



United States Department of Defense.

News Transcript

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20031023-secdef0819.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html> or +1 (703) 428-0711

Menu

Updated: 27 Oct 2003

NEWS

[DoD News](#)
[Advisories](#)
[Contracts](#)
[Live Briefings](#)
[Photos](#)
[Releases](#)
[Slides](#)
[Speeches](#)
[Today in DoD](#)
[Transcripts](#)

[American Forces](#)
[News](#)
[Articles](#)
[Radio](#)
[Television](#)
[Special Reports](#)

[DoD Search](#)

[About News](#)
[News Archive](#)
[News by E-mail](#)

[Other News Sources](#)

Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Thursday, October 23, 2003

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld Interview with Washington Times, Editorial Board

Q: First of all we want to thank you very much for this. Short notice or not, we're always happy to come over and talk to you.

We got a copy here of a memo, General Myers --

Rumsfeld: Yes, indeed.

Q: You're familiar with this.

Rumsfeld: Yes, I am.

Q: I want to ask you about it, needless to say. I saw the press conference today, the comments you made since this thing was published. You talked about largely that you were raising questions of a manager. It sounds pretty much [inaudible]. But there are several things in here that really are statements. They're not questions, they're just statements.

Rumsfeld: I don't have a copy of it. Does anyone else?

Q: Yes.

Rumsfeld: I'd rather have my version of it, the I wrote it.

Q: We'd rather have your version of it, too.

Q: What I'd like to do is, I'd like to ask you about these brief statements, if you can just explain them. One is, you say, "It is not possible to change DoD fast enough to successfully fight the global war on terror."

Explain that.

Rumsfeld: Big institutions take time. If you have an organization that is as large as this and it's organized, trained and equipped to fight armies, navies and air forces, you can't one day walk in and say hey, September 11th occurred. Let's revamp this thing in five minutes and spin it on a dime so that it is organized, trained and equipped to deal with a new set of 21st Century problems. That isn't doable.

What you have to do is you have to take pieces of it and adjust them so that they can address the new problems, and then simultaneously begin the more laborious process and time-consuming process

of trying to get the institution itself and the ongoing process that this place has many of, taking into account those changes that exist.

Q: You say, "My impression is that we have not yet made truly bold moves." Such as?

Rumsfeld: I was referring organizationally, I believe. I hate to answer questions on something I don't have in front of me.

My recollection is that what I was talking about is organizational moves, (inadudible). Except we've now since added an Assistant Secretary for Homeland Security. We have added an Under Secretary for Intelligence. And we have added a Northern Command. And we have changed the Special Operations technique from a supporting command to both a supported and a supporting command.

I think most people would look at all of that and say it's rather bold. I tend to be a bit impatient and I'm looking for still more changes.

We've done a great deal. We'd give you copies of these, but Larry and I were talking about the fact that there's not a lot new in that memo that I haven't been talking about since before September 11th. If you think about it, here's June 21st, testimony of Rumsfeld to the Senate Armed Services Committee. We asked for a hearing on transformation. We requested it. So that we could get in there and talk about something other than the budget. We talked about the reviews that we'd just undertaken. I said I asked the members of our group to think about and answer a series of questions.

How do we measure and balance the various risks? How can we best size and organize our force? What key capabilities does the U.S. currently lack or does not have in sufficient maturity that are essential? What should DoD be doing with respect to homeland defense? This is before September 11th. What type of small-scale contingency operations are we likely to face and how many? And a few other questions.

I'll give you a copy of that.

Here is August 30th of '01. We set up the Defense Planning Guidance to go forward. We said, "it's built around the concept of a capabilities-based transformation. Those capabilities are likely to include terrorism, cyber warfare, advanced surface-to-air missile defense systems, anti-space weapons, and weapons of mass destruction among others.

"A key goal of the transformation effort is to shift the basis of a defense from planning the threat-based model used in recent years to a capabilities-based model over the longer term. A capabilities-based model, one that focuses more on how an adversary might fight than who the adversary might be or where a war might occur. It broadens the perspective of the strategic planners." And folks who have tracked what we've been doing and saying for two and a half to three years know that these are the exact same types of questions we were pushing even before September 11th.

Q: Understood, and obviously we've covered a lot of that stuff in great detail. My question is, okay, that was two year ago. You made the point that it's a big department, you can't change it rapidly. But you're saying we have not yet made truly bold moves. What truly bold moves would you want to make as Secretary of Defense?

