

Foreword

On January 16, 1991, the United States and its coalition partners launched Operation Desert Storm. At midnight on February 27, the guns fell silent; Iraq's unlawful occupation of Kuwait was ended. This was a victory for every country in the coalition and for the United Nations. This Nation fought with honor and valor. We owe our heartfelt appreciation to our sons and daughters in our Armed Forces who achieved such a quick and decisive outcome.

Before launching the operation, the United States explored every avenue for a principled peace. The United Nations, with the full support of the United States, had tried to apply peaceful pressure to force Iraq out of Kuwait and had given Iraq until January 15 to comply with its resolutions. Secretary of State Baker travelled to Geneva to meet with Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz on January 9 to convince him of the seriousness of our will. Despite all our efforts, Saddam Hussein chose to ignore the UN's deadline to withdraw from Kuwait. We had no choice but to use military force, and, as a result, Kuwait is once again free.

In its wake, the Gulf War also opened an historic opportunity to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. To move this process forward, Secretary Baker made numerous trips through the region, to see whether the United States could act as a catalyst for peace. We made great progress toward our goal of convening a Middle East peace conference. At the same time, to address another serious problem in the region—the proliferation of destabilizing conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction together with the means to deliver them—I proposed a Middle East arms control initiative.

The Persian Gulf and Middle East were not, however, the sole focus of attention during this time. Economics and trade remained important issues. To aid our goal of a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, and the North American Free Trade Agreement, I asked Congress to extend my “fast track” negotiating authority. I also signed a transboundary clean-air agreement with Canada, added additional measures to our trade enhancement initiatives for central and eastern Europe, and extended Most Favored Nation trading status to the People's Republic of China for another year. On February 4, I proposed that agreement be reached on a global climate change convention by June 1992.

U.S. relations with the Soviet Union were, as always, of central importance. The successful international effort to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait would have been immeasurably more difficult without the cooperation of the USSR. Nevertheless, we did not let this deter us from protesting the excessive use of Soviet force in the Baltic Republics. At the same time, to help alleviate a serious food shortage confronting the people of the Soviet Union, I sent a mission there to examine and report back to me on the food distribution system. In light of their recommendations, I extended additional credit guarantees to the Soviet Union. I also waived the Jackson-Vanik Amendment because of the USSR's greatly improved record in emigration.