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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Friday, October 10, 2003 3:15 p.m. EDT

Secretary of Defense Delivers Ronald Reagan Public Policy Briefing

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Applause.) Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you.

Fred, thank you. I appreciate that very generous introduction. It kind of makes me sound like I can't hold a job. (Laughter.)

Mark, and thank you so much, and all of you for what you do to help people across the world to know more about the values, the leadership and the accomplishments of President Ronald Reagan. We appreciate what you're doing with his library and the foundation.

Pete Wilson, good to see you always. Thank you for your service to the country and, certainly, your assistance to me as a member of the Defense Policy Board. (Applause.)

Mrs. Reagan, you are a beacon of courage. And Joyce and I have such respect for you and for all you do, and for taking such loving care of our great president, Ronald Reagan. (Applause.) You bring such grace -- both of you bring such grace and dignity to -- both in public life and private life, in the White House and out of the White House. America loves and appreciates you both so much.

Well, this is a full house! (Laughter.) Thank you all for being here. It's a privilege for me to be able to stop here and have a chance to see the library, and say hello to some old friends sitting here, and to see so many of you.

I first met President Reagan back in 1974, when I was working with Gerald Ford. And I remember we had a lunch at your home, I believe, Mrs. Reagan, and had a nice visit. I also remember there was a point where President Ford asked me to very quietly, without embarrassing anybody, to go visit President -- or, Governor Reagan and see if -- I guess he was former Governor Reagan at that point, and see if he might have an interest in joining President Ford's Cabinet. And he didn't want to do it in a public way and he didn't want to make it awkward. And he knew that President Reagan was thinking of challenging him, but he wanted to try to bring the party together. So he went to -- I went into a hotel room -- I think it was the Madison Hotel -- and met with President Reagan, and we had a visit. And I failed. (Laughter.) But Governor Reagan was as gracious as always, but he graciously declined.

Of course, President Reagan went on to win the nomination in 1980. And during his administration, as you mentioned, I had the opportunity to serve in a variety of different commissions and boards, to serve as his special envoy for the Middle East. And through it all, I had the chance to work with him and see the clarity of his leadership.

Someone asked me, "What's the most distinctive thing about President Reagan?" And I said that his leadership was directional. He had a way of getting people's eyes up off their shoelaces and out to the

horizon. And you almost could feel him planting a flag, a standard, miles down the road, so that people could see it and track towards it. He did it with words. He did it with actions. But he did it brilliantly. And it was that leadership that elevated all of us and helped change the world.

Today, in so many ways, our country continues to benefit from Ronald Reagan's remarkable tenure as president. The accomplishments of any president and -- are really built on the foundation of -- that was left to him by his predecessors. You come into office, and you have to work with that which was left to you. And what you do during your time in office rarely benefits and enables you; it tends to plant seeds in the ground that then enable future presidents and future Congresses and future generations to build off of that.

But the foundation that was left to him by his predecessors were a result of the decisions they made, the investments they made in military capabilities, the leadership they exercised, and importantly, the world they left behind.

In each of these areas, all of us today owe a true debt of gratitude to President Reagan. And today, as we fight the global war on terror, our goal is to leave the world freer and safer than we found it, just as President Reagan did, to our great benefit.

When President Bush visited this library in 1999, he said, "We live in the nation that President Reagan restored and the world he helped to save." It is a truth that today, in the light of history, even critics cannot deny those facts.

But the Reagan years are more than a moment in history to be remembered and admired, though they are that to be sure. But the Reagan legacy is in fact a living legacy, one that continues to benefit and guide our great country.

Of course we continue to reap the benefits of historic defense investments made during the Reagan years, which produced many of the capabilities that have been so critical to our successes both in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

It was President Reagan who had the vision to see the emerging ballistic missile threat and insist that free people not remain defenseless against it. I was privileged to be in the White House that evening when he made the announcement. I remember the late Dr. Ed Teller was there. And he announced what became known as the Strategic Defense Initiative. And today, under President Bush's leadership, we have revitalized the missile defense research, development and testing, and we're on track to begin deploying the first rudimentary missile defenses, we hope, in the latter portion of next year.