Rumsfeld: We have made, in my view, bold moves internally in the department. Also there have been some bold moves outside -- the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, for example, is a big, significant event.

One of the things I had in mind organizationally is that there is not an institution in the U.S. government that can address in a consistent, coordinated, purposeful way over time the problem that I posed about the fact that terrorists are being trained every day. We're capturing and killing some every day. But we don't know what the balance is there. It's not knowable. I'm not saying we should know.

It would be nice to know, but there are some macro issues like that that you simply can't develop a metric for because it's not possible to have enough knowledge to track those types of things.

Since you don't know and you have to be concerned about it, then it seems to me you have to say what are the kinds of things we might do to address that? One of the things you might do, for example, is to fashion a 21st Century information agency in the government which we don't have that could address those things in a purposeful way over time and be staffed and funded in a way that conceivably we could have fewer people teaching people to be terrorists and more people teaching people math and languages and those types of things.

Q: This is not to replace the CIA.

Rumsfeld: That's overt. CIA is covert. What I just said is overt.

Q: If I can follow that up, it seems like one of the themes from the memo and what you've been saying is we need to do more to fight what I would call the ideological war against terrorism. Just as in the Cold War we had ideological programs against Communism. Is that what you're talking about?

Rumsfeld: I do think that we do need, that we are in a war of ideas as well as a global war on terror and the ideas are important and they need to be marshaled and they need to be communicated in ways that are persuasive to the listeners. They need to be fashioned to go into the receiving sets that are out there in the world. In many instances we're not the best messenger. There are lots of people in the world, but the overwhelming majority of the people of all religions don't believe in terrorism. They don't believe in running around killing innocent men, women and children. We need more people standing up and saying that in the world -- not just us. We need more people who have the courage and the leadership to demonstrate that they don't believe that teaching people to kill innocent men, women and children is a good thing to do in our world.

Q: Has that been quantified to your satisfaction regarding the attitudes of the Muslim world, what the percentage if broadly in any level of magnitude are supportive of the terrorists as opposed to peaceful folks?

Rumsfeld: I don't have numbers that I can give you.

Q: Let me take you back to the memo. You say, "The United States, the U.S. is putting relatively little effort into a long range plan."

My question on that is, why not?

Rumsfeld: Where is that?

Q: Page two of what I have. "Does the US need to fashion a broad and integrated plan"

Rumsfeld: Oh, sure.

Q: Which is exactly what you're talking about.

Rumsfeld: Government agencies tend to do what they've been doing is the answer to your question. They tend to continue what they're doing, and then when there's a shock like 9/11 they make adjustments. And there have been a lot of adjustments made in the Department of Defense and outside the Department of Defense and I've listed some of those. But the natural tendency of big institutions is to keep doing what they're doing and to make incremental adjustments. And big institutions tend to be tactical. They tend to react to the circumstances that are immediate as opposed to strategic.

It seems to me that the problem we're facing is -- Because global war on terror -- That means people talk about Iraq and Afghanistan and they're terribly important, but they're battles in this war. We

need to keep the broader global war on terror in our minds and look at it as something that's long range.

Q: But my question --

Rumsfeld: And therefore it has to be dealt with strategically over a sustained period of time.

Q: That I understand, but the President, Vice President Cheney, others, have warned us basically since 9/11 that we're in it for the long haul. I believe Vice President Cheney even said early on that he thinks the war against terror will last beyond his lifetime.

Why [inaudible]?

Rumsfeld: We have. We've done an awful lot of things. First of all, you can't do everything at once. We've done a lot of things in the department, I've listed four or five examples, we've listed four or five examples in other departments and agencies. The hardest things to do are things that are between agencies.

You think of the battle it took to get Homeland Security through the Congress. I know I spend 99 percent of my time on my department, the Department of Defense, but there are ways we could be organizing the government so that we could live more effectively in the 21st Century, organizing functions, organizing the government so we could live more effectively in the 21st Century. This is to raise questions of people in the department about that question so that they can come back to me and see if they have ideas as to areas that might benefit from additional thinking, whether it relates to the Department of Defense only or it relates to government more broadly or whether it relates across the 90-country Coalition.

