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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Friday, March 21, 2003 - 1:36 p.m. EST

DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld And Gen. Myers

(Also participating was Gen. Richard B. Myers, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Slides, video, and photos from today's briefing are available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/g030321-D-6570C.html>; <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/g030321-D-6570C.html>; and <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/>.)

Rumsfeld: Good afternoon. Yesterday, four American Marines and eight members of the British armed forces were killed in a helicopter accident returning from a mission in Iraq. And in a separate incident, a U.S. Marine was killed in action during combat operations in Iraq. We are certainly grateful for their lives, their courage, and their sacrifice. And our hearts go out to their families. The world will be a safer place because of their dedicated service.

On the president's order, coalition forces began the ground war to disarm Iraq and liberate the Iraqi people yesterday. And a few minutes ago, the air war in Iraq began.

General Myers will provide some details on the progress of our operation, but first let me comment on the aims and objectives we have for the days ahead.

Our goal is to defend the American people, and to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and to liberate the Iraqi people. Coalition military operations are focused on achieving several specific objectives: to end the regime of Saddam Hussein by striking with force on a scope and scale that makes clear to Iraqis that he and his regime are finished. Next, to identify, isolate and eventually eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, production capabilities, and distribution networks. Third, to search for, capture, drive out terrorists who have found safe harbor in Iraq. Fourth, to collect such intelligence as we can find related to terrorist networks in Iraq and beyond. Fifth, to collect such intelligence as we can find related to the global network of illicit weapons of mass destruction activity. Sixth, to end sanctions and to immediately deliver humanitarian relief, food and medicine to the displaced and to the many needy Iraqi citizens. Seventh, to secure Iraq's oil fields and resources, which belong to the Iraqi people, and which they will need to develop their country after decades of neglect by the Iraqi regime. And last, to help the Iraqi people create the conditions for a rapid transition to a representative self-government that is not a threat to its neighbors and is committed to ensuring the territorial integrity of that country.

The regime is starting to lose control of their country. Yesterday, the Iraqi information minister declared that the port of Umm Qasr is "completely in our hands," quote/unquote. Quote: "They (the coalition forces) failed to capture it," unquote. In fact, coalition forces did capture it and do control the port of Umm Qasr, and also a growing portion of the country of Iraq.

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The confusion of Iraqi officials is growing. Their ability to see what is happening on the battlefield, to communicate with their forces and to control their country is slipping away. They're beginning to realize, I suspect that the regime is history. And as that realization sets in, their behavior is likely to begin to tip and to change.

Those close to Saddam Hussein will likely begin searching for a way to save themselves. Those whose obedience is based on fear may well begin to lose their fear of him. Officers and soldiers in the field will increasingly see that their interests lie not in dying for a doomed regime but in helping the forces of Iraq's liberation.

To those in the Iraqi chain of command, some words of advice: Do not obey regime orders to use weapons of mass destruction. Do not obey orders to use innocent civilians as human shields. Do not follow orders to destroy any more of Iraq's oil wells or to blow up dams or to flood villages. Those who carry out such orders will be found and will be punished.

We are especially grateful for the direct military involvement of the forces of Great Britain and Australia and Poland, and so many other countries. And we are deeply grateful for the support of each of the now 45 nations that have publicly associated themselves with the coalition effort in Iraq.

We did not choose this war. Saddam Hussein was given a choice by the international community: Give up your weapons of mass murder, or lose power. He chose unwisely, and now he will lose both.

As in Afghanistan, our objective in Iraq is not conquest or colonization. Iraq belongs to the Iraqi people. Our objective is to bring down a regime that threatens the American people with weapons of mass destruction and create conditions where Iraqis can establish a new government, one that respects the rights of its diverse population and the aspirations of all Iraqis to live in freedom and to choose their own leaders.

To American forces and those of our coalition partners, let me say this. Know that we are proud of you that we stand with you today. We have every confidence in your courage, your tenacity, and your ability to get this job done. All Americans hold you and your families in our thoughts and prayers today.

General Myers.