But President Reagan left a legacy more powerful than any weapon. He really did do so much to restore our nation's confidence in principled American leadership around the world. He dared to call the Soviet Union what it was -- an evil empire -- and in doing so, he reminded the entire world that evil does exist; that peaceful coexistence with it is neither possible nor desirable, and that if we have the will, the determination and the patience, it can be defeated. And it was.

Like President Reagan, President Bush has not shied from calling evil by its name or declaring his intention to defeat its latest incarnation -- terrorism -- just as free men and women of all political persuasions, here and abroad, defeated fascism and communism before.

When President Reagan came to office, Soviet Communism was on the march and our country was still weakened by the experience of the Vietnam War, and a lingering fear of the projection of American power. President Reagan saw the danger. He knew that weakness is provocative. One of his most important strategic innovations was the idea that to roll back the communist expansion, America need not send a half a million U.S. troops to every trouble spot where freedom was threatened. In many cases, there were people in those countries who were willing to fight and die for their own freedom. It was Ronald Reagan's genius to make common cause with those freedom fighters, providing them with arms, training, intelligence and other support.

In Afghanistan, President Bush built on that notion. He did not send in massive armies to march and occupy the country of Afghanistan, as the Soviet Union had. Indeed, if you think about it, the Soviets put 300,000 troops into Afghanistan and lost. They had another 160,000 in the three countries just north, in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Rather, President Bush made common cause with the Afghan fighters, providing them the support necessary to turn the battle around. He sent in teams of special operations forces and provided them with close-air support as they rode into battle, often on horseback. Some people said that "Rumsfeld's so old, that's his idea of transformation." (Laughter.) "He wants to bring back the cavalry." (Laughter.)

In Iraq, it would have been impossible for Iraqis to overthrow that regime without significant numbers of coalition forces. Still, we've kept our footprint relatively modest. In the north, Special Operations forces teamed up with Kurdish freedom fighters, tying down Saddam Hussein's northern units, capturing Mosul and helping to unravel the northern front in rapid order. And today, as the coalition battles regime remnants and foreign terrorists in Iraq, they are doing so side by side with Iraqis, who have stepped forward to fight for their future.

Since liberation of Iraq, some 80,000 Iraqis have been armed and trained in a matter of five months, and they're participating in the defense of their country. Ten-thousand more are in training as police, army, site-protection forces, civil defense forces, border patrols. They, in a sense, are freedom fighters as well. And they are not simply observing or helping. These 80,000 Iraqis since May 1st, working closely with coalition forces, have suffered 67 killed in battle, and they've suffered more than 115 wounded in action. So they too are on the front line in the global war on terror, as they should be. It's their country, and they will -- to the extent we can be still more successful in training additional Iraqis to take over security of that country, they will be able to provide for their own security in Iraq.

But perhaps the most important way we benefit from President Reagan's legacy today is from the expansion of human freedom that took place with his leadership. When this library was open, I'm told one of the first exhibits was a simple wall on which was inscribed the chronology of the dates and events beginning in 1989 as one nation after the next through off the shackles of tyranny and embraced democracy and self-government. The exhibit was called "The World that Ronald Reagan Left Us."

I arrived this morning from Colorado Springs, where the United States hosted a meeting of the NATO defense ministers. At that meeting of the 19 NATO nations were three former Warsaw Pact adversaries: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, now NATO allies. Also present, interestingly, were seven former East Bloc nations: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, nations that have been invited to join NATO and will becoming part of that alliance in the early part of next year. The membership of those recently-free nations is changing the alliance. It is injecting a new energy into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a new love of freedom which can really possibly only come from nations that so recently were enslaved. That's the world that Ronald Reagan left us.

Or take the coalition in Iraq. It now includes military forces from 32 nations. Consider some of the countries that are contributing troops in Iraq today: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. They all have forces in Iraq assisting the coalition. There are others, as well, but I just mention these because those are the nations helping in Iraq today that President Reagan helped to make free.

Why are so many of these nations, many small, most not very wealthy, sending their forces, their young men and women put at risk halfway around the world to help bring freedom to the Iraqi people? I suspect it's because so many of them have just recovered their own freedom, and they're eager, they're proud to help the Iraqi people recover theirs. God bless them all, and God bless Ronald Reagan for what he did to help liberate them. (Applause.)

In a sense, their contributions are important in another way. They demonstrate that the seeds of freedom, when planted, can do more than simply take root where they're sown. They can have the

power to spread freedom across the globe to other countries.

