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Barack Obama

On Authorization of Odyssey Dawn, Ltd Military Action in Libya

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Good afternoon, everybody. Today I authorized the Armed Forces of the United States to begin a limited military action in Libya in support of an international effort to protect Libyan civilians. That action has now begun.

In this effort, the United States is acting with a broad coalition that is committed to enforcing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, which calls for the protection of the Libyan people. That coalition met in Paris today to send a unified message, and it brings together many of our European and Arab partners.

This is not an outcome that the United States or any of our partners sought. Even yesterday, the international community offered Muammar Qaddafi the opportunity to pursue an immediate cease-fire, one that stopped the violence against civilians and the advances of Qaddafi's forces. But despite the hollow words of his government, he has ignored that opportunity. His attacks on his own people have continued. His forces have been on the move. And the danger faced by the people of Libya has grown.

I am deeply aware of the risks of any military action, no matter what limits we place on it. I want the American people to know that the use of force is not our first choice and it's not a choice that I make lightly. But we cannot stand idly by when a tyrant tells his people that there will be no mercy, and his forces step up their assaults on cities like Benghazi and Misurata, where innocent men and women face brutality and death at the hands of their own government.



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So we must be clear: Actions have consequences, and the writ of the international community must be enforced. That is the cause of this coalition.

As a part of this effort, the United States will contribute our unique capabilities at the front end of the mission to protect Libyan civilians, and enable the enforcement of a no-fly zone that will be led by our international partners. And as I said yesterday, we will not -- I repeat -- we will not deploy any U.S. troops on the ground.

As Commander-in-Chief, I have great confidence in the men and women of our military who will carry out this mission. They carry with them the respect of a grateful nation.

I'm also proud that we are acting as part of a coalition that includes close allies and partners who are prepared to meet their responsibility to protect the people of Libya and uphold the mandate of the international community.

I've acted after consulting with my national security team, and Republican and Democratic leaders of Congress. And in the coming hours and days, my administration will keep the American people fully informed. But make no mistake: Today we are part of a broad coalition. We are answering the calls of a threatened people. And we are acting in the interests of the United States and the world.

Thank you very much.