Myers: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I too want to extend my deepest condolences to the families of the Marines, both U.S. and our British allies, who died in the helicopter crash yesterday and to the family of the Marine killed in action earlier this morning. These brave men died fighting for their nation and the safety of the world.

Operation Iraqi Freedom, our effort to disarm Iraq and dismantle the Iraqi regime, is fully underway. But before I go into that, I want to recap what has happened in the last 48 hours and how we got to where we are now.

On Wednesday afternoon, we conducted early battlefield preparations by taking out air defense threats, radar communication sites and artillery that could pose a threat to coalition forces. Some of these targets included radars in western Iraq and near Basra in southern Iraq, artillery pieces near Al-Faw and Az Zubay near Kuwait, and surface-to-surface missiles in the south. Later Wednesday evening, coalition forces began inserting Special Operations Forces throughout western and southern Iraq to conduct reconnaissance operations and take down visual observation posts on the southern Iraqi border.

At the same time, as we briefed yesterday, we took advantage of a leadership target of opportunity in Baghdad. Specifically, we struck at one of the residences in southeastern Baghdad, where we thought the leadership was congregated. We also took down -- struck intelligence service headquarters in Baghdad and a Republican Guard facility. They were targeted with nearly 40 Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles from coalition ships in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Two Air Force F-117s also dropped precision-guided, 2,000-pound penetration weapons on these leadership targets.

Then yesterday we launched more than 20 TLAMs against eight targets in Baghdad, which included several Baghdad Special Security Organization sites. As most of you know, the Special Security Organization is that organization that protects the senior Iraqi leadership. Also on Thursday, coalition ships launched some 10 TLAMs against three Republican Guard targets in Kirkuk in the north.

In the last 24 hours, Special Forces have seized an airfield in western Iraq and have secured border positions in several key locations. Additionally, Navy Seals and coalition special forces have seized Iraq's two major gas and oil terminals in the northern Persian Gulf. There were embedded media with the Seals, and their reports should be out shortly.

I also have a graphic, I think they'll bring it up -- and it's up now; good. Coalition ships boarded three Iraqi tugboats in the Khor Abdullah waterway and found weapons, uniforms and mines. Over 130 mines, including influence mines, were discovered. Our naval vessels are being extra vigilant to ensure the Iraqi Navy has not placed any mines in international waters.

On the ground, as you know, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, along with our coalition partners, crossed into Iraq, and they have now secured the port city of Umm Qasar and the al-Faw peninsula. They have also secured the main oil manifolds along the al-Faw waterways, and have moved through the southern Iraqi oil fields. These fields, if we're successful, should be secured sometime later today, and they will be a great resource for the Iraqi people as they build a free society.

Last night, at approximately 10:00 p.m. Eastern Time, the rest of the ground campaign began in earnest when the 3rd Infantry Division rolled into southern Iraq. There's been a lot of reporting on this, of course, with some of the embedded media. At this hour, our ground forces have pushed close to 100 miles inside Iraq.

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom began, coalition aircraft have flown more than 1,000 sorties and dropped scores of precision-guided munitions on Iraqi military targets. I have two gun-camera shots from yesterday; both are from F-14s as they dropped on missile targets in southern Iraq. The first is targeting a missile support vehicle. The second is an Iraqi missile storage facility in Basra. And if you note in the bottom of that picture, you'll see another fire; that was hit from a previous strike from the same flight.

As you've seen from the TV coverage, from embedded media, clearly we're moving towards our objectives, but we must not get too comfortable. We're basically on our plan and moving towards Baghdad, but there are still many unknowns out there.

We have dropped millions of leaflets over Iraq telling the Iraqi people our intentions and asking the Iraqi military to lay down their arms. In fact, some Iraqi soldiers are surrendering and abandoning their positions in the south and also in the north. Clearly, many Iraqi military are heeding our message that it is better to fight for the future of Iraq than to fight for Saddam Hussein.

