

All of these measures -- homeland security, terror surveillance, and high-value interrogation -- have been absolutely essential to confronting the strategic threat to our country. And the same is true for our ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The war on terror is not a figure of speech. On two fields of battle, it is a shooting war. The only way to win is by going on the offensive -- and that's exactly what we're doing.

In both countries, we confronted tyrants -- (applause) -- in both countries we confronted tyrants and removed them from power. And we're keeping our promise to support these democracies, and to help them build up their own defense forces, and to prevent terrorists from regaining a foothold in that critical region of the world.

In Afghanistan, America leads a coalition that includes every member of the NATO Alliance. The Taliban is still waging attacks against the Karzai government and against our forces. But our coalition remains strong, and our troops are facing the enemy with skill and toughness. Seven years ago, we rescued the Afghan people and lifted their country out of the dark ages. Today they have an elected government, a rising economy, and schools that educate both boys and girls. Afghanistan is rebuilding itself, and it's become an ally in the war on terror. The Afghan people stand with us, and we are standing with them.

We are standing with the Iraqi people as well. And I'm pleased to report that the troop surge we began last year has been an enormous success. (Applause.) Violence in the country is down dramatically compared to the first part of 2007. Sectarian killings and civilian deaths have fallen dramatically. And the casualty rate among American forces last month was the lowest in the history of that conflict.

Thanks to our new strategy in Iraq, led by General Dave Petraeus, the Iraqi people now live in greater security than they have in years. We're gathering better intelligence, because now the Iraqis are less afraid to pass along tips about where enemy fighters are hiding, and where they keep their weapons. The surge has given Iraq's elected leaders the breathing room to pass new reforms, and they've stepped up to their responsibilities. At the same time, we're -- continued to train Iraq's security forces, and those forces are able to lead more and more operations on their own. And al Qaeda, the main enemy in Iraq, is substantially degraded, running out of sanctuaries, losing the fight.

We're going to keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq, as we have pledged to do. The military aspect of the war on terror has been a hard-fought, difficult, challenging enterprise. So difficult, in fact, that many politicians -- including some who voted to send the troops into battle -- have decided to quit. Last year, with the entire Iraqi operation in the balance, we had to fend off multiple threats from the Congress. There were threats to cut off all funding for the troops, threats to force an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, consequences be damned, and threats to mandate a pullout by strict, short, and completely arbitrary timelines. The troop surge faced intense opposition from members of Congress who said it was doomed to fail. The Democratic leader of the Senate -- an early supporter of the war -- abandoned that support and even declared the cause to be lost.

President Bush stood firm, along with a number of notably courageous members of Congress, some of them from Arizona. They knew a surge of operations was our big chance to get things right. They also