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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
December 11, 1990

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Section 3.5

NLN 07-17/S per ltr. 11/20/2010

By JMR NARA, Date 10/4/2011

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Dear Mr. President:

I would like to share with you my assessment of the Gulf crisis, both where we are and where we may be heading. As you know, we now have in hand a resolution passed overwhelmingly by the UN Security Council authorizing us after January 15 to use "all necessary means" to achieve the established goals of Iraq's complete and unconditional withdrawal, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, and the release of all hostages. We are also busy improving our military posture--and by "our" I refer to U.S. and allied--in order to make the option to use force credible. And we are preparing for meetings in the near future with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz here and President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. Needless to say, we are approaching a key juncture in the crisis.

From the outset, we have sought to build and lead a global alliance that isolates Iraq politically, economically and militarily. We have sought also to increase steadily the political and economic costs for Saddam Hussein of holding onto Kuwait. We have made clear our preference for a peaceful solution, but this will depend on Saddam Hussein. We need to make him understand that one way or another he will have to withdraw from Kuwait--and that means he has to understand that we and our partners will use force if need be. Iraq's preferred strategy is to rely upon its formidable ground forces to deter an attack, to try to drive wedges between members of the coalition in the hope it will fracture, and to play for time in the expectation that the resolve of the United

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States and the coalition will weaken. Our immediate efforts are directed at increasing the pressure brought to bear on Iraq. Moreover, should Iraq withdraw from Kuwait, we will still have the task of restricting Iraq's military capabilities and constructing security arrangements to ensure stability in the Gulf.

The Military Balance

Since August 2, 27 countries have deployed land, air or naval forces to counter Iraqi aggression. U.S. forces in the region number over 230,000 and in conjunction with other coalition forces now have the capability to defend successfully against any further Iraqi aggression. As announced recently, U.S. forces will increase substantially to ensure that the coalition has an adequate offensive military option should one be required to achieve our goals. I took this additional step out of conviction that the best possibility of obtaining Saddam's compliance with the UN Security Council resolutions lies in convincing him that the threat of a devastating U.S.-led offensive is genuine.

Arab and Islamic forces within the international coalition number about 140,000 with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt and Syria in the lead. Other major troop contributors are the United Kingdom and France. Allied forces in the Gulf were significantly strengthened by the deployment of two Egyptian divisions and a Syrian armored division in November. We have received commitments to increase contributions from many of our partners.

The Iraqi army is in defensive positions, but could shift to the offensive with little delay. Iraq has moved almost half (the best half) of its ground forces to Kuwait and southeast Iraq. Fifteen divisions are committed to Kuwait operations with an additional 11 divisions reinforcing. Personnel total more than 460,000 men. The Iraqi Air Force is relatively sophisticated, but it is untested against a western air force. One can never predict with

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certainty the course of any conflict, but it is our view that U.S. and allied forces could act to inflict a decisive defeat upon Iraq. As I made clear November 30, no one should assume that a war in the Gulf would bear any resemblance to Vietnam.

Sanctions Prognosis

Compliance with the UN-mandated embargo is nearly complete. Iraqi exports have virtually stopped and are at two percent of the pre-crisis level. Lost oil revenue is costing the Iraqis over \$2 billion a month at current oil prices. Imports have been drastically reduced. The naval interception effort has challenged more than 2,700 ships, boarded over 280 and diverted 11 with cargoes that violated the U.N. embargo. Some smuggling across land borders continues, but leakage is relatively slight. Jordan has markedly improved its sanctions performance; Iran is for the most part enforcing UN sanctions.

Some evidence of shortages in the Iraqi economy, particularly in the industrial sector, is now appearing. Iraq's abortive gas rationing decision evidenced serious Iraqi government concerns about grumbling reported among the populace and even in the military. There are credible reports that some Iraqi industries have shut down. We cannot predict, however, whether and if so when shortages will translate into political pressure on Saddam Hussein who, in any case, will continue to divert resources as necessary to protect his army and power base. Indeed, the most recent assessment by the intelligence community concludes that sanctions-induced hardships are not significant enough to force Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait and that there is no hard evidence we will ever arrive at such a point.

Responsibility Sharing

The economic foundation of our international coalition is our successful effort to distribute the economic burden of confronting Iraq. Three Gulf states--Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United

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Arab Emirates--have agreed to contribute \$12 billion to this effort in 1990. Japan has pledged \$4 billion, Germany \$2 billion, the European Community \$670 million along with member state commitments of an additional \$1.3 billion, and South Korea \$220 million. Consultations are underway regarding contributions for the next calendar year. We are also succeeding at persuading oil producers with excess capacity to increase output, thereby easing the upward pressure on prices. So far, the increase in prices is a result of psychology and fears for the future rather than any actual shortage.