That brings us up to date. So now, within the last hour, coalition forces have launched a massive air campaign throughout Iraq. Several hundred military targets will be hit over the coming hours, but we're getting into future operations here, and I'm going to let those details be briefed by CENTCOM tomorrow.

Finally, I have two messages.

First, to the commanders and soldiers of the Iraqi forces, I urge you in the strongest possible terms: Do the honorable thing, stop fighting that you may live to enjoy a free Iraq where you and your children can grow and prosper.

The second message, to the men and women of our armed forces, and to our allies and our coalition partners and to all their families, I salute you for your sacrifice, your courage and your professionalism. Be confident that you are well prepared, well trained and well supported in the mission that lies ahead. Take pride in the legitimacy and the necessity of your mission. Show compassion for the lives that this war will forever change, but rest assured, the outcome is not in doubt. We will disarm the Iraqi regime and ensure their weapons of mass destruction will not fall into the hands of terrorists.

And with that, we'll take your questions.

Rumsfeld: Before we do, let me make one comment. Just before coming down, after the air campaign began in earnest about on 1:00 [p.m.], I saw some of the images on television and I heard various commentators expansively comparing what's taking place in Iraq today to some of the more famous bombing campaigns of World War II. There is no comparison. The weapons that are being used today have a degree of precision that no one ever dreamt of in a prior conflict -- they didn't exist. And it's not a handful of weapons; it's the overwhelming majority of the weapons that have that precision. The targeting capabilities and the care that goes into targeting to see that the precise targets are struck and that other targets are not struck is as impressive as anything anyone could see. The care that goes into it, the humanity that goes into it, to see that military targets are destroyed, to be sure, but that it's done in a way, and in a manner, and in a direction and with a weapon that is appropriate to that very particularized target. And I think that the comparison is unfortunate and inaccurate. And I think that will be found to be the case when ground truth is achieved.

I would add also that I think we're probably watching something that is somewhat historic. We're having a conflict at a time in our history when we have 24-hours-a-day television, radio, media, Internet, and more people in the world have access to what is taking place. You couple that with the hundreds -- literally hundreds of people in the free press -- the international press, the press of the United States, from every aspect of the media -- who have been offered and accepted an opportunity to join and be connected directly with practically every aspect of this campaign. And what we are seeing is not the war in Iraq. What we're seeing are slices of the war in Iraq. We're seeing that particularized perspective that that reporter, or that commentator or that television camera happens to be able to see at that moment. And it is not what's taking place. What you see is taking place, to be sure, but it is one slice. And it is the totality of that that is what this war is about and being made up of. And I don't -- I doubt that in a conflict of this type there's ever been the degree of free press coverage as you are witnessing in this instance.

Sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, it's obvious from the beginning of this major air campaign and from what you all have said that there has been no general agreement by the Iraqi military leadership for a general surrender.

Rumsfeld: That's for sure.

Q: Could I ask, sir, are there talks -- possibly direct talks going on between this building and the Iraqi senior military leadership toward that end?

Rumsfeld: In the way you've put it, the answer is no. If you're thinking -- is there country-to-country

dialogue taking place, and the answer is no. If you're asking is there contact between coalition forces and Iraqi forces, the answer is most certainly. There has been over the past period of weeks, and those discussions have intensified. But they tend to be particularized to a specific unit in a specific location.

Q: Well, in terms of any general surrender, they're not -- you wouldn't say that there were talks going on at high level --

Rumsfeld: I answered that. The answer's no.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you believe Saddam Hussein is currently in control of Iraq?

Rumsfeld: I don't know.

Q: Do you have any indication that the leadership has changed hands?

Rumsfeld: I hear scraps of information, and if I -- you can be certain if I had sufficient number of scraps that it began to make a persuasive case, that I would opine on it.

Q: Can you characterize the command-and-control structure that you believe is in place currently inside Baghdad?

Rumsfeld: Until there's good solid evidence that it doesn't exist, we have to assume that it is in place and functioning in one way or another. Our hope, our expectation is that they probably had multiple methods of communicating through their command-and-control system -- they had redundant systems. And so to the extent we are successful in eliminating some, our expectation is that even if it's simply couriers, they will have the ability to communicate.

