

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces December 15, 2010

*Dear Madam 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 OBJECTIVES**

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida terrorists and their Taliban supporters. 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. Previous 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.

United States Armed Forces are actively pursuing and engaging remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 97,500, of which more than 81,500 are assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The U.N. Security Council most recently reaffirmed its authorization of ISAF for a 12-month period from October 13, 2010, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1943 (October 13, 2010). The mission of ISAF, under NATO command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic

Republic of Afghanistan, is to conduct population-centric counterinsurgency operations, enable expanded and effective capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces, support improved governance and development in order to protect the Afghan people, and promote sustainable security. Presently, 48 partner nations contribute to ISAF, including all 28 NATO Allies. These combat operations are gradually pushing insurgents to the edges of secured population areas in a number of important regions, largely resulting from the increase in U.S. forces over the past year. U.S. and ISAF forces will continue to execute the strategy of clear-shapehold-build, and transition, until conditions on the ground allow for the full transition of the lead in operations to the Afghan National Security Forces.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qa'ida, Taliban, and associated force fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped forces deployed since January 2002 to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the approximately 170 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 who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, its friends, its allies, and U.S. forces abroad, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's area of operations. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to assist in enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. 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 counterterrorism 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*

Since the expiration of the authorization and mandate for the Multinational Force in Iraq in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 on December 31, 2008, U.S. forces have continued operations to support Iraq in its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq pursuant to the bilateral 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 (Security Agreement), which entered into force on January 1, 2009. These contributions have included, but have not been limited to, assisting in building the capability of the Iraqi security forces, supporting the development of Iraq's political institutions, improving local governance, enhancing ministerial capacity, and providing critical humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the Iraqis. The United States continues its responsible drawdown, in accordance with commitments in the Security Agreement, to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq by December 31, 2011. The number of U.S. forces in Iraq at this time is approximately 48,400.

#### *MARITIME INTERCEPTION OPERATIONS*

As noted in previous reports, the United States continues 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.

#### *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 and, with local authorities and international institutions, contributes to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment.

Currently, 24 NATO Allies contribute to KFOR. Eight non-NATO countries also participate by providing military and other support personnel. The United States contribution to KFOR is approximately 808 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 9 percent of the total strength of approximately 8,721 personnel. The United States forces participating in KFOR have been assigned to the eastern region of Kosovo, but also have operated in other areas of the country based on mission requirements. The principal military task of U.S. KFOR forces is to help maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement.

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 statutory and constitutional 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 Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Daniel K. Inouye, President pro tempore of the Senate.

## Remarks at the American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal Nations Conference December 16, 2010

Thank you very much. Everybody please be seated. Thank you. Thank you, Fawn, for that wonderful introduction. Thanks to all of you. It is wonderful to be with you here today.

I see a lot of friends, a lot of familiar faces in the house. I want to thank all the tribal leaders who have traveled here for this conference. And I also want to recognize all the wonderful Members of Congress who are here, as well as members of my Cabinet, including Secretary Salazar, who is doing terrific work here at Interior on behalf of the first Americans and on behalf of all Americans. So thank you very much, everybody.

Yesterday I had the chance to meet with several tribal leaders at the White House, continuing a conversation that began long before I was President. And while I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak with you this morning, I'm also very eager to see the results of today's meeting. I want to hear more from you about how we can strengthen the relationship between our governments, whether in education or health care or in fighting crime or in creating jobs.

And that's why we're here today. That's a promise I've made to you. I remember, more than 2 years ago, in Montana, I visited the Crow Nation, one of the many times I met with tribal leaders on the campaign trail. You may know that on that trip, I became an adopted Crow Indian. My Crow name is "One Who Helps People Throughout the Land." And my wife, when I told her about this, she said, "You should be named 'One Who Isn't Picking Up His Shoes and His Socks.'" [*Laughter*]

Now—but I like the first name better. And I want you to know that I'm working very hard to live up to that name.

What I said then was that as President, I would make sure that you had a voice in the White House. I said that so long as I held this office, never again would Native Americans be forgotten or ignored. And over the past 2 years, my administration, working hand in hand with many of you, has strived to keep that promise. And you've had strong partners in Kim Teehee,

my senior adviser for Native American issues, and Jodi Gillette, in our intergovernmental affairs office. You can give them a big round of applause. They do outstanding work.

Last year, we held the largest gathering of tribal leaders in our history. And at that conference—you remember, most of you were there—I ordered every Cabinet agency to promote more consultation with the tribal nations. Because I don't believe that the solutions to any of our problems can be dictated solely from Washington. Real change depends on all of us doing our part.

So over the past year my administration has worked hard to strengthen the relationship between our nations. And together, we have developed a comprehensive strategy to help meet the challenges facing Native American communities.

Our strategy begins with the number-one concern for all Americans right now, and that's improving the economy and creating jobs. We've heard time and again from tribal leaders that one of the keys to unlocking economic growth on reservations is investments in roads and high-speed rail and high-speed Internet and the infrastructure that will better connect your communities to the broader economy. That's essential for drawing capital and creating jobs on tribal lands. So to help spur the economy, we've boosted investment in roads throughout the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Reservation Road Program, and we've offered new loans to reach reservations with broadband.

And as part of our plan to revive the economy, we've also put billions of dollars into pressing needs like renovating schools. We're devoting resources to job training, especially for young people in Indian Country, who too often have felt like they don't have a chance to succeed. And we're working with you to increase the size of tribal homelands in order to help you develop your economies.

I also want to note that I support legislation to make clear, in the wake of a recent Supreme Court decision, that the Secretary of Interior