

extremists.

So tonight I want to speak to members of the United States Congress: Let us come together on a policy of strength in the Middle East. I thank you for providing crucial funds and resources for our military. And I ask you to join me in supporting the recommendations General Petraeus has made and the troop levels he has asked for.

To the Iraqi people: You have voted for freedom, and now you are liberating your country from terrorists and death squads. You must demand that your leaders make the tough choices needed to achieve reconciliation. As you do, have confidence that America does not abandon our friends, and we will not abandon you.

To Iraq's neighbors who seek peace: The violent extremists who target Iraq are also targeting you. The best way to secure your interests and protect your own people is to stand with the people of Iraq. That means using your economic and diplomatic leverage to strengthen the government in Baghdad. And it means the efforts by Iran and Syria to undermine that government must end.

To the international community: The success of a free Iraq matters to every civilized nation. We thank the 36 nations who have troops on the ground in Iraq and the many others who are helping that young democracy. We encourage all nations to help, by implementing the International Compact to revitalize Iraq's economy, by participating in the Neighbors Conferences to boost cooperation and overcome differences in the region, and by supporting the new and expanded mission of the United Nations in Iraq.

To our military personnel, intelligence officers, diplomats, and civilians on the front lines in Iraq: You have done everything America has asked of you. And the progress I have reported tonight is in large part because of your courage and hard effort. You are serving far from home. Our nation is grateful for your sacrifices, and the sacrifices of your families.

Earlier this year, I received an email from the family of Army Specialist Brandon Stout of Michigan. Brandon volunteered for the National Guard and was killed while serving in Baghdad. His family has suffered greatly. Yet in their sorrow, they see larger purpose. His wife, Audrey, says that Brandon felt called to serve and knew what he was fighting for. And his parents, Tracy and Jeff, wrote me this: "We believe this is a war of good and evil and we must win even if it cost the life of our own son. Freedom is not free."

This country is blessed to have Americans like Brandon Stout, who make extraordinary sacrifices to keep us safe from harm. They are doing so in a fight that is just, and right, and necessary. And now it falls to us to finish the work they have begun.

Some say the gains we are making in Iraq come too late. They are mistaken. It is never too late to deal a blow to al Qaeda. It is never too late to advance freedom. And it is never too late to support our troops in a fight they can win.

Good night, and God bless America.