the prepared remarks aside, because really the heart of what we're trying to do has been very well- explained by these two very young men sitting to my left.

You know, when I was asked to join in this effort, it's at the point in my life where I'm trying to slow down, not increase. But I don't think there's anything more important than this because, although we have great issues of substance which face us, I think the process, in many ways, needs more attention -- the process of how we get things done in a democratic country.

RUDMAN: We are facing enormous problems, not only the ones that we see currently, but long-term: our economic viability, the future of this economy, our energy supplies, looking at what's happening around the world, and homeland security, the war on terrorism which evidently has a new name lately, but whatever.

I have seen a deterioration in the ability to work across the aisle from when I first entered the United States Senate in 1981, under the leadership of then Howard Baker and, I believe, Robert Byrd.

I am particularly pleased to serve with Lee Hamilton. We shared leadership in the now-famous or infamous Iran-Contra affair. We conducted those hearings over a long period of time in the Russell Caucus Room. I got to know Lee very well.

RUDMAN: And as I said to him just before we came in here, it was always very interesting -- we'd have a raging debate, it would in the committee. And at the very end a very quiet voice from Indiana would then sum it up and tell us what we really ought to do. And we normally followed his advice.

So I am very, very glad to serve with him.

Now I'm sure many of you will ask: What are your probabilities of success?

Obviously, what we want to do is to issue a number of papers on specific positions and try to build bipartisan support.

The simple answer is: I don't know. But I do know that it's worth trying. There is nothing that is worth doing that is necessarily easy. That has been my experience in life.

The more laudatory the objective, the more difficult the terrain to traverse to get to that objective.

RUDMAN: It's true in war and it's true in politics.

And so I certainly hope that, with this extraordinary group of people that have been recruited to join this effort and to work with us, that hopefully people pay attention.

I thank all of you for coming here this morning, because the only way that we will get done what we wish to get done is if, by word of mouth and through the American media, people understand that there is a group now here in Washington trying to promote what the American people seem to say they want. And that is bipartisanship, particularly in these critical issues. Not to say there won't be partisan divides; there always have been in this republic and there always will be.

The question is: How is that partisanship conducted? How personal and bitter does it get? Or how professional can it become?

That's essentially what we're about here. And I've worked with both of these young men on my left, and I know that they will give this great leadership and great guidance. And I look forward to working with Lee, who will now speak to you.

Thank you very much.

HAMILTON: Thank you, Warren.

Good morning. One of these days I'll set up a public official hall of fame. And when I do, Warren Rudman will be voted into that hall of fame on the first ballot, because he's had such an extraordinary career and has been a delight to work with in a number of capacities.

Warren and I are both pleased to work with an extraordinarily distinguished list of Americans in this project. And I think he and I are both very pleased to work with Jamie and Chip.

Warren and I know that, for any organization to succeed, the very first requirement is a good staff. And we have that with spades to spare with Jamie and Chip.

I began serving in the Congress in 1965. And the environment at that time, as I recall it, on Foreign Affairs, was very much a bipartisan environment. And that environment carried forward for a good many of my years in the Congress.

And if you look back for a moment at American foreign policy, the great achievements for example, of American foreign policy in the years following World War II, when we had a bipartisan effort to set up all of the institutions, really, that served us so very well during the 50 or more years of the Cold War period -- I don't want to suggest here that bipartisanship means that you don't debate policies.

HAMILTON: We understand that they're going to be differences in points of view, some of which will break upon party lines. But that debate should be free of rancor and it should be focused on the national interests to the United States.

If you poll the American people about words that are often used in politics, the word "bipartisanship" has 100 percent approval. If you're going to give a speech, make sure you work into that speech somewhere "bipartisan," because the American people approve of that. It has a 100 percent rating because it resonates with the American people.

Two questions: Why is bipartisanship important?

Well, it's a very simple answer, and that is bipartisanship is important because American foreign policy is more robust, more effective, is stronger when this nation speaks with a single voice. That was true during that post World War II period and it is true today.

And I believe that the great successes -- and there are a lot of them -- of American foreign policy, over the past several decades, the great successes were those where the nation spoke in a bipartisan way with the a unified voice.

