

November 2011: Washington Ordered Troops in Uganda to Capture Joseph Kony

Americans Should Worry About Obama, Not Uganda

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President Obama has ordered about 100 U.S. troops into Uganda to “help” and “advise” in capturing Joseph Kony, the head of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The troops, Obama claimed, are not to engage Kony’s forces unless it becomes necessary for their own self-defense.

Kony and the LRA were declared a terrorist organization under the PATRIOT Act in 2001, and indictments were issued against them by the International Criminal Court in 2005. Among the charges against Kony and his men were murder, rape, enslavement, sexual enslavement, and kidnapping.

If any of these charges are true, what is the likelihood that American troops will not engage them in combat, in self-defense or not?

News of the deployment was released on Friday, Oct. 15 with a shotgun blast of adjectives that assured Americans that this is really nothing more than a humanitarian mission of goodwill and peace on earth. In fact, the story released on Yahoo News was titled “Obama sends 100 U.S. military advisers to Uganda.” Yes — well-armed, fully trained, combat-ready advisers.

A cursory glance of mainstream media sources and major newspapers reveals that American journalists certainly know how to use a thesaurus. Kony, his men, and their crimes are described with a plethora of terms: “ruthless,” “volatile,” “brutal,” “horrific,” “atrocities,” “devastation,” “heinous,” “human rights crisis,” “notoriously violent,” “reign of terror,” and “unimaginably savage” to list a few.

Kony and the LRA, if guilty of the deeds with which they are charged, are certainly worthy of these words and many more. But Obama’s deployment of U.S. troops brings up a few issues of great concern. To begin with, the deployment of troops by presidential decree is blatantly unconstitutional. Yet Obama, a former constitutional law professor, said, “I have directed this deployment, which is in the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as commander in chief and chief executive. I am making this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution.”

Wait, what? “Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as commander in chief and chief executive”? Article II, Section 2 says, “The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militia of the

several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States....” (emphasis mine).

And who is it that puts the military into the actual service of the United States? According to the Constitution (Article I, Section 8), it is Congress alone.

For good measure, President Obama claims that his authority as commander in chief allows him to direct the movement of troops. But such authority only applies in wartime.

So, he throws in that he is acting “consistent with the War Powers Resolution.” What war? One would assume he is referring to the undeclared, thus also unconstitutional, “War on Terror” in which the U.S. government, under the PATRIOT Act, can declare who the enemy combatants are by simply adding them to the list.

In other words, President Obama has deployed U.S. troops because he wanted to, and he assumes that Congress will simply go along because they are just as wantonly ignorant of the Constitution as he is.

At least Obama sent a letter to Congress to make them aware of the deployment, apparently so they would not have to find out via CNN. He added, “I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action.” Not permission, mind you, “support.” And, with the kind of adjectives thrown out by the media against Kony, what congressman would dare object? It’s election season.

Now, in May 2009, Congress did approve the “Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act,” which called for greater U.S. involvement in aiding war-torn Uganda. But it is worth noting that President Obama does not cite the act as his authority in deploying troops to the region. Rather he points to the War Powers Resolution, calls it a matter of “national security,” and appeals to his title of “commander in chief.”

The act allows for assistance to Uganda, particularly of the humanitarian kind, but it does not specifically allow for military intervention. If Obama is sending only “advisers,” why invoke the War Powers Resolution? Obama claims that he was only acting in “furtherance of the Congress’s stated policy” (presumably a reference to the LRA Disarmament Act), but that policy does not allow for military action without explicit approval.

So, if President Obama could wait over two years to intervene in Uganda, why could he not wait a few more days to seek explicit congressional approval for troop deployment?

It seems that Obama was acting regardless of congressional approval and not because of it.

Further, Obama claims that the LRA poses a threat to “national security.” How? He offers no further substantiation of this claim, which has been used as the world’s largest blanket statement since 2001.

“National security” has been used to justify wiretapping; government surveillance of emails, phone calls, personal correspondence, and credit card and bank records; unlawful arrests; detaining of suspects without charge or due process; assassination of American citizens; and more — all in violation of the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 14th Amendments — in the name of the darkly and ironically named PATRIOT Act.

Now it is being used to justify the deployment of American troops to a region with no

national security relevance whatsoever.

If the LRA's presence in Uganda is of such pressing importance, why did the U.S. wait 10 years after placing it on the "terrorist" list to pursue it? It certainly was not out of a firm commitment to the Constitution or the foreign policy of the Founding Fathers.

But anything can happen in an election season, particularly when attention must be diverted from an economy that would have to improve to be called "dismal." Besides,

Americans are apparently not buying into Iran's "terror plot" as quickly as the administration must have hoped.

Finally, and perhaps most likely to escape the attention of Americans, why is Obama against this brutal regime? After all, the U.S. government has been in official alliances with regimes guilty of the same crimes with which the LRA is being charged. Remember Uzbekistan? That is one of the "insignificant" nations to which Herman Cain referred. The U.S., under President George W. Bush, supported the hideously violent regime of Islam Karimov, and Obama has begun doing the same.

What about Afghanistan? Following the rapid removal of the Taliban, the U.S. handed control of the country to warlords who quickly began engaging in rape, murder, and intimidation to solidify their power. Though the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan is now a decade old, little has changed, with violent warlords filling influential seats in the Afghan government.

Then there are the early years of Saddam Hussein, when the CIA secretly supported him with weapons and money for his war against Iran. His brutality, mass murder, and other crimes against humanity failed to concern the American government for a few decades. U.S. enmity with Iran and the ability to manipulate Iraqi oil made Saddam easier to tolerate.

But, of course, the first real CIA overthrow of a foreign government was Iran in 1953. The U.S. supported the ousting of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and helped install the shah, who proved to be quite the tyrant. This was overlooked because the U.S. gained a major stake in Iran's oil.

In other words, America has a "selective" way of dealing with tyranny around the world. When oil or political alliances are on the table, American values dramatically change. In the case of Uganda and Joseph Kony, it seems that President Obama is willing to sell out the Constitution and American troops, yet again, for the benefit of a political distraction.

If Kony and his men are actually guilty of the things with which they are charged, then no one would mourn their capture, but let no one pretend that this particular mission is being conducted out of sheer goodwill and love for the law.

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