My friend Dr. Marty Anderson, who's also on the Defense Policy Board with Pete, came to me one day, some -- many, many months back and told me about a remarkable treasure trove of President Reagan's letters that had been found. And he began looking at them, and I understand they've since been published.

One in particular is worth mentioning here. It's a letter he wrote by hand in April of 1981 to Soviet leader Brezhnev. Brezhnev had sent him a letter accusing the United States of destabilizing the world with its territorial ambitions and imperialistic designs. President Reagan replied, quote, "There's not only no evidence to support such a charge; there's solid evidence that the United States, when it could have dominated the world, at no risk to itself, made no effort whatsoever to do so.

"When World War II ended, the United States had the only undamaged industrial power in the world," he wrote. "Its military was at its peak, and we alone had the ultimate weapon, the nuclear bomb, and the unquestioned ability to deliver it anywhere in the world. If we had sought world domination, who could have opposed us?"

He went on to say, "But the United States followed a different course, one unique in the history of all mankind. We used our power and wealth to rebuild the war-ravaged economies of the world, including those nations that had been our enemies," unquote.

Think of what he wrote and the power of the truth he spoke. Because of those efforts after World War II, freedom did take root in Japan, in Germany and Italy and indeed across Europe. And the liberated nations of Europe then joined with the United States to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Together we stood up to the forces of communist tyranny, and by the end of the 20th century, liberty had spread -- spread across the entire continent of Europe and beyond.

When President Bush spoke here, he pointed out that in 1941 there were only about a dozen democracies on the face of the Earth, and by the close of the 20th century, there were more than 120. Today many of those recently liberated nations are now at the forefront of the effort to help Iraq and Afghan peoples recover their freedom and maintain them. And if we are steadfast, free societies can take root in those countries and we will have still new allies in the battle for freedom and moderation in the Middle East.

The Marshall Plan President Reagan spoke of in his letter to Brezhnev cost roughly \$90 billion in today's dollars. That \$90 billion investment helped transform a region that had been a source of violent war and instability for centuries and turn it into a place of peace and prosperity and, I would add, mutually beneficial trade. Today some have understandably asked, why should the American people, taxpayers, pay \$20 billion to help Iraq get on a path of stability, democracy and self-government? The reason, I would submit, is because it's in our interest and it's in the interest of the free world. And I also suspect that that's what Ronald Reagan would say.

Today America carries on the mission that animated President Reagan's life and his presidency: very simply, the defense of human freedom. And looking at what has been accomplished in the past two years -- tyrannies defeated, nations rescued, millions of people liberated, 46 million in those two countries -- and I suspect he would approve.

Thank you. God bless you. And as President Reagan always said, God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause.)

Thank you. Now, I'm told -- I'm told there are some microphones here and that we have some time, and I can receive questions, answer the ones I know the answers to, and respond to the remaining -- (laughter) -- in one form or another.

Yes, sir? I'm always worried about the first one up! (Laughter.)

Q What in the world is happening in Cuba? (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Next question! (More laughter.) I knew I should be worried! (Laughter.)

What do you have in mind?

Q On the Internet this morning, good old Drudge Report, I believe, something about unseating the current commandant of that country. What's going on?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, the first thing I would -- first of all, I have been flying all morning -- (laughter) -- so there's a lot I don't know! (Laughter.)

Second, simply because something's on the Internet -- (laughter) -- does not make it so. (Applause.) Although, I'm a conservative person, I must add: Although it could be! (Laughter.)

Question?

Right there. (Chuckles.)

Q Since we first went into Iraq, what would you say the biggest surprise has been for you?

SEC. RUMSFELD: You know, I knew that so many things were not knowable. I kept getting asked -- how long will it take, how many casualties would there be, how much will it cost, what will be the reaction of the people on the ground? And I knew I didn't know. I knew that it was -- many of those things were not knowable.

