

Memorandum of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Tariq Aziz.
Moscow, 23 February 1991 (0:15 a.m.)
[excerpts]

Gorbachev. The whole world is very concerned. I can't help feeling that there is still a chance to prevent bloodshed. As I understand it, the infrastructure is badly damaged.

Aziz. Naturally, 80,000 combat sorties have already been carried out against a country as small as Iraq. This has led to enormous destruction.

Gorbachev. What did you come here with this time?

Aziz. I have been instructed to inform you of a decision that is a response to your suggestions.

The core of the solution is as follows. Iraq is ready to completely withdraw its troops from Kuwait within a certain time, which we will agree on with you. For this, there must be a ceasefire and military activities on land, air, and sea must be stopped, after which the withdrawal will begin immediately.

At the same time, the Iraqi leadership is advocating that, simultaneously with the ceasefire, all the resolutions of the Security Council that were adopted after Resolution 660 (there are only 11 of them—from 661 to 678) should be repealed, and that all the consequences arising from them should be repealed.

Gorbachev. ... I want to repeat what I said at our previous meeting. In principle, Iraq's request for the termination of the other resolutions is legitimate. But this is a separate issue that should be resolved immediately after leaving Kuwait. We are convinced that it cannot be linked to the first two points, since in this case it will be considered as a precondition, as a pretext for a move towards an offensive on the ground.

... If the Iraqi side puts forward lengthy periods for the withdrawal of troops, then the Americans will definitely perceive this as a maneuver, an attempt to drag out time in order to prevent them from conducting ground operations with the onset of the hot season

Aziz. ... We do not view the USSR as a mediator or as an intermediary between us and the Americans, but as an effective power with principled positions.

Gorbachev. You have correctly assessed our role. Some are counting on the fact that, due to internal difficulties, the Soviet Union may give in to pressure, and deviate from principles. But that won't happen.

[Evgeny] Primakov. It must be understood that the Americans have been carrying out a countdown since August 2, 1990. They cannot wait any longer. Their troops have been put on alert, which cannot last for a long time. They must either strike or cancel this readiness.

Gorbachev. The Americans are no longer counting days, but hours. I can report that, according to reliable data received from three channels, the ground offensive should have already begun. And only our appeal has allowed it to be delayed. If we have agreed on the substance of the issue, then the settlement plan should be immediately accepted and announced.

Aziz. We really will have no choice but to fight. All Iraqis, all 18 million, will fight as best they can. When there are no weapons left, we will resort to terrorist methods. The USA is not some absolutely invincible force.

Gorbachev. Let's return to the question of the time frame of the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Could you do this in one week?

Aziz. No, that is quite impossible. We have 500,000 soldiers in Kuwait.

Gorbachev. Then maybe 10 days is enough? This is the time frame in which you can try to convince the Americans.

Aziz. No, that is also unrealistic.

Gorbachev. ... If you state the time frame that you propose, then the Americans will regard it as deliberate time-wasting.

... To prevent the deployment of ground operations, the following press release could be drafted:

“On behalf of the President of Iraq and the Revolutionary Command Council, T. Aziz has presented proposals that are at their core positive and far-reaching. After a thorough discussion and comparison of the points of view, a plan emerged that includes the following positions.”

The points proposed by Primakov could then be listed (*they differ from the American ones in a number of essential details*).

Work is continuing on clarifying the wording and specifying details. The final results of this work will be communicated to the members of the Security Council and the UN Secretary General.

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and John
Major
23 February 1991**

Gorbachev: [...] This morning we received a message from [Saddam] Hussein and the Iraqi leadership that they accept the proposals we have worked out here.

Hussein dismissed the U.S. allegations that the Iraqis committed acts that damaged the environment in Kuwait. Iraq is prepared to welcome any international commission, including one under UN auspices at any time so that they can observe the actual situation on the ground.

Hussein and those around him would not be likely to agree to a troop withdrawal unless they realized that the next stage in the development of the conflict was so imminent, i.e. the stage of a ground offensive. [...] At this moment, we can say that we came close to our set goal, and there are opportunities to turn events into the channel of a political settlement. Today we have a new situation where, it seems to me, we should convene a session of the Security Council. At that session we could consider an entire complex of proposals.