Diplomacy

As you can see, we are stepping up our diplomacy. The offer to meet directly with the Iraqi leadership was something of a shift in tactics and is something of a risk. Nevertheless, it is one well worth taking given what is at stake and what we may be asking of our men and women in uniform. Moreover, it is an essential step to take to highlight that the choice of peace or war is Saddam's to make. Jim Baker and I will speak as plainly as possible so that Iraq's leadership will understand exactly what is required of them and exactly what consequences they will face if they continue to defy the Security Council. By the meetings' end, I am confident that Saddam and his inner circle will have fewer illusions about the reality that their aggression has brought about. There will be no negotiations, no concessions, no attempts at face-saving, no partial solutions, and no linkage. In short, we will go the extra mile, but everything we do will be within the parameters established by Security Council Resolution 678 and its predecessors. As of this writing, we are still trying to work out mutually agreeable dates for the meetings, with the Iraqis pressing to hold the Baghdad meeting as close to January 15 as they can in an effort to erode the certainty of the Security Council's deadline.

This offer to meet directly with the Iraqis was extended in the aftermath of the Security

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Council's historic vote. What Resolution 678 does is provide additional legal and especially political sanction for the use of force should we so determine; what we hope of course is that the resolution, coupled with our military preparations, will persuade Saddam that the time to withdraw has come. What the resolution also does is symbolize just how far we have come-- with our coalition, with the Soviets, and with the United Nations. "Watershed" is not too strong a term for what has been accomplished.

All of this took place against a backdrop of November trips to the region and elsewhere by Jim Baker and myself to meet with key coalition partners. These consultations revealed strong opposition to any "partial solutions," a continued willingness to share the economic and military burden, and increased readiness to contemplate the use of force to achieve the goals set out by the international community and in the twelve resolutions thus far passed by the Security Council. Our task was made somewhat easier by the failure of Soviet envoy Primakov and others to elicit reasonable Iraqi behavior. Iraqi interest in diplomacy thus far has been tactical, designed to weaken the coalition against it rather than find a settlement consistent with what the United Nations has declared. Fortunately, Iraq's transparent attempts to divide the international coalition-- including its cynical treatment of hostages-- have been recognized and rejected for what they are.

Hostages and the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait

Iraq has declared that it will release all hostages, including our fellow Americans. Many have already departed, including Americans held as human shields; we expect the remainder of those who wish to leave will soon follow. I believe Saddam's decision to release these innocent people was a result of our resolve and determination, timed cynically to take propaganda advantage in advance of the Tariq Aziz and Baker meetings.

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With regard to our Embassy in Kuwait, we will keep it open, but unmanned. Its mission, protecting our citizens trapped there, has been accomplished now that all the hostages are getting out. Until the legitimate government in Kuwait is restored, we will have no official business to conduct. The final departure order will be given as soon as I am convinced that our citizens are truly on their way to freedom.

Domestic Politics

I believe there is widespread support in the Congress and the public at large for our basic objectives, just as there is equally strong understanding of what is at stake. Where there are continuing concerns are with war powers, where many in the Congress want to have the opportunity to decide whether force is used, and on the policy of whether and if so when to move from sanctions to a policy of liberation by force.

My opposition to the war powers resolution is well known. But we will continue to consult, since we appreciate the concerns of the Congress. Circumstances permitting, we will be more than happy to have Congress go on record supporting the use of force. Regarding the question of timing, we are less willing than many on the Hill to eschew the use of military force and allow sanctions to continue for another year or even longer. We and the world already are paying a real price--economic, human, political and strategic--for Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Waiting also could raise the costs of a military option should one be necessary. On balance, it is not at all clear that we have the luxury of waiting for sanctions to prove decisive, which they might never be.

In any event, the combination of remarkably candid consultations and explanations we have offered seems to have had a calming effect. That said, we are under no illusions on this

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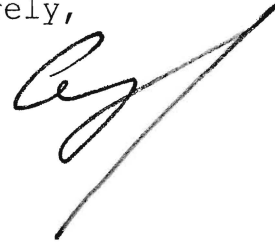
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score; managing the congressional and domestic account will, as ever, prove one of our major challenges. I hope that the statement at my press conference of November 30, the Administration's testimony last week at Congressional hearings, and our stepped up public diplomacy efforts will shore up public support.

I hope this letter has shed some light on our efforts. Please feel free to contact me directly if questions remain or you have any counsel to offer.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Richard M. Nixon
577 Chestnut Ridge Road
Wood Cliff Lake, New Jersey 07675

*I'd welcome your thoughts
any time. I've never been
more determined to see this
matter through to a prompt
and satisfactory conclusion*



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