

Iraq

After nearly nine years, the war in Iraq has finally come to a responsible close. While the U.S. military involvement in Iraq may have ended, the fight to provide our veterans with the care they deserve will be ongoing. The Iraq war has created a new generation of warriors that will need our support, not only in the coming weeks and months, but in the years and decades ahead. As our courageous men and women of the United States Armed Forces return home, it is paramount that their sacrifices never be forgotten. Many left jobs, families, and everything they knew behind in the name of protecting our country.

Moving forward, we must redouble our efforts to make certain our veterans have access to the best health care possible, are provided with ample opportunities for education and well paying jobs, and are becoming fully integrated to the lives they once knew.

I will do everything in my power to ensure the sacrifices made by our soldiers and their families will always be remembered.

Afghanistan

As a 24-year veteran of the Army National Guard, I emphatically believe in the value of open and honest debate about the most solemn act a democracy undertakes, using its military in an armed conflict. Unlike the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan was not a war of choice. It has been a war forced upon us by the terrible attacks on 9/11 and reinforced by the subsequent attacks on innocent civilians in nations across the world.

The war in Afghanistan should never have gone on this long, and it likely would not have, had the Bush Administration not decided to shift resources to an unnecessary conflict in Iraq.

he Obama Administration carried out an extensive review of our policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the President announced a new strategy in December 2009 from West Point. I believe that process was important to determining our long term goals in the region.

In general, I support the President's overall strategy for the region, but I have concerns over the details of its execution. The culture, terrain, and politics of Afghanistan present extreme challenges to our counterinsurgency strategy, and I spent the last year investigating the U.S. approach to carrying out the President's plan. Our troops and diplomats deserve to have a plan that is fully synchronized and incorporates our military, diplomatic, and developmental actions within the entire region.

In the town hall meetings I held on Afghanistan, I heard from many southern Minnesotans who have important questions, and I took these concerns to the President in [a letter I wrote in December 2009](#)

Since then, I have received candid briefings from the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of State on the condition of the Afghanistan/Pakistan region and U.S. actions in that region. Our military service members and diplomats are doing a great job, but there is still a long way to go in Afghanistan.

I will remain vigilant in working to ensure that this time we get our Afghanistan and Pakistan policies right. It is simply too important to our national security to let the region once again become a safe haven for terrorists who would mount mass attacks on America and our allies.