

lamic State of Iraq and the Levant and to respond to emerging needs in the face of evolving terrorist threats and emergent crises worldwide.

Earlier this month, the Department of Defense transferred the last remaining third-country nationals held in U.S. custody in Afghanistan, ending U.S. detention operations in Afghanistan. Yet, halfway around the world, the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, remains open for the 13th consecutive year, costing the American people hundreds of millions of dollars each year and undermining America's standing in the world. As I have said many times, the continued operation of this detention facility weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists. Closing the detention facility is a national imperative.

I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to work with my administration to close the detention facility at Guantanamo once and for all. Individuals from across the political spectrum have recognized that the facility should be closed. But instead of removing unwarranted and burdensome restrictions that curtail the executive branch's options for managing the detainee population, this bill continues them. Section 1032 renews the bar against using appropriated funds to construct or modify any facility in the United States, its territories, or possessions to house any Guantanamo detainee in the custody or under the control of the Department of Defense unless authorized by the Congress. Section 1033 likewise renews the bar against using appropriated funds to transfer Guantanamo detainees into the United

States for any purpose. The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, contains similar provisions as well as those relating to existing restrictions on the transfer of detainees abroad. I have consistently opposed these restrictions and will continue to work with the Congress to remove them. More than 80 percent of detainees at one time held at the detention facility have now been transferred. The executive branch must have the flexibility, with regard to those detainees who remain, to determine when and where to prosecute them, based on the facts and circumstances of each case and our national security interests, and when and where to transfer them consistent with our national security and our humane treatment policy. Under certain circumstances, the provisions concerning detainee transfers in both bills would violate constitutional separation of powers principles. In the event that the restrictions on the transfer of detainees operate in a manner that violates constitutional separation of powers principles, my administration will implement them in a manner that avoids the constitutional conflict.

The Guantanamo detention facility's continued operation undermines our national security. We must close it. I call on Members from both sides of the aisle to work with us to bring this chapter of American history to a close.

NOTE: H.R. 3979, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 113-291. The statement referred to H.R. 83, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, which was approved December 16 and assigned Public Law No. 113-235.

Statement on Signing the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014 December 19, 2014

Today I have signed into law S. 2673, the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014, an Act that underscores the United States unshakeable commitment to Israel's security and its future. This bipartisan piece of legislation reflects the importance placed by my administration on strengthening and deep-

ening U.S.-Israel bilateral cooperation and ties. It reinforces critical defense and security programs, which have reached an unprecedented level under my administration. It also lays the groundwork for increased trade and cooperation across a range of cutting-edge fields, including energy, water, agriculture, and

technology. Sections 11(b) and 12(c)(2) of this bill purport to require me to provide to the Congress certain diplomatic communications and direct the Secretary of State to undertake certain diplomatic initiatives. Consistent with longstanding constitutional practice, my administration will interpret and implement

these sections in a manner that does not interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct diplomacy and to protect the confidentiality of diplomatic communications.

NOTE: S. 2673, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 113–296.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to the Crimea Region of Ukraine

December 19, 2014

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the “order”) that takes additional steps to address the Russian occupation of the Crimea region of Ukraine. These steps have been taken with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 of March 6, 2014, expanded in scope by Executive Order 13661 of March 16, 2014, and further expanded in scope by Executive Order 13662 of March 20, 2014.

The order prohibits new investment by United States persons in the Crimea region of Ukraine; the importation of goods, services, or technology into the United States from the Crimea region of Ukraine; and the exportation, reexportation, sale, or supply of goods, services, or technology from the United States or by a United States person to the Crimea region of Ukraine. It also prohibits the facilitation of any such transactions. The order also blocks the property and interests in property of any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- to operate in the Crimea region of Ukraine;
- to be a leader of an entity operating in the Crimea region of Ukraine;
- to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf

of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or

- to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order.

In addition, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien determined to meet one or more of the above criteria.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA, as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order. All agencies of the United States Government are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

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 letter referred to Executive Order 13685, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.