

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

**Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployment of United States
Combat-Equipped Armed Forces**

June 14, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

***MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM
OBJECTIVES***

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

***Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in
Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives***

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. In support of these and other overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Previously, such operations and deployments have been reported, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's leadership of Afghanistan. The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces to carry out future acts of international terrorism, and we have continued to work with our counterterrorism partners to disrupt and degrade the capabilities of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. As necessary, in response to this terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter this terrorist threat to the United States.

Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces continue to pursue and engage remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan while transitioning to an Afghan security lead. The Afghanistan Force Management Level is approximately 62,000 U.S. forces. Approximately 49,000 of these forces are assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Further Presidentially directed force reductions will continue to the 34,000 level by February 12, 2014.

The U.N. Security Council most recently reaffirmed its authorization of ISAF for a 12-month period until October 13, 2013, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2069 (October 9, 2012). The mission of ISAF, under NATO command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. Fifty nations, including the United States and all 28 NATO members, contribute forces to ISAF. These forces broke Taliban momentum and trained additional Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The ANSF are now increasingly assuming responsibility for security on the timeline committed to at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, and renewed at the Summit in Chicago, by the United States, our NATO allies, ISAF partners, and the Government of Afghanistan. The nations contributing to ISAF will continue to support Afghanistan on its path towards self-reliance in security, improved governance, and economic and social development. This path will prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a safe haven for terrorists that threaten Afghanistan, the region, and the world.

On March 25, 2013, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Afghan government under which the United States transferred all Afghan nationals detained by U.S. forces in Afghanistan to the custody and control of the Afghan government. Pursuant to the MOU, any new Afghan detainees are to be transferred to Afghan custody and control within 96 hours after capture. United States forces in Afghanistan continue to detain approximately 66 third-country nationals under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40), as informed by the law of war.

Somalia. In Somalia, the U.S. military has worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab. As detailed in my report of January 13, 2013, and at my direction, on January 11, 2013, U.S. combat aircraft briefly entered Somali airspace and U.S. forces provided limited technical support to French forces conducting an operation in Somalia in which they attempted to rescue a French citizen being held hostage by al-Shabaab.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to dismantle operationally and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in Yemen who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for the approximately 166 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40) as informed by the law of war.

Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

As detailed in my report of February 22, 2013, and at my direction, on February 20, 2013, the last elements of a deployment of 40 additional U.S. military personnel entered Niger with the consent of the Government of Niger. This deployment provides support for intelligence collection and facilitates intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in Mali, and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 180.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

In October and November 2011, U.S. military personnel with appropriate combat equipment deployed to Uganda to serve as advisors to regional forces that are working to

apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield, and to protect local populations. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed for this mission, including those providing logistical and support functions, is approximately 100. United States forces are working with select partner nation forces to enhance cooperation, information-sharing and synchronization, operational planning, and overall effectiveness. Elements of these U.S. forces have deployed to forward locations in the LRA-affected areas of the Republic of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic to enhance regional efforts against the LRA. These forces will not engage LRA forces except in self-defense. It is in the U.S. national security interest to help our regional partners in Africa to develop their capability to address threats to regional peace and security, including the threat posed by the LRA. The United States is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to help the governments and people of this region in their efforts to end the threat posed by the LRA and to address the impact of the LRA's atrocities.

MARITIME INTERCEPTION OPERATIONS

As noted in previous reports, the United States remains prepared to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of each of the geographic combatant commands. These maritime operations are aimed at stopping the movement, arming, and financing of certain international terrorist groups, and also include operations aimed at stopping proliferation by sea of weapons of mass destruction and related materials. As detailed in my report of January 28, 2013, and at my direction, on January 23, 2013, a U.S. Navy warship with Yemeni Coast Guard personnel aboard entered Yemeni territorial waters, at the invitation of the Government of Yemen, to assist the Government of Yemen in intercepting and inspecting a vessel suspected of smuggling contraband into Yemen. Upon boarding and searching the vessel, a combined U.S. and Yemeni team discovered various conventional weapons and explosives, apparently of Iranian origin, concealed within the vessel. The vessel was escorted to Aden and turned over to the Yemeni Coast Guard on January 30, 2013.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 690 military personnel are assigned to the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo.

Currently, 23 NATO Allies contribute to KFOR. Seven non-NATO countries also participate. The United States contribution to KFOR is approximately 750 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 5,165 personnel.

REGIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

As detailed in my report of December 14, 2012, the security forces that deployed to Libya on September 12, 2012, and the security forces deployed to Yemen on September 13, 2012, to

support the security of U.S. personnel remain in place and will remain until the security situation no longer requires them. On May 17, 2013, approximately 30 additional U.S. forces deployed to Libya to further support the security of U.S. personnel in Libya.

As detailed in my report of December 29, 2012, due to the deteriorating security situation in the Central African Republic and the potential threat to U.S. citizens, U.S. embassy personnel and several private U.S. citizens were evacuated on December 27, 2012, from Bangui, Central African Republic. On December 27, 2012, a standby response and evacuation force of approximately 50 U.S. military personnel from U.S. Africa Command deployed to Chad to support the evacuation of U.S. embassy personnel and U.S. citizens from the Central African Republic. The last of those forces departed Chad on December 29, 2012.

Additional information about regional security operations is provided in the classified annex.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107-40 and other statutes) and as Chief Executive, as well as my constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Categories: Communications to Congress : Combat-equipped Armed Forces, U.S., deployment, letter.

Names: Kony, Joseph.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Detention facilities, transfer of responsibility to Afghan forces; Afghanistan : Former regime; Afghanistan : International Security Assistance Force; Afghanistan : NATO, role; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Central African Republic : Political unrest and violence; Cuba : Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base :: Detention of alleged terrorists; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic security, strengthening efforts; Kosovo : KFOR international security force; Mali : Political unrest and violence; Niger : U.S. military detachment; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Somalia : Security cooperation with U.S.; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : al-Shabaab terrorist group; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Uganda : Lord's Resistance Army insurgent group; Uganda : U.S. military detachment; Yemen : Security cooperation with U.S.

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