We could know a great many of the things that could go wrong, and so we made a great many plans to deal with them. A humanitarian crisis -- it didn't occur. We were prepared for it. Internally displaced persons and refugees, massive refugees as there were in the early 1990s in Desert Storm. It didn't happen. Tragic destruction of their infrastructure. We were able to do that campaign with such precision that their infrastructure was largely intact: very few bridges blown; very little damage to their water system; electrical system was damaged; communication system was damaged, purposely. But the -- what is the biggest surprise? You know, if you don't -- if you're not -- if you don't have a great deal of certainty in your mind, it's hard to be surprised. (Laughter.) And war is such an unpredictable thing that our task was not to predict what would happen. Our task was to fashion a plan that had sufficient flexibility during the war that it could -- they say once a war plan hits the ground, everything changes. And it does, because you're dealing with a whole different set of problems.

I suppose on reflection, the thing that probably surprised me the most is the ability that the so-called Fedayeen Saddam people had to terrorize and frighten the rest of the Iraqi people and cause them to not come over to the other side. They caused them to be frightened. They kept them inside the cities. They killed people who tried to get out and assist the coalition as they were moving up from the south. They used all the tricks of the trade. They used hospitals and Red Crescent, which is their Red Cross, trucks for weapon caches and schools for weapon caches and mosques for weapon caches. That didn't surprise us, but the effectiveness of their ability to sustain the conflict long after the army, in effect, disappeared and melded into the countryside has created a situation where the war -- major conflict operations ended May 1st, and what we're dealing with now is a very serious, low-intensity conflict that -- I'm trying to think if I -- these numbers'll be within 10 percent. That's not bad for government work. (Laughter.) I think coalition forces are running something like 1,700 patrols a day -- some, many, most now with Iraqi forces accompanying them of various types -- and I think one-tenth of 1 percent involve any kind of conflict. So it's -- it is a very low-intensity situation, percentage-wise.

Nonetheless, people are getting killed; people are getting wounded -- Iraqis; Americans; Brits; other members of the coalition. So it's a difficult situation, and the single thing that is not surprising but which is affecting the situation there, I think, is the fear that that regime will come back. We were fortunate in finding the two sons; we've not yet been fortunate in finding Saddam Hussein. But the

Ba'ath Party that controlled that country with a Stalinist- type economy, forcing people to not make decisions themselves and to only do that which they were told, and fear, the fear of those people of that regime was so intense that the very low level of combat that's still taking place tends to be attacking targets of success. They killed a woman who was on the governing council, a signal to people -- "Don't get on the governing council. It's not a good place to be." When we graduate a class from a police academy, they tend to try to put off an explosive device near there to remind those policemen that they'd best not be doing that. They go out and, when we get the power operating again -- here's a country the size of California. You can imagine the -- until we have the people bold enough to participate fully, such as these policemen are, and the army and the site border guards and the site protection people, until you have people stepping forward willing to participate fully and having the courage to do so, it can be quite intimidating if you have a very small number of attacks such as the ones I've described.

So it's a difficult situation. But I've -- President Bush is just solid as a rock. (Applause.)

Yes?

Q Have you worked closely with Wesley Clark? And what do you think of his leadership skills? (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't think I've ever met him. (Laughter.) I was out of government as he came up from a White House fellow to a general. And I was gone just for about 25 years, is all. So I really don't know him. And time will tell. And I don't do politics. (Laughter.)

Yes, sir?

Q We're aware of how difficult it is to get the word to the American people of what's actually going on in Iraq. Is it possible to sponsor an Iraqi-based newspaper for distribution in the United States?

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Pause.) It must be possible. I hadn't really thought about it. There -- you know, here's Iraq, where five months ago there were 23 million people enslaved. Now they're liberated. There's over a hundred Iraqi newspapers that have come out of nowhere, and tens of thousands of businesses that have sprung up, entrepreneurial activity on the street doing this, doing that. I think I'd rather have it done spontaneously, if there's a market, than for us to sponsor it. We'd get accused of managing the news. (Laughter.) Can you believe that, managing the news? (Laughter.) I can hardly digest it sometimes. (Applause.)

Yes?

Q What more can be done by the Bush administration to emphasize the many positive and wonderful accomplishments in Iraq and counter the negative news by the media?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know -- I -- (interrupted by applause). I can tell you there's an awful lot of people who spend an awful lot of time trying to think that through, as to how that can be done.