A second question is a lot tougher to answer, and that is: How do you achieve it? How do you achieve bipartisanship?

We could talk about that for a good part of the morning. I'll make several very quick observations.

The president and the C ongress have to understand their respective roles, their respective powers, their respective limitations under the constitutional system under which we operate.

Just by way of illustration, the president and the Congress make foreign policy. The president carries out foreign policy. That's a very important distinction to keep in mind, and it's one of the rules of the road, if you will, that you should follow in developing a bipartisan foreign policy.

The second rule would be that the president and the Congress and all of us, really, have to have mutual respect for one another. Carl Albert was speaker of the House for a good many years. And one of the things he said to me on the floor one afternoon, he said, "Lee, don't ever forget that every single member of this institution was elected by the same number of people that elected you, and that means that you must always show that person a deep and abiding respect."

HAMILTON: That was good advice for me and I think it's good advice for all of us as we try to conduct American foreign policy. We disagree, we debate, sometimes sharply. There are very difficult issues after all. But you do it in the context of having a mutual respect for your adversary.

And, finally, the president and the Congress and all of us must place the national interest ahead of any partisan interest and agree that U.S. leadership, U.S. engagement is necessary to advance the national interests of the United States.

And if we all focus on the national interest, it doesn't necessarily mean we're all going to agree. But it certainly limits the amount of disagreement if you are focused on the single-most important thing in the conduct of American foreign policy which is to try to advance the American national interest.

All of us who are on this advisory commission are proud to have served in our respective political parties. We are partisans. But the defense of America and the national interest of America should rise above those political concerns.

In the 9/11 Commission, we looked back to the great challenges of the 20th century. We did so in order to try to look forward to the great challenges of the 21st century. That's

what we want to do through this organization.

We feel that this organization can make a very substantial contribution because of the wide range of people that are included among us, because of the sophisticated means that Jamie and Chip will bring to our organization. And it will be a high personal pleasure for me to work with Warren and to work with the other members of the advisory group and, of course, to work with Jamie and Chip.

And I'll turn this back over to Chip at this point.

(UNKNOWN): Thank you, Congressman.

We're now going to open up to questions.

QUESTION: I'm trying to get a grasp on why this is happening. I'm hearing an emphasis on bipartisanship. I would have assumed that if you form a new group to write and worry and speak about security, you have some concern that we're heading off in the wrong direction or incompletely, at least, addressing the problem.

QUESTION: So does what the administration doing need fixing, or are you a sounding board to amplify the theme, "Stand behind the president, no matter what your politics are"? I don't understand, frankly, why this is coming about.

I'm hearing a lot about bipartisanship. Most of the people who protect such things as civil liberties and other abuses are not a broad -- they're usually aggressive dissenters. They're not part of some mass bloc of people who just shake their head, "Go ahead, I agree with you."

(UNKNOWN): Thank you.

First in terms just of the timing of this organization forming, this organization is not formed in specific response to an individual issue or a point in time today. This revolves around conversations that go back almost a year and a half, two years, for many of us who have focused.

And all those that sit behind this table, in different fashions -- some of us have sat farther behind the table on occasion, behind these two gentlemen -- have seen the benefits of bipartisan debate, discussion and then finally some agreement reached on foreign policy issues, and some very tenacious, difficult issues that we as a country have faced over many, many years.

We have seen the logistical side, the actual debate, the actual discussions that we see in the bodies of the Senate and the House which before provided a forum, and a positive forum and a solid forum for debate, that some of that debate has lost its ability to move in an aggressive and positive fashion.

Senator Rudman do you want to make a comment, or Congressman?

RUDMAN: I would only say it would be a mistake to particularly identify what we're doing with a particular issue. The one that you referred to, that is only one. There is a broad range of things which both Lee Hamilton and I have come to the conclusion after, you know, a lot of thought before we joined this, that there was an era in which there was as much contention, but eventually they could build consensus.

There is a very personal nature to much of this debate today which many of us think is inappropriate. You can certainly have strong disagreement and eventually reach consensus without some of the things that we have seen, without particularly citing any of them, but you all know what I'm talking about.

(UNKNOWN): I also think that there is consensus in foreign policy, that we don't always see it because we focus on the debate, as we should, in terms of the policy development.

