

Aug. 22 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan

August 21, 1998

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

At approximately 1:30 p.m. eastern daylight time, on August 20, 1998, at my direction, U.S. forces conducted strikes in Afghanistan against a series of camps and installations used by the Usama bin Ladin organization, and in Sudan where the bin Ladin organization has facilities and extensive ties to the government. I ordered these actions based on convincing information from a variety of reliable sources that the bin Ladin organization is responsible for the devastating bombings on August 7, 1998, of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, that killed over 250 persons. United States forces struck a facility in Sudan being used to produce materials for chemical weapons. They also struck facilities in Afghanistan that are being used for terrorist training and as basing and supply camps for staging terrorist activities.

The United States acted in exercise of our inherent right of self-defense consistent with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. These strikes were a necessary and proportionate response to the imminent threat of further terrorist attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities. These strikes were intended to prevent and deter additional attacks by a clearly identified

terrorist threat. The targets were selected because they served to facilitate directly the efforts of terrorists specifically identified with attacks on U.S. personnel and facilities and posed a continuing threat to U.S. lives.

The U.S. forces involved in these strikes have completed their mission. No U.S. personnel were injured or killed in connection with this action.

I directed these actions pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress as we continue to take all necessary steps to protect U.S. citizens at home and abroad.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 22.

The President's Radio Address

August 22, 1998

Good morning. I want to talk to you about our strike against terrorism last Thursday. Two weeks ago, a savage attack was carried out against our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Almost 300 innocent people were killed; thousands were injured. The bombs were aimed at us, but they claimed anyone who happened to be near the Embassies that morning. They killed both Africans and Americans indiscriminately, cruelty beyond comprehension.

From the moment we learned of the bombings, our mission was clear: Identify those re-

sponsible; bring them to justice; protect our citizens from future attacks.

The information now in our possession is convincing. Behind these attacks were the same hands that killed American and Pakistani peacekeepers in Somalia, the same hands that targeted U.S. airlines, and the same hands that plotted the assassinations of the Pope and President Mubarak of Egypt. I'm referring to the bin Ladin network of radical groups, probably the most dangerous non-state terrorist actor in the world today.

We also had compelling evidence that the bin Ladin network was poised to strike at us again, and soon. We know he has said all Americans—not just those in uniform—all Americans are targets. And we know he wants to acquire chemical weapons.

With that information and evidence, we simply could not stand idly by. That is why I ordered our military strikes last Thursday. Our goals were to disrupt bin Ladin's terrorist network and destroy elements of its infrastructure in Afghanistan and Sudan. And our goal was to destroy, in Sudan, the factory with which bin Ladin's network is associated, which was producing an ingredient essential for nerve gas.

I am proud of the men and women of our Armed Forces who carried out this mission and proud of the superb work of our intelligence and law enforcement communities. I thank the congressional leadership for their bipartisan support. And I'm grateful to America's friends around the world who have expressed their solidarity. For this is not just America's fight; it's a universal one, between those who want to build a world of peace and partnership and prosperity and those who would tear everything down through death and destruction; a fight that joins people from Northern Ireland and Africa and the Middle East; a fight not directed at any particular nation or any particular faith but at a callous criminal organization whose policies of violence violate the teachings of every religion.

In particular, it is very important that Americans understand that the threat we face is not part of the Islamic faith. Hundreds of millions of Muslims all over the world, including millions right here in the United States, oppose terrorism and deplore the twisting of their religious teach-

ings into justification of inhumane, indeed ungodly acts.

Our efforts against terrorism cannot and will not end with this strike. We should have realistic expectations about what a single action can achieve, and we must be prepared for a long battle. But it's high time that those who traffic in terror learn they, too, are vulnerable.

I'm determined to use all the tools at our disposal. That is why I have just signed an Executive order directing the Treasury to block all financial transactions between the bin Ladin terrorist group and American persons and companies. We'll urge other governments to do the same. We must not allow sanctuary for terrorism, not for terrorists or for their money. It takes money, lots of it, to build the network bin Ladin has. We'll do our best to see that he has less of it.

Finally, as we close ranks against international threats, we must remember this: America will never give up the openness, the freedom, and the tolerance that define us. For the ultimate target of these terrorist attacks is our ideals, and they must be defended at any cost.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:55 a.m. on August 21 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 21 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Pope John Paul II; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and Usama bin Ladin, who allegedly sponsored terrorist attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The Executive order of August 20 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Progress Against Drunk Driving

August 24, 1998

The data released today by the Department of Transportation shows that we are making real progress in protecting Americans from drunk drivers. Last year, the number of people killed in alcohol-related crashes dropped to an all-time low, representing a decline of over a third since 1982. For the first time since we started keeping

these statistics in 1975, drunk driving deaths accounted for less than 40 percent of all traffic deaths. And alcohol-related fatalities among 16- to 20-year-olds dropped by 5 percent last year alone.

Our progress is the result of stronger laws, tougher enforcement, and increased public