I think it's a stretch to think it's possible to eliminate their ability to communicate up and down through their command system. Our hope and our prayer is not that we'll get 100 percent of their ability to communicate, but rather that we will be persuasive enough with the people who would have to implement the orders of the senior people in that regime, and persuade them that it is clearly not in their interest to obey those types of orders.

Q: Can you help us to clarify here -- the type of people that you are in contact with represent what? Is it Republican Guard and regular army outside of Baghdad? Are you in touch with any of those inside, which is where his key levels of support are?

Rumsfeld: For the most part, it's outside.

Q: Could you elaborate as much as you possibly can about the state of Saddam Hussein and the -- what you know so far about the success of the strike on the command headquarters?

Rumsfeld: There's no question but that the strike on that leadership headquarters was successful. We have photographs of what took place. The question is, what was in there? And until we gather sufficient information and intelligence and have more than one source that gives us conviction, we have to assume that the operation is proceeding.

Q: Do you have one source that might have perhaps seen him coming out?

Rumsfeld: I don't want to get into that.

Q: Mr. Secretary, if Saddam Hussein and his sons were listening to this briefing and they wanted to give up, what precisely should they do? And now that the air campaign over Baghdad has begun, is it

in fact too late for them to choose to go into exile? Is their only choice to be captured, surrender to the United States or be killed? Is it too late for exile?

Rumsfeld: It is certainly too late for them to stay in power. What they do with themselves is up to them. And what the people around them do with them is up to the people around them. But, you know, it's -- I guess time will tell what kinds of judgments they'll make. So far they've made very poor judgments.

Q: What precisely what do they need to do?

Rumsfeld: Oh, I don't need to give advice to that. They know precisely what to do.

Q: You mentioned earlier the allusions to bombing campaigns in World War II and that they were an inappropriate historical analogy.

Rumsfeld: Those were dumb bombs and they were spread across large areas.

Q: Can I finish my point?

Rumsfeld: These are very precise weapons.

Q: All right. But one thing that characterized those campaigns and the bombing of Haifa -- of Hanoi was that the public, their spirit did not diminish; they hunkered down, they pretty much resisted the bombing. What makes you so certain that in this case, even though it's precise, that "shock and awe" won't just force the Iraqis to hunker down and wait it out like the Brits, the Germans, the Vietnamese, and the Japanese in World War II, and in Vietnam?

Rumsfeld: Well, for one thing, the people here are a repressed people. And anyone there, I think, while it has to be a terribly unpleasant circumstance, will have an opportunity to see the precision with which we're going about this task, and that the targets are military targets, and that we -- this is not an attack on the Iraqi people, it's not an attack on the country of Iraq. It's an attack on that regime that has refused to disarm peacefully.

Myers: Could I just add to that? The secretary is absolutely right. This is about their military capability. And we have the capability, in a reasonably precise way, to go after those military targets that are going to diminish their capability over time. And so we think that, combined with what -- the other things you see going on -- I think I mentioned in my remarks the folks that have entered in southern Iraq, we have folks in western Iraq, we have folks in the north, their sights are set on other objectives; they're not going to stay where they are. So this is a combined issue -- we're not counting on just the air piece.

Q: You mentioned in your opening statement that you're moving along towards your objective. And some of the embeds are reporting that their units have reached places before they thought they would. Is this 100 miles what you expected? Would you say things are going faster than you thought?

Myers: I would let the combatant commander characterize that. When I said that, I meant in the general sense of the overall plan. We knew that -- I mean, if they had used chemical weapons at this point, that would have affected the timing, and so forth. But the thing that you saw Wednesday night with the quick strike on a leadership target, very well-coordinated between all elements of this government and all elements of our U.S. armed forces on very short notice, is the kind of thing I think you can expect to see as this conflict unfolds. We have much greater flexibility and adaptability today; not as much as we would like, but a lot more than we've ever had in a previous conflict. So whether it goes faster or slower, we'll be able to adapt.