I was testifying, two weeks ago, before a House appropriations committee. And that morning, 17 members of the United States House of Representatives had just come back from Iraq, and they were Republicans and Democrats alike, and six or seven were on that committee that I was testifying before. And in the course of the hearing, they went right down the line explaining what they saw in Iraq and how it was so markedly different, and stunningly different from what they had as an impression, a collective impression, from all of the inputs they'd received from the press -- the U.S. press, international press, intelligence reports and the media. And they were stunned by how different what they saw was, and what a wonderful job the young men and women in uniform are doing for this country. Our people -- (applause). And in that hearing, with the press there in full flower, they went right down the line and said that. The next day, there was no mention of the hearing -- (laughter) -- let alone what they'd said.

Now, why is that? Well, I guess good news isn't news. And goodness knows, when somebody is killed, that is news, and it's heartbreaking. And when there are people wounded, your heart just breaks

for them.

On the other hand, from day to day, you see the contrast and you know that what's going on out there is complicated. It's not the same in Baghdad, where much of the press is located; it's different in the north, it's different in the south, it's different in the west. And it isn't a simple, clear picture.

And while the schools are open, the hospitals are functioning, there's a new central bank, they've converted a new currency -- these are things that took, you know, a year, two years, five years, 14 years in Germany after World War II, and in Japan after World War II, and they're being done in a matter of months.

So there's an impressive record of accomplishment, but it's balanced against the fact that people are being killed and people -- and the remnants of the Ba'athist regime are trying to intimidate the Iraqi people. So I say to myself, if that's what I believe, and that is what I believe, I know what's going on there, and it is a mixed picture. And the part of the picture that's negative is being emphasized, and the part of the picture that's positive is not.

Now, what do we do about that? I think what we do is we just thank the good Lord the American people have so much sense. They've got a good center of gravity, and I have a lot of confidence in them. And over time, they'll sift it out and they'll sort it out and they'll analyze it and they'll read this bad news and this good news, and they'll hear this from somebody, and then they'll develop their judgment about it. And so, I think we're going to be all right. I think -- I've got a lot of confidence in the people.

Yes, sir?

Q Secretary Rumsfeld, it's a great honor and privilege to be with you here today.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you, sir. (Applause.)

Q We are all concerned with the stability in the Middle East region. As you look at the potential of a nuclear weapons build-up in the neighboring country of Iran, how can you effectively -- how can you and the Bush administration effectively deal with the Iranian government and the Iranian people to avoid any problems in the future?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It is a good question, and it's one that a lot of people are considering and debating and discussing and considering in a thoughtful way, and I've been impressed with it.

If you think what you've got there, you have the senior clerics, then you have the quote, "reformists," unquote, and then you have the people. The people were encouraged and hopeful with the reformists, the fact that the senior clerics allowed them to be there, allowed them to have positions that were slightly different from the clerics' views, seemingly. But over time, it's become rather clear that the clerics control the so-called reformists. If they go too far on their leash, they get their leash pulled and they get pulled back.

So the question is, what should the rest of the world do? Should they deal with the clerics, which weakens the reformers? Or should they deal with the reformers, even though they know that the reformers are on a short chain? Or should they deal with the people and express the hope that the people will find their way to having a better life?

The Iranian people are wonderful people. They're intelligent, they're industrious, they have an impressive history. If you think how fast Iran went from the shah to the clerics, it was -- in a matter of days, it was over. I don't know what will happen there, and it is worrisome that they seem to be proceeding with a nuclear program. There is, I think, at least, a hope that the people of that country will figure out a way to change that situation. It would be wonderful if it happened like it did the last time, in five minutes or five days.

But the people, the young men, the young women, the people in that country have a good deal of contact with the rest of the world. They have a good sense of what's going on outside the world. They know that their circumstance could be vastly improved if they had a system of government and opportunities that they're currently being denied.

So it's something that I think that we have to be interested in and careful about, but I think that the path we're on in this administration is the right one. Someone once said -- I think Bernard Lewis -- that there are countries where the governments love us and the people hate us, and there are countries where the people hate us and the government loves us. I would characterize Iran as one where the people understand that what they want is something that we value just as they do.

Yes?

Q We hear every day on TV about vast right-wing conspiracies and neoconservative cabals and all the various strings the administration is pulling. And so the question that keeps coming up to me is, if you guys are so powerful, why in the heck didn't you plant the weapons of mass destruction? (Laughter.) (Applause.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Laughs.) Oh, my. (Laughter.) It's kind of nice to be out of Washington. (Laughter.)

