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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

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DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld And Gen. Myers

Tuesday, December 3, 2002 - 2 p.m. EDT

(Also participating was Gen. Myers, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff)

Rumsfeld: Good afternoon. A lot of friendly faces here. As the United Nations weapons inspectors start their work in Iraq, it's I suppose worth remembering that what brought us to this point with inspectors in Iraq has been the increasing pressure on the Iraqi regime that's been backed by the coalition's credible threat of force, if necessary. For more than a decade Iraq has been pursuing weapons of mass destruction, in defiance now of -- then of some 16 resolutions of the Security Council. Only when President Bush took the case to Congress first, and then to the United Nations, and made clear that he, and this country, and a coalition of the willing, were prepared to take military action if Iraq refused to disarm its weapons of mass destruction program, did the Iraqi regime allow the inspectors to return. I think it's useful to keep that sequence in mind. They didn't just suddenly one day decide to invite back the inspectors. With the passage of the new U.N. resolution and the strong statement by our NATO allies in Prague, Saddam Hussein now faces a choice: to disarm or face the possibility of being disarmed. I should add that the members of the U.N. also face a choice. When the Iraqis send in their declaration, if it's false, will the United Nations continue the pattern of the past of allowing Iraq to ignore U.N. resolutions, or will the member countries hold Iraq to its obligations? As inspections begin, it's worth underscoring another important fact: the burden of proof is not on the United Nations or on the inspectors to prove that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The burden of proof is on the Iraqi regime to prove that it is disarming, as required by the successive U.N. resolutions. As President Bush said here at the Pentagon yesterday, inspectors do not have a duty, or even an ability, to uncover weapons of mass destruction hidden in a country that is uncooperative. The responsibility of the inspectors is simply to confirm evidence of voluntary and total disarmament. Let me also make clear that disarmament is only one of the steps required of Iraq in Resolution 1441, and the 16 Security Council resolutions that preceded it. Resolution 1441 also calls for Iraq to end repression of its civilian population. That repression is well documented in the British government's new human rights dossier, which details the systematic terror that the Iraqi regime has and is currently inflicting on its own people. According to the U.K. report, some 100,000 Kurds in northern Iraq -- innocent men, women and children -- have been killed. Shi'ite Muslims, who make up more than half of the population of that country, have also been systematically attacked, and millions of Iraqis have been forced to flee their homeland. Torture is systematic in Iraq, and the most senior officials in the regime are involved. Electric shock, eye-gouging, acid baths, lengthy confinement in small metal boxes are only some of the crimes committed by this regime. That this pattern of human rights violations seems not of concern to some nations is disturbing. The British human rights dossier ought to remind us why Iraq's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction should be of the utmost concern to free people everywhere. A regime with weapons of mass destruction and such contempt for human life, even the lives of its own people, ought to be considered what it is: namely, a particular kind of danger.

General Myers?:

Myers: Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Secretary. We continue to make progress in helping Afghanistan to establish its national army. A new Afghan national army battalion begins its 10-week training program this week. It includes over 700 recruits -- one of the largest groups yet. The French will train the group, which is the 6th battalion to be established. The 5th battalion that's being trained by the United States will finish its training at the end of this month. Moving to Iraq, coalition aircraft have been fired on 17 of the last 24 days in Operation Southern Watch, and 7 of the last 24 days in Operation Northern Watch. And, just as a reminder, it's been 24 days since the United Nations passed United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441. On Sunday, coalition forces responded to one of the firings by dropping 23 precision-guided weapons from 13 coalition aircraft on Iraqi air defense sites in the south, near al-Basra and al Kut. Also, today we have a video for you that illustrates how the Iraqis move military equipment into civilian areas to protect it. And if you'd roll the video here, you'll see a road -- you'll see a truck moving down the road. On the truck is a Spoon Rest radar -- an early-warning radar. The truck is heading for cover, as you will see here in just a little bit -- is heading for cover near a group of civilian buildings. Of course the radar is in a movement mode, so you are not going to see the antenna. You'd have to freeze-frame it and blow it up and then you can see the apparatus. The buildings that

it will be approaching -- we do not know what their use is. We do know, though, that they are not military facilities. Here come the -- here's the compound that it's coming close to, and you'll see that it will park near one of those buildings, and then the drivers actually get out of it at that point.

Q: And this is not something you were able to go after?

Myers: No that's a very good point.

