

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Commencement of Military Operations Against Libya March 21, 2011

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

At approximately 3:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, on March 19, 2011, at my direction, U.S. military forces commenced operations to assist an international effort authorized by the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council and undertaken with the support of European allies and Arab partners, to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and address the threat posed to international peace and security by the crisis in Libya. As part of the multilateral response authorized under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, U.S. military forces, under the command of Commander, U.S. Africa Command, began a series of strikes against air defense systems and military airfields for the purposes of preparing a no-fly zone. These strikes will be limited in their nature, duration, and scope. Their purpose is to support an international coalition as it takes all necessary measures to enforce the terms of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973. These limited U.S. actions will set the stage for further action by other coalition partners.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 authorized Member States, under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in Libya, including the establishment and enforcement of a “no-fly zone” in the airspace of Libya. United States military efforts are discrete and focused on employing unique U.S. military capabilities to set the conditions for our European allies and Arab partners to carry out the measures authorized by the U.N. Security Council Resolution.

Muammar Qadhafi was provided a very clear message that a cease-fire must be implemented immediately. The international community made clear that all attacks against civilians had to stop; Qadhafi had to stop his forces from advancing on Benghazi; pull them back from Ajdabiya, Misrata, and Zawiya; and estab-

lish water, electricity, and gas supplies to all areas. Finally, humanitarian assistance had to be allowed to reach the people of Libya.

Although Qadhafi’s Foreign Minister announced an immediate cease-fire, Qadhafi and his forces made no attempt to implement such a cease-fire, and instead continued attacks on Misrata and advanced on Benghazi. Qadhafi’s continued attacks and threats against civilians and civilian populated areas are of grave concern to neighboring Arab nations and, as expressly stated in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, constitute a threat to the region and to international peace and security. His illegitimate use of force not only is causing the deaths of substantial numbers of civilians among his own people, but also is forcing many others to flee to neighboring countries, thereby destabilizing the peace and security of the region. Left unaddressed, the growing instability in Libya could ignite wider instability in the Middle East, with dangerous consequences to the national security interests of the United States. Qadhafi’s defiance of the Arab League, as well as the broader international community moreover, represents a lawless challenge to the authority of the Security Council and its efforts to preserve stability in the region. Qadhafi has forfeited his responsibility to protect his own citizens and created a serious need for immediate humanitarian assistance and protection, with any delay only putting more civilians at risk.

The United States has not deployed ground forces into Libya. United States forces are conducting a limited and well-defined mission in support of international efforts to protect civilians and prevent a humanitarian disaster. Accordingly, U.S. forces have targeted the Qadhafi regime’s air defense systems, command and control structures, and other capabilities of Qadhafi’s armed forces used to attack civilians and civilian populated areas. We will seek a rapid, but responsible, transition of operations to coalition, regional, or international organizations that are postured to continue activities as may

be necessary to realize the objectives of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973.

For these purposes, I have directed these actions, which are in the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, con-

sistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action.

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.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Sebastian Pinera Echenique of Chile in Santiago *March 21, 2011*

Buenas noches. President Pinera; First Lady; former Presidents Aylwin, Frei, Lagos; to all the distinguished guests here tonight, especially the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Jose Miguel Insulza: It is wonderful to be here. I have to say that because I've already given one speech tonight, I've already made remarks at the press, I'm going to keep my remarks tonight very brief. Because otherwise, you won't invite me back. [*Laughter*]

On our flight into Chile today, we were all struck by the incredible beauty of the Andes. We looked out the window, Michelle and my daughters and my staff, and we marveled at the awesome ranges and the snowcapped peaks. It was truly spectacular.

And it called to mind something once said by a beloved daughter of both our countries, the novelist Isabel Allende. She said, "I come from a land of mountains, where friendship is a blood pact . . . hospitality is sacred, [and] bonds unbreakable."

President Pinera, First Lady, to you and the people of Santiago and of Chile, thank you for the extraordinary hospitality that you have shown to both me, Michelle, and our daughters. And thank you for the friendship and the strong bonds between our people, which indeed are unbreakable.

Given the events that are unfolding half a world away, in the Middle East and North Africa, I hope you'll give me a brief moment to

reflect on the broader meaning of the times that we live in.

We gather in a palace that tells the story of a nation and its relationship with my own. For many years, this was a symbol of how Chile lost its democracy. But today, it stands as a testament to how Chile regained and rebuilt your democracy, an achievement for which I know all Chileans are extraordinarily proud.

In this sense, you've fulfilled the vision of the liberator Bolivar, who long ago predicted, "Chile can be free." Chile can be free. And as I said in my speech today, at a time when others around the world are reaching for their own rights and struggling for their own sense of dignity, Chile sends a powerful message: You too can write a new chapter in the story of your nation; you too can be free.

Some have called Chile's progress a miracle. But as you know so well, there was nothing miraculous about it. It takes courage and sacrifice and resolve over many years. This too is Chile's lesson for the world. Democracy can't be imposed from the outside. It must spring from within, from the hearts and souls of those who seek it and are willing to work for it.

There's a saying that goes, "Tell me who is by your side, and I'll tell you who you are." And so I would like to propose a toast. I hope they didn't mix up our glasses. [*Laughter*].

To the people and progress of Chile, the United States of America is proud to stand with you as partners. And to what our partnership