

Thesis: The cold war marked an end of an era, an era in which the world was not in our control, and the beginning of a new one, when the end of the world was now within human control because of new technology, and because of this nuclear war that is normalized and not thought of as a major threat.

— START —

Nicolle: Hi, I'm Nicolle Mathison.

Brad: And I'm Brad Polumbo. We are political science students from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and you're listening to our podcast: Fire and Ice. Massachusetts. The Cold War and nuclear war today. We'll be discussing the cold war and current Massachusetts residents disengagement with the topic of nuclear war. We're also going to talk about how Massachusetts may have normalized nuclear war since the Cold War, a time when it was an ever-present thought in the minds of most Americans, we're going to ask, do Massachusetts residents actually still see nuclear war as a threat? Do we still care or do we just view it as a thing of the past?

Nicolle: After World War Two, the United States created the first atomic bomb¹ and the Soviet Union soon followed with their own², they didn't even hesitate. America wanted to end the spread of communism. So, this fear of nuclear war and the tension of two major powers led to a long war, often referred to as the "war of words,"³ as nothing physical actually occurred and it was mostly a back and forth of words, rather than a nuclear attack taking place. The threat of a nuclear attack between the two powers went cold, however the threat of such an event lasted from 1945 to 1991⁴.

Brad: To get an idea of what life was like back then, living during the Cold War, and in a time of terror, people feared the potential of a nuclear attack so destructive it could cause massive casualties. To get an idea of what that was like, we spoke to Norman Smith, a veteran who lived through this time. Smith spoke about being a child during the Cold War and living under constant fear of an attack.

INSERT CLIP OF VETERAN FROM SOLDIERS' HOME 2: 0:17-0:46

Nicolle: Life during the Cold War wasn't easy. Living under constant fear that your world could end at any second was, as anyone could imagine, absolutely terrifying. Because of this,

¹"Who Built the Atomic Bomb?" *Atomic Heritage Foundation*, 16 June 2014, www.atomicheritage.org/history/who-built-atomic-bomb.

² "The Cold War Museum." *Cold War Museum*, www.coldwar.org/articles/40s/soviet_atomic_bomb_test.asp.

³ Schoenfeld, Gabriel. "War of Words." *By Gabriel Schoenfeld*, www.hudson.org/research/11190-war-of-words.

⁴ *House Un-American Activities Committee*, www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/cold-war.cfm.

President John F. Kennedy, who led his title from 1961 to 1963⁵ during this war of words, took precautions, specifically in Massachusetts.

Brad: JFK established MEMA, or the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, to protect the state from nuclear disaster⁶. MEMA would allow for Massachusetts to have a safety building. The organization's headquarters were in the form of a bunker located in Framingham⁷, that would allow for the continuation of state government following a nuclear attack. This structure was built underground, and built to withstand a bomb exploding as close as three miles from its location⁸. Massachusetts was the first in the nation to have a State Emergency Operations Center⁹.

Nicolle: Following MEMA, and with the influence of Kennedy's choice to start such an agency in Massachusetts, FEMA was created, otherwise known as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, used to protect the nation as a whole¹⁰. Just an example of what this agency can do, in any sort of disaster from environmental or nuclear, FEMA will send out alerts to citizens in order to keep them informed and alert them of trouble. FEMA is also currently aiding individuals affected by the California wildfires¹¹, contacting victims and providing assistance. MEMA set a precedent for such an emergency agency..

Brad: Another instance of preventative measures, specifically made in Massachusetts, is "The Notch," a bunker located right in Amherst, now used as library storage by Amherst College. Built in 1957¹², the bunker was a secret Air Force command post for the Westover Air Force Base located in Chicopee, a fully functioning base prepared for a nuclear attack. "The Notch" was built underground in the Holyoke Mountain Range in the Bare Mountain. It was capable of holding 100 men for up to 90 days in the event of a nuclear attack¹³. This bunker, a place that many do not know exist, is an example of how the issue of nuclear war has become normalized, and fallen into the background of our minds. The cold war marked the end of an era, an era in which the world was not in our control, yet, it also marked the beginning of a new one, an era in which the end of the world, at least relating to nuclear power, is now within human control

⁵ "Life of John F. Kennedy." *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/life-of-john-f-kennedy.

⁶ "History of the Mass Emergency Management Agency Hardened Bunker in Framingham, MA." *Coldwar-Ma*, coldwar-ma.com/Mema_Bunker.html.

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¹⁰ "About the Agency." *Emergency Support Function Annexes | FEMA.gov*, www.fema.gov/about-agency.

¹¹ Nixon, Ron. "What FEMA Is Doing, and Not Doing, in Response to California's Fires." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/11/22/us/politics/fema-california-wildfires.html.

¹²Merwin, Laura. "Bare Mountain: Go inside Amherst College's Bunker (Photos)." *Masslive.com*, Masslive.com, 25 Feb. 2016, www.masslive.com/living/index.ssf/2013/05/photo_tour_go_inside_amherst_colleges_bare_mountain_bunker.html.