Rumsfeld: Well, you are able to go after it, but you choose not to, if it's located -

Myers: Because the potential for collateral damage is so high when they park near buildings like this, we elect not to go after them. But it's a good example, I think, how the Iraqi regime places civilians at risk in a very conscious -- in a conscious way. As somebody already said, we passed on hitting this target just to avoid putting the Iraqi civilians in harm's way. And we would be happy to answer your questions.

Q: If you don't know -- if you don't know what those buildings are used for, how do you know they're not military facilities?

Myers: Well, from our intelligence. I mean, we know -- we know what their military facilities are. We are very certain those are civilian structures.

Q: Very certain?

Q: When and where -

Myers: We'll get you the dates on that. [date of video - 26 November, 2002]

Rumsfeld: Charlie?

Q: Mr. Secretary, you said that pressure on Iraq, the threat of military action, is the only thing that has brought it this far, and the fact that U.N. inspectors are now in Iraq. If Iraq on December 8th says that it has no weapons of mass destruction, is the United States prepared to further ratchet up that pressure by again moving large numbers of ground troops to the Gulf for a possible invasion?

Rumsfeld: There are a series of things that could occur in the days ahead, including what you indicated. I think it's due by December 8th, their declaration, but very likely could be on the 7th or something. There are a number of things like that that can occur as we go along. And of course at that point the president and other countries that participate in the Security Council will be making judgments about how they feel about whatever has been done. And then I am sure they will be consulting and making judgments about what they think about that.

Q: Well, might the U.S. unilaterally begin -- openly begin moving large numbers of troops to ratchet up the pressure? And wouldn't you also have to notify the National Guard and Reserves of a possible large call-up in such a case?

Rumsfeld: I don't think I want to speculate on that. We don't really talk about deployments particularly, or operations. We had been moving forces around the world, as you know. We've got a somewhat higher level of presence in the Central Command area today than we did last week or the week before or the week before that. But I don't think I want to speculate about what the president might decide to do.

Q: Mr. Secretary, could you bring us up to date on the training of Iraqi opposition forces in terms of the timetable, the numbers, any of those developments?

Rumsfeld: I really can't. It is -- I don't know precisely where it stands. I do know who is responsible for it and that it's in process, but where it stands today -- do you know?

Myers: What little I could add to that is that we are still in the vetting process for some of the individuals, and we are still trying to finalize the site where the training would take place.

Q: Would that be this month, the month of December?

Myers: It's possible. I think we just -- we haven't had an update recently.

Rumsfeld: Haven't heard lately.

Q: Numbers? Any rough numbers of people? Interested in -

Rumsfeld: I've seen the numbers, but -- that have been vetted and cleared -- but I don't think we want to get into the numbers.

Q: Mr. Secretary, yesterday the president expressed a lack of optimism about the situation in Iraq. And yet the weapons inspectors seem to be getting cooperation, even to the point of going into one of the presidential palaces. We go back to early on

in the verbal conflict against Iraq, the goal was regime change. And then by the time it got to the U.N. it became disarmament. And now listening to the president again it seems to be back on regime change. Can you straighten us out, what is the actual goal?

Rumsfeld: Well, I don't think anything's ever changed. Years ago -- four, or five years ago, '98, '97 -- somewhere in that timeframe, '99 -- the Congress passed legislation calling for regime change in Iraq. That has been the position of the government. And the reason it's been the position of the United States government is quite simple: It is that the conclusion was made that he had refused to cooperate with some 16 U.N. resolutions, and that seemed to be a behavior pattern which suggested that he would be unlikely to do so in the future, and therefore the way to change -- to achieve disarmament would be to change the regime, and have disarmament occur that way. When the president went to the United Nations, the U.N. Security Council addressed it in a slightly different way, and focused on disarmament, which had been the U.N. practice over a period of time. And I don't see any change in our -- in the administration's position. I do recognize that the U.N. has emphasized disarmament.

Q: Mr. Secretary, so -- Q Just to follow up. So the goal is actually twofold: disarmament and regime change?

Rumsfeld: I think, you know, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It depends on who you talk to and when you talk to them. If you talk to somebody who concludes -- frequently, if you talk to the Congress, that's our national position. If you talk to the U.N., you'll get different views from different people, because they -- some have a higher degree of confidence that Saddam Hussein and his regime are going to decide that they want to cooperate, in which case they then could disarm, and that problem, that aspect of the problem -- certainly not as his repression of his people, which is another part of the U.N. resolution, which I mentioned in my opening remarks. But that portion of it, disarmament, would have occurred voluntarily. So it depends on who you talk to and when you talk to them, and what their confidence level is as to whether or not Saddam Hussein's regime will change a decade-long pattern. Yes?