But I think our group has a responsibility to highlight where there is agreement, where there is consensus.

We have seen instances with Nunn-Lugar where you had very difficult, contentious issues, with Republicans and Democrats joining together to form a position that ultimately led to over a decade of a policy initiative which has engaged, for the most part, in a forward-moving position in foreign policy.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask Mr. Rudman and Mr. Hamilton, four years ago we had a very partisan foreign policy. "Who needs allies, especially old Europe? Clinton had bombed in the Middle East, or failed to succeed. Therefore, we'll wash our hands of it."

That was four years ago. In his second term, Bush has been all over Europe, Condi Rice has her mahogany desk onboard an airplane and has been to the Middle East.

What in the seven points in your ad is there partisan disagreement between the vice president and Harry Reid? What, today -- aside from the labor provisions of the CAFTA agreement -- what, today, is a highly contentious partisan issue that bothers you that we need consensus on, except maybe the national debt?

RUDMAN: Well, I think I can answer that very simply. I think there is a huge partisan divide right now. And I think it will go through this administration, and most likely into the next, on the whole issue of Iraq and the Middle East.

That is a very, very highly charged, partisan debate which has continued unabated since the presidential campaign.

And what we are saying is that, fine, there were strongly held views, but there has to be a better way to draw people together to form a consensus that gets the support of the American people behind whatever the policy is.

There is one thing that is apparent to anyone on either side of this debate right now, and that is that the support of the American people for the policy in Iraq -- whether you agree or disagree -- is starting to slip and erode.

That is not good for anyone. I mean, this country cannot have a major foreign policy initiative without the support of the American people. You only get the support of the American people if you have more consensus-building between people who lead.

I would point to that as an example.

QUESTION: The Iraq...

RUDMAN: I don't want to argue about it. That's my answer.

QUESTION: Democrats are not saying "Quit Iraq."

RUDMAN: You and I can talk about that for a long time. And I'm not saying who's right and who's wrong, but there is a huge divide between the two sides as to how to handle this -- a huge divide. And, in my view, the debate coming out of the presidential campaign has been less than what it ought to be in terms of substance.

QUESTION: If you look at the points on the board there, several of yours -- more emphasis on allies, more emphasis on alternative energy, reducing the deficit, controlling the debt -- would seem to point in a different direction than the priorities of the administration.

Is this a critique? Should this be seen as a call for a change in direction on the part of President Bush?

HAMILTON: My answer to that is no. I don't think the motivating factor behind what Warren and I are doing here is to sharply criticize the Bush administration or any particular action the Bush administration has taken.

What we see is an environment in the city -- that is, I guess, conventional wisdom here -- that is highly partisan. And we think that we can do it better -- there's a better way to do it, particularly with regard to American foreign policy issues.

HAMILTON: And not only must the process be improved, but the result will be better if you improve the process, because the country will be more unified.

Now, we talk in here about the advantages of multilateralism, but we also say that there are times when you have to act by yourself. And we're not always going to agree what times you act by yourself, what times you act in a multilateral capacity. But the manner in which, the process in which, as Warren said a little earlier, that you go about making that decision is very, very important, because the result will be better if you work together.

There are a lot of other things here that are very controversial. We come out strongly here about resources for first responders. That's a huge debate right now in the Congress, how you distribute those resources. And we think that through a bipartisan process you can come to a better answer on that question than thus far has been developed by the Congress and the president.

So it's not a matter of dissatisfaction with any particular policy that's pulling us together here. Rather, it is a feeling that we as a country can do better by having a more respectful process, less rancor and less partisanship.

Now, we understand that we're talking at a time when the environment is probably as highly partisan as any time that Warren and I can remember. And that, I think, as much as anything, drives the formation of this effort.

QUESTION: I can applaud your approach. The problem is the people who are making the policy and the ones who are setting the atmosphere that you're against are the ones who are in power, the ones who have to get reelected. And they have the larger voice and they also have the partisan interest of basically getting elected and pushing their agenda.

I'm worried about you guys being heard and how you think that you can influence the atmosphere when the people with the power might not listen.

RUDMAN: Well, it's thus been ever so. That is not particularly anything that is unique to the era that we live in.

