

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

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

June 15, 2012

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 AGAINST AL-QA'IDA, THE TALIBAN, AND ASSOCIATED FORCES AND IN SUPPORT OF RELATED U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM (CT) OBJECTIVES

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida terrorists, their Taliban supporters, 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 degraded al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's leadership of Afghanistan.

United States Armed Forces are now actively pursuing and engaging remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 90,000, of which more than 70,000 are assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In accordance with June 2011 Presidential guidance, the Department of Defense remains on track to achieve a Force Management Level of 68,000 U.S. forces by the end of this summer. After that, reductions will continue at a steady pace.

The U.N. Security Council most recently reaffirmed its authorization of ISAF for a 12-month period until October 13, 2012, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2011 (October 12, 2011). 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 Allies, contribute forces to ISAF. These forces, including U.S. "surge" forces deployed in late 2009 and 2010, 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 by the United States, our NATO allies, ISAF partners, and the Government of Afghanistan.

United States Armed Forces are detaining in Afghanistan approximately 2,748 individuals under the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40) as informed by the laws of war. On March 9, 2012, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Afghan government under which the United States is to transfer Afghan nationals detained by U.S. forces in Afghanistan to the custody and control of the Afghan government

within 6 months. Efforts are underway to accomplish such transfers in a safe and humane manner.

The combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the approximately 169 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under Public Law 107-40 and consistent with principles of the law of war.

In furtherance of U.S. efforts against members of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to assist in enhancing the CT capabilities of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world.

In Somalia, the U.S. military has worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and al-Qa'ida-associated elements of al-Shabaab. In a limited number of cases, the U.S. military has taken direct action in Somalia against members of al-Qa'ida, including those who are also members of al-Shabaab, who are engaged in efforts to carry out terrorist attacks against the United States and our interests.

The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to operationally dismantle 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 that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida and its associated forces to carry out future acts of international terrorism, and we have continued to work with our CT partners to disrupt and degrade the capabilities of al-Qa'ida and its associated forces. As necessary, in response to the terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces 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. A classified annex to this report provides further information.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

The United States completed its responsible withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq in December 2011, in accordance with the 2008 Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq.

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 90. 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, however, 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 impacts 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. Additional information is provided in the classified annex.

HOSTAGE RESCUE OPERATIONS

As noted to you in my report of January 26, 2012, at my direction, on January 24, 2012, U.S. Special Operations Forces conducted a successful operation in Somalia to rescue Ms. Jessica Buchanan, a U.S. citizen who had been kidnapped by individuals linked to Somali pirate groups and financiers.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 693 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 817 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 6,401 personnel, which includes a temporarily deployed Operational Reserve Force.

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.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Daniel K. Inouye, President pro tempore of the Senate.

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

Names: Buchanan, Jessica; Kony, Joseph.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Former regime; Afghanistan : International Security Assistance; Afghanistan : International Security Assistance Force; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Commerce, international : Piracy; Defense and national security : Piracy, efforts to combat; Egypt : Multinational Force and Observers; Iraq : Relations with U.S.; Iraq : Status of forces agreement with U.S.; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Kosovo : KFOR international security force :: International assistance; Kosovo : KFOR international security force :: NATO, role; Kosovo : KFOR international security force :: U.S. military forces, deployment; Somalia : Piracy; ; Afghanistan : Former regime; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : al-Shabaab terrorist group; Terrorism : Transfer of detainees at Guantanamo Bay; Uganda : Lord's Resistance Army insurgent group; United Nations : Security Council.

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