Q: Mr. Secretary, trying that a different way, considering what is being seen with reconnaissance assets that the U.S. is currently flying over Iraq, how would you characterize the level of cooperation that the Iraqis are giving to U.N. weapons inspectors so far?

Rumsfeld: Oh, I don't know that I want to -- the president has made some comments on that, and that's good enough for me.

Q: Following up, will the reconnaissance assets be used, do you think, by the U.N., or the images?

Rumsfeld: We certainly want to cooperate with the U.N. inspectors, UNMOVIC (United Nations Monitoring Visual and Inspections Committee). And I suspect -- discussions are taking place -

Myers: That's correct, working out the modalities.

Rumsfeld: -- and I assume the United States, as well as other countries, will provide various types of intel assistance. Yes?

Q: To go back to what you were saying about Iraq and its actions, should -- do other nations in the world that possess weapons of mass destruction and brutally repress their own have reasons to -- the regimes of those countries have reasons to fear actions from the United States?

Rumsfeld: We've talked about this so many times, where the president has talked about the distinctions between various countries. You are quite right: there are a number of countries that are on the terrorist list. Many, if not most of them, have very active weapons of mass destruction programs. Many of them, if not most of them are dictatorships. Many, if not most, are vicious dictatorships and repress their people. So there are some similarities and there's some differences.

Q: And some nations that aren't on the terrorist list that would also be included -

Rumsfeld: True. And some nations that don't have weapons of mass destruction repress their viciously. So you have various categories. My point was I think a valid one: that if a country demonstrates, by its particular, distinctive viciousness to its own people, as well as what it's done by using those weapons to neighbors, and it has weapons of mass destruction, that one has to put it in a category that is of concern to the world. And that was my point. But you are quite right: North Korea has weapons of mass destruction and is denying freedom and food and every kind of opportunity that is available to the South Korean people to the people of North Korea. It's a tragedy that it happens.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Rumsfeld: Yes?

Q: Coming back to -- (inaudible) -- the inspections. There are some within the Iraqi opposition movement who say that rather than running around a country to these suspected weapons of mass destruction sites, that the inspectors should instead focus on the concealment mechanisms of the regime, such as the special security organization which supposedly has records about movements of equipment and so forth. I wondered what you thought about that. Should the inspectors try to go to the heart of the matter after these concealment mechanisms, or continuing a path of suspected sites?

Rumsfeld: Gosh, I don't know that I'm inclined to give advice to the inspectors. I -- if one looks back historically, there are two or three things that stand out. One is inspections don't work unless it is a country that has decided to cooperate. In other words, you

can't expect people to go into a country that is just enormous, with all that real estate and all that underground facilities and all of these people monitoring everything -- everything anyone is doing -- and expect them to engage in a discovery process and turn up something somebody is determined for them not to turn up. Inspections work when the country cooperates. They tend not to work if the country doesn't. So that's fact number one. Fact number two: If you go back and look at the history of inspections in Iraq, the reality is that things have been found -- not by discovery, but through defectors. That is to say, someone in the country with certain knowledge figures out a way to get that information into the hands of the inspectors, or somebody else, who then gets it into the hands of the people. And they may be in the country or out of the country. And it is that certain knowledge of an individual who has been a participant in the program, and decided that they think it is not a good thing. And therefore they go to the inspectors, or they go to somebody else and say, Look, here's where it is, here's how they are hiding it, here's where they are going to move it -- and you get the kind of information that means the game is up. You've got hard information, and only then, really only then, do you discover anything that somebody didn't tell you. Historically, that's been roughly the pattern.

Q: So you think that's going to continue today, that they -

Rumsfeld: I don't know. We'll just have to see.

Q: Mr. Secretary, what's the state of play of the vaccinations, smallpox vaccinations for the troops? And is there any evidence that Iraq has smallpox in their bio-weapons program?

Rumsfeld: I'm not going to discuss intelligence about Iraq on that subject. I must say, I see so many leaks in the newspaper that pre-announce things that haven't been announced or finally decided that I have lost track. I have a meeting on a subject like smallpox. And then I have a second meeting on smallpox. And then a month later, I have a third meeting. And we're getting ready to do something. And then I read in the press that we're doing it -- Hasn't been announced. Well, I didn't think it had been announced. (Laughter.)

Q: But are you going to vaccinate the troops against -- for smallpox?

Rumsfeld: We've not made an announcement on that subject, although I've had several meetings, and -

Q: Yeah, but you could cut the leaker off at the pass right now -- (laughter.) What is your position on that?

