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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Alexander A. Bessmertnykh,
Ambassador of the USSR to the United States

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Robert Gates, Deputy to the President for
National Security Affairs
Richard N. Haass, Special Assistant to the
President for Near East and South Asian
Affairs

Ambassador Alexander A. Bessmertnykh, Soviet
Ambassador

The President: We've given a lot of thought about how to respond. After our meeting this morning, I thought what a remarkable distance we've come, when the President of your country would consult with the U.S. before going final with an initiative, especially as the USSR had close relations with Iraq. I do not want to risk offending President Gorbachev, but we want to be frank. The bottom line is that we hope any emissary will not go with these proposals. So that you don't just think we're rejecting their proposals, let me explain why:

- I want to thank you for coming in again. I also want President Gorbachev to know how much we appreciate the spirit of cooperation in which this consultation is taking place.
- I also applaud the spirit in which the Soviet plan is put forth. No one wants a war, and if it can be avoided in a manner fully consistent with the 12 UN Security Council resolutions then we will all benefit.
- One major reason the policy has been so successful is that the two of us have acted in such close concert. We could not have reached this point had this not been the case.
- If our efforts are to finally succeed, we must not depart even the slightest bit from what the Security Council has put forth. I said the same thing to Javier Perez de Cuellar; I told him it might be best for him to go ahead.
- We agree with diplomatic efforts that include a full and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. We have made it clear that Iraq and Iraqi forces would not be attacked during and after such a withdrawal. But I believe it is

essential that we not go beyond that point.

- It would be a disaster for us all if at this late date we were to do anything which allowed Saddam Hussein to claim victory. Such a move could also lead to serious difficulties within the UN coalition. If Saddam perceives any weakness, the last chance for peace will be lost.
- Thus, while I understand and appreciate the motivation for these proposals I would like to urge you not to proceed with them.
- The best hope for peace at this point is to convince Saddam Hussein that he has nothing to gain and everything to lose by being obstinate. We thought about proposals, asked whether they might help, but concluded he might feel he has something to give by being obstinate.
- If we hold out the prospect of concessions, no matter how small, he will take it as a sign of weakness and his reaction will be to see how much more he can get rather than focus on compliance with the U.N. resolutions. We'd worry he'd take this as a sign of weakness and see who else.

I hope President Gorbachev will not be disappointed in our response, but I feel he was entitled to know. I hope this news will not be pleased; if he does, I hope it will simply reiterate UN resolutions.

I think you'll see Saddam Hussein try to guess a lot of action going after the 15th. I would say don't do that, as we do see the 15th as a very serious date. Credibility ?????? Are you going to leave your options open?

Ambassador Bessmertnykh: Yes. It's open

The President: You still have people there under ????. Could they be in jeopardy? . We can't blindside President Gorbachev with the use of force. I would certainly encourage you getting people out of Baghdad. I don't want any of their lives to be endangered. I was so pleased we could coop our ??? This may not be what President gorbachev wanted taken.

Ambassador Bessmertnykh: Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate your frankness. I will report it to President Gorbachev. We are all trying to do our best to get out of this situation. The SG, with all respect, will not deliver peace in the Persian Gulf. But it's worth the try.

We have removed most of our people from Iraq by January 10, with only a few hundred ???

Approve your ?????

The President: Is this Iraq? If the US use of force, even though in compliance with 178, wouldn't that cause G to be further embattled at home? Does it affect the internal situation in USSR? Do his allies ??? force will undermine him?

Ambassador Bessmertnykh: Not a primary domestic concern. May be some, but you ????? action versus Arab state. But after UNSC resolution, people getting used to probable use of force. And Geneva meeting has ???? dislike of Iraqi behavior.

The President: You can tell President Gorbachev that in the letter to Saddam Hussein there were no insults, not of ???. I feel Saddam is surrounded by people who won't bring him bad news. The letter was no ugly; it was to tell him you up against. We may release it. I don't like to do this. But I'm being told it might be helpful to me. We'll see.

Ambassador Bessmertnykh: If Primakov still goes, with ??? of mission on Secretary General, to say that the US is really serious, how could this be.

The President: If he did this, nobody could object. But there is a risk it will be leaked ??? somebody else and delay implementation. We can't say not to go, but I do ask it be thought out.

General Scowcroft: Every time someone of significance goes to Iraq, there will be wild speculation, especially

The President: I won't delay.