

unemployment benefits is going to have a drag on economic growth for next year.

So there are some basic things that we can do just to create a better economic environment for these outstanding mayors. There are some areas—for example, raising the minimum wage—that could have a tremendous boost in a lot of the cities where there are a lot of service workers who get up and do some of the critical work for all of us every single day, but oftentimes, still find themselves just barely above poverty or, in some cases, below poverty.

So what I want to do is explore ideas with them. We wish them luck. You can see that it's a diverse group, but what binds them together

is a commitment to helping people succeed in this country.

And so I want to congratulate all of them, and I'm looking forward to, over the next 3 years for me, working with them for the benefit of their constituencies. Many of them may end up being around for 20 years and—[laughter]—so they'll have other Presidents to work with.

But thank you so much for coming in.

[*At this point, several reporters called out questions.*]

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the Resignation of Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs Miguel E. Rodriguez

December 13, 2013

Miguel Rodriguez has served in my administration from day one. After a tour with Secretary Clinton at the State Department, he joined my staff in October 2011 before agreeing to serve as my Director of Legislative Affairs earlier this year. And throughout some of this year's most contentious legislative battles, Miguel worked tirelessly to bridge the partisan divide, forge consensus, and seek out solutions that helped us move forward. As the son of immigrants, I know Miguel took particular pride in the Senate's passage of a bipartisan, commonsense immigration reform plan, something that we are going to see through. I'm

grateful for his service, and I will miss his advice and counsel, but I am pleased that Katie Beirne Fallon has agreed to serve as my next Director of Legislative Affairs. As a veteran of Congress and my Deputy Director of Communications, she has the deep expertise and strong relationships required to build on the progress we've made this year and advance my top priority: creating jobs and expanding broad-based growth and opportunity for every American.

NOTE: The statement referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

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

December 13, 2013

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 friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. 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, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, 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. 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 leadership of Afghanistan.

The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and 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, the Taliban, and associated forces. As necessary, in response to this terrorist threat, 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 this terrorist threat to the United States.

Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces continue to pursue and engage remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan while transitioning to an Afghan security lead. There are approximately 55,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and the United States Armed Forces are on track to meet the Afghanistan Force Management Level of 34,000 by February 12, 2014.

The United Nations (U.N.) Security Council most recently extended its authorization of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan until December 31, 2014, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2120 (October 10, 2013). The mission of ISAF, under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population. Forty-eight nations, including the United States and all 28 NATO members, contribute forces to ISAF. For the last few years, the ISAF campaign has focused on preparing the ANSF for full security transition in 2014.

In June 2013, at the "Milestone 2013" ceremony, the ANSF assumed the lead for security nationwide. ISAF is now in support of the ANSF. The only unilateral operations that ISAF conducts are in support of its own security, sustainment, and redeployment. In the coming months, ISAF will focus on developing the sustainability of the ANSF and assisting the ANSF as the Afghan government plans for the elections in 2014. The security transition process—as agreed to at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon and reaffirmed at the 2012 NATO

Summit in Chicago—remains on track and the ANSF are expected to assume full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

As I noted in my report of June 14, 2013, on March 25, 2013, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Afghan government under which the United States transferred all Afghan nationals detained by U.S. forces in Afghanistan to the custody and control of the Afghan government. Pursuant to the MOU, any new Afghan detainees are to be transferred to Afghan custody and control within 96 hours after capture. United States forces in Afghanistan continue to detain approximately 53 third-country nationals under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

Libya. In Libya, on October 5, 2013, U.S. Armed Forces captured longtime al-Qa'ida member Abu Anas al Libi.

Somalia. In Somalia, the U.S. military has worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab. On the night of October 4, 2013, U.S. Armed Forces conducted a raid in Somalia to capture a member of al-Qa'ida who is also a top commander in the terrorist group al-Shabaab. The operation did not result in the capture of the targeted individual.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to dismantle operationally 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.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for the approximately 162 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Au-

thorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

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

As indicated in my report of June 14, 2013, U.S. military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in Mali and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 200.

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 of the African Union Regional Task Force (AU–RTF) 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 number of U.S. military personnel deployed to the central Africa region, including advisors deployed for this mission and personnel providing logistical and support functions to this and other missions, is approximately 120.

United States forces are working with select partner nation forces of the AU–RTF 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, including the Republic of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic in order 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 impact 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.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 715 military personnel are assigned to the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

As detailed in my report of June 21, 2013, at the request of the Government of Jordan, a combat-equipped detachment of approximately 700 U.S. personnel remain in Jordan following participation in a training exercise that ended on June 20, 2013. The detachment includes Patriot missile systems, fighter aircraft, and related support, command, control, and communications personnel and systems. These forces joined U.S. forces already in Jordan for a total of approximately 1,500 U.S. military personnel. 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 Agree-

ment 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. Eight non-NATO countries also participate. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 670 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,900 personnel.

REGIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

As stated in my report of June 14, 2013, U.S. Armed Forces remain in Libya and Yemen to support the security of U.S. personnel. These forces will remain deployed, in full coordination with the respective host governments, until the security situation no longer requires them.

Additional information about regional security operations is provided in the classified annex.

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.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.