

Beat: Politics

Obama vows to continue Iraqi airstrikes 'if necessary'

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USPA News - U.S. President Barack Obama vowed Saturday to continue American airstrikes in northern Iraq if necessary, but emphasized there is no American military solution to the crisis and said he would not allow the United States to be dragged into fighting yet another war in Iraq. Speaking in his weekly address, Obama noted that American citizens are based across Iraq and said he would do "whatever is needed" to protect them.

"Thursday night, I made it clear that if they (Islamic State fighters) attempted to advance further, our military would respond with targeted strikes. That's what we've done," he said. "If necessary, that's what we will continue to do." Obama's comments were published a day after the U.S. military carried out several rounds of airstrikes against Islamic State militants in northern Iraq, killing an unknown number of suspected fighters. U.S. military planes have also dropped food and water for thousands of Iraqi minorities - mostly Yazidis - who fled to Mount Sinjar after the Islamic State threatened to kill them. "The thousands - perhaps tens of thousands - of Iraqi men, women and children who fled to that mountain were starving and dying of thirst. The food and water we airdropped will help them survive," the president said. "I've also approved targeted American airstrikes to help Iraqi forces break the siege and rescue these families." Obama added that the United States "cannot and should not" intervene whenever there's a crisis in the world, but explained that it cannot "just look away" when there's a situation like the one on Mt. Sinjar, where thousands of civilians faced either a massacre or dying of thirst. "That's not who we are. We're Americans. We act. We lead. And that's what we're going to do on that mountain," he said. The American president also condemned the Islamic State's brutal treatment of religious minorities, which has particularly affected Yazidis and Christians. "The terrorists that have taken over parts of Iraq have been especially brutal to religious minorities - rounding up families, executing men, enslaving women, and threatening the systematic destruction of an entire religious community, which would be genocide," he said. But despite the beginning of U.S. airstrikes in northern Iraq, which makes Obama the fourth consecutive American president to bomb Iraq, the president emphasized that he will not allow the United States to be dragged into fighting yet another war in Iraq. "American combat troops will not be returning to fight in Iraq, because there's no American military solution to the larger crisis there," he said. Obama added: "What we will do is continue our broader strategy in Iraq. We will protect our citizens. We will work with the international community to address this humanitarian crisis. We'll help prevent these terrorists from having a permanent safe haven from which to attack America. And we'll continue to urge Iraqi communities to reconcile, come together and fight back against these terrorists so the people of Iraq have the opportunity for a better future." The Islamic State, which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), is an al-Qaeda splinter group which declared itself an Islamic caliphate after seizing much of northeastern Syria and making huge gains in parts of Iraq. Their rule has been marked with brutal violence - such as beheadings and hangings - of anyone opposing the "caliphate," including a recent massacre in Tikrit in which hundreds were slaughtered.

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