Rumsfeld: Let's go back to the last question for a minute. It's important to remember that this attack is against a regime that is responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of people. This is not a benign regime; this is a regime that has killed hundreds of thousands of human beings. Makes it-- (inaudible).

Q: Along those lines, though, doesn't it make it more likely there will be civilian casualties, if you're going after hundreds of military targets, even though you have precision weapons? And I think a lot of people would say in this country, particularly in Baghdad, why not make it more targeted bombing against particular sites as opposed to hundreds of sites?

Rumsfeld: What is taking place today is as targeted an air campaign as has ever existed.

Q: But it makes it more likely there will be civilian casualties, isn't that right, if you're talking about --

Rumsfeld: We have analyzed -- every single target has been analyzed, and the weapon has been carefully selected, and the direction in which the weapon is delivered has been carefully examined, and the time of day when there is the greatest prospect of minimizing any innocent lives. It is an enormously impressive effort, a humane effort to do what is necessary to reduce this threat against our country and that region, and to eliminate a regime that has killed hundreds of thousands of human beings.

Q: Mr. Secretary, why do you think Saddam Hussein has not used chemical or biological weapons? And do you think that the strike Wednesday of the leadership target played any role in that?

Rumsfeld: Don't know.

Yes, Pam?

Q: General Myers, you mentioned in your brief summary of the war actions to date what is happening in southern Iraq. Can you tell us what U.S. and coalition forces may be doing in the northern part of the country, and to what extent the Turks may have crossed the border?

Myers: The best that I know, the Turkish forces have not crossed the border from Turkey into northern Iraq. And in terms of the operations up there, we haven't said a lot about them and I'd prefer to leave that either to CENTCOM or just not to talk about them right now.

Q: General?

Rumsfeld: Just one second. Just one second. I think it should be added that the Turkish forces go in and out of the northern part of Iraq and they have for years, and they may have some forces there.

Myers: In fact, they have had some forces in north Iraq for some time, not associated with what's going on right now.

Rumsfeld: But in terms of any large numbers, they are not --

Q: Mr. Secretary, can you characterize the level of resistance coalition forces are feeling? And is there a relationship between resistance and the decision to go ahead with a massive air campaign?

Rumsfeld: The decision to go ahead with the ground campaign and the air campaign was a direct result of the fact that the 48-hour ultimatum expired and Saddam Hussein and his crowd did not leave the country. It is after still additional time, in the hope that one might find a large number of senior military people making a conscious decision that they would prefer to act with honor and separate

themselves from that regime, when that did not happen, the only choice one has is to proceed and use coercion. It was the absolute last choice after every single other thing that could be done had been done.

Q: There was a second deadline issued, then, for the senior Iraqi officials to surrender by a certain time?

Rumsfeld: No, there was no certain time. There was time provided, as you're well aware. The president spoke, I believe, and gave a 48-hour ultimatum on Monday, Eastern Standard Time, at 8:14 it came out of his mouth. By Wednesday, 48 hours had expired. Today is, what, Friday. The ground campaign began last evening about 10:00 [p.m.], and the air campaign began today about 1:00 [p.m.].

We have been issuing, through a variety of methods, communications urging the Iraq military to surrender, and it apparently -- what we have done this far has not been sufficiently persuasive that they would have done that. It may very well be that with the initiation of the ground war last evening and the initiation of the air war this afternoon, that we may find people responding and surrendering.

Q: General Myers, could you say whether there's been any resistance? How much resistance there's been? Whether there have been any major engagements? And what the situation is around Basra?

Myers: I think if you're in a firefight, it's probably major to you. So we've had sporadic resistance. And as you know, we had a Marine killed. There may be others that I'm not aware of now as the -- you know, information lags our timeline. But it's sporadic resistance. There have been tank battles. Generally limited, but there have been some fighting.

Rumsfeld: Bill.

Q: You used the term free Iraqi forces the other day. Aside from any communication that you have, are there indications that some Iraqi units have turned against the pro-Saddam forces, or are there other forces in the north that may be outside the coalition fighting against Saddam?

