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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

SPOT COMMENTARY

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21 February 1991
2300 EST

IRAQ-KUWAIT: SITUATION REPORT #594

Saddam's One-Two Punch

The Soviet Union announced tonight that visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz had responded "positively" to the Gorbachev initiative. A Soviet spokesman laid out an eight-point approach for settling the Gulf crisis: Iraq would first agree to a full and unconditional withdrawal of its forces from Kuwait, which would begin on the second day after a cease-fire and would take place in a fixed time frame. All POWs would be released immediately after the cease-fire. The withdrawal would be monitored by countries not directly involved in the conflict, as chosen by the UN Security Council.

The plan then stipulates that after two-thirds of Iraq's forces have left Kuwait, the UN-imposed economic sanctions would end and, once all Iraqi forces have withdrawn from Kuwait, the crisis-related UN resolutions would cease to be in effect. More details on the plan will be made public later tomorrow to the members of the UN Security Council.

Earlier today, Saddam broadcast a prerecorded speech that was defiant and uncompromising; although leaving room for a diplomatic solution, he virtually pleaded for the start of a ground war. Nearly coincident with Saddam's speech and Moscow's announcement of Iraqi withdrawal plans, Baghdad launched Scuds at Saudi targets.

Comment: Baghdad's acceptance of the Soviet initiative and Saddam's speech appear to be two aspects of a single effort to shift the political momentum in Iraq's favor. Saddam almost certainly will have calculated that some of the terms of the Soviet proposal will not be acceptable to Washington and, if so, that the coalition will be drawn into a negotiating process Baghdad has long sought, or that a US rejection of the Soviet initiative will strengthen Saddam's image as a victim of US aggression. Saddam probably is willing to run the risk of a ground war in the hope that his diplomatic moves will gain him international support--especially with the Soviets and the Iranians--to a cease-fire more to his liking.

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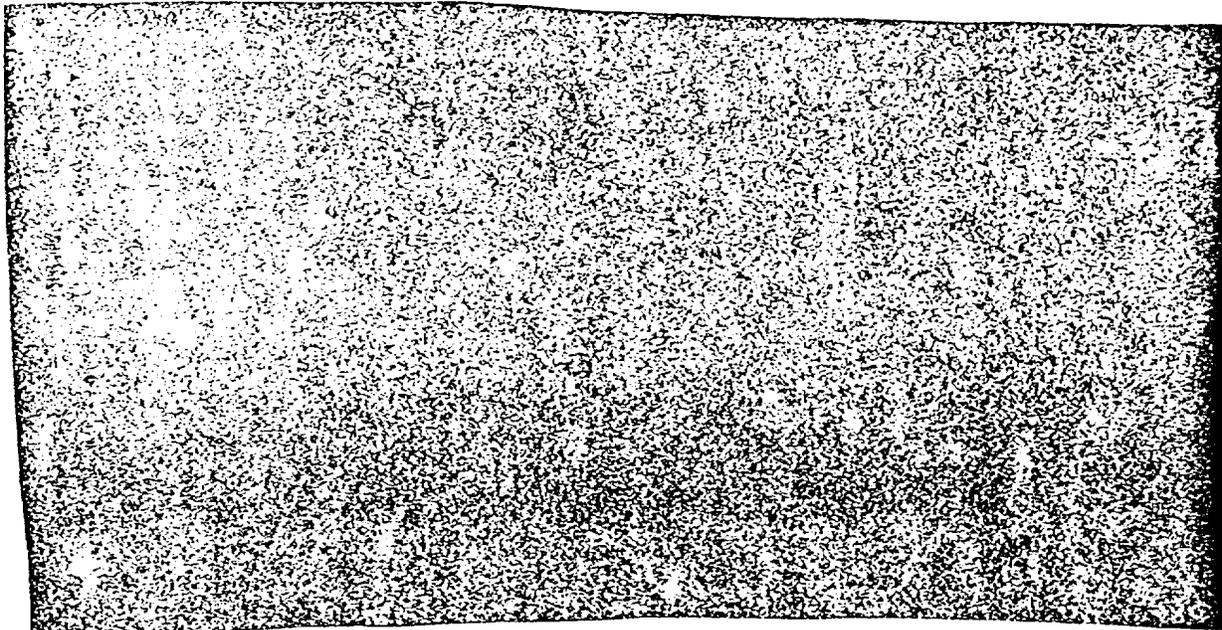
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Worldwide Reaction to Soviet Initiative

Most countries have not yet issued a formal comment on the plan. The limited reaction so far has been mixed:

- o Among coalition countries, Britain and France say the Soviet proposal does not meet its demands for complete compliance with the UN resolutions and, a Saudi UN spokesman said the plan had "too many conditions."
- o Among key neutral countries, China welcomed the Soviet initiative while Israel declared it unacceptable.
- o Reaction among pro-Iraq countries has been positive. Both Yeaen and the PLO hailed the proposal.



