

Since the surge was announced in January, it has moved through several phases. First was the flow of additional troops into Iraq, especially Baghdad and Anbar province. Once these forces were in place, our commanders launched a series of offensive operations to drive terrorists and militias out of their strongholds. And finally, in areas that have been cleared, we are surging diplomatic and civilian resources to ensure that military progress is quickly followed up with real improvements in daily life.

Anbar province is a good example of how our strategy is working. Last year, an intelligence report concluded that Anbar had been lost to al Qaeda. Some cited this report as evidence that we had failed in Iraq and should cut our losses and pull out. Instead, we kept the pressure on the terrorists. The local people were suffering under the Taliban-like rule of al Qaeda, and they were sick of it. So they asked us for help.

To take advantage of this opportunity, I sent an additional 4,000 Marines to Anbar as part of the surge. Together, local sheiks, Iraqi forces, and coalition troops drove the terrorists from the capital of Ramadi and other population centers. Today, a city where al Qaeda once planted its flag is beginning to return to normal. Anbar citizens who once feared beheading for talking to an American or Iraqi soldier now come forward to tell us where the terrorists are hiding. Young Sunnis who once joined the insurgency are now joining the army and police. And with the help of our provincial reconstruction teams, new jobs are being created and local governments are meeting again.

These developments do not often make the headlines, but they do make a difference. During my visit to Anbar on Labor Day, local Sunni leaders thanked me for America's support. They pledged they would never allow al Qaeda to return. And they told me they now see a place for their people in a democratic Iraq. The Sunni governor of Anbar province put it this way: "Our tomorrow starts today."

The changes in Anbar show all Iraqis what becomes possible when extremists are driven out. They show al Qaeda that it cannot count on popular support, even in a province its leaders once declared their home base. And they show the world that ordinary people in the Middle East want the same things for their children that we want for ours -- a decent life and a peaceful future.

In Anbar, the enemy remains active and deadly. Earlier today, one of the brave tribal sheikhs who helped lead the revolt against al Qaeda was murdered. In response, a fellow Sunni leader declared: "We are determined to strike back and continue our work." And as they do, they can count on the continued support of the United States.

Throughout Iraq, too many citizens are being killed by terrorists and death squads. And for most Iraqis, the quality of life is far from where it should be. Yet General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker report that the success in Anbar is beginning to be replicated in other parts of the country.

One year ago, much of Baghdad was under siege. Schools were closed, markets were shuttered, and sectarian violence was spiraling out of control. Today, most of Baghdad's neighborhoods are being patrolled by coalition and Iraqi forces who live among the people they protect. Many schools and markets are reopening. Citizens are coming forward with vital intelligence. Sectarian killings are down. And ordinary life is beginning to return.