Myers: I would not have had three meetings if I didn't think that there might be a good -- if it is a subject that merited my attention. And General Myers has had several of those meetings, and Pete Pace has, and Paul Wolfowitz has.

Q: Will you be inoculated as an example to the troops?

Rumsfeld: (Laughter.) I'm already -- I'm so old, I already had a vaccination.

Q: Two follow-up questions please, sir. One, General Myers mentioned about the new Afghan battalion. What's the ethnic composition of that new battalion, and how does that compare to the previous ethnic composition -- compositions of those other Afghan battalions?

Myers: My understanding is that over time, they become more and more ethnically diverse, which is exactly what we wanted to happen. I don't happen to have the numbers right before -- we can get that.

Q: Do you have -- does the Pentagon have those?

Myers: Sure. I -- well, we -- they have them in Central Command, and we can get those for you.

Q: And the second question -

Rumsfeld: I think the latest one is more diverse, and I think it's also got a higher number, is my recollection.

Myers: Yes, the number is almost (700 ?), I think -

Rumsfeld: Yeah. So, it -- I get a feeling that the progress is positive.

Myers: There is more and more cooperation among the other leaders in the country out in the various regions, and that's been the trend from the start of this effort.

Q: And the second one, I need clarification on the tape you showed of that radar unit being moved to what -

Myers: Right.

Q: could be -- (inaudible) -- you suggested in answer to one of the questions that you didn't go after it because of possible collateral damage. I was under the impression, and I'm probably wrong on it, but that you only fire at those radars when they train their radar on U.S. planes. Is that -

Myers: No, they're fair targets if -- if our air crews, coalition air crews have been shot at, then they become a fair target whether -- I mean, whether or not they illuminate or not, because they're involved in the whole air defense system. So, we could go after them. And just to clarify, I mean, we know it's not a military facility, when I said I -- it's definitely civilian. Now, what its exact use is, whether it's an old folks home, a school, residences, that's the part we don't know, because we don't spend time looking at civilian areas like that, try to -- (inaudible) -

Q: General, on November 26th -

Rumsfeld: Let me make this very clear: The coalition pilots, crews are not restricted to attacking only the things that attack them -- specifically not. They have the freedom to attack targets that will degrade the air defense capability and make the responsibilities they have less dangerous.

Q: I see. So, on November 26th, when that tape was shot, they could have been shot in part A of Iraq, and that radar could have been in another location, still, under that rule, it could be attacked then. Right?

Myers: That's correct. I mean, if it contributes -- and without getting into a lot of operational detail, they are not restricted to the thing that shot at them.

Q: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Secretary, the United States has categorically said that Iraq has an active bio, chemical and nuclear weapons program.

Rumsfeld: Because they do.

Q: Britain has said categorically that they have active bio, chemical and nuclear weapons programs. What happens on Saturday, or Sunday, when Iraq comes in and says, "No, we don't have any active programs. We have no weapons. We have some dual technology that is used for civilian purposes." How does that get resolved? Is it for the United States and Britain to prove they're right, for the Iraqis to prove they're right, or for UNMOVIC to say who's right?

Rumsfeld: The resolution I think is really quite clear on that. And, it does not leave it in the hands of UNMOVIC. It -- as I recall, it has a provision that there are certain things UNMOVIC must do and assert or not assert as to their circumstance, and they have the ability to do that. They can say anything they wish, as I understand it, and it's up to the Security Council, also individual members, to make a decision at any moment as to what their particular view might be about that. And any member can take that issue to the Security Council under the resolution at any time that they believe that it's something that the Security Council ought to be seized on.

Q: what would the United States expect of the Security Council if this was to happen?

Rumsfeld: I can't speak for the United States. That's something that the president would have to decide. And I'm sure it would be the kind of thing he would decide after looking at all the things that had taken place during the preceding period, and then have discussions with various members of the Security Council, I suspect. But that really is more a presidential thing than a Department of Defense thing. (Cross talk.)

Q (Inaudible) -- sir, to present to the U.N. Security Council (for review ?) Are you ready to carry intelligence before the U.N. Security Council and say, "Look, Iraq says this, and here's the evidence that it's not true."

