

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.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Designation of Curaçao as a Beneficiary Country for Purposes of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act December 23, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 212 of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) (19 U.S.C. 2702), as amended by the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) (Public Law 106–200), and after considering the criteria set forth in sections 212(b) and (c) and 213(b)(5)(B) of the CBERA (19 U.S.C. 2702(b) and (c) and 19 U.S.C. 2703(b)(5)(B)), I have determined that it is appropriate to designate Curaçao, which is a successor political entity to The Netherlands Antilles, as a beneficiary country for the purposes of the CBERA and CBTPA.

In accordance with section 212(a)(1)(A) of the CBERA, I am hereby notifying the Congress of my intent to designate Curaçao as a beneficiary country for the purposes of the CBERA and CBTPA. After the U.S. Trade

Representative (USTR) makes a determination under section 213(b)(4)(A)(ii) (19 U.S.C. 2703(b)(4)(A)(ii)) regarding whether Curaçao has implemented and follows or is making substantial progress toward implementing and following the customs procedures required under the CBTPA, and publishes such determination in the *Federal Register*, Curaçao will be eligible for benefits under the CBTPA on the date that the USTR designates.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The related Proclamation 9072 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address December 25, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody, and happy holidays.

The First Lady. We know how busy this time of year is for everyone, so we're not going to take much of your time. But we did want to take a moment to wish you all a merry Christmas, from our family to yours.

The President. This is a season for millions of Americans to be together with family, to continue long-held holiday traditions, and to show our gratitude to those we love. And along the way, some of us might even watch a little basketball or eat some Christmas cookies too.

The First Lady. Here at the White House, over the past few weeks, we've had about 70,000 people from all across the country come

visit and look at our holiday decorations. This year's theme was "Gather Around: Stories of the Season." And in every room of the house, we tried to tell the story about who we are as Americans and how we celebrate the holidays together.

And we made certain to highlight some of the most powerful stories we know: the stories of our outstanding troops, veterans, and military families and their service and sacrifice for our country.

The President. Our extraordinary men and women in uniform are serving so that the rest of us can enjoy the blessings we cherish during the holidays. But that means many of our troops are far from home and far from family.

They're spending some extra time on the phone with their loved ones back home. Or they're setting up video chats so they can watch as the presents are opened. So today we want all our troops to know that you're in our thoughts and prayers this holiday season.

And here's the good news: For many of our troops and newest veterans, this might be the first time in years that they've been with their families on Christmas. In fact, with the Iraq war over and the transition in Afghanistan, fewer of our men and women in uniform are deployed in harm's way than at any time in the last decade.

The First Lady. And that's something that we all can be thankful for. And with more and more of our troops back here at home, now it's our turn to serve. It's our turn to step up and show our gratitude for the military families who have given us so much.

And that's why Jill Biden and I started our Joining Forces initiative, to rally all Americans to support our military families in ways large and small. And again and again, we have been overwhelmed by the response we've gotten, as folks from across the country have found new ways to give back to these families through their schools, businesses, and houses of worship.

The President. That's the same spirit of giving that connects all of us during the holidays. So many people all across the country are helping out at soup kitchens, buying gifts for children in need, or organizing food or clothing

drives for their neighbors. For families like ours, that service is a chance to celebrate the birth of Christ and live out what He taught us: to love our neighbors as we would ourselves, to feed the hungry and look after the sick, to be our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper. And for all of us as Americans, regardless of our faith, those are values that can drive us to be better parents and friends, better neighbors, and better citizens.

The First Lady. So as we look to the new year, let's pledge ourselves to living out those values by reaching out and lifting up those in our communities who could use a hand up.

The President. So merry Christmas, everyone. And from the two of us, as well as Malia, Sasha, Grandma, Bo——

The First Lady. And Sunny, the newest Obama.

The President. ——we wish you all a blessed and safe holiday season.

The First Lady. Happy holidays everybody, and God bless.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:30 p.m. on December 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 25. In the address, the President referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The First Lady referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 25.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014

December 26, 2013

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3304, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014." I have signed this annual defense authorization legislation because it will provide pay and bonuses for our service members, enhance counterterrorism initiatives abroad, build the security capacity of key partners, and expand efforts to prevent sexual assault and strengthen protections for victims.

Since taking office, I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to work with my Administration to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The continued operation of the facility weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists.

For the past several years, the Congress has enacted unwarranted and burdensome restric-