

teachers and a great principal at Kenmore. They saw that spark in him, and, like all great educators, they're helping him to harness his energy and his curiosity and his talents.

And that's what we want every single child in America to have. Just—we just want to give them a chance. And so many of them are full of that same talent and drive, but we let them slip through the cracks, or we're not creative enough in thinking about how they can be engaged, or they just don't have the resources that they need in the classroom, or they fell behind early because they didn't get the support that they needed given the tough circumstances they were born into.

And we want to make sure that through this piece of legislation, with our hard work, with our focus, with our discipline, with our passion, with our commitment, that every kid is getting the same opportunities that Antonio is getting. I want this not just because it's good for the students themselves, not just because it's good for the communities involved, not only because it's good for our economy, but because it really goes to the essence of what we are about as Americans.

There was a time, I think, when upward mobility was the hallmark of America. We've slipped on that front compared to other countries. And some of it is because where we used to be so far ahead of other countries in investing in education for every child, now on some indicators, we've been lagging behind. Hopefully, this is going to get us back out front.

There's nothing more essential to living up to the ideals of this Nation than making sure every child is able to achieve their God-given potential. And I could not be prouder of the people on this stage and those of you in the audience who helped us take just one step closer to that reality.

So, with that, let me sign this bill. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Antonio Martin, student, Kenmore Middle School in Arlington, VA, who introduced the President; and John Word, principal, Kenmore Middle School. S. 1177, approved December 10, was assigned Public Law No. 114–95.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployment of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces

*December 11, 2015*

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

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

### **MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM OBJECTIVES**

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In

this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our friends and allies. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

### *Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives*

Since October 7, 2001, U.S. Armed Forces, including special operations forces, have conducted counterterrorism combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. In support of these and other

overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Such operations and deployments have been reported previously, consistent with Public Law 107-40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. If necessary, in response to terrorist threats, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter terrorist threats to the United States.

*Afghanistan.* As I previously announced, U.S. Armed Forces have transitioned the lead for security to Afghan security forces while striking significant blows against al-Qa'ida's leadership and preventing Afghanistan from being used to launch attacks against our homeland. A limited number of U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan for the purposes of training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, conducting and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al-Qa'ida, and taking appropriate measures against those who directly threaten U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan or provide direct support to al-Qa'ida. The United States currently remains in an armed conflict against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces, and active hostilities against those groups remain ongoing.

The mission to help train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan ministries and institutions continues through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led Resolute Support Mission. The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2189, dated December 12, 2014, which welcomed the Resolute Support Mission and underscored the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

Today, there are approximately 10,500 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, consistent with the Force Management Level of 9,800. (The actual number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan may exceed this Force Management Level due to, for example, overlap during rotations of units, and the continued presence of forces with the single mission of supporting the retrograde of U.S. equipment, both of which are excluded from counting against the Force Management Level.)

*Iraq and Syria.* As part of a comprehensive strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), U.S. Armed Forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes and other necessary actions against ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria. United States Armed Forces are also conducting airstrikes in Syria against operatives of al-Qa'ida, including members of the al-Qa'ida element known as the Khorasan Group, who are involved in al-Qa'ida's plotting against the West. In Iraq, U.S. forces are advising and coordinating with Iraqi forces and providing training, equipment, communications support, intelligence support, and other support to select elements of the Iraqi security forces, including Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces. On October 22, 2015, U.S. Armed Forces supported an Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga operation to rescue hostages at an ISIL detention facility near Hawijah, Iraq, and U.S. Armed Forces remain postured to support or conduct further similar operations in Iraq and Syria. Additionally, small teams of U.S. special operations forces have deployed to northern Syria to help coordinate U.S. operations with indigenous ground forces conducting operations against ISIL. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq currently is 3,550; up to approximately 50 U.S. Armed Forces personnel may be deployed in Syria as circumstances warrant. These actions are being undertaken in coordination with and at the request of the Government of Iraq and in conjunction with coalition partners.

*Turkey.* In July 2015, the Government of Turkey agreed to the U.S. request to deploy U.S. combat aircraft to Turkey to conduct air

operations in support of counter-ISIL operations. Strike aircraft and about 350 U.S. military personnel deployed to Turkey on August 10, 2015. Beginning on November 6, 2015, additional fighter and strike aircraft, with approximately 375 U.S. military personnel, deployed to Turkey in support of counter-ISIL operations, and to support Turkish air sovereignty operations at the Turkish government's request.

*Somalia.* In Somalia, U.S. forces have worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab, and to provide advice and assistance to regional counterterrorism forces, including Somali and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces. On December 2, 2015, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike against Abdirahman Sandhere, an al-Shabaab senior leader who is part of al-Qa'ida. United States forces also conducted a series of strikes in support of Somali forces, AMISOM forces, and U.S. forces in Somalia between June 28, 2015, and July 29, 2015, and on November 21, 2015.

*Yemen.* The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Government of Yemen to operationally dismantle and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

*Djibouti.* United States forces continue to partner with Government of Djibouti authorities, which have permitted use of Djiboutian territory for basing of U.S. forces. United States forces remain deployed to Djibouti, including for purposes of posturing for counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

*Libya.* On June 13, 2015, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike targeting Mokhtar Belmokhtar, an Algerian national who was the mastermind of the 2013 attacks in In-Amenas, Algeria. That 2013 attack resulted in the death of 38 civilians, including three Americans. On

November 13, 2015, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike in Libya against Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi, also known as Abu Nabil, an Iraqi national who was a longtime al-Qa'ida operative and who had assumed the role of a senior ISIL leader in Libya.

*Cuba.* Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for detainees held at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40), as informed by the law of war. There were 107 such detainees as of the date of this report.

#### *Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives*

United States military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in the Sahel and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 350.

#### *Military Operations in Cameroon in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives*

As initially detailed in my report of October 14, 2015, approximately 300 U.S. military personnel deployed to Cameroon, with the consent of the Government of Cameroon, to conduct airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in the region. These forces are equipped with weapons for the purpose of providing their own force protection and security, and they will remain in Cameroon until their support is no longer needed.

#### *MILITARY OPERATIONS RELATED TO THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY*

United States military personnel with appropriate combat equipment remain deployed to various countries in the central Africa region to serve as advisors to regional forces of the African Union Regional Task Force that are working to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and

other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield, and to protect local populations. The number of U.S. military personnel deployed to the central Africa region, including advisors deployed for this mission and personnel providing logistical and support functions to this and other missions, will fluctuate at a level up to approximately 300. Additional information about military operations related to the LRA is provided in the classified annex.

#### MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 700 military personnel are assigned to or supporting the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

#### MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

At the request of the Government of Jordan, U.S. Armed Forces elements, including Patriot missile systems, artillery, fighter aircraft, and related support, command, control, and communications personnel and systems, are deployed to Jordan to support the security of Jordan and promote regional stability. The total number of U.S. forces in Jordan is approximately 2,000 U.S. military personnel. These forces will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.

#### U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to

monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 700 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,600 personnel.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief and as Chief Executive (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107-40 and other statutes), as well as my constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Orrin G. Hatch, President pro tempore of the Senate. The letter referred to Abdurahman Sandhere, also known as "Ukash," a senior leader of the al-Shabaab terrorist organization who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Kuunyo-Barrow, Somalia, on December 2.

## The President's Weekly Address *December 12, 2015*

Hello, everybody. This week, Americans across our country have shown what it means to be strong in the face of terrorism. In San

Bernardino, even as the community continues to grieve, people are refusing to be ruled by fear. Across the country [county],<sup>o</sup> dedicated

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<sup>o</sup> White House correction.