Rumsfeld: The responsibility under the resolutions for disarming and for proving -- and/or for proving that Iraq has disarmed and has no weapons of mass destruction any more -- we certainly know they did, right? The inspectors found these things after a defector told them where to go. And they found active programs. So, we know they did. So, let's pretend they don't today. The responsibility for demonstrating that is not on the U.N., it's not on the United States, it's not on the U.K., it's not on the Security Council. It's on Iraq. And it's important to get that into one's mind, because it is Iraq that is the subject of the resolutions, and the resolutions call for them to be open and demonstrate that they have disarmed, and no longer have any of those programs which they did -

Q Mr. Secretary -

Rumsfeld: -- and we know they do.

Q -- let's pretend that they do, and you have evidence that they do.

Rumsfeld: We don't have to pretend they do, Charlie.

Q Well -

Rumsfeld: They do.

Q -- are you -- are you ready to present that evidence to the U.N. Security Council on the heels of any denial by Iraq that they have such weapons?

Rumsfeld: Those would be judgments that every country in the Security Council would have to make.

Q Well, let me ask you this way: You've said that Iraq has hidden things. You've mentioned underground places. You've also said that the inspectors don't have the wherewithal to find it if it's well hidden unless somebody gives it up. Do you -- without saying what you would do with any evidence or what decisions the president might make, does the United States have the evidence to know when Iraq presents its declaration this weekend, will you be able to look at that and tell whether they're telling the truth and being forthcoming? Will we be able to tell right away that you're on a path to war with Iraq?

Rumsfeld: Well, the latter is, of course, a decision for the president, the Security Council, other countries to make judgments about. It's not for me. The United States knows that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The U.K. knows that they have weapons of mass destruction. Any country on the face of the earth with an active intelligence program knows that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction.

Q But will you be able to tell whether they have completely accounted for those? I mean, do you have -

Rumsfeld: I have no idea what their declaration will say. It seems to me if one looked across a spectrum, Iraq could on the one hand say, "Wrong, we don't have anything. Never have, never did, never will." They could move over on the spectrum and say, "You're right. We used to. And all the stuff the U.N. said we had when they came in here and found it and started destroying it all, that's all we ever had. It's all been destroyed." That's the second option. The third option, they could come in and say, "Yeah, we used to have it, and almost all of it was destroyed. But gee, look over here, we just figured out, maybe there's a couple more buckets of this, and a couple of more buckets of that. And here it is. You guys tow it away. Take care of it for -- and now we're clean." (Laughter.) So, that's a possibility. There's a variety of things like that that could happen. And, you know, why try to prejudge them when it's not -- it's not for me or any -- anyone except the president to.

- Q: you seem to be saying that if Iraq is given a clean bill of health by U.N. inspectors -
- Rumsfeld: I don't think that the U.N. inspectors are in a position to do that. How -

Q: But they can say they have not found weapons of mass destruction.

Rumsfeld: Is that a clean bill of health? If the responsibility is on Iraq to demonstrate that it does not have weapons of mass destruction under the U.N. resolution, it is not for some country to go in and give them a clean bill of health, it is for Iraq to give itself a clean bill of health by saying, "Here's honestly what we currently have. Here's where it is. Here's what we've done. Please destroy it for us."

Q: Well, I'm confused by the way the president has characterized some of these things, and this is a slight change in direction here. The president has said that Iraqi cooperation is not encouraging, yesterday, and Kofi Annan today says cooperation seems to be good by the Iraqis.

Rumsfeld: Well, it's the glass half-empty/half-full.

Q: Well -

Rumsfeld: I don't see that that's a big deal?

Q: You don't?

Rumsfeld: No.

Q: Mr. Secretary, they seem to be doing what is being asked of them by inspectors. And by that, Kofi Annan says cooperation seems to be good. Why is cooperation not good?

Rumsfeld: You'd have to ask the president.

Q: They're letting people in.

Rumsfeld: Maybe he's looking at intelligence that somebody else isn't seeing. I don't know. You'd have to ask him.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you appeared to indicate today that the U.S. will accept only one answer from Iraq, and that is an admission that they now possess or are continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction. Is that correct?

Rumsfeld: No. I've three times, I think, indicated that it's not for me to say what the United States will or will not accept. That is a matter for the president. I have said a reasonable person stepping back and looking at this thing could say that the answers could fall in these kinds of categories. The only thing I have said or asserted is that they have weapons of mass destruction.

Q: Well, General -

Q: My other question is, there's a press report today that -

Rumsfeld: Well, wait a second. Let's go to Pam here -

Q: May I -- may I please? There's a press report today that says -

Rumsfeld: Well, what about Pam? Look at her face. (Laughter.)

Q: I know, but -

Rumsfeld: I mean, come on. (Cross talk.)