For example, I worry about proliferation of very sophisticated technologies of mass destruction. I think it's pretty clear that the current regimes that exist in the world aren't working. It is possible, not even difficult in many cases, for terrorist states to find ways to get their hands on these technologies. In addition, these terrorist states trade among themselves.

The Department of Defense can't stop that. The U.S. government can't stop it. It's going to take a number of countries which requires what the President is in the early stages of doing and that is to try to focus the world's attention on the new approach to counter-proliferation. My guess is that it will require a large number of effective countries, hopefully with some international blessing of a large number of countries, to have the capabilities to interdict the movement of such technologies among states that are doing what they're doing to the detriment of the rest of the world.

How does that get done? Well it takes time. The President's thinking about it, he's talked about it, he's put it forward, there's a beginning of that process. That's an illustration of something that we simply -- One country cannot enforce counterproliferation restrictions. It just doesn't work. As an example.

Q: Let me ask you a question about the sense of urgency that seems to be [inaudible]. When one looks at the dangers [inaudible] looking at now, it seems sort of staggering [inaudible] potentially imminent. Then I sense wandering around this town the complete lack of any sense of urgency. And if you go to London or anywhere else one travels.

This proportion between this tidal wave of danger and people scratching their bottoms as they walk around town, I don't blame the Administration in any way, but do you see that as a project line to try to redress the balance between I'm sure the dangers you see and the lack of a sense of that --

Rumsfeld: That's the purpose of memos like this, is to inject a sense of urgency in the thing.

It's human nature to have your mind focused by fear or necessity for a period. They say necessity is the mother of invention and fear focuses the mind. Both are true.

Then time passes. There's a danger that that sense of urgency can ease and relax. It's important that that not be the case. So I have a pattern of injecting urgency into this department and into the government to the extent I'm able. It's important that that be done.

People kid me about it in the department. I sat in here at the end of the table with one of my combatant commanders one day and he'd been working his head off with all of his people and presented his facts and slides, presented them on the board. I said I haven't read it yet, but I know it's too timid. [Laughter] That's just my nature.

That's what this memo is about. Are we [inaudible]? I sat there with our combatant commanders, I raised all these questions, some of these questions off the top of my head, came back to the office and wrote this memo because I could feel that they're doing a great job and they're enormously talented, but I kept saying what's missing? Are there things we aren't doing that we might be doing?

One of the things that we did to try to do that, Tony, was 9/11 occurred. Six months later I said to the senior people in the department, I said what we have been doing for six months is doing the things that we believe 9/11 called upon us to do, to see that we do the best possible job to protect the American people. I said let's reverse it. Set 9/11 behind you and look out six months and say to yourselves, there is an event of a kind, but different. What are the things we must be doing now to avoid it, to know about it, to mitigate it, and to deal with the kinds of people that are involved in doing that. And to try to fashion a semi-artificial way of injecting urgency into things, and it works. If you do it that way you can get people's minds focused on something like that.

Q: Let me ask a broader question outside of this department, and it's not really your area of responsibility. General Boykin, I don't want to ask you what you're going to do, an IG, but my sense is, I did a column, there's a huge reaction from the public -- not because of my column but because the Boykin affair has touched a lot of Americans in very emotional ways.

In the battle of ideas we know that the enemy is strongly motivated. How do we sustain the fighting spirit of the American public over a period of time from this President to the next President who's going to be fighting the same battles? The Boykin event suggests to me that some of the messages the people got from that are of the sort that do rally a nation.

Do we have, does the government have any sustained effort to sustain the fighting spirit of the public? Through public statements? Other than ones that come out [inaudible] the public noticing the world go by. Can we sustain that fighting spirit amongst the general populace?

Rumsfeld: I think so. I think the American people have a good center of gravity. I think they recognize that we live in a dangerous world. They saw what happened on September 11th. They know that there are very serious threats that exist in the world and they want to preserve their free way of life. They don't want to live in fear. It's perfectly possible for them to sustain their effort, it seems to me, based on our belief in freedom and our values and our principles that we believe in freedom of religion and we believe in freedom of speech and we believe in people being able to go where they want and say what they wish and not have to fear for what they do.

Q: Does that include Gen. Boykin? Is he going to be punished for freedom of speech? I'm not speaking for myself.

[Multiple voices]

Q: He's on the reporting side.