Major: [...] Our problem is that in recent days we have heard a number of contradictory statements coming from [Tariq] Aziz in Moscow and from Hussein in Baghdad. Those statements are very different in tone as well as in substance. In the last several months we have realized that one cannot trust Hussein. [...] What happened in reality points to intentional acts of setting things on fire in Kuwait, and also to the fact that these fires are going on and becoming more widespread.

You know that we believe firmly in all provisions of UN Resolution 660 as well as Resolution 678. But we have become convinced from our own practical experience that we cannot trust Hussein. [...] And the situation has come to a critical point now.

I have great respect and understanding for your desire to find a peaceful solution, which guided you in your decision to invite Aziz to Moscow for negotiations. Today I think it would be too late to talk about demands other than those that are included in the resolutions of the Security Council and that were presented by Bush on behalf of all the coalition members yesterday.

Gorbachev: [...] We have now received a response [from Hussein]. On the main issues, he is going along with our new tough demands. [...] As a result of our efforts Hussein did, finally, announce the immediate, unconditional and full withdrawal from Kuwait,

just as it is postulated in the Security Council resolution. And if we, for some reason, do not take this opportunity, he then will look like a hero. [...]

I believe that we should continue this unique relationship that we have developed. At least, I am in favor of it. And finally, I am asking you to pass my warmest wishes to Mrs. Thatcher.

[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]

Memorandum of Conversation with Tariq Aziz, Moscow, 12:30-12:40 p.m.

Gorbachev. I welcome the statement by the Iraqi leadership (*on readiness for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Kuwait*).

A new situation has emerged, and I am now actively working to prevent a tragedy. I am contacting the leaders of many countries. Conversations with Major, Andreotti, Mitterrand, Rafsanjani, Mubarak, Assad, Kohl have taken place or will take place in the near future.

In these conversations, I am focusing on the fact that a new situation has developed, a chance has opened up for a peaceful settlement. We urgently need to convene the Security Council to consider the situation. If there are different interpretations in its assessment, we can bring them to a common understanding in the Security Council.

I have an urgent request that nothing should happen in Kuwait from an environmental point of view ...

I hope that we will be able to prevent a tragic outcome and resolve the situation peacefully.

[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.

Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive.]

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Prime Minister of Italy Giulio Andreotti
23 February 1991, 13:25-13:55**

Gorbachev. Greetings Mr. Prime Minister, dear friend.

Andreotti. Hello, I am very glad to hear from you.

Gorbachev. I would like, Giulio, to report on the new developments. We received a response to our initiative early in the morning from Baghdad. Iraq is accepting the settlement plan that we discussed with Aziz. They have officially announced this there, stressing that Aziz has been delegated all the necessary powers.

Andreotti. That is very important.

Gorbachev. Yesterday at 12 o'clock Moscow time, Aziz held a press conference during which he announced the settlement plan.

- Iraq agrees to comply with Resolution 660, that is, to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops from Kuwait to the positions they occupied on August 1, 1990.

The withdrawal of troops begins the day after the cessation of hostilities and all military action on the ground, at sea, and in the air. We had a difficult debate with the Iraqis about the timeline of the withdrawal. (Iraq initially requested 3-4 months for this, but eventually agreed to three weeks.)

- Immediately after the completion of the withdrawal of troops from Kuwait ... the UN Security Council's resolutions will cease to be effective. Naturally, all this should be considered and recorded by the Security Council.

- All prisoners of war will be released and repatriated within 3 days after the cessation of hostility and military action.

- The confirmation, control, and supervision of the ceasefire and the withdrawal of troops will be carried out by observers or peacekeeping forces, as determined by the UN Security Council.

At yesterday's press conference Aziz put forward two theses.

First. He denied that Iraq has caused irreparable environmental damage to Kuwait, stating that Iraq was ready to accept an independent or UN-appointed commission at any time to check that everything on site.

Second. The settlement plan that he announced is a response to the main demand of the Americans.

