

*Aug. 13 / Administration of George Bush, 1992*

## Letter Accepting the Resignation of James A. Baker III as Secretary of State

*August 13, 1992*

*Dear Jim:*

With this letter, I accept with deep appreciation your decision to resign as Secretary of State effective August 23, 1992; and I look forward, with great pleasure, to your joining me at the White House as Chief of Staff and Senior Counselor to the President.

Your service as Secretary of State has been superb. You have brought to foreign policy-making a rare combination of personal characteristics: substantive command, political sophistication, extraordinary negotiating skills, tireless dedication, personal integrity, and consistent grace. Applying these distinctive characteristics in yet one more public policy domain, you have again excelled.

With your outstanding leadership at State, Eastern Europe has been liberated. Germany has been peacefully and democratically unified, within NATO. The Soviet empire has disbanded; the captive nations have regained their independence; and Russia is becoming a democratic nation, seeking to transform itself into a market economy. You have successfully concluded negotiations that make the risk of super-power nuclear conflict a thing of the past. At the same time, you have turned U.S. strategy toward the new post-Cold War era by establishing a framework for continued U.S. engagement in Europe; and by advancing the global effort to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In addition, you deserve special credit for leading our successful negotiating efforts to stabilize areas of regional conflict: first, gaining international support for free elections in Nicaragua and a peace accord for El Salvador; second, organizing a U.N. coalition that effectively stopped and reversed Iraqi aggression in Kuwait; and finally, getting Arabs and Israelis to sit down together—in order that a stable Mideast peace might be won in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

The record is of genuinely historic pro-

portions. I can well understand your reluctance to resign as Secretary of State.

Foreign policy will continue to demand vigilant and creative attention in the post-Cold War period and the team there at the Department of State under Acting Secretary Larry Eagleburger, working closely with the White House as you have done so well, is well qualified to handle any and all challenges. But America will not be able to fulfill her historic mission at home or abroad if our domestic leadership and performance are not strong and secure.

To help assure that America enjoys both domestic strength and security, I have asked you to join me in the White House. As a former Chief of Staff and Treasury Secretary, you bring extraordinary skills and experience to the policy challenges that lie immediately before us. It is imperative that we define appropriate new policies for a changing domestic environment—just as we have done for a radically transformed international environment. In so doing, we must attend to the connections between domestic and foreign policy, and between economic and security policy. At the same time, we must develop and implement more effective strategies for advancing our policies through the U.S. Congress.

For all of this, you are uniquely well-suited. I am profoundly grateful that you have agreed to yet another challenge of service. We have been friends and colleagues for a very long time. So again let me say: I appreciate your willingness to change assignments, and look forward to our working even more closely together.

Barbara and I know how difficult the demands of travel have been for you, Susan, Mary Bonner and the rest of the family. If there is any consolation in this new challenge, it may be that, although I will still call upon you in foreign policy, you will not have to travel so much in this new job!

Sincerely,

GEORGE BUSH

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*Dear Mr. President:*

It is with pride and a sense of accomplishment that I submit my resignation to you as Secretary of State effective August 23. It is also with a sense of gratitude to you, Mr. President. Gratitude because you have placed great trust and confidence in me and do so again by asking me to work with you to build a safe, strong America at home and abroad. Gratitude, also, because you gave me the high honor of serving you to shape American foreign policy during a period of extraordinary and revolutionary change.

I have little doubt that when we look back on these last three years and seven months, we'll understand we've lived through a fundamental watershed in world politics. In this short period of time the strategic verities of the post-World War II era were shattered. The Cold War ended. The division of Europe was undone. The Soviet empire collapsed, and the Soviet Union dissolved.

Changing those verities created new hopes and new possibilities—and what was unthinkable before became achievable through very active and dynamic diplomacy that you mandated. Germany was unified in NATO, something we were told at the time was impossible. Central America has been transformed through a policy based on free elections and peaceful reconciliation of long-standing differences. A peaceful settlement has been developed for Cambodia. Iraqi aggression was defeated in Kuwait with an unprecedented coalition that would never have been possible in the bipolar world of the past. And, in the aftermath, in defeating Iraq and rescuing Kuwait, it became possible to break the historical taboo and produce Arab and Palestinian partners to talk peace with Israel.

