

troops.

Thanks to success in Iraq, we will increase U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan by deploying a Marine battalion this November and in January 2009 an Army brigade combat team – units that had been slated for Iraq.

As in Iraq, however, additional forces alone will not solve the problem. Security is just one aspect of the campaign, alongside development and governance. We must maintain momentum, keep the international community engaged, and develop the capacity of the Afghan government. The entirety of the NATO alliance, the EU, NGOs, and other groups – our full military and civilian capabilities – must be on the same page and working toward the same goal with the Afghan government. I am still not satisfied with the level of coordination and collaboration among the numerous partners and many moving parts associated with civil reconstruction and development and building the capacity of the Afghan government. We do face committed enemies, which brings me to the challenge of the tribal areas of Pakistan. As in Iraq, until the insurgency is deprived of safe-havens, insecurity and violence will persist. We must continue to work with the Pakistani government to extend its authority in the tribal region and provide badly needed economic, medical, and educational assistance to Pakistani citizens there. At the same time, we continue to train and equip the paramilitary Frontier Corps and Pakistani military units so they can better secure the border area and carry out operations against militants.

We also continue to encourage the Afghans and Pakistanis to work together to secure their common border. This effort includes the establishment of more Border Coordination Centers jointly manned by ISAF, Afghan, and Pakistani troops; following up on the 2007 Joint Peace Jirga; and holding routine meetings of the Tripartite Commission.

I do believe Islamabad appreciates the magnitude of the threat from the tribal areas – particularly considering the uptick in suicide bombings directed at Pakistani targets, most recently the Marriott hotel in Islamabad. During this time of political turmoil in Pakistan, it is especially crucial that we maintain a strong and positive relationship with the government – since any deterioration would be a setback for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The War on Terror started in this region. It must end there.

One final point. Last year, Admiral Mullen noted that in Afghanistan we do what we can – while in Iraq, we do what we must. With the positive developments in Iraq, the strategic flexibility provided by ongoing troop reductions there, and the prospect of further reductions next year – I think it is possible in the months to come to do militarily what we must in both countries.

Let me close by again thanking all members of the committee – and the Congress as a whole – for their support of our men and women in uniform. I have noted on a number of occasions how positive the public response has been to those who have volunteered to serve. Our nation's leaders across the political spectrum have led the way in honoring our servicemen and women – not just by providing the funds they need for their mission, but also by publicly declaring their support and admiration of our troops. I share your sentiment. And I thank you all for your leadership during these challenging times.