Yesterday I had a telephone conversation with Bush. We talked for almost an hour-and-a-half. You see, Giulio, what developments have taken place. We all expected that it would still be possible to find a political solution that allows us to avoid a tragic phase of the war. American representatives were calling Moscow 3-4 times a day asking if there was any news. Now that real progress has been made, they are beginning to feel a little uneasy. To a certain extent, I somewhat understand the reasons for their unease.

You see, Giulio, we were together and must stay together. If someone wants to present a case in such a way that it seems that someone is trying to achieve one-sided success, then this is profiteering. Firstly, if we were not together, and, secondly, if it were not for the powerful American military efforts, then nothing would have changed, and such a step from Hussein, as he has now taken, would not have followed ... This is our shared achievement. That's the way to do it.

I spoke by phone just now with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. He repeated the US argument and said that Hussein must accept the American ultimatum.

You see, Giulio, it turns out that when Baghdad accepted the plan that we had prepared together, all the Europeans, an ultimatum appeared. And Baghdad had already accepted the plan. In this way, a completely new situation has developed, and this must be kept in mind in order to avoid mistakes in decision-making.

My thought is as follows. We need to be together, as before, to use the emerging opportunity to avoid the transition to a tragic phase of the war. This issue must be submitted to the Security Council, and as soon as possible. There it will be possible to discuss the settlement plan that has now been proposed, compare it with the American plan and come up with an integrated solution. I think this will be the most appropriate, it will allow us to keep the initiative. I believe that this will be a display of the highest order of politics. The rest is all a lot of fuss about nothing, competing vanities.

That's what I wanted to tell you, Giulio, as always sincerely and in a friendly way. There is one bottom line—we must act. We must help George maintain his balance of mind, convince him that a great victory has been won.

Andreotti. Thank you. I would like to allow myself a brief comment. What has been done is already a lot. The remaining differences are not that great. The main condition must be fulfilled—the return of freedom to Kuwait. Many fear that Hussein will remain with his army of five hundred thousand. But all this can be discussed later, and not immediately, which is in line with the UN plan.

Gorbachev. I agree with you.

Andreotti. For my part, I will try to influence Bush in this direction. The positions are very close, and it would be absurd not to come to a constructive solution.

Gorbachev. Your words are very welcome, Giulio.

Andreotti. I will also contact Francois Mitterrand. I think he will agree; as far as I know, he has a similar approach. You need to talk to him personally, unless, of course, you have already done so.

Gorbachev. I intend to speak with him.

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Hosni Mubarak

23 February 1991, 14:35-15:05

Gorbachev: Good afternoon, dear Hosni.

Mubarak: (speaks Russian) Hello, Comrade Gorbachev. How are you?

Gorbachev: Today I want to speak about one main problem without being distracted by other issues. Early in the morning we received a response from Baghdad—the Iraqi leadership accepted the six-point plan.

Mubarak: I heard Aziz's press conference. I do not believe him.

Gorbachev: But they are inviting a commission (in connection to setting fire to oil wells). This is the key point. Arabs or others could send their own representatives and check the sites themselves.

Yesterday I talked to Bush for an hour-and-a-half. Today I talked with Andreotti, and will talk to Kohl, Mitterrand, and Assad.

I think that a new situation has emerged, and we should use this chance.

I am telling George and others that we cannot fail to take account of the fact that the situation has changed. Baghdad has officially stated that they will withdraw troops from Kuwait. This is the main demand and he is ready to implement it ...

Mubarak: The problem is that nobody believes the Iraqi leadership. It wants to play for time and for that it needs to convene a session of the Security Council. Among the Arabs, nobody believes Saddam Hussein. [...] I don't believe him. He has lied to us too many times.

I am asking you to make another effort. You bear the responsibility of a great power. I tried to convince Saddam, I sent him a message through the King of Jordan. He did not understand anything.

I can talk to Bush, but I am asking you to get in touch with him.

Gorbachev: Dear Hosni, didn't I tell you that I just spoke with Bush for an hour---and a half?

[...]

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]*

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive.]*

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and
Francois Mitterrand
23 February 1991, 15:20-15:50
[excerpt]**

Gorbachev. I would like, in a few words, to bring you up to date on the situation that has developed after talks with the Iraqi delegation.