I think one of the most instructive things those of you interested in the issue can do is to read the history, 1945 to 1955. And there was great contention about the United Nations, about the Marshall Plan, about NATO and a number of other things.

If you go back and read the biographies of the people who made those things happen and you read the histories, you will find that the way they all happened was because, although there was substantial disagreement, both sides understood that there had to be a policy to take the world from where it was post-World War II to where it would be as we sit here today.

And I would submit to you that all of the factors that you you've just described in your question were present then.

RUDMAN: In fact, the most interesting thing is, at that time the Republican Party was very much a minority -- although a very effective minority in some ways -- in both the House and the Senate, and you had President Roosevelt, who had been in office, and then Truman, for a very long period of time.

And yet, without a bipartisan approach to those four key issues, they probably would not have get done. They weren't the kind of things that one party could ram through the

Congress.

And so I'd just say to you that it's been done before and it can be done again.

HAMILTON: Let me try to be as specific as I can with regard to the advantages of a bipartisan approach.

From my perspective, at least, one of the really great failures of American foreign policy over the past several decades is our failure to have energy independence.

We have not resolved the question of how in this country we can have independence from certain regions of the world that are the big oil producers. And because we have not resolved that, we have all kinds of deep, deep difficulties in the conduct of our policy.

OK. I got out a speech of mine. I guess you're getting old when you start reading your old speeches. And I began reading a speech of mine I gave on the floor of the House back in the '70s. I could give that exact same speech today on energy, and I don't think I'd have to change a word of it.

OK, how do you solve that problem? Well, we have not solved it, and in part we have not solved it because the partisan divisions have been so great.

And so we put down here in this paper we issued yesterday that achieving energy independence or more efficiency and alternative energies and technology and all the rest is critical.

I believe you can do that if you express mutual respect for one another, if you go at that problem in a bipartisan way. We certainly have not achieved for the past several decades.

RUDMAN: I would point out to you that when the country has faced a crisis, generally speaking when the crisis was very apparent to everyone, and particularly the American people -- 9/11, for instance -- all of a sudden there was great bipartisanship in getting what were perceived to be solutions to the issue at that particular time.

What we're saying, it shouldn't take a 9/11 to build that kind of bipartisan, and it has not in the past.

QUESTION: I read the letters to the editor in my home paper, and they are just as bitterly divided as what we're seeing in Washington.

QUESTION: There was a letter from a young woman talking about how she felt the war in Iraq was built on lies and was completely counter to our national interests, and then responding letters saying that she was a traitor that she was supporting the terrorists and, basically, that she should be run out of the country.

So what is there to be done if to some degree the elected representatives are amplifying

what the people at home are doing, which may be built on the fact that people are getting their news from very partisan outlets these days to a large degree?

RUDMAN: Is that an Indiana newspaper? We don't have those kind of letters to the editor in New Hampshire. ..

(LAUGHTER)

RUDMAN: Lee, do you want to answer that?

(LAUGHTER)

HAMILTON: Look, if you make a pitch for bipartisanship and foreign policy, it does not mean that you're going to agree on all the issues. It doesn't mean that there aren't going to be some issues.

I doubt very much if we can bridge the gap on the Iraq war at this point in time. The country's going to be struggling over that for the next year or two.

What we can do is focus on those issues where we think bipartisanship can be reached -- we think they're a lot of them, we've identified a lot of them up there -- and focus on those.

And I would think that those in power today would welcome the effort we're making, because what we're trying to do is bring together the country on a consensus solution behind some very, very difficult issues. It doesn't mean all issues; it means a lot of important issues. And that's really the -- we're not naive here as to think that we can solve every foreign policy problem with this organization, but we think we can help solve a good many of them.

RUDMAN: I want to also just add to that in a serious vein: It's a very interesting chicken and egg question. I have always thought that with the amazing amount of communication available to people -- all of the cable channels, 24 hours a day, talking heads debating and shouting and screaming at each others, members of Congress doing the same thing with no sense of dignity of the positions they hold -- in many ways, that reflects back on the constituencies who tend to pick up that same cudgel.

So I'm not sure which comes first or whether they happen simultaneously.