Rumsfeld: And I've answered it. There's an Inspector General at his request. He asked for an Inspector General. I was told that that was his preference.

Q: Is that going to be an Army Inspector General or a DoD Inspector General?

Di Rita: We said today that it's going to be the Department of Defense Inspector General working with the Army Inspector General, and that tends to be the way these types of investigations into Senior flag or general officers are --

Q: What do we hope to accomplish with this Inspector General --

Di Rita: I talked about this in the transcript today. We went into some of it.

Q: What do you want to see accomplished?

Rumsfeld: Given the fact that he requested it and it's been initiated, my position is that I don't think it's useful for me to talk a lot about it.

Q: Can anybody request such an investigation and would you grant it because the person requested it?

Rumsfeld: I don't know. How can I say? [If you asked for one,] I doubt if I would honor it. [Laughter]

Q: Is the White House or [inaudible] who's putting pressure on the department to push --

Rumsfeld: Nobody.

Q: Absent the media.

Rumsfeld: Personally I haven't had a communication on the subject from the White House.

Q: Has anybody at the senior level at the Pentagon had any communication with the White House on that?

Rumsfeld: Not to my knowledge. The only one who talks to the White House on this subject is from a press standpoint and it would be the press office.

Q: Is there a threshold for disciplinary action for General Boykin?

Rumsfeld: I'm not a lawyer.

Q: No, but you're the Secretary of Defense.

Rumsfeld: I know, but is there a threshold --

Q: For example --

Rumsfeld: There are all kinds of rules and regulations and requirements and people will look at them and they'll discuss those and then one will compare his circumstance and those rules and regulations at his request.

Q: Sir, [inaudible] if he had not have asked for it, you would not have initiated it?

Rumsfeld: There is -- I don't know what I would have done, to be honest with you. I didn't have -- I never got to that bridge to jump off with. He requested it and my view is that -- I've said so much on the subject, I think you're wasting your time here to beat a dead horse --

Q: I'll ask a different question.

Rumsfeld: -- over and over --

Q: I'll ask one more question about this. Maybe you answered it before, Larry, but you can answer it again.

The LA Times and NBC both have transcripts of his remarks. Have they indicated that they will release those transcripts for your investigation?

Di Rita: Not that I'm aware of.

Q: Okay.

Di Rita: I'm not sure that we've asked. I just don't know.

Q: One other issue, you mentioned that it's hard to get things done between agencies. I've heard from a lot of working level people that there is some pretty fierce in-fighting within the Administration but specifically over Iraq policy and strategy, and that that has forced a lot of other issues to the back burner.

Do you get any sense that the Administration is divided over how to deal with Iraq in terms of stabilization, in terms of what the future is for Iraq?

Rumsfeld: Most of those things are being handled down at the Coalition Provisional Authority level by Bremer. There's not much debate and discussion about the Abizaid piece of what's taking place.

The issues that Jerry Bremer's dealing with are enormously complex, difficult. He is working with the Governing Council and with CENTCOM and every day he faces six or eight enormously complicated issues about timing and the governance issues and how the path towards sovereignty will evolve, and how the, particularly the economic pieces will go forward. He tends to work most of those things out at his level with, for example, the currency. When and how do you trade out a currency? When and how do you establish a central bank? Those are the kinds of things that he works with Treasury on and DoD and State and people who have knowledge of those areas.

There are always going to be differences of views and perspectives departmentally, but even within departments there are differences of views.

Q: One of the issues is there seems to be some sniping at his big idea, especially from State to DoD, that DoD didn't prepare for the post-major conflict period. I think Wolfowitz has addressed this, and I'm not sure if you have. But what is your view about whether or not we were prepared --

Rumsfeld: An enormous amount preparation that took place. It started in the National Security Council and for months there were interagency groups that were meeting, presentations that were made to the interagency, up to the President. At a certain moment a lot of it transferred over here. Prior to that, State had had a fellow named Walwick, I'm told, doing some planning on the subject as a result of probably the Iraqi Act. I guess that's the official -- Iraqi Freedom Act. Iraqi Liberation Act.

They had done some work. All of that became part of what Jay Garner and Jerry Bremer used, and people there from all the different agencies and departments in Iraq and were here in the planning period beforehand. So all of that was taken into account.

