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Six Recess Appointments to Be Made, Obama Says

By SHERYL GAY STOLBERG

HONOLULU — President Obama said Wednesday that he intended to install six appointees — including James Cole, his controversial pick for the No. 2 spot at the Justice Department — while Congress is in recess. The move will allow them to serve without confirmation by the Senate, where their prospects will only grow dimmer once Republicans gain strength in January.

Mr. Obama, who is vacationing here on the island of Oahu with his family, made the announcement via news release, without any explanation or comment, other than to say that the posts have “been left vacant for an extended period of time.”

But the White House and Congressional Democrats have been exceedingly frustrated by what they regard as Republican foot-dragging on Mr. Obama’s nominees, including Mr. Cole, a close friend of Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. whose views on terrorism and close ties to the insurance giant A.I.G. have drawn scrutiny from Republicans.

Mr. Obama’s action brings his recess appointees to 28; former President George W. Bush had made 23 recess appointments by this time in his presidency. Administration officials said the six nominees have been waiting an average of 114 days in the Senate. Another 73 candidates for politically appointed jobs, many of them judges, were awaiting confirmation when the Senate adjourned; Mr. Obama will have to renominate them if he wants them to serve.

Mr. Obama’s action will allow Mr. Cole and the other nominees — four ambassadors, as well as the official who runs the Government Printing Office — to serve for one year. The deputy White House chief of staff, Jim Messina, defended the move, saying Mr. Obama felt he had no choice, especially in Mr. Cole’s case.

“We’ve been working hard with the Republicans and have seen some movement forward,” said Mr. Messina, who is with the president here. “There were some that, for whatever reason, they could not help us with and we felt were mission critical, and clearly the deputy attorney general is a critical position to help enforce the laws of the land.”

Democrats applauded the move. Senator [Patrick J. Leahy](#) of Vermont, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, called Mr. Cole “highly qualified” and complained that Republicans had refused to debate his nomination for more than five months. “I believe that he would have been confirmed by the Senate had his nomination been given an up-or-down vote,” Mr. Leahy said. “The delays in considering his nomination were unnecessary and wrong.”

Aside from Mr. Cole, the nominees include four ambassadors: Matthew J. Bryza to Azerbaijan, Robert Stephen Ford to Syria, Frances J. Ricciardone Jr. to Turkey and Norman L. Eisen to the Czech Republic. The first three are career foreign service officers. Mr. Eisen is a top adviser to the president on ethics who has been an irritant to Republicans since his days as the founder of [Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington](#), a watchdog group that investigated the former House Republican leader [Tom DeLay](#).

Mr. Obama also installed William J. Boorman as public printer of the United States.

All administrations face delays in getting their nominees confirmed, and the problem has been worse under Mr. Obama.

While aides to the president insist the delays are the product of Republican obstructionism, Paul C. Light, a professor at [New York University](#) who studies the presidential nomination process, says other factors are also at work. The number of Senate-confirmed positions is on the rise, nominees are required to submit substantial background information that requires extensive vetting, and a single senator can easily put a hold on any nominee.

“Obama has set the record for the slowest process since J.F.K.,” Mr. Light said, as measured by the length of time it has taken to get his first class of roughly 550 appointees confirmed. “It’s really a mess.”