

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

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

December 5, 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 capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. 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, among other things, training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces; conducting and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of core al-Qa'ida and against ISIL; 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 remains in an armed conflict, including against the Taliban, and active hostilities 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.

The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Afghanistan currently is 9,800. Effective January 1, 2017, the Force Management Level for Afghanistan will be 8,448. (The actual number of U.S. military personnel may exceed the Force Management Level due to certain forces being excluded from counting against the Force Management Level; for example, incoming and outgoing forces that overlap during rotations of units do not count against 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 operations against ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria. United States Armed Forces are also conducting airstrikes and other necessary operations against al-Qa'ida in Syria. 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. Additionally, small teams of U.S. special operations forces have deployed to 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 5,262. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Syria is 300.

Actions in Iraq are being undertaken in coordination with the Government of Iraq, and in conjunction with coalition partners.

Turkey. Strike and combat support aircraft, with associated U.S. military personnel, remain deployed to Turkey to support counter-ISIL operations and to support the defense of Turkey, at the Turkish government's request.

Somalia. In Somalia, U.S. forces continue to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and its Somalia-based associated force, al-Shabaab. United States forces also advise, assist, and occasionally accompany regional forces, including Somali and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces, during counterterrorism operations. United States forces also conducted strikes in defense of U.S. forces, and in defense of partnered Somali and AMISOM forces, on June 21, July 20, July 31, August 31, September 25, and September 28, 2016.

Yemen. The U.S. military also has 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). A small number of U.S. military personnel are deployed in Yemen to support operations against AQAP, including support for operations to capture AQAP leaders and key personnel. Our 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 my June 13, 2016, update report, including on July 1, July 4, July 8, July 16, August 4, August 24, August 30, September 4, September 20, September 22, September 23, September 29, October 6, October 18, October 21, November 20, November 24, and November 30, 2016.

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 and contingency support for embassy security augmentation in East Africa, as required.

Libya. United States forces continue to conduct airstrikes against ISIL targets in Libya, including in support of efforts by forces aligned with the Libyan Government of National Accord to recapture the city of Sirte from ISIL. These airstrikes are conducted at the request of and with the consent of the Government of National Accord.

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 59 such detainees as of the date of this report.

Jordan. At the request of the Government of Jordan, approximately 2,300 U.S. military personnel are deployed to Jordan to support counter-ISIL operations and the security of Jordan and to 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.

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

United States military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for counterterrorism intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting counterterrorism operations in the Sahel and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 575.

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

Approximately 285 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 THE RED SEA

As I previously reported, on October 12, 2016, U.S. forces conducted missile strikes on radar facilities in Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen. These strikes were in response to anti-ship cruise missile attacks perpetrated by Houthi insurgents on U.S. Navy warships in the international waters of the Red Sea on October 9 and October 12.

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 RELATED TO THE SECURITY OF U.S. CITIZENS AND PROPERTY IN SOUTH SUDAN

As I reported in July 2016, U.S. military personnel with appropriate combat equipment are deployed to South Sudan to support the security of U.S. citizens and property in South Sudan,

including of our Embassy in Juba. These forces will remain in South Sudan, in full coordination with the Government of South Sudan, until the security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed. The forces that were deployed to Uganda to support this mission have redeployed to Djibouti or their home stations in Europe.

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 774 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 Orrin G. Hatch, President pro tempore of the Senate.

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

Names: 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 : Security cooperation with U.S.; Kosovo : KFOR international security force; Niger, U.S. military detachment; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Somalia : al-Shabaab terrorist organization; South Sudan : Security cooperation with U.S.; 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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