... Three hours ago, a press conference was held, and it became known that Tariq Aziz confirmed Iraq's agreement to the six-point plan ...

I want to inform you that yesterday I spoke on the phone with President Bush for an hour-and-a-half. After this conversation, I had the impression that the situation was quite peculiar. In recent days, we have all been involved in the search for a political solution to the problem. And so, when, finally, the outline of a plan for achieving peace began to take shape, our friends began to have concerns. Now we are in constant contact, only through the foreign ministries, three or four contacts a day.

... Considering the concerns that are now being expressed, we, together with the United States, perhaps also with a number of other countries, could come up with an initiative to urgently convene a meeting of the Security Council, where new proposals could be considered. Given your active role from the very beginning of the search for ways out of the crisis, perhaps you could join this initiative. At this meeting of the Security Council, we could come up with concrete solutions and achieve the objective through cooperative efforts.

Mitterrand. Let me interrupt you. Our difficulty is not related to information received from Aziz. I see that there are specific disagreements. Apparently, the proposals set out in the joint statement of the United States, France, and other countries are not suitable for Iraq. As I understand it, the main disagreements are related to the timeline. ... I can tell

you directly that we do not trust Hussein. ... We insist on a deadline of seven days. Iraq is proposing too long a timeframe.

Gorbachev. Did I understand you correctly? Can you agree that in the next 24 hours the Soviet Union, France, and the United States will present an initiative to convene a meeting of the Security Council?

Mitterand. No, I have to say that we have a problem here. We already put an end to this issue with a joint statement from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and other countries.

Gorbachev. But, given that the Security Council is currently working, the Soviet Union, France, and other countries could try during the Council meeting to develop a constructive document acceptable to everyone ...

Mitterand. I must remind you that we have obligations to the United States and other members of the Coalition. We cannot act in isolation. Of course, we can consult with our allies, but we cannot do more ...

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive.]*

Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Hafez Assad

23 February 1991, 15:55-16:05

Assad: Good afternoon, dear friend.

Gorbachev: Good afternoon, dear Hafez. Greetings and hugs to you. We know all the problems related to Saddam Hussein's position, with his actions in recent years. But my concern is about Iraqi lives, about the lives of other Arabs and non-Arabs, about the Iraqi people, about other Arab peoples, about the fate of the Middle East.

Assad: That is right, I agree.

Gorbachev: Therefore, I have a request—to act together in this situation. Not to allow this to become a military catastrophe. You know our proposals and the American proposals. What's next? I think we should urgently convene a session of the Security Council to work out a joint decision, which would integrate these proposals. That would be in everybody's interest, considering the fact that Saddam Hussein has raised the white flag.

Assad: We are friends. We are in constant contact, we invariably work together. You know all the problems associated with the Iraqi leadership. I personally and the entire Syrian leadership highly value your efforts aimed at not allowing a military solution. I wish success to your peaceful efforts.

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]*

Memorandum of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi

23 February 1991, Moscow

Gorbachev: Welcome to Moscow. I am glad that we are meeting again.

Gandhi: I am very glad that we are meeting again. I see that you are in a fighting mode.

Gorbachev: I have to be. Today is a hot day. I had telephone conversations back-to-back with the leaders of Great Britain, Italy, France, Egypt, and Syria. I am going to talk to Chancellor Kohl too.

Gandhi: And what is their reaction?

Gorbachev: Reactions are different. You know our proposals. This is a new plan. We sent it to Baghdad and received a positive answer. The main item is the unconditional and full withdrawal of troops from Kuwait. [...]

Today Iraq accepted this plan. And we see that the Americans are starting to get nervous, starting to hurry [...] Last night I had an hour-and-a-half telephone conversation with President Bush. He insisted that we should support the U.S. demands. This is the situation we have now: on the one hand—their demands, on the other—Iraq's acceptance of my proposals, which I cannot take back. Andreotti said that there wasn't much difference between the two approaches. Really: 7 days or 21? It is clear that in 7 days it

is simply physically impossible to withdraw all the troops. One can only insist on it if they don't want to have a political resolution.

We believe that the Security Council should consider the situation now and find a comprehensive solution that would integrate all the proposals. [...]