¹³ "The Five College Library Depository: the Bunker." *Www.hampshire.edu*, www.hampshire.edu/library/the-five-college-library-depository-the-bunker.

because of new technology. Because of this, nuclear war is just not perceived as much of a threat as it once was.

Nicolle: Researcher Yulia Suvorova went to the bunker herself and explored the rooms that once held showers for nuclear decontamination, bunk rooms and a War Room with projectors conveying horrifying images of threats of the war..

Yulia: Hi, my name is Yulia Suvorova and I am standing at 100 Military Road in Amherst, MA in front of what used to be a secret Air Force command post. Otherwise known as the Bunker or the "Notch." As I am approaching it, it looks rusty and the paint is chipping. It basically looks like a door inside a mountain. There is moss growing around it and through the cracks in the asphalt also. It looks abandoned, yet from what I have read about the bunker prior to scheduling this visit it is far from the truth. It is still currently used, but its purpose has drastically changed. Amherst College purchased it in 1999. What used to be a highly classified bunker is now used by the five colleges in the Amherst area as a Library Depository. What used to be heavy lead doors made to potentially protect the generals from a nuclear blast, are now glass automatic doors. What used to be top secret rooms that no soldier could walk into without being shot are now regular rooms full of books and pieces of art. What used to be 50 different rooms such as Air & Water room, panel command room, decontamination showers room, are now less than 20 rooms which accommodate tall bookcases.

Ok it's pretty chilly outside let me go in and see what's still in here.

Looking around I see that the paint is still here, most buildings have white paint on the walls. This one is color-blocked. That's how I know it is original and not modern. I have talked to Jason Fuller, the librarian, to find out what the colors mean. Apparently, after spending too much time underground, people tend to lose sense of orientation as to what is located at the top and where is the bottom. The walls are painted with two colors to help people keep their orientation in space. Pale yellow is what covers the top portion of the wall, which symbolises a sunny day. While the bottom portion of the wall is covered with a darker greyish/brown color that signifies the ground. As I walk around, some rooms are still in the same condition as they were in the past because there was no purpose in renovating them. There are many emergency exits that would have been used in case there was a lot of debris from bomb explosions. If you follow this rather dark corridor, there is a staircase. It is in a dark corner, with no lighting and it goes all the way up past all of the 3 floors. It looks like a fire escape in that you will have to physically climb vertically up. By looking at it, I can already tell that if I were to climb a few yards up, I would stop seeing the bottom, that's how dark it is, I would also probably get very tired. Clearly this was meant for soldiers, who are much more physically fit, not for a girl in high heels.

Brad: Find out more about the reason for the creation of this secret base after this break from our sponsors.

AD: Political Science Department

Brad: Now back to discussing “The Notch.” The bunker was created to support Chicopee’s Westover Air Force Base¹⁴, a facility in the process of preparing for nuclear war and protecting the state. The bunker had the purpose of holding military staff with crucial positions that further the military operations of the state, and also protecting these crucial military staff from an attack. In order for the state of Massachusetts to remain functioning in the event of an attack and to have the ability to protect itself, important military personnel had to be kept safe, so that’s why the bunker was built to hold 100 men¹⁵. The facility was actually built into the side of a mountain because, in the case of a nuclear attack, the building would be protected from a blast by the mountainside, whereas without that geographic landscape, the bunker most likely would not be able to survive¹⁶.

Nicolle: Jason Fuller, the bunker’s librarian and historian, spoke to us about the geographic location and why it is beneficial to the bunker’s not being destroyed by a nuclear attack.

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Brad: One surprising insight into the potential for nuclear war between the United States and Russia is that a war would not have happened across the Pacific or across Europe, actually, it would most likely occur across the North Pole¹⁷. This is because it’s the shortest distance to Russia, so all of our missiles would go straight over it, therefore the missiles would have traveled from both nations back and forth over the North Pole. As we found out from speaking with Fuller, there is a bunker similar to the one in Amherst located in Texas, however it is actually above ground. Texas was too far south for the Russians to reach¹⁸, and therefore America knew that we could protect this space from our opposing nation. During the fifties and sixties, it was impossible for Russian bombers to reach Texas, so to some extent, it was considered safe.

Nicolle: Back in this time, different generals would have 12 hour surveillance shifts 24/7, and would fly over the North Pole, and do “figure eights” in a plane, as Fuller states¹⁹. This was done to monitor any action over the Pole from Russia, as any missiles coming towards the United States would fly over this area first.

Brad: Now going back to “The Notch” for a second, the bunker was built so that a high power member of the military could be alive and protected after an attack to have so that we would

¹⁴“Westover in The Cold War - A History of Westover Air Force Base.” *Google Sites*, sites.google.com/site/ahistoryofwestoverairforcebase/home/westover-in-the-cold-war.

