

dent referred to Elizabeth Cooper, student, University of Northern Colorado. The transcript was made available by the Office of

the Press Secretary on August 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 16.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Commencement of United States Military Operations in Iraq August 17, 2014

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

On August 14, 2014, I authorized the U.S. Armed Forces to conduct targeted air strikes to support operations by Iraqi forces to recapture the Mosul Dam. These military operations will be limited in their scope and duration as necessary to support the Iraqi forces in their efforts to retake and establish control of this critical infrastructure site, as part of their ongoing campaign against the terrorist group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The failure of the Mosul Dam could threaten the lives of large numbers of civilians, endanger U.S. personnel and facilities, including the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and prevent the Iraqi government from providing critical services to the Iraqi populace. Pursuant to this authorization, on the evening of August 15, 2014, U.S. military forces commenced targeted airstrike operations in Iraq.

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.

## Remarks on the Situations in Iraq and Ferguson, Missouri, and an Exchange With Reporters August 18, 2014

*The President.* Good afternoon, everybody. Earlier today I received an update from my team on two separate issues that I've been following closely: our ongoing operation in Iraq and the situation in Ferguson, Missouri.

With respect to Iraq, we continue to see important progress across different parts of our strategy to support the Iraqi Government and combat the threat from the terrorist group ISIL. First, our military operations are effectively protecting our personnel and facilities in Iraq. Over the last 11 days, American airstrikes have stopped the ISIL advance around the city of Erbil and pushed back the terrorists. Mean-

while, we have urgently provided additional arms and assistance to Iraqi forces, including Kurdish and Iraqi security forces who are fighting on the front lines.

Today, with our support, Iraqi and Kurdish forces took a major step forward by recapturing the largest dam in Iraq near the city of Mosul. The Mosul Dam fell under terrorist control earlier this month and is directly tied to our objective of protecting Americans in Iraq. If that dam was breached, it could have proven catastrophic, with floods that would have threatened the lives of thousands of civilians and endanger our Embassy compound in