This is the concrete situation. But there is something more serious behind it. It is the issue of force.

Gandhi: Yes, and it concerns [us] a lot.

Gorbachev: There is a danger of sliding back to the methods of the Cold War. And secondly: the claim to leadership, world leadership. The Americans have difficulties with the new thinking for the new world. We want to continue the process that has started in recent years. We have to defend the main achievements of those years. This is what we are talking about. The Persian Gulf, although it is a difficult, big conflict, is not the main thing.

This is a serious question: how things will develop in the world. For the United States, as we can see, the questions of prestige, of leadership are in the first position. I believe that it is very important to preserve our choice in favor of Soviet-American cooperation, of joint efforts to improve the state of affairs in the world. But the United States is experiencing temptations because the Soviet Union is deeply drawn into problems of internal development and renewal of the country. This is a shortsighted approach. It turns out that some people in the United States do not want a dynamic, renewed Soviet Union. [...]

Gandhi: I am almost 100% in agreement with what you said. Today we should give support to your plan.

Gorbachev: That would be very important ...

Gandhi: We took this position already in the Parliament resolution yesterday. It was done on our party's initiative. Even before we received all information about the details of your proposal, we supported it and announced that Saddam Hussein must accept it. And in the same resolution we stated that it was necessary to convene a session of the Security Council to consider your proposals.

Gorbachev: Do you plan to hold a press conference here, in Moscow?

Gandhi: I could do that.

Gorbachev: It would be good if you could present these positions, your approach to the situation.

Gandhi: This is a good idea. I will ask to organize a meeting with the press after our conversation.

There are some mysterious aspects to this story. How did it happen that Hussein got in this situation? We, frankly speaking, expected that before January 15 he would make some dramatic step to get out of this situation. Sometimes, when you analyze the American position, you start thinking, especially remembering the words the U.S. ambassador [April Glaspie] said shortly before the invasion (of Kuwait). Then the Americans claimed that he [sic] was mistaken. And still, the ambassador essentially gave a “green light” to the Iraqis. Could it be that the Americans led Saddam by the hand to the current situation?

Gorbachev: Such version [of events] does exist: that the United States pushed Iraq toward the aggression in order to get engaged in a major way and thus to orchestrate a general rearrangement in the Middle East. It looks like it is a crude design. But if one looks at what is happening now, it rings true, the Americans are destroying Iraq as a big military-political force in the Middle East. It is not just some primitive country, it is a powerful factor, which is an obstacle for them in the Middle East. Therefore, it is one of the possible explanations. [...]

Gandhi: Unfortunately, in the mass media of many countries a situation has emerged where the truth does not count. There are literally waves of disinformation.

Gorbachev: It is true, they have a great potential in the sphere of information. We see it in the context of the conflict that we experienced in Lithuania. It had not only internal, but also external causes. [...]

I was on the phone with leaders of different countries all morning today. I tried to persuade Mitterrand.

Gandhi: I think it hurts him that it was you who proposed this plan. And so he is not really wishing it success.

Gorbachev: Who prevented him [from proposing it]?

Gandhi. Certainly. Today it is important to mobilize as many countries as possible in support of your initiative, especially the non-aligned countries. Lately they are very quiet. But some time ago I became convinced that they can be united around a cause when somebody acts like a leader. If there is no [leader], they sit with their arms crossed.

Gorbachev: After our conversation, I am planning to call President Bush once again; I will try to persuade him again to start the process within the framework of the Security Council.

Gandhi: It is very important to engage China and Iran in these efforts.

Gorbachev: Our relations with Iran are improving now; I will be talking with Rafsanjani later today.

We tried to get in touch with the Chinese, but the only person who was available to talk was a Foreign Ministry official on duty. I don't think that it is a gesture of sorts. It is probably just the weekend, the end of the day. [...]

I am very satisfied with our conversation. Let's continue our contacts. The confidential channel that we established earlier remains active. We will use it.

[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow.

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl
February 23, 1991, 19.55-20.15.**

Gorbachev. Greetings, dear Helmut. You are at home tonight and you seem to be in a good mood. I really don't want to, but I'll have to ruin it a little.

