

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-Gen-

eral 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