I was amused that the Wall Street Journal ran an article describing the fact that there were lengthy planning with the U.N. World Food Organization and the Department of Defense in planning for a humanitarian crisis. Needless to say they didn't want that known because it was all taking place prior to the war. They didn't want to be seen as complicit in a war, and yet they recognized as we did that we needed to plan and be prepared.

So there was a great deal of planning. There was, apparently someone at State who had hoped to

be in charge of it all wasn't, and has been contending that there wasn't enough planning or they didn't take full account of the planning. But that's more of a personal thing, I think.

Q: I understand General Cao the Chinese Defense Minister is coming, and you're going to meet with him perhaps later this month. Is that a signal that U.S.-Chinese military-to-military relations are back on track after the --

Rumsfeld: I meet with Ministers of Defense from countries all across the globe on a regular. We announced that he is coming.

Q: The Chinese --

Rumsfeld: I've forgotten when it is, but next week? There will be a meeting.

Q: How about the mil-to-mil? Things obviously --

Rumsfeld: Well we've had some mil-to-mil prior to this visit.

Q: But it's not what it was in the Clinton Administration. The Chinese press is saying it's back to the Clinton Administration levels where they had a fairly aggressive exchange program which didn't seem to bear fruit when it came to the EB-3 incident.

Rumsfeld: I'm not in a position to compare. That's not a useful thing for me to try to do.

Q: Do you think it's useful to have exchanges with the Chinese military?

Rumsfeld: I think certainly the ones we're having are appropriate and logical and beneficial from our standpoint.

Q: Can you explain why, or what's your view of it?

Rumsfeld: Well, my personal view is what the President's view is and what he's indicated. He met with the leadership in the People's Republic of China. It's a big country, it's an important country, it's emerging into the world, that region as well as the entire world in a variety of different ways, and the hope is that that merging into the world will happen in a way that's smooth and not bumpy. One way to try to understand what's taking place is to have the kind of interaction that the President has initiated and that he's suggested that we initiate.

Q: One more for me and I'll shut up.

Earlier this year we reported that they found some French passports in Iraq, an indication that the French were supporting the Iraqis. Your comment at the time was the French had traditionally been close to Iraq and that we'll find out, meaning since that time, since the end of the war, what their relationship was. Have you found out anything on that?

Rumsfeld: I can't, and I don't remember that incident. But we all know that there are forged and stolen passports from a variety of countries that is a constant problem. I must say in that part of the world trading and selling and dealing in passports of a lot of countries is (inaudible) --

Q: How about the bigger issue of why France and Germany in particular seem to have turned against us, at least in the months and weeks leading up to the conflict? Do you have a view on that you can share with us?

Rumsfeld: I think back over my adult life and the relationship between DeGaulle and General Eisenhower, and Dr. Kissinger and [inaudible]. I don't think there's been a five-year period my entire life where there hasn't been highly visible issues in one way or another that for a period spike up and then recede.

People tend to look at what's taking place today and opine that it is something distinctive. I don't find it distinctive. I find it an old record that gets replayed about every five or seven years.

Q: We reported several weeks ago about an internal Joint Chiefs of Staff report about post war planning that was critical of the work that had gone into that planning. Now you're saying looking back on it there was [inaudible] preparation. Are you satisfied with the level of post-war planning we did?

Rumsfeld: I'm never satisfied. We always go back and do lessons learned, and ask ourselves what could have been different, what could be better? I've never once gone back and reviewed an activity or a military campaign or a business plan and not found that there were things that one could have done differently and better.

I've not seen this report. I'm told it was a draft at a very low level and Dick Myers had not even seen it. To my knowledge, I don't know if he has since, but he certainly hasn't brought anything to me so I can't speak definitively about this particular report.

What I have seen is the lessons learned that has been briefed widely, I've spent eight hours in this room going over the lessons learned. Tom Franks was very open. He allowed I think 50 to 75 people to go in at every level of his activities and they were embedded prior to the beginning, and throughout the entire process. And Giambastiani and a general named Cone briefed it, we've had them brief me I think four times, they briefed our [inaudible]. It is a very in-depth -- Without question I would submit the most in-depth analysis of a campaign because it was not afterwards, it was during the entire thing.

It is I think a very useful thing to do.

Di Rita: It was done by the Joint Forces Command --

Q: -- see that at all? Is that going to be --

DiRita: General Cone has been in the studio briefing.