Rumsfeld: It's his third one. (Laughs.)

Q: There's a press report today that says that the CIA has turned over to the Pentagon some nearly 100 examples or documents indicating varying degrees of cooperation and support from Saddam Hussein to al Qaeda. First of all, is that true? And if it's true, what does that say about Iraq's support for al Qaeda?

Rumsfeld: This has been an interesting subject for the press. Everyone's had a big time with it. And, the only time I've ever opined on the subject was when one day I said to the CIA, "Gee, folks, why don't you give me an -- I keep getting asked this question -- why don't you give me an unclassified piece of paper?" And I brought it down here and I read it. And for weeks afterward, I was accused of having a different opinion from the Central Intelligence Agency or for drawing connections, some sort of connection. And this was repeated in the Senate, and repeated in the House, and repeated in the press. And I really had a minimum of high regard for the way the whole thing was handled. So, I've decided that I'm not going to go asking for an unclassified piece of paper. I don't need it. You need it. (Laughter.) So, what I do is I read the classified. I know what's going on. And I'm perfectly happy, and I don't need to go through that again. (Laughter.) Pam. (Laughter.)

Q: Well, did the CIA present nearly a hundred examples of contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda?

Rumsfeld: You didn't hear me. (Laughs.) I'm not going to get into it.

Q: Okay.

Rumsfeld: Pam.

Q: I'm speechless. (Laughter.) Just, you know, by way of editorial comment, there is at least an ideal that we lean towards, which is giving the people what they need to know.

Rumsfeld: Right.

Q: So that's

Rumsfeld: I lean far in that direction.

Q: Yeah -- well, not so much right now. (Laughter.) My question is actually on a different subject. And we haven't had a chance to talk about it, and I'd appreciate it if we could just sort of go back and forth a little bit on what happened in Yemen when another agency used a weapons system to assassinate or to kill an al Qaeda -- (laughter.)

Rumsfeld: Charlie, she's right in your league. (Laughter.) Yeah, you're the guy. Summary executions?

Q: I think it's very important, and we need to talk about this. Could you explain -- it's sort of a two-pronged question -- why that was not a DOD operation; why it was decided that that's what -- was it because he was a target of opportunity and that something needed to be done right then; why he was not arrested and interrogated? And could you, given the presence -- the military presence that we now have off the coast of the Horn of Africa and renewed al Qaeda activity, it seems, in that area, explain what the DOD policy is with regard to taking lethal action in countries? Is it only at the request or permission of the government, or is it only in places -- and/or is it only in places where there is no sovereign government in existence?

Rumsfeld: Those are very good questions.

Q: Thank you.

Rumsfeld: And I happen also to agree with you that a discussion of them at some point would be -

Q: I take it that would be not now? (Laughter.)

Rumsfeld: The -- let me think how I can say this. Let's start with the beginning. I don't really like to talk about what other countries do or don't do. I really believe that it is in our country's interest to let them do that. Every country has different sensitivities. So about half of your questions -

Q: Well, I'm asking what the DOD policy is.

Rumsfeld: I'm working my way over to figuring out how I won't answer that. (Laughter.)

Q: Then this whole right-to-know thing is rearing its ugly head.

Rumsfeld: Yeah. You don't know that I was one of the authors of the Freedom of Information Act. Do you know that? Did you know that?

Q: (Off mike) -- know that. (Off mike) -- more about it.

Rumsfeld: Yeah, back in the 1960s -

Q: That's why it doesn't work.

Rumsfeld: Oh! (Laughs.) Oh! (Cross talk, laughter, groans.) I really was. I was one of the co-authors of that legislation. So DOD policy is -- and I'd like to say full stop on the question you asked and just go over and talk about generically DOD policy. DOD policy is what you all know it to be. There is really no mystery to it. We recruit, organize, train, equip and deploy young men and women, in uniform, to go out and serve as members of our military. They are not trained to do the word you used, which I won't even repeat. That is not what they're trained to do. They are trained to serve the country and to contribute to peace and stability in the world, and they do it in a whole host of different ways. But they -- but their task is, in almost every instance, something that is either public at the time, or public shortly thereafter. It's not mysterious. It -- I don't know how else I could answer it other than that. I mean, you all are professionals; you know what we do. You talk to people. You are embedded with them in deployments; you see how they behave. You know they're the people who come out of our high schools and our colleges. They're -

Q: The question on the policy actually dovetails very directly into the Yemen mission and might shed some light or two why that wasn't a DOD mission. That's why I related the two together. So maybe you could talk specifically about the Yemen mission and why it was not a DOD operation.