A serious word about that subject; not vast right-wing conspiracies, but about weapons of mass destruction. The work that's being done by Dr. David Kay and his team of people, some 1,200, 1,300-strong now, is -- it's important work. They're proceeding in a very professional and orderly way. It's an enormous country. Think about it. They buried jet airplanes under the ground. I suppose that was -- last war, they sent them to Iran and never got them back. (Laughter.) So I suppose it shouldn't come as a great surprise. (Laughter.)

But if you can bury big jet airplanes underground -- and no one knew they were there. No one could find them. It happened that the sand blew away and all of a sudden a tail stuck up. (Laughter.)

But in a country that size, it is going to take time. There's just no question about it. And the way to find it is not by running around like that French inspector with his magnifying glass -- (laughter) -- and checking everything. The -- no, I didn't mean that. I was -- (laughter, scattered applause) -- full stop. I was talking about Inspector Couseau (sic; he means Clouseau) or whatever. (Laughter.) I really was! (Laughter.)

The way to do it is not by running around turning over rocks and saying, "Maybe I'll find something here." The way to do it is to interrogate people and find out who knew and what did they know and then systematically link those things together, so you can -- and that's exactly what David Kay is doing. And his interim report did not say what one might have the impression it said, namely, "Aha! There are no weapons of mass destruction." Quite the contrary. It's a -- Colin Powell wrote a terrific piece on it within two or three days after David Kay's report, analyzing and laying out exactly what's been found thus far.

And it seems to me that responsible people will read his report. It's on the Internet. It happens to be one of the things on the Internet that's correct -- (laughter) -- not that that isn't. I just don't know. I've been in an airplane all morning. But I would go read that report off the Internet, and you'll get a good sense of the importance and the seriousness of the intelligence that existed and the work they've done thus far to develop leads and information about those programs.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, God bless you and thank you for all you've done for our country.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

Q I just have one question -- (applause) --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you very much.

Q -- that I was curious --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I should have saved you till the end. (Laughter.)

Q Oh! (Laughs.) Okay. It's 58 years after the war, and we have all these bases in Germany, and they don't like us very much. Why couldn't we put those bases in Poland, where they do like us? (Applause.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, Poland is a good friend; let there be no doubt. But I don't think it's fair quite to say that Germans don't like us. There are an awful lot of wonderful people in that country that have been very supportive and very helpful.

You're right; this government that exists there is not being supportive with respect to Iraq. On the other hand, they've taken over leadership of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan very recently, which is an unusual thing for Germany, which had never had forces outside of their country for a good many years.

Second, when we needed -- when we were deploying forces out of Germany into the Middle East, into Iraq, we allowed to the Germans that it would be a big help -- we knew they wouldn't send any forces, but it would be a big help if they would use their forces to provide force protection for our bases in Germany, which they stepped up and did, which means we didn't have to call up as many reservists or Guard.

So, the base issue is a big one. And the president asked me to start working on it about 2-1/2 years ago, and we're making excellent progress. We're looking at it worldwide. We're looking at it not so much -- not to try to punish any country or to move them out, but we clearly do want to be where the environment is hospitable. And there are a lot of places where that's the case.

Second, this is the 21st century and we've got a 20th century footprint in the world. The way we're organized and set made a lot of sense previously. But we do not think the Soviet Union is going to engage in a major tank war across the north German plain. (Laughter.) It just isn't likely. So we need to get ourselves set in a different way.

We've gotten all of our combatant commanders to come back in with their recommendations for adjusting the footprint. We then are in the process of connecting all those, which we've now finished. We've gone into the interagency process, two weeks ago for the first time. I briefed our NATO allies on the principles that we're looking at. And my guess is that over the next, oh, year or so, we will be working with the Congress, working with our allies, proposing the kinds of changes we believe fit the 21st century challenges. And then it very likely will be you go to Congress and get the budget, and it would play out over a period of two, four, six, eight years as you made the kinds of adjustments that we'll have to make.

It's a big project. I am delighted with the progress we've made thus far. It's not something that we're going to get from where we are to where we need to be without a few bumps. And, of course, nobody likes change. It's just so hard for people; the thought of adding something or taking something out stirs up a lot of anxiety in people, and we're just going to have to work our way through that.