QUESTION: If you could both address the process again, not the issues but the process. It has seemed to me over the last year or so that one of the things that's clogging the process is excessive secrecy or the lack of free flow of information.

QUESTION: So I wonder whether, as you tackle the process of achieving more bipartisan consensus, whether that isn't one of the points you're going to need to address?

HAMILTON: I don't know whether we'll address the specific question of classification or declassification down the line or not. I have pretty strong views about that personally but I'm not sure they're shared by everybody on this advisory group.

But the process is important. And from my point of view -- and I'm speaking now personally -- the more open and transparent that process is, the better off you are; recognizing, of course, that dealing with national security issues, there are times when you cannot have an open process.

But in general, I think my answer to your question is it's a very important matter. Accountability is one of the fundamental tenets of representative democracy and you cannot really have accountability unless you have openness and transparency.

QUESTION: I wonder, there's a lot of talk, obviously, about partisanship, but if the divides between the parties are really the most important thing that's been driving a lot of the rancor in the foreign policy debate recently.< BR class=br>

I mean, the Bush administration, as everybody knows, has had a strong neoconservative, sort of, influence on its national security policymaking. And looking at the name of lists of the Republican members of your advisory board, it seems to be drawn pretty exclusively from the more realist tradition which we associate with his father's administration to some extent, with the Reagan administration. And that seems to be a tradition that they need a decision to turn away from, not as a kind of mistake or an act of partisanship but as a considered decision that they wanted to go in a different direction.

The national security strategy that they published refers to international fora and judicial processes as on par with terrorism as tools of the week. And that's a distinctive world view they have. And it seems to me that, insofar as this is a group that disagrees with that, that disagreement even needs to be joined squarely or not, that it's not merely a question of bickering getting in the way of decision-making.

RUDMAN: I find your question very interesting because it, kind of, reminds me, with all due respect, of corporate chiefs who only worry about the results of the next quarter.

I mean, what you said about the administration, you know, some people may agree or disagree with. But this is not our focus. This administration is going to be here forever. No members of Congress are going to be here forever.

The whole political process of this country has always evolved. And we'd like to help that evolution in a way that was positive in terms of bringing people together to build consensus.

Now, that may be very difficult to do with a particular administration or it may be easier with one than with the other. But the fact is that if you look at the list of people, they are all people who generally have shown in their political lives the ability to work across the aisle with people of the other party to achieve things that were important for the country.

So what you may say about this administration, some may agree, some may disagree; I might agree in part, disagree in part. But we're not looking at the next quarter. We're looking at trying to build a platform that will help bring the party together over the long term.

So this is not focused on George Bush's second term as president of the United States. Not at all.

ANDREA: In effect, too, as I said before, and as Jamie's mentioned, this organization is here for the longer term. I mean, we did not pose this in our question to those who wished to join and were able to join us, that we wanted to do this just for a couple of months and see how it goes.

The people that you see on this list are people who have committed their lives to foreign policy and to constructive foreign policy. Many people disagree with some individual decisions that they reached, but no one will suggest that they have not tried to reach consensus, that they've not tried to move forward.

And, Jamie, as the Democrat, may have a conflict at some point because Democrats sometimes want and may even win a presidential election here in the future. But for now, we are looking just at moving this ball forward and staying engaged, trying to focus the attention of people who want to create a process that works and a process that works internally.

HAMILTON: Chip, may I make one further observation?

I think this ad or whatever we call it up there is instructive. We're not putting forward there every foreign policy problem confronting America today. There are all kinds of things left out of that statement.

We don't say a single thing about Iraq, we don't say anything about Iran, we don't say anything about North Korea, and on and on and on.

But what we have said is that in the things that we have pulled together here, you've got to be strong and secure, and that that means a lot more than just military might. It also means that you've got to have a commitment not just to democracy, but also to justice. We think Americans can unite behind that in a bipartisan way.

And you can go down through that entire list: They're very important aspects of American foreign policy and we believe you can get a bipartisan consensus in these areas.

Now, there's a lot left out.

QUESTION: Congressman Hamilton, you suggested that it's important that the president and the Congress understand their respective roles under the Constitution. Are you

concerned that, in fact, that's not the case with either the present administration or certain leadership in the Congress?

