

*Mr. Keller.* But I would just like to say there are a few issues I feel less cynical about. I do worry—I share the worry you have that this evaporates because of short attention spans. And I guess it's on us in the news media in part to make to make sure that that doesn't happen.

*The President.* Good. Well, thank you for hosting this. And thanks to everybody here in attendance and the chiefs for the good work you're doing.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:36 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates; and J. Scott Thomp-

son, chief, Camden County Police Department. Chief Beck referred to Sgt. Emada Tingirides and Capt. Phil Tingirides, Los Angeles Police Department officers whose family was placed under police protection during an investigation concerning threats made against them in connection with Capt. Tingirides's role on an internal disciplinary committee that led to the firing of another police officer. He also referred to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). Mr. Keller referred to Willie Horton, a convicted felon who was sentenced for crimes committed during a week-end furlough program in Massachusetts in 1986; and White House Intern Carly Lindgren.

## Remarks on Vetoing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 *October 22, 2015*

As President and Commander in Chief, my first and most important responsibility is keeping the American people safe. And that means that we make sure that our military is properly funded and that our men and women in uniform get the support, the equipment, the support for their families that they need and deserve when they protect our freedom and our safety.

The bill that has been presented to me authorizing our defense—excuse me—the bill that's before me, authorizing our defense spending for this year, does a number of good things. It makes sure that our military is funded. It has some important provisions around reform of our military retirement system, which is necessary to make sure that it is stable and effective. It's got some cybersecurity provisions that are necessary; that's an increasing threat.

Unfortunately, it falls woefully short in three areas. Number one, it keeps in place the sequester that is inadequate for us to properly fund our military in a stable, sustained way and allows all of our Armed Forces to plan properly. I have repeatedly called on Congress to eliminate the sequester and make sure that we're providing certainty to our military so they can do out-year planning, ensure military

readiness, ensure our troops are getting what they need. This bill instead resorts to gimmicks that does not allow the Pentagon to do what it needs to do.

Number two, unfortunately, it prevents a wide range of reforms that are necessary for us to get our military modernized and able to deal with the many threats that are presenting themselves in the 21st century. We have repeatedly put forward a series of reforms eliminating programs that the Pentagon does not want; Congress keeps on stepping them back in, and we end up wasting money. We end up diverting resources from things that we do need to have the kind of equipment and training and readiness that are necessary for us to meet all potential threats.

And the third thing is that this legislation specifically impedes our ability to close Guantanamo in a way that I have repeatedly argued is counterproductive to our efforts to defeat terrorism around the world. Guantanamo is one of the premiere mechanisms for jihadists to recruit. It's time for us to close it. It is outdated; it's expensive; it's been there for years. And we can do better in terms of keeping our people safe while making sure that we are consistent with our values.

So I'm going to be vetoing this authorization bill. I'm going to be sending it back to Congress. And my message to them is very simple: Let's do this right. We're in the midst of budget discussions. Let's have a budget that properly funds our national security as well as economic security. Let's make sure that we're able, in a constructive way, to reform our military spending to make it sustainable over the long term. And let's make sure that, in a responsible way, we can draw down the populations in Guantanamo, make sure that the

American people are safe, and make sure that we're not providing the kinds of recruitment tools to terrorists that are so dangerous.

[At this point, the President signed the message to the House of Representatives returning the bill, H.R. 1735, without approval.]

There you go. All good? Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:52 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

## Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 October 22, 2015

*To the House of Representatives:*

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 1735, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016." While there are provisions in this bill that I support, including the codification of key interrogation-related reforms from Executive Order 13491 and positive changes to the military retirement system, the bill would, among other things, constrain the ability of the Department of Defense to conduct multi-year defense planning and align military capabilities and force structure with our national defense strategy, impede the closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and prevent the implementation of essential defense reforms.

This bill fails to authorize funding for our national defense in a fiscally responsible manner. It underfunds our military in the base budget, and instead relies on an irresponsible budget gimmick that has been criticized by members of both parties. Specifically, the bill's use of \$38 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funding—which was meant to fund wars and is not subject to budget caps—does not provide the stable, multi-year budget upon which sound defense planning depends. Because this bill authorizes base budget funding at sequestration levels, it threatens the readiness and capabilities of our military and fails to

provide the support our men and women in uniform deserve. The decision reflected in this bill to circumvent rather than reverse sequestration further harms our national security by locking in unacceptable funding cuts for crucial national security activities carried out by non-defense agencies.

I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to work with my Administration to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and explained why it is imperative that we do so. As I have noted, the continued operation of this facility weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists. Yet in addition to failing to remove unwarranted restrictions on the transfer of detainees, this bill seeks to impose more onerous ones. The executive branch must have the flexibility, with regard to those detainees who remain at Guantanamo, 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. Rather than taking steps to bring this chapter of our history to a close, as I have repeatedly called upon the Congress to do, this bill aims to extend it.