Rumsfeld: I don't even concede there was a Yemen mission.

Q: There are six dead people. I mean, something happened there and -

Rumsfeld: I -- I'm -- I've said what I've said, that is -- that is it is up for others to comment on anything they want to comment on, but I don't comment on things we're not involved in, and I don't comment about things that other countries -- happen to other countries.

Q: Can I just clarify something you said earlier? You mentioned that the U.N. resolution also called on Saddam Hussein to end repression of his own people.

Rumsfeld: I think it did. Am I right? Yeah, I'm pretty sure I'm right.

Q: Are you saying that in addition to disarming, that the government of Iraq needs to certify that it's no longer repressing its own people?

Rumsfeld: No. I'm not a lawyer. I would caution everybody to go and read the resolution. What it is is a fairly lengthy document that was fashioned by a committee. And there are a series of calculated ambiguities in it that were negotiated so that more and more people, ultimately everybody could agree to it. And I am sure that if you went to five lawyers and they read that thing, they would have five different opinions as to precisely what it may or may not mean. That doesn't mean it's a bad resolution, it just means it is a negotiated resolution. And it's not for me to say what any one Security Council member might or might not conclude from that resolution.

Q: Well, in the end, whether it's -- even though it's Iraq's responsibility to comply with it and to prove that they've complied, in the end, won't it be the United States that judges whether Iraq is in compliance?

Rumsfeld: I think that certainly the United States would have an opinion. I also suspect that other countries in the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, will have opinions. And I don't know if they'll all agree.

Q: But they don't have to agree for the United States to take action it deems necessary, do they?

Rumsfeld: They don't have to -- everyone does not have to agree for any member country to take appropriate action.

Q: So in the end, it will be the U.S. that decides?

Rumsfeld: Or any other country.

Q: A question for General Myers, please, Secretary?

Rumsfeld: Why don't we try some folks that didn't have a question yet.

Q: He needs a question.

Rumsfeld: Yes he does need a question. Go ahead.

Q: Thank you.

Rumsfeld: That's a good idea.

Q: Thank you. General, in the past two days -

Rumsfeld: In fact, he needs two.

Q: there has been an increase of activity from the unfriendlies in Afghanistan. In the past 24 hours, a couple of places struck by people, and A-10s called in. And for the first time since July, a "Buff" [B-52] was called in to drop JDAMs [Joint Direct Attack Munition]. I believe the secretary refers to this as a spike, but there are some who believe this is a clear escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan. Also the other day there was what we call, I guess, or what you call a green-on-green, where a warlord attacked another warlord, and in a sense some U.S. special forces got caught in the middle. So, one, is there an escalation? And two, is there an increasing or steady instability in the country, which prevents any kind of peace and stability from taking place?

Myers: Well, to address the B-52 piece up front, there are a variety of aircraft that are on call to provide support to our ground forces over Afghanistan at any given time, and the fact that a B-52 was present and perhaps -- and dropped a weapon does not mean that was a special event of any sort. It could have been any other aircraft. It just happened to be that that's the time period there was a B-52 available with the right weapon to target match. So that's not indicative. Just yesterday, last night, we had the commander of Joint Task Force 180 in here, General McNeill, briefing the secretary and some of the staff on the conditions in Afghanistan. And Secretary, you correct me as I go through this, but I think he would -- we have had a series of incidents here right before winter that I think we expected, but they're primarily in that part of Afghanistan that's over closest to the Pakistan border. And that has not changed much over time. We always knew that was the area where the Taliban were trying to regroup, where the al Qaeda were regrouping and where they were trying to bring harm either to coalition forces or to the new Afghan transitional government. In the rest of Afghanistan, for the most part things are relatively stable. And you can look at most of the trends there in terms of the number of nongovernmental workers in the country. I think we heard last night it's around 5,500, but the trend lines have been steadily increasing -- number of sites, I'm sorry, not number of people -- in the country where you have nongovernmental or private organizations in there to help the Afghani people. And so if you look at a number of those trends, I think you would say for most of the country that it's becoming more stable. In the case of the fire between two factions, that's not the first time that's happened. That's happened from time to time. That is something that the central government has to work out, and in this case I think did get involved and mediated that particular event. So my personal opinion is that we're -- three-quarters of that county is pretty darn stable. Now, there is a quarter of it that is going to be an issue for some time to come and that there will be incidents from time to time and we've got to take the appropriate appropriate action. But the green-on-green is basically an Afghan-government issue.