Yes.

I should add, interestingly, that I discussed this with the NATO ministers of defense yesterday in Colorado Springs at this big ministerial meeting, and the German minister of defense there, Peter Struck,

was very interesting. He said he understands it completely, the fact that there's going to have to be changes, because he is doing exactly the same thing within his country. He is having to face up to the need for the German forces to be readjusted and for some consolidations of their bases, and so he sees exactly what we're doing, and we're doing it worldwide, and of course we're also doing it here. We've got a base commission that at some point will be working its way through how we adjust our base structure here. And the estimate here is, we've got something like 23 percent more bases than we need for our force structure, and that's been the case -- Pete, you know when you served on the Armed Services Committee. It's just very tough to do.

Yes, sir.

Q That was a good point about the area in Germany. But we do a great job helping our allies. We protect their borders, but yet here in the United States, we have Mexico and Canada. Their borders are so loose that terrorists supposedly are coming in this country by the busloads. What can we do, and who is stopping the Defense Department from actually supporting us on our borders and stopping all these terrorists from coming in here?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The responsibility for homeland security is in the first instance, with the Department of Homeland Security. The Department of Defense has responsibilities in a supporting role, and we do a lot to assist. We tend to do things as a responder to a need, because we have the ability to move these men and women in uniform from this state to that state or this problem to that problem. And you'll recall, when the -- after 9/11, when they suddenly decided they needed more people in airports to check baggage and to do all those things, the first people that went in were military people. And then I signed an agreement agreeing to do that, because the president said we need those people fast. But I said, "Look, that is not what these people were recruited, organized, trained and equipped to do. These are warfighters. And so we'll bring them in. We'll get it started. But by golly, we have to immediately get a civilian program going where we recruit and hire and train these people to take over for the military people," which they did in relatively short order -- a matter of six months to a year, as I recall.

So, it is a -- you're right, our borders are porous. So are most of the borders in the world, and they're very difficult things to deal with. There are ways you can do it with people, and there are ways you can do it with technology. But nonetheless, you know, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, thousands of miles of borders is a very difficult task.

And the way to deal with the problem, I think, is the way the domestic agencies of our government are doing it, and that is to do a certain number of things that are physical; to do a certain number of things that are intelligence-gathering; do law enforcement and monitoring. And hope that from all of that you can put so much pressure on the terrorists, both here and elsewhere, make it more difficult for them to move across borders; make it more difficult for them to transfer money; make it harder for the terrorist networks to attract and retain people; to raise the cost of everything they do; freeze their bank accounts -- bring all elements of national power on those networks, to the extent it's possible.

And I don't think that the way to do it is totally defensive; just to say to hunker down in America and try to protect all of everything and don't let something happen that way. The problem is a terrorist can attack at any time, at any place, using any technique, and it is not humanly possible to defend at every place, at every time, against every conceivable terrorist technique.

When President Reagan asked me to be a Middle East envoy, right after the 241 Marines were killed in Beirut, Lebanon, I went over there, and George Shultz was the secretary of State, and he sent me over there. The truck went into that Marine barracks and killed 241 Americans. The next week, month, and year these barricades were put all around buildings -- these little concrete things. You've seen them; there are some out here. So then they started lobbing rocket-propelled grenades over them. So the next thing, you go down to the Corniche in Beirut, and here was the building, the British Embassy, with a metal mesh all the way around it so it drove off these rocket-propelled grenades; when they'd hit the mesh, it would bounce off. So what did the terrorists do? They go to school on you. They started hitting people going to and from work.

So, you can't -- I do not believe -- I'm convinced President Bush is right. I am convinced that the way to deal with this terrorist problem is to go after them where they are and not think that we can simply hunker down here and defend against every one of those attacks. (Applause.)

I'm -- thank you very much -- I'm getting the hook. (Laughter.) I can feel it. There's somebody on my right about ready to pull me off.

MR. : (Off mike.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Pete Wilson. (Applause.)

PETE WILSON (member, U.S. Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee): Mr. Secretary, this is not a question, it's a comment. In 32 years of public service, I have seldom seen anyone whose courage, vision, energy, integrity and leadership matched yours or generated the confidence that I feel in you. Thank you. (Applause.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

MR. WILSON: We are very lucky to have you.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you very much. (Applause continues.)

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