Rumsfeld: To my knowledge, you could not answer that question, the way you phrased it, yes. There are forces that have surrendered; there are forces that have had discussions about the possibility of helping, but to my knowledge, there are none that have turned in quite the way you're describing it.

Q: How many have surrendered?

Q: Do you have a number?

Q: Any sort of rough ideas?

Rumsfeld: I have -- it's untidy. We get mixed reports from different places, and I wouldn't want to start adding them up.

Q: Small number?

Rumsfeld: Just off the top of my head, I can think of a few hundred.

Myers: I think a few hundred, and then in defections though, you don't know, but there are lots of reports of defections as well.

Rumsfeld: A lot of people just leave and melt into the countryside.

Q: You and other officials in this government of course said before this many time that apparently Iraq did have biological and chemical weapons. We also heard from several commanders that they were actually convinced that Saddam, in a last resort, would use those weapons. In these 40 to 48 hours, have you learned anything in addition about that capability, about where they might be, and about the readiness of Saddam and his planners to use them?

Rumsfeld: Nothing definitive. The --

Q: Sir!

Q: General Myers, sir, could you please --

Rumsfeld: Shh. Shh. There have been a variety of views offered on that subject, and a lot of them tend to cluster around the idea that the most serious period would be if the Iraqi regime did not flee, and the forces got close to where they likely are in Baghdad or Tikrit, and the closer they got, the greater the danger of that. But we don't -- that's been more a theory on the part of outsiders rather than a theory on the part of insiders through interrogation or communication.

Q: General Myers, would you elaborate on the mines that were found? Were the Iraqis engaged in an effort to lay those mines down? Was there resistance? Can you tell us anything more about that?

Myers: I don't know about the resistance part. I just know -- I think I said the number was -- what? -- over 130, I believe, mines. Some of those influence mines, meaning they're not just contact, they can detect passing ships, and so forth. And there were three boats. And they had uniforms on the boats as well.

It's one of the things that General Franks has prepared for, was to be looking out for mines in the Gulf. You remember in Desert Storm, there were mines in the Gulf and it was a --

Q: Was this in Iraqi waters or was it in the Gulf?

Myers: It was right up there -- yeah, I had it on the diagram. But it was right up there along the Iraqi water basically.

Q: General Myers, how is the deadlock with Turkey affecting the campaign of our actually being able to get the overflight rights that we need?

Myers: Well, we've said a couple of times from up here that the -- that we have forces in the north now. General Franks intends to put more forces into the north. It would be helpful if Turkey would go along and make the arrangements that the parliament approved, and that is for overflights. So we're still hoping for that, but we're not counting on that, and we have other ways of inserting those forces.

Rumsfeld: And we're in the process of utilizing the other ways.

Q: General Franks (sic) -- excuse me -- are you moving to protect the oil fields around Kirkuk?

Q: General Franks? (Laughs.)

Q: I don't want you to go into details, but are you moving to protect the oil fields? You all have emphasized the importance of oil.

Rumsfeld: That's what we've said, that the oil is the Iraqi people's oil. It's part of the wealth of their country. It would be a crime to destroy those fields. We've had lots of intelligence that suggested that

explosives were being moved into those areas and that there was a risk that the Iraqi regime would do what they did to the Kuwaiti oil fields, and that was an environmental disaster.

We, as General Myers said, have control over a non-trivial fraction of the oil wells in the south, and we're fortunate to say that because of the speed with which that was done, there looks to be only about 10 wells that we know of, out of possibly a thousand in that area, that have been damaged. Several are still on fire, several are pouring oil onto the ground. We would intend to, in fairly short order, have the people that know how to repair those wells in there and putting the fires out and fixing the ones that are still spilling on the ground.

Q: Mr. Secretary, could you please for a moment talk about the use of the Predator in this campaign and whether or not you've been able to glean any valuable information from the use of the Predator? Maybe General Myers could comment on that also.

Rumsfeld: We're using the Predator and it's helpful. (Laughter.)