Nothing was inevitable, and managing these historic transformations both to create new possibilities and to ensure a peaceful transition to a new, vastly safer world required very active American leadership. You provided it, Mr. President.

Working with Presidents Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and others, we managed to help shape a peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union and empire; to ensure there would be no new nuclear states emerging from the breakup of the USSR; to assure that tactical nuclear weapons would not fall into dangerous hands; and to negotiate groundbreaking START and CFE agreements that drastically reduce both nuclear and conventional arms.

On top of this, Mr. President, we were able to conclude the most far-reaching understanding on strategic arms reduction in history at your June Summit with President Yeltsin. We came into office with the US having 13,000 strategic nuclear arms and the Soviets about 11,000. Your agreement with President Yeltsin means we will slash those levels by over 75 percent by the year 2003. In addition, we will eliminate all MIRVed ICBMs, the most destabilizing strategic weapons.

There is still much to be done and new international challenges to deal with. The tragedy that is unfolding in the former Yugoslavia is a reminder of one of the new dangers in the world caused by the explosive mix of extremist nationalism and ethnicity in politics. As you have led the way in ending the Cold War, so too we must lead in building a new peace, developing the collective means to defuse these kinds of conflicts before they begin; contain those where they can't be defused; and employ peacekeepers and monitors to preserve ceasefires and ensure conditions for peace-making. That's a tall order, and it will require American leadership. But it will be necessary if we are to mobilize the coalitions that can be useful and effective in dealing with a challenge we and others are sure to face in the years ahead.

Active American leadership will also be necessary as we continue our efforts to stop and undo the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and the missiles that might deliver them. This will increasingly dominate the arms control agenda of the 1990's.

Of course, we will also have to continue accelerating our efforts to promote free markets and free trade and facilitate the

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work of American businesses and investors overseas. Free markets and free trade do not simply reflect our values, they promote our economic growth and well-being. The more we open markets to our goods and services internationally, the more we will expand economically and generate good jobs domestically. NAFTA can be a model for the future.

I look forward to supporting your efforts to more strongly integrate domestic and foreign policy and to build our strength here

at home. Mr. President, we have been friends for 35 years, and I have always known you to finish the jobs you've begun. Work remains to be done and I look forward to helping you complete the job you started.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. BAKER III

*Note: These letters were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but were not issued as White House press releases.*

## Letter Accepting the Resignation of Samuel K. Skinner as Chief of Staff to the President

August 13, 1992

*Dear Sam:*

It is with deep regret but even more with pride in your many accomplishments that I accept your resignation as Chief of Staff. I am very pleased, at the same time, that you will serve as General Chairman of the Republican National Committee.

You have worked in every one of my campaigns since 1979, and you have served with great distinction in two demanding jobs in the last four years. As Secretary of Transportation, you developed the National Transportation Policy that will keep our Nation on the move well into the next century, obtained record levels of Federal funding for the aviation infrastructure, and strengthened mass transit programs. Under your leadership, the Coast Guard performed superbly in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

Your many accomplishments at the Department are crowned by one of our most significant legislative achievements—the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. That law establishes the National Highway System, builds partnerships between all levels of government and the private sector, and strengthens highway safety programs.

As Chief of Staff, you led the White House during a period of great change both at home and abroad. I deeply appreciate your loyalty in fighting for the programs

that we know will change America for the better. This year, among many other accomplishments, we presented our Comprehensive Health Care Reform proposals, accelerated welfare reform in the States, and announced the “G.I. Bill for Children” to promote school choice for middle- and low-income families. We sent our economic growth agenda to Congress and worked to improve our economy, to ensure that every American who wants to work can have a productive job, and we concluded negotiations for a North American Free Trade Agreement. In foreign relations, President Yeltsin had a successful State Visit to Washington.

Throughout your distinguished career, both in your beloved Illinois and on the national scene, you have been known for your integrity and “can do” approach to problems. As a lawyer and public servant, you have brought your friendly style and deep devotion to the principles we share, and all of us at the White House are the richer for your tenure here.

I am deeply grateful for all your accomplishments on behalf of our Nation. Thank you for your service, dedication, and most of all your friendship to me and my entire family.

Barbara and I send our warmest wishes to you and Honey.