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Any decision involving the commitment of American military personnel and combat resources is never easy. It requires as much personal reflection as it does strategic evaluation, all with the understanding of what is at stake and what is at risk. With Libya, it is improbable to think that the decision to create and enforce a no-fly zone was treated any differently.

The president and his administration were confronted with a tough choice. Either avoid the fight altogether and watch a humanitarian crisis unfold, or stand with the international community to protect others and assist rebel elements that are outnumbered and outmatched.

In this case, President Barack Obama made a decision that is consistent with his role as commander-in-chief – in fact, a judgment that conformed to calls from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. Part of the criticism against the administration is that Congress was never properly notified nor was the Libya operation put to a vote. Such a critique is seemingly based more on feelings of frustration because of the administration's previous dealings with Congress and the public than whether it is an unlawful or perhaps even intentional oversight.

The War Powers Resolution provides the president with the authority to conduct limited operations absent a declaration of war or use of force resolution from Congress. The reason for

this authority is simple. Imagine for a second that a president is confronted with a situation requiring limited military involvement but, rather than having the ability to act quickly, an open consultation process with Congress must first occur. Under that scenario, the element of surprise is lost while strategic intent and operational planning are broadcast worldwide, risking the mission at hand, combat resources and the lives of America's military men and women.

Open deliberation or any formal pronouncement to Libyan President Moammar Gadhafi would only have provided more time and opportunity to reposition personnel and tactical resources, such as artillery and anti-aircraft weapons. Now, due in large part to the advantage of superior air power, a line has been drawn between the rebels and Gadhafi's troops, while civilian populations are under far less threat of attack than before.

All of this is not to say that the president is relieved of conveying to Congress and the American people the exact parameters of the Libyan mission and continuing an informational exchange on day-to-day operations. Depending on the duration of the military activity, there is also the likelihood that Congress will consider some type of measure pertaining to the operation. Unknown, of course, is whether the measure would halt, continue or redefine the scope of the mission as it goes along.

What is important to distinguish is that the War Powers Resolution does not provide the president with an unrestricted authorization or blank check. It does, however, give the president the authority to take particular action that is viewed within the national interest. Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton all acted in this arena and there surely will be future presidents who exercise this prerogative, too. Attempting to abolish the War Powers Resolution, as some have suggested, is not the solution, but rather a knee-jerk reaction to the idea that any military response, regardless of its significance, is an act of war.

All things considered, the speed and efficiency of the Libya operation is a testament to the strength of America's military and our allies. A no-fly zone has been established and attacks against civilian populations have decreased markedly. Other countries will soon collectively accept the primary leadership role as we keep our eye on winning in Afghanistan – our nation's paramount priority in the global fight against terrorism.

Regardless of how things turn out in Libya, there is absolutely no reason to commit American ground troops to the region, either now or at any time in the future. This option does not appear to be on the table and rightly so. Assisting with air capability is one thing. However, combat

operations with ground troops is another. Putting American troops in the cross-hairs of enemy fighters and ensuring a continued regional presence for some time to come is not the answer.

The president does have an obligation to Congress and the American people to define the mission in Libya, including plans to transition full mission responsibility to our coalition partners. This must happen soon; otherwise, Congress is entirely within its constitutional authority to take such action on itself. For the time being, at least, a major humanitarian crisis has been avoided and coalition aircraft now control the skies over Libya.