Q: A question, General Myers. Earlier today there was a report that an Iraqi boat had fired on a couple of Kuwaiti Coast Guard vessels. Somebody said that that wasn't true. I wondered if you had any information on it. And just on that general topic, what kind of a navy does Iraq have? What kind of activity do you see them engaging in? Do they pose any significant threat to any U.S. force?

Myers: As far as I know, on the incident -- and the secretary can maybe clarify this -- my information -- I've heard the same report, and we're chasing down the details. I do not know the details at this point, to be able to stand up here and say, "Here's what actually happened." In terms of the navy, I don't want to go into a lot of details, but they do have some seaworthy craft that could be outfitted with a certain kind of weapons that could pose a threat to shipping in the Persian Gulf.

Q: Well, chemical weapons, for instance, or -

Myers: I'm thinking -- I'm not -- I mean, I suppose that's possible. I was thinking of other kinds of missiles. You know, in the past they have shot Exocets at aircraft in the Gulf and -

Q: Or ramming into ship, like in Yemen.

Myers: Sure.

Rumsfeld: They can lay mines.

Myers: They can lay mines. They could shoot missiles. They could -- and -

Q: General Myers, this videotape that you showed us earlier of the Spoon Rest radar -- is that indicative of anything -

Q: Can we have any questions from -- I'm sorry. (Off mike) -- questions? There were three or four -

Q: does that show that Iraq is bracing for a war, or is that the standard sort of thing Iraq does in the southern -- in the no-fly zones to try to just avoid U.S. and British strikes?

Myers: I think that is -- that's just an indication of how the Iraqi regime treats its civilian population, in that they're willing to use them as shields against those forces over there that are trying to the -- force compliance or ensuring compliance with the U.N. Security Council resolutions. So that's what I think it means. I don't think it's directly tied to anticipating war. They've been doing this for some time.

Rumsfeld: Two last questions, none, of which -- neither of which will be in the front row. (Laughter.) Yes.

Q: Or the second row.

Rumsfeld: Or the second row.

Q: Thank you. Talking about North Korea -- thank you, Mr. Secretary -- many North Koreans are suffering in hunger and tyranny.

Rumsfeld: They are.

Q: And they are also fleeing from North Korea in mass numbers. North Korea -- (inaudible) -- also human rights of North Korea are very seriously abused. Do you have any idea how can the United States stop North Korea from hurting their people?

Rumsfeld: Well, your comment, your question is exactly correct. It is a vicious regime. And what it is doing to the people of North Korea is criminal. The course that the United States is on is to work with South Korea, Japan and other countries, including most recently China and Russia, to attempt to persuade the leadership in North Korea that the course they're on is the wrong course, and that they should steer to a different course. This is an effort that's been underway in prior administrations. It's had uneven success. And I don't know what the prospects are in this instance. But that clearly is the path that this administration has taken. And we hope it succeeds. Yes.

Q: General Myers, we're told by American diplomats that a pilot program is being initiated in Gardez, Afghanistan, whereby U.S. military forces will be protecting -- providing some sort of protection, a measure of protection to aid workers. I think it's AID [USAID, United States Agency for International Development]. It might be some other organizations. Can you elaborate at all on that program, when it's going to start; who's going to be involved?

Myers: You're -- I'm not -- I'm just not familiar with that -

Q: (Having to do with if ?) the military is engaging in such a program -

Myers: Yeah, I'm just not aware they are in that specific program you just mentioned.

Q Okay. Can I -

Rumsfeld: The military forces, ours and coalition forces, as well as the ISAF [International Security and Assistance Force], exist in various parts of the countries. And in parts of the countries where they are located, whether as a specific presence or as a unit that's embedded in one of the regional political leader's forces, I am sure they have continuous interaction with aid workers. And I don't doubt for a minute that someone in the aid worker business is pleased that coalition forces are in an area where they're working. Whether there's some formal program like you're characterizing, I haven't heard of.

Q: We were actually told by U.S. -- I can't say who, but by U.S. diplomats who would be in a position to know. And -

Rumsfeld: Well, we can check it for you.

Myers: We'll check it out.

Q: Okay. Can I get one more? For you, sir. I just wanted to offer you the opportunity to announce here today whether Steve Cambone will be appointed as your new undersecretary for intelligence?

Rumsfeld: You want to know if you could offer me the opportunity? (Laughter.) The answer is yes, you may offer me the opportunity, and I decline. (Laughter, cross talk.)

Rumsfeld: It's a presidential appointment, not a secretarial appointment.

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