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Note: President Bush spoke at 9:01 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In his address, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra; and Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. The address was broadcast live on nationwide radio and television.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve

January 16, 1991

The President tonight authorized Secretary of Energy James D. Watkins, pursuant to the terms of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, to draw down and distribute the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) at such a rate as the Secretary may determine.

The authorization to draw down the SPR is in conformance with the emergency response plan agreed to in the International Energy Agency (IEA) on January 11, 1991. The IEA plan provides that, in anticipation of any possible temporary shortfall in oil supplies in the event of hostilities in the Persian Gulf, 2.5 million barrels of oil per day be made available by member countries. The U.S. contribution to meeting the IEA commitment is 1.125 million barrels per day.

The President made a finding that events in the Persian Gulf have resulted in a potential national energy supply shortage constituting a ''severe energy supply interruption,'' as defined in section 3(8) of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. The President's action was a precautionary measure, taken in concert with our IEA partners, designed to promote stability in world oil markets.

Exchange With Reporters on the Persian Gulf Conflict

January 17, 1991

Q. Mr. President, based on what you've been told this morning, what are your thoughts at this point on how severely the Iraqis have been damaged, how long this may last, and at what cost?

The President. Well, again, I don't want to go into questions here because of the moment. I will say that was covered very well by Secretary Cheney and Colin Powell. And the way we're going to handle this is, I will not be commenting on the ups and downs—and there will be some downs—or the trauma of the moment—there's a lot of trauma of the moment. But I think it is fair to say—and I will be repeating this to the leaders here—that we are pleased with the way things have gone so far. We're determined to finish what we've set out to do. But I just think, for procedural reasons, I'd like you all to know that I'm not going to be trying to do briefings from the White House on the details of the operations over there. I have full confidence in our Secretary of Defense and in our able Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and, of course, in our general, General Schwarzkopf.

So, for the future, though I'll be in touch with the American people, I think it's better to leave the details of the operations to the briefings over there. And, of course, I'll be available for questions from time to time. But when we don't have all the information, I just would hate to risk misleading the American people.

Having said that, I think all of us are very pleased that so far the operation is going forward with great success. And we keep praying that the loss of life will be held at

an absolute minimum. And I feel so strongly about our troops over there. Certainly I feel that way about them, and I feel that way about the innocents who might get caught up in this conflict. So, I think it's fair to say there's a lot of prayer going on both here and on Capitol Hill and across this whole country. And it will be that way until this is concluded.

Q. Mr. President, Saddam Hussein says he won't be crushed.

The President. I won't take others right now. Thank you.

Q. Are you concerned this early talk of success might lead to unwarranted optimism on some people's part?

The President. No, I'm not concerned. There is no unwarranted optimism, and there will be none. And I would refer you to the briefing of the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The exchange began at 9:40 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with congressional leaders. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney; Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.

Exchange With Reporters on the Persian Gulf Conflict

January 17, 1991

Q. Mr. President, will you insist on an unconditional surrender by Saddam?

Q. Has it reached that point, sir, that surrender is the answer?

The President. I tried very hard last night to spell out our objectives, and I think it's very clear. And the United Nations spelled them out, and they remain the same. He can call it anything he wants, interpret any way he wants, but we are going to prevail. I don't want to get caught up in some semantics about all of this. He's got to get out of Kuwait. And he's got to do it with no concessions or no condition. That was determined long ago when he failed to comply with the U.N. resolutions. And now, in keeping with those, we are using force, and we're not going to stop until he fully complies with the resolutions.

So, let's not worry about what we call it. Let's worry about—call it, if you want to make it clear, full compliance with the U.N. resolutions, full compliance with the objectives of the coalition forces.

Q. What do you think of his response so far?

The President. I think our people are doing very well.

Note: The exchange began at 3:13 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, President Bush referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Nomination of Carol T. Crawford To Be a Member of the United States International Trade Commission

January 17, 1991

The President today announced his intention to nominate Carol T. Crawford, of Virginia, to be a member of the United States International Trade Commission for the term expiring June 16, 1999. She would succeed Alfred E. Eckes, Jr.

Ms. Crawford has served as Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Jus-