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Statement on the Resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev as President of the Soviet Union

1991-12-25

Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation as President of the Soviet Union culminates a remarkable era in the history of his country and in its long and often difficult relationship with the United States. As he leaves office, I would like to express publicly and on behalf of the American people my gratitude to him for years of sustained commitment to world peace, and my personal respect for his intellect, vision, and courage.

President Gorbachev is responsible for one of the most important developments of this century, the revolutionary transformation of a totalitarian dictatorship and the liberation of his people from its smothering embrace. His personal commitment to democratic and economic reform through perestroika and glasnost, a commitment which demanded the highest degree of political and personal ingenuity and courage, permitted the peoples of Russia and other Republics to cast aside decades of dark oppression and put in place the foundations of freedom.

Working with President Reagan, myself, and other allied leaders, President Gorbachev acted boldly and decisively to end the bitter divisions of the cold war and contributed to the remaking of a Europe whole and free. His and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's "New Thinking" in foreign affairs permitted the United States and the Soviet Union to move from confrontation to partnership in the search for peace across the globe. Together we negotiated historic reductions in chemical, nuclear, and conventional forces and reduced the risk of a nuclear conflict.

Working together, we helped the people of Eastern Europe win their liberty and the German people their goal of unity in peace and freedom. Our partnership led to unprecedented cooperation in repelling Iraqi aggression in Kuwait, in bringing peace to Nicaragua and Cambodia, and independence to Namibia. And our work continues as we seek a lasting and just peace between Israelis and Arabs in the Middle East and an end to the conflict in Afghanistan.

President Gorbachev's participation in these historic events is his legacy to his country and to the world. This record assures him an honored place in history and, most importantly for the future, establishes a solid basis from which the United States and the West can work in equally constructive ways with his successors.