¹⁵ “The Five College Library Depository: the Bunker.” *Www.hampshire.edu*, www.hampshire.edu/library/the-five-college-library-depository-the-bunker.

¹⁶ “The Notch - Hadley.” *Coldwar-Ct*, coldwar-ct.com/The_Notch_-_Hadley.html.

¹⁷ Suvorova, Yulia. “Interview with Amherst Bunker Historian .”

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have the ability to fire back at Russians. According to Fuller, it was activated only once, during the Cuban Missile Crisis²⁰.

Nicolle: The Cuban Missile Crisis began after a failed invasion of Cuba by JFK, called the “Bay of Pigs,” meant to take Fidel Castro out of power²¹. The invasion was to be done by Cubans who had fled their homes after Castro took power, and were trained by Americans to overthrow him. However, they could not withstand Castro’s many troops. Because of this, Castro and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev reached an agreement to place Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba to deter America from attacking them²².

Brad: This Amherst bunker is where General Curtis Lemay stood as he suggested to Kennedy himself that they simply bomb Russia during the Cuban Missile Crisis because the general was sure that they would attack anyways, and he wanted the United States to strike first²³. Fuller discusses this true occurrence and how such an extreme suggestion from Lemay spawned an entire movie, titled “Dr. Strangelove.”²⁴

INSERT JASON FULLER CLIP: 24:15 - 25:59

Brad: It’s clear that this topic, the potential for nuclear war, was a hot topic during the cold war. “Dr. Strangelove” was released in 1964, right after Kennedy’s presidency and his assassination. It was released during the Cold War²⁵. At this time, nuclear war was so present that it made its way into pop culture, and it’s threat to the world provided such fear and suspense that it made for good entertainment.

Nicolle: Because of the fact that nuclear war doesn’t come with such fear and suspense nowadays, and is not so ever-present in popular culture, is the normalization and disengagement with the subject because of our increased technology to protect ourselves from nuclear war justified? Does this modern, technologically advanced time make it fair to assume that we are safe? Fuller says otherwise.

INSERT JASON FULLER CLIP: 13:32-17:28

Nicolle: After the break we’ll discuss current ways that Massachusetts residents are still engaged with the threat of nuclear war.

AD: Library

²⁰ “The Notch - Hadley.” *Coldwar-Ct*, coldwar-ct.com/The_Notch_-_Hadley.html.

²¹ *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/bay-of-pigs.

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²³ “Curtis LeMay.” *Atomic Heritage Foundation*, 15 Nov. 1906, www.atomicheritage.org/profile/curtis-lemay.

²⁴ “Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.” *IMDb*, IMDb.com, 29 Jan. 1964, www.imdb.com/title/tt0057012/.

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Nicolle: Now back to the podcast. The Program Executive Office for Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications, or the NC3 program, is located at Hanscom Air Force Base in Lincoln, Massachusetts²⁶. This program has a mission of improving the communications system that American forces would use in the case of a nuclear war. Last May, however, six peace activists were arrested after protesting the program²⁷.

Brad: These protestors were assembled by the Massachusetts Peace Action, and protested the funding of this program being used on preparing for a nuclear attack instead of being used for American citizens' everyday life²⁸. Protestors are quoted by masspeaceaction.org saying that the money used could be used to fund free college or health care for the American people²⁹.

Nicolle: We spoke to Lt Col Mark Guerber, the Detachment Commander for AFROTC Det 370 at UMass Amherst and former missileer. The Lt Col says that the military will always support activism like the occurrence in Lincoln. He states that the military and activists are on the same side, and encourages citizens to be better engaged and informed with the topic, despite the fact that it is normalized. He emphasized the fact that citizens should take the time to develop their own opinions on the subject in order to stay informed and aware.

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INSERT LT COL CLIP (about activism, free speech, military is always there): 4:22-5:03

Brad: Well there you have it, folks, it is crucial, both as an American citizen and member of a democratic nation, to stay informed, to develop your own opinions on subjects, and to be independent. If you have a strong opinion on the topic, practice activism, because as Lt Col Guerber says, the military is always on your side and on the same page. Just because it is not on the forefront of our minds, do not let the topic of nuclear war fade away. Stay interested. Stay curious. Stay informed.

Nicolle: Thanks so much for listening, and a special thanks to our hard working crew, Yulia Suvorova, one of our fellow researchers, Lauren Crociati, our producer, and Sifa Kasongo and Jared Nussbaum, our engineers.

²⁶"Home." *Hanscom Air Force Base*, 2 Apr. 2018,

www.hanscom.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/379461/hanscom-air-force-base/.

²⁷ Rozziecole. "Six Arrested at Protest Against Hanscom Role in Nuclear War Preparations." *Massachusetts Peace Action*, 6 Oct. 2018, masspeaceaction.org/six-arrested-at-protest-against-hanscom-role-in-nuclear-war-preparations/.

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