Q: Is that the military campaign itself or the post-war period? What I'm concerned about is the post-war -- Was General Cone also --

Di Rita: They remain embedded.

Rumsfeld: They do. (inaudible) We're certainly interested in both.

Q: What's your measure for success in Iraq? Is there some objective thing that you have to accomplish before you can say the mission is over and done? When will you know that you've had success in Iraq?

Rumsfeld: The goal that the President set forth was that the regime be changed and that a new government be put in place, be achieved, established in some way. That is an Iraqi government that is at peace with its neighbors, that does not have weapons of mass destruction programs, that is one country, not broken up into parts, that is respectful of individual rights and of the various diverse ethnic and religious elements in the country, and representative of the people.

Now those are kind of broad things. Within there you can have a lot of variety of how it might be done, and it will be an Iraqi solution.

But the short answer is it will be done when sovereignty has been transferred over, and the self-rule has been transferred to the Iraqi people. That they're capable of providing at least their internal security [inaudible]. And that their economy is jump started where they can be a contributing factor in the economic sector in the region.

Now is it our job to do all that? No. It's their job to do that. It's their job to rebuild that country. It's their job to take over their security. That's why we've gone from zero Iraqis up to 85,000 Iraqis providing for their own security in five months. How in the world can you do that if you haven't done some planning? You don't just go from zero to 85,000 with another 15,000 in training for a total of about 100,000, and probably since June 1st. May 1st if you want.

Q: Is that police and military?

Rumsfeld: It is police, border patrol, site protection, Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, and a new Iraqi army. It is five elements in various sizes and shapes at varying costs, in varying degrees of training, varying degrees of equipment. And these folks are -- So what you've had is you've had a decline in U.S. forces from a high of about 152,000 down to about 132,000 and you've had a rather level Coalition force. Then you've had this significant increase in Iraqi security.

Q: Regarding goals of [Inaudible] Syrians and Iranians policies and actions don't change [inaudible]. How hard would it be to gain the objectives that we have and want Iraq? Do we have to get some kind of change in their policies or could we somehow meet our objectives even if Syria and Iran continue to do what they've been doing?

Rumsfeld: It would sure be a lot easier if they were helpful instead of harmful.

The borders are porous, they're long. We're getting good cooperation from the Saudis on their border, Kuwait, Jordanians, the Turks. The two problem areas are those.

I think that we will end up succeeding in Iraq. It's just going to be harder, little more difficult.

Q: As opposed to that being actually strategic. In other words, we've got to make a decision at some point that that kind of conduct is inconsistent with [inaudible].

Rumsfeld: I don't believe so. In other words what I believe is we will be successful, and I think it will take time, and it's difficult, and it's more difficult to the extent that terrorists cross those borders and come into Iraq and complicate the problem.

On the other hand it gives the CENTCOM folks a chance to kill or capture the terrorists.

Q: Have you seen any improvement in Syria and Iran since you --

Rumsfeld: There's only so much we know, and there are things we don't know, and we know we don't know them. I suspect there are also things we don't know we don't know. Of what we do know, it's ebbed and flowed for different reasons. But I certainly wouldn't say that I'm comfortable with their general degree of cooperation. I'm uncomfortable with it.

Q: You mentioned also in the memo the difficulty in finding Mullah Omar and tracking down the Taliban. Why is that? Are we too preoccupied with Iraq?

Rumsfeld: Oh, no. No, no. It's hard to find a single individual -- it's very difficult.

Q: But you would say --

Rumsfeld: Let me talk.

Look at the FBI Most Wanted List. People have been on there for 10, 15, 20 years. It's fairly difficult to do. It is not something that the Department of Defense ever decided that's what it was sought to organize, train and equip to do. So it is not a single department's task. It is a task that takes all elements of the government. You have to look at how money is moved, you have to look at how people move across borders, you have to look at law enforcement issues, you have to have cooperation with

other countries, and it is a particularly difficult thing to do.

There are a lot of ungoverned areas in the world. There are a lot of borders that offer a haven and the ability to move readily from one side to the other in ways that frustrate law enforcement. There are portions of the countries like in some nations, even in ours, where the tribal elements have different rules for who can enter the areas and what people can do. A number of these folks have access to a good deal of money and that facilitates — correction that makes more difficult our task and facilitates their task in trying to avoid capture.

So I guess it's just the nature of the world that people can avoid being caught for rather long periods.