Q: Can you tell me any -- has it been really invaluable in terms of gleaning information that you can use to promote the campaign?

Rumsfeld: It's an intelligence-gathering platform and we use it along with dozens of other platforms, and they're all helpful.

Q: General Myers. Are you moving to secure the fields in the north, Sir, given these fears that they might set them on fire?

Myers: That gets into some operational considerations that we just can't get into right now.

Q: On the air campaign, that began after the ground campaign, which is a reversal of the first Gulf War.

Myers: That's correct.

Q: Can you talk a little about the conditions that enabled that to happen and what the advantages were of doing it that way? For instance, did the firing in the no-fly zone in the south clear out the opposition needed to pull in those ground forces?

Myers: That was a judgment that General Franks made after consultations with the secretary. There were, of course, certain objectives in the south that were important. One of them we just talked about, the oil fields. If you remember, the fires in the oil fields started before the ground forces went. And so, General Franks had to make a calculation on when he wanted to do what he wanted to do. And that's just one of the reasons. There are a couple of other reasons, as well. There were some threats, as you know, being moved into southern Iraq -- artillery, short-range surface-to-surface missiles, and felt this was the best way to do it.

Rumsfeld: The fact pattern is different. It's a decade- plus later. The circumstance of the Iraqi forces is quite different. The capability of the United States of America are quite different. I think that expecting that you're going to find a cookie mold fit between two events that are so substantially different, and so separated in time by such a long period of time, and so many advances in technologies and a notably different purpose -- the purpose then was to remove them from Kuwait; the purpose now is quite different.

Way in the back.

Q: Over here, it seems to me that we're moving relatively freely toward Baghdad. You -- General

Myers talked about, "We're 100 miles inside." There's reports of surrenders, and then with the attack on Wednesday, that we degraded Saddam's capability of communicating with his commanders. Yet we keep talking about this overwhelming force that we're prepared to use. I'm wondering, are you concerned at all that we will be seen as a bully?

Rumsfeld: The United States and the coalition forces have taken every conceivable step, diplomatic, economic and ultimatum and a careful, measured beginning. What we are currently doing could not, by any stretch of the imagination, fit what you just said. It would be a -- it would be to misunderstand everything that's taking place.

Q: General Myers, there had been some concern that the Iraqis might try to use controlled floods or even sabotage of its dams and reservoirs to impede and advance from the south. Is there any evidence of that? And what's being done to try and secure those dams and reservoirs?

Myers: To my knowledge, there is no evidence to date of that. We have taken some actions to help mitigate that. I'm not going to go into what they are, of course. And I think, as we've told you before -- well, I'll just leave it there. We're just not going to go into the operational --

Rumsfeld: Pam, last question.

Q: Could you describe the command relationship U.S., maybe, Special Forces have with the Kurdish and the Iraqi opposition forces in the north? Is it positive control? Are they embedded with them and advising them on what to do? And is the United States asking Turkey not to send troops in beyond that refugee buffer zone? And if so, why not? Why?

Rumsfeld: We have Special Forces and units connected to Kurdish forces in the north, in answer to your question. And you can be certain that we have advised the Turkish government and the Turkish armed forces that it would be notably unhelpful if they went into the north in large numbers.

Q: Isn't that complicating -- isn't that the issue that's complicating the overflight rights, it's that request that the United States has made that's now making Turkey say, "Well, then, you can't fly through our airspace"?

Rumsfeld: There apparently were a lot of issues involved, and that may very well be one of them. But over a period of, what?, three or four months now that these discussions have been going on, my impression is that the discussions are pretty much towards an end.

Q: And is the 4th ID out of this fight, at least from Turkey in the north?

Rumsfeld: That's up to Tom Franks, and he'll make judgments about that in good time. And I guess time will tell how many forces will actually be needed on the ground. But there are other ways to bring them in than Turkey.

Q: Thank you.

Rumsfeld: Thank you.

Q: Could you tell just how long will this war last? (Laughter.)

Rumsfeld: (Inaudible.)

(Laughter.)

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