

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

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

June 13, 2016

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 partners and allies. 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, U.S. Armed Forces, including special operations forces, have conducted counterterrorism combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. Since August 2014, these operations have targeted the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which was formerly known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq. 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. Such operations and deployments have been reported previously, 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 and ISIL's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. These operations also included an airstrike conducted by U.S. forces on May 21, 2016, against Taliban leader Mullah Mansur in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. If necessary, in response to terrorist threats, 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 terrorist threats to the United States.

Afghanistan. As I previously announced, U.S. Armed Forces have transitioned the lead for security to Afghan security forces while striking significant blows against al-Qa'ida's leadership and preventing Afghanistan from being used to launch attacks against the United States. A limited number of U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan for the purposes of training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, conducting and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al-Qa'ida, and taking appropriate measures against those who directly threaten U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan or provide direct support to al-Qa'ida. The United

States currently remains in an armed conflict against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces, and active hostilities against those groups remain ongoing.

The mission to help train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan ministries and institutions continues through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led Resolute Support Mission. The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2189, dated December 12, 2014, which welcomed the Resolute Support Mission and underscored the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

Today, there are approximately 9,300 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, consistent with the Force Management Level of 9,800. (The actual number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan may exceed this Force Management Level due to, for example, overlap during rotations of units, and the continued presence of forces with the single mission of supporting the retrograde of U.S. equipment, both of which are excluded from the Force Management Level.)

Iraq and Syria. As part of a comprehensive strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL, U.S. Armed Forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes and other necessary actions against ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria. United States Armed Forces are also conducting airstrikes in Syria against operatives of al-Qa'ida, including those who are involved in al-Qa'ida's plotting against the West. In Iraq, U.S. Armed Forces are advising and coordinating with Iraqi forces and providing training, equipment, communications support, intelligence support, and other support to select elements of the Iraqi security forces, including Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces. In February 2016, U.S. Armed Forces captured Sulayman Dawud al-Bakkar, also known as Abu Dawud, an ISIL "emir" of its chemical and conventional weapons manufacturing, in Iraq. On March 10, 2016, Dawud was transferred to Iraqi government custody. United States Armed Forces remain postured to support or conduct further similar operations in Iraq and Syria. Additionally, small teams of U.S. special operations forces have deployed to northern Syria to help coordinate U.S. operations with indigenous ground forces conducting operations against ISIL. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq currently is 4,087. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Syria is 300.

These actions are being undertaken in coordination with and at the request of the Government of Iraq and in conjunction with coalition partners.

Turkey. In July 2015, the Government of Turkey agreed to the U.S. request to deploy U.S. combat aircraft to Turkey to conduct air operations in support of counter-ISIL operations. Strike and combat support aircraft, with associated U.S. military personnel, deployed to Turkey to support counter-ISIL operations and Turkish air sovereignty operations at the Turkish government's request.

Somalia. In Somalia, U.S. forces continue to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab and to provide advice and assistance to regional counterterrorism forces, including Somali National Army and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces. On March 31, 2016, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike against an al-Shabaab senior leader, Hassan Ali Dhoore, who is part of al-Qa'ida. On May 27, 2016, U.S. forces carried out an airstrike against Abdullahi Haji Da'ud, one of al-Shabaab's most senior commanders, who is also part of al-Qa'ida and served as the principal coordinator of al-Shabaab's attacks in Somalia and Kenya. United States forces also conducted strikes in defense of U.S. forces, and in defense of partnered Somali and AMISOM forces between March 5 and May 13, 2016, notably including the March 5 airstrike against an al-Shabaab training facility where fighters posed an imminent threat to U.S. and AMISOM forces.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Government of Yemen 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. United States forces have conducted a number of airstrikes against AQAP combatants in Yemen since December 2015, including on February 3, February 29, March 30, April 23–28, and May 19. Notably, on March 22, 2016, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike targeting an AQAP training camp in Yemen. In April 2016, small numbers of U.S. military personnel were authorized to deploy to Yemen to support operations against AQAP.

Djibouti. United States forces continue to partner with Government of Djibouti authorities, which have permitted use of Djiboutian territory for basing of U.S. forces. United States forces remain deployed to Djibouti, including for purposes of posturing for counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

Libya. On February 19, 2016, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike targeting an ISIL training camp near Sabratha, Libya, and a senior ISIL facilitator, Nouredine Chouchane, also known as Sabir.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for detainees held at Guantánamo 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. There were 80 such detainees as of the date of this report.

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

United States military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in the Sahel and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 420.

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

Approximately 250 U.S. military personnel are deployed to Cameroon, with the consent of the Government of Cameroon, to conduct airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in the region. These forces are equipped with weapons for the purpose of providing their own force protection and security, and they will remain in Cameroon until their support is no longer needed.

MILITARY OPERATIONS RELATED TO THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

United States military personnel with appropriate combat equipment remain deployed to various countries in the central Africa region to serve as advisors to regional forces of the African Union Regional Task Force 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. Additional information about military operations related to the LRA is provided in the classified annex.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 700 military personnel are assigned to or supporting the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

At the request of the Government of Jordan, approximately 2,200 U.S. military personnel are deployed to Jordan to support the security of Jordan and promote regional stability. These forces will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.

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. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 660 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,475 personnel.

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 and as Chief Executive (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107-40 and other statutes), 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 Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

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

Names: Bakkar, Sulayman Dawud al- "Abu Dawud"; Da'ud, Abdullahi Haji; Kony, Joseph.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Former regime; Afghanistan : NATO, role; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Africa : Central Africa, Lord's Resistance Army insurgent group; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Cameroon, U.S. military detachment; Cuba : Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base :: Detention of alleged terrorists; Djibouti, security cooperation with U.S.; Egypt : U.S. military detachment; France : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Iraq : Iraqi military and security forces; Iraq : Security cooperation with U.S.; Jordan : Security cooperation with U.S.; Kosovo : KFOR international security force; Niger, U.S. military detachment; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Somalia : al-Shabaab terrorist organization; Somalia : U.S. airstrikes; Syria : U.S. military detachment; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Turkey : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Yemen : Security cooperation with U.S.; Yemen : U.S. airstrikes.

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