Q: One of the jobs of the CIA has been to increase their counterterrorism center from 200 to as many as 1,000, and obviously they're playing a key role in this. You mentioned the Under Secretary for Intelligence which has been perceived by many as not being happy with intelligence.

Do you think that U.S. intelligence is doing a good enough job in the war on terrorism?

Rumsfeld: Yes, I do.

Q: You mentioned the new CIA finding, by which I presume you mean more authority to do stuff.

Rumsfeld: It was a question of are there things other departments or agencies could be doing that with additional authorities they might be able to do.

Certainly the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence in now way is anything other than what we said it was. It is a fact that we have a big department with a lot of intelligence activities, and I needed a single point of focus so that it was more effective for me and more effective for George Tenet and the agency to deal with this department if each of us knew there was a single point of contact, and it's worked very well.

I have a meeting with George Tenet every week, generally for lunch on a Friday. We have developed a relationship between the two departments that is I would suspect as close as it can be. We're linked well at the CENTCOM level. We're linked well here. One of the things that has facilitated that is the availability of Steve Cambone to assist with that.

Now with respect to the other part of your question, no one, I don't think I've ever seen a military commander that's got a task who is totally 100 percent satisfied with the intelligence. No matter whose responsibility it was to get people to [inaudible] responsibility. It is by definition something that's hard to do. A lot of these targets are very hard targets. They're difficult to get information on.

The techniques that we use have been compromised through spies, through trading of information among rogue nations and among terrorist networks. So the terrorists have access to our technologies that they never could have developed and manufactured. They're not running around with a shoebox with 3x5 cards in it. They have laptops and wire transfers and all the things that pagers and telephones and jet airplanes and all the things that others have fashioned for them. And they do what we do.

We go to school on them and they go to school on us. We watch how they behave and try to figure out how to get inside their decision cycle; and they look at us and find ways that they can do what I was saying today down at the press briefing. Today's the 20th anniversary of the attack on the barracks in Beirut. They literally did it with a truck. Then they stick up barricades. Then they fire things over the barricades. Then they hang draperies over a building. Then those things bounce off. So then they go for soft targets. There's always something else. There's no permanent defense. There's nothing that's final. It's always an action and a reaction, and they're doing it and we're doing it and we've got to keep doing it in new ways, in creative ways, and that's what that memo was about. It's to find still better

ways every day, every week, and see that our folks are thinking, leaning forward, because we've got a whale of a responsibility.

The American people, if it's human possible to protect them against additional attacks, that's what we've got to try to do.

Q: Speaking of the memo and the issue of DoD not being able to change fast enough. Is the problem --

Rumsfeld: DoD or anything else. Any other big institution.

Q: I want to apply that to an issue that I know from personal experience being on the ground in Iraq strikes at the heart of our ability to really fight the war on terrorism effectively. That's Arabic language translators.

Rumsfeld: Yeah.

Q: I personally reported on October 13th that the Pentagon in some ways cut some corners in order to get enough Arabic language translators on the ground in Iraq and to interrogate al Qaeda suspects. Extremely important tasks, and a tough position to be in.

But I want to know -- That was actually vindicated by Charles Abell who said indeed, yeah, some corners were cut.

I want to know what corners were cut, if you can --

Rumsfeld: I don't know. I saw a press report on his transcript but I didn't get a chance to see the full transcript.

Di Rita: And I doubt he said corners were cut. I think he said --

Q: He didn't say those exact words. He said he thought it was fair to say that folks were brought on with sort of interim-level checks and then --

Di Rita: In-?

Q: Interim-level checks. And then more detailed checks to follow. "I think the results of that are as we are seeing here," he's talking about the Guantanamo Bay spy probe. "We have found a couple who are not as trustworthy as we had hoped initially."

Rumsfeld: That's different from what you said he said. No matter what department or agency of this government and no matter their varying techniques for screening and vetting people. We've had spies since the beginning of time. And there are people who are determined to do those things; it's regrettable but they do. I don't know that there is a perfectly bullet-proof way to vet so that you don't end up with a spy.

Q: Is there any kind of an effort afoot to teach American soldiers some Arabic? I know from being in Iraq, I know that the English Department at Tikrit University was basically hired on the spot to work as translators for the 4th Infantry Division. These guys were needed, but they were bringing on guys into classified