Kohl. Good evening, Mikhail. I am in quite a good mood and it will not be easy to spoil it.

Gorbachev. ... I would like, in a few words, to touch on the current situation around the Persian Gulf. I just had a phone call with George. I told him frankly that it would be fatal to our own interests not to take a chance and prevent the tragedy that may begin. ... The recently announced demands of the Iraqis bear no insurmountable obstacles.

It is urgent to convene a meeting of the UN Security Council, let's say within the next 24 hours, at which a firm decision could be made to end the war and a strict timetable for the withdrawal of troops could be determined.

If George is inclined to preserve his image by starting a war on land, we could all find ourselves in a very difficult situation, from which it will be difficult to get out ...

We agreed with George that contacts between [Alexander] Bessmertnykh and [James] Baker would continue. But I have a lot of concern that the Americans have already made their final decision. So it will be a decision without us. We are not involved in it. Once again I stress the enormous need to act jointly in the present situation. As before, I am convinced that by remaining in a position of strict realism we will be able to press the situation to a political solution. There is still a chance to prevent tragedy.

Kohl. I would like to ask one question in connection to this. No one here understands why Hussein is demanding to establish a period of 21 days for the withdrawal of troops. After all, he occupied the entire country in almost a day, and for him to withdraw from Kuwait, 10 days would be a lot.

Gorbachev. When the Iraqis submitted their first proposal for peaceful settlement, they claimed that it would take them three to four months to withdraw troops from Kuwait. I do not exclude the possibility that within the framework of an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, which we are calling to be convened immediately, taking into account the demands of both the Soviet Union and the United States, it will be possible to put the squeeze on Iraq and determine a withdrawal period of up to 10 days.

During our conversation in Moscow, [Tariq] Aziz told me that Iraq had made a decision of principle and had thrown down a white flag. This is not a political game, nor maneuvering.

Kohl. The problem is that no one has any confidence in Hussein anymore. His recent appearance on television made simply a terrible impression on our people.

Gorbachev. You and I know very well what Hussein is. But let me tell you straight: what will change in a day if the UN Security Council urgently meets and considers all the demands?!

Kohl. ... I do not trust the fact that Hussein is clinging to this 21-day period. We have drawn attention to the fact that this period of time coincides with the Islamic holiday of Ramadan.

Gorbachev. Don't we all have enough political wisdom, balance, and reason to take advantage of this opportunity, by not allowing the crisis to develop into a phase which will be very difficult to get out of?!

Kohl. And what did George say to you on this?

Gorbachev. I don't want to be incorrectly understood. George is waiting for a response from Iraq to his ultimatum. But already at the press conference in Moscow, Aziz declared a six-point program that could be viewed as the basis for finding a solution.

... I want to say frankly: if I thought only about myself, about my personal ambitions, and my proposals are well known, I could calmly withdraw into the shadows. But I also want to be with Bush in this difficult situation. It is especially important today to work together.

Kohl. At the moment, this is really the most decisive factor. I'll tell you directly, Mikhail: George and you must be together at this moment. Is it necessary to think too much about Hussein?

Gorbachev. I am of the same opinion. I don't need Hussein. But we will all end up in a very difficult situation if a massacre begins on the ground. There will be graves, old people and children will die.

You asked how George reacted to my views. He said he wanted to consult with the coalition allies. Without belittling my role, I want to say that I am counting on you, Helmut.

Kohl. But the ultimatum deadline for our time has already expired.

Gorbachev. George is now contemplating what to do next.

Kohl. Okay, I'll take care of this. I want you to know my position as well. I am set up to be very skeptical.

Gorbachev. Can such a politician as the Chancellor of a unified Germany turn into a skeptic?

Kohl. My skepticism applies only to this issue.

Gorbachev. We are currently dealing with a situation where it is necessary to show real character. Later George will say thank you for the fact that Mikhail and Helmut stuck to their guns.

Kohl. I will try to reach George and talk to him again on this matter.

Gorbachev. I embrace you, dear Helmut. I remember well your family home, that cozy place by the fireplace, where I was recently. All the best.

Kohl. Goodbye.