HAMILTON: I was trying to set out just some, kind of, some general principles. Going back in my own experience over a period of decades, it seems to me that oftentimes the deep splits that will arise between the president and the Congress come about because they lack mutual respect for one another or they just don't understand their roles under the Constitution.

It's not easy to make the Constitution of the United States work. It's very tough work, very hard work.

But one of the premises for making it work is that you have to understand that the Congress of the United States does not carry out American foreign policy; that's not its role. And therefore, when the Congress gets involved in telling the president how to conduct American foreign policy, it's overstepping its constitutional role.

QUESTION: Congressman Hamilton and Senator Rudman, you've emphasized the need for a clear and unified voice on U.S. foreign policy. Do you think there's actual clear and tangible effects on how the U.S. foreign policy is interpreted overseas -- you know, for example, possibly progress in Iraq or our vulnerability here -- or is it simply making these processes more difficult?

HAMILTON: Well, my view on that is that it's very hard to get policymakers to articulate American foreign policy and to articulate it clearly and concisely. And that's not a shot aimed at President Bush. It really goes back for a good many years.

Presidents do not like to articulate American foreign policy unless they have to. And the reason they don't like to do it is because it's very, very hard to do. You're speaking to a lot of different constituencies out there, and language really counts.

My view -- and I spent a good part of my career in Congress trying to get policymakers, Republican and Democrat, to articulate what the policy was -- and it's not as easy as it looks, either to articulate it or to get them to articulate it.

And so I think it's a very important part of the conduct of American policy that policy be clearly understood and clearly articulated.

RUDMAN: I would just add to the last part of your question, I have a sense that people overseas and to some extent people in this country don't have a clear understanding of what the overall foreign policy of this country is, for many of the reasons that Lee just outlined. I think, depending on where you travel in the world, you get wholly different views and many times mistaken views of what our policy actually is.

HAMILTON: Let me tell you how extreme I am on this point. I once argued, rather naively, that a president of the United States should never speak on foreign policy unless

he did it from a prepared script.

(LAUGHTER)

Now, I believe that would be best for American foreign policy.

You folks won't let that happen...

(LAUGHTER)

... because you're after him, and that's understandable. You want more and more information.

But when presidents begin to speak -- or anybody, secretaries and high levels -- begin to speak off the cuff on a foreign policy issue, the risks are very high that they're going to misstate it, misstate their own policy, or state it incompletely, which is usually the case.

(UNKNOWN): As a former Clinton White House staffer, I completely agree with you, Congressman, that presidents should stick to the script.

Just wanted to add one more piece, as Senator Rudman and Congressman Hamilton have mentioned.

When the United States is projecting our positions overseas, we are so much more effective when we can speak with a unified voice.

One of the changes of the global information revolution is, that even the process and the intricacies of the process here are known to people all around the world. And when there are sharp divisions on important national security issues, those sharp divisions themselves are amplified internationally.

But when there's unity, when Democrats and Republicans come together and work out consensus positions, as difficult as that is, it makes the nation that much more effective.

QUESTION: How do you define a success? Or is the success just getting people to think about this, think about decorum and to think about conduct?

RUDMAN: Well, I think that certainly. But beyond that, if at some point in the not-too-distant future a major foreign policy debate faces this country in which there are strongly held views on various sides, and there's quite often more than two of a particular issue, it will depend entirely, if you see a situation where strong leadership emerges from both sides of the aisle and from the executive branch of the government and draws strong compromise in an atmosphere of intellectual examination, then we will have succeeded.

RUDMAN: Will that take a year, two years, five years, 10 years? I don't know, but we are certainly going to try with a number of things we're going to do to foster that. That's

the intent of what we're doing.

As I said when I spoke here a few minutes ago: Will we be successful? I don't know, but it sure is worth trying.

HAMILTON: It's going to be very difficult to measure success, clearly, in an enterprise of this kind. However, if we find that the country is coming together not on every issue but on several or even many issues in the American foreign policy debate, that will be success.

Will it all be attributable to us? Of course not. There are a lot people in this town working for bipartisan foreign policy other than us. We're just trying to bring it to a focus and to contribute to the debate.

RUDMAN: Thank you all very much.