

prime-time address to the nation from the White House. "If you threaten America, you will find no safe haven."

Obama announced that he was sending nearly 500 more U.S. troops to Iraq to assist Iraqi forces. The additional troops brings the total number of American forces sent there this summer to more than 1,500. He also urged Congress to give money to train and arm Syrian rebels. The rebels are fighting both ISIL militants and Syria's government.

Obama's announcement is a major shift for the president. Before becoming president, he opposed the U.S. war in Iraq. While president, he has tried to end American wars in the Middle East and avoid new ones. He's particularly avoided involvement in Syria. The country has been gripped in a continuing civil war. Its chaos has given ISIL the space to grow. It has moved across the border to Iraq.

Most Americans Want Airstrikes

Speaking on the eve of the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the U.S., Obama's plans also showed that in the years since, the U.S. has not silenced the terror threats in the Middle East.

Obama said he was not sending U.S. combat troops back to the Middle East. Even so, he acknowledged that "any time we take military action, there are risks involved, especially to the servicemen and women who carry out these missions."

He added, "But I want the American people to understand how this effort will be different from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It will not involve American combat troops fighting on foreign soil."

White House officials do not know any plans by ISIL to strike the U.S. Still, they say ISIL threatens Americans across the Middle East. Officials are also concerned about Americans who have joined the group. When they return home, they could launch attacks in the U.S.

Surveys show that most Americans support airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.

The U.S. launched some airstrikes against ISIL fighters in Iraq earlier this summer. But Obama wasn't ready to get the U.S. involved any deeper. He first wanted Iraq to form a new government. Obama wanted all religious groups to have a say in Iraq's government. Iraqi leaders took that step Tuesday.