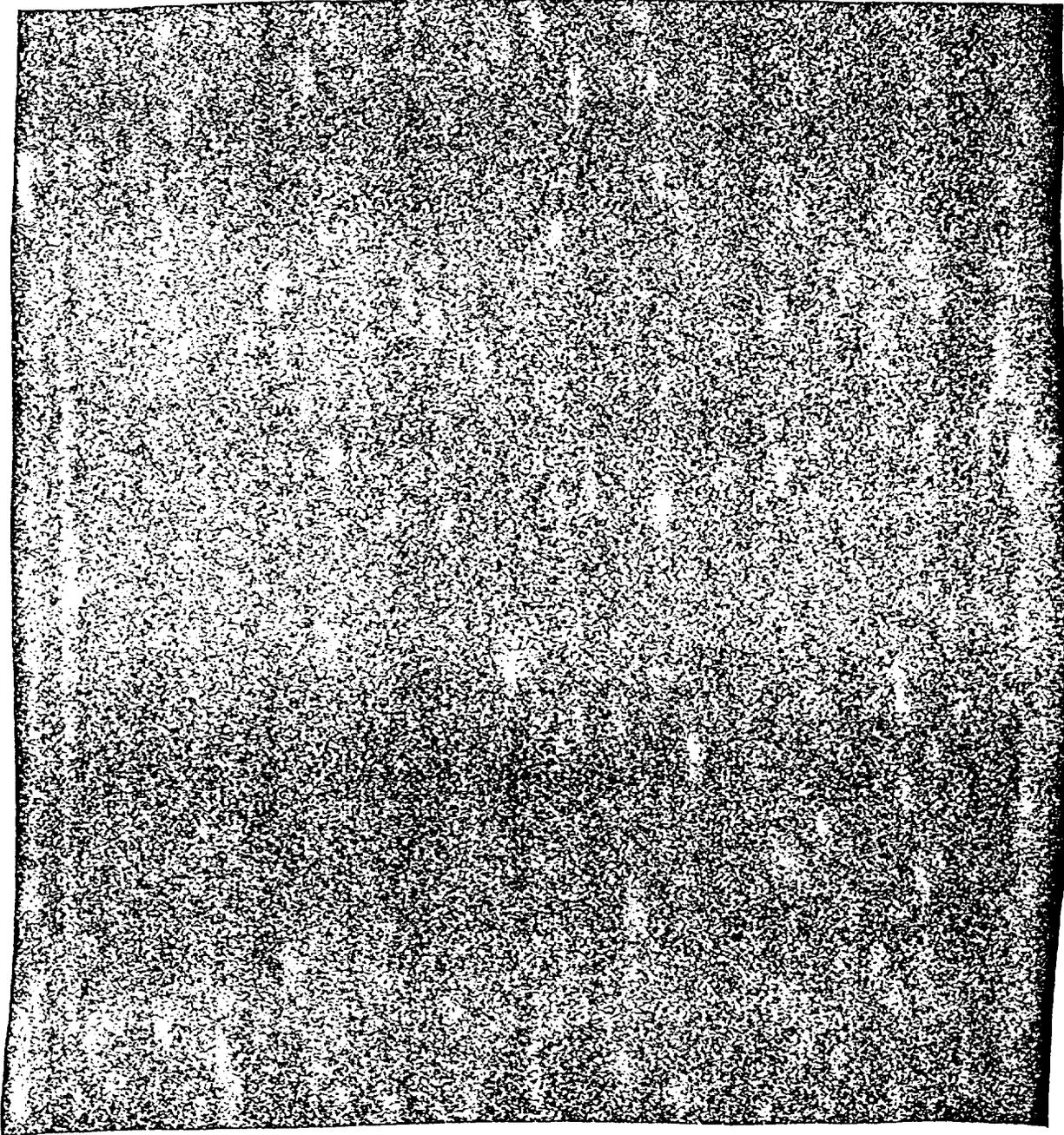
Iraqis Launch FROG Rockets

Iraq used FROG rockets for the first time today, according to press reports. Two rockets were fired at coalition forces northeast of Hafr al Batin, one of which reportedly fell close to a unit of Senegalese troops, injuring eight and damaging a vehicle. The second rocket fell in a deserted area.

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Comment: Iraq may be responding to continuing coalition probing attacks along the Saudi border. The FROG is a Soviet-made surface-to-surface rocket with a 70 km range and a 215 kg warhead.



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