

troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan. And I've been careful to resist calls to turn, time and again, to our military, because America has other tools in our arsenal than our military. We can also lead with the power of our diplomacy, our economy, and our ideals.

But when the lives of American citizens are at risk, we will take action. That's my responsibility as Commander in Chief. And when many thousands of innocent civilians are faced with the danger of being wiped out, and we have the capacity to do something about it, we will take action. That is our responsibility as Americans. That's a hallmark of American leadership. That's who we are.

So tonight we give thanks to our men and women in uniform, especially our brave pilots and crews over Iraq who are protecting our fel-

low Americans and saving the lives of so many men, women, and children that they will never meet. They represent American leadership at its best. As a nation, we should be proud of them and of our country's enduring commitment to uphold our own security and the dignity of our fellow human beings.

God bless our Armed Forces, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Fuad Masum and Speaker of the Council of Representatives Salim al-Jabouri of Iraq. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Commencement of United States Military Operations in Iraq *August 8, 2014*

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

As I announced publicly on August 7, 2014, I have authorized the U.S. Armed Forces to conduct targeted airstrikes in Iraq. These military operations will be limited in their scope and duration as necessary to protect American personnel in Iraq by stopping the current advance on Erbil by the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and to help forces in Iraq as they fight to break the siege of Mount Sinjar and protect the civilians trapped there.

Pursuant to this authorization, on August 8, 2014, U.S. military forces commenced targeted airstrike operations in Iraq.

In addition, I have authorized U.S. Armed Forces to provide humanitarian assistance in Iraq in an operation that commenced on August 7, 2014. These operations will also be limited to supporting the civilians trapped on Mount Sinjar.

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. These actions are being undertaken in coordination with the Iraqi government.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148). I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action.

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.