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive.]*

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev
and A.A. Hashemi Rafsanjani**

February 23, 1991, 20.25-20.55.

[...]

Gorbachev. I will touch on an issue that I considered necessary to discuss with you. I am referring to the situation in the Persian Gulf region.

I must say that we commend the constant contacts and interaction between our countries throughout the entire period of the development of this crisis, and note how important your efforts to finding a political solution to it are.

... We had to make the decision to talk over the phone with the leaders of a number of states. On our side, a suggestion was made to move consideration of the situation to the UN Security Council and urgently, within one day, to hold a meeting in order to try to come to an integrated solution and prevent the military conflict from escalating into an even more acute stage.

In a word, today I have devoted entirely to discussions of this problem. Of course, we especially look forward to working with you at this extremely crucial moment.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani. In recent days, we have been closely following the steps taken by the Soviet Union, by you personally, Mr. President, to resolve the crisis in the Persian Gulf region. We welcome your efforts to find a political solution ...

For our part, we maintain constant contact with the Iraqi leadership, exchanging messages with them. Everything is being done on our part to convince Iraq of the need to support your efforts, to be flexible and refrain from such actions that could further worsen the situation.

Gorbachev. I had a conversation with President Bush just before our conversation with you. He is waiting for a response from Iraq to his proposals, not including the statement of the Iraqi leadership referred to [previously]. There are fears that the lack of an Iraqi response could provoke a sharp reaction from the Americans and others.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani. Representatives of a number of non-aligned countries have now gathered in Tehran. If the multinational force does not start ground-based military action within the next 24 hours, it would be possible, for example, to urgently direct a delegation to Baghdad from among the participants in this meeting to convince the Iraqi side to give such an answer.

Gorbachev. I think Iran's statement in support of our proposal about urgently convening the Security Council could have a deterrent effect.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani. We will immediately publish a statement about our conversation with you, in which we will also state our position on all the issues raised.

We hope that, in turn, the Soviet side will do everything possible to persuade the United States not to deploy a ground campaign for at least the next 24-30 hours.

Gorbachev. This is precisely what our proposal for urgently holding a meeting of the UN Security Council is oriented towards.

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive.]*

**Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Toshiki
Kaifu**

February 23, 1991, 20.55-21.10.

Gorbachev. Greetings. Please excuse me for interrupting your rest on a Saturday night.

I would like to share with you some thoughts about the situation in the Persian Gulf, which has entered a new phase. Now the cooperation of all the leading countries is very necessary in order to transfer the conflict to a political phase. The question is not whether or not to trust Saddam Hussein. This situation is not about Hussein now. Hussein is already different now: he has failed to split the coalition and is weak. He is already under pressure from the circumstances and the firm position of the coalition ... From my point of view, one day or two days changes nothing. However, during this time, efforts should be made so that the conflict does not enter an acute phase, a tragedy does not occur, and people do not die. In this regard, I am hopeful for the credibility of Japan and its government. I think that just as we have acted these seven months together, we need to make Bush feel that this is also necessary in the future.

Kaifu. Mr. President, I appreciate the efforts towards peace that you have made recently. I believe that agreement on the six points itself represents a certain progress. However, this is not enough, there is no unconditional and complete withdrawal of troops. Some time ago I had a telephone conversation with President Bush on this topic, and our points of view coincided. I would like, Mr. President, for you to have made additional efforts, to have taken one more step so that Iraq fully withdraws its troops from Kuwait. I highly appreciate that you felt it necessary to contact me, and I'm taking into account what you said. However, President Bush is not optimistic, he takes a tough line.

Moving on to another topic, I would like to say that I look forward to your arrival in Japan in April and hope to talk about a lot with you.

Gorbachev. Thank you. I also look forward to meeting with you. I am sure that you, Mr. Kaifu, will use your unique relationship with the United States and with the president of that country in order to avoid an escalation of the conflict in the Persian Gulf, to avoid tragedy. That's all I wanted to say to you.

Kaifu. Thank you. I appreciate that you contacted me today. I will remember this conversation of ours. Let us from now on work together to achieve peace. I would like to say once again that I look forward to your visit to Japan.

*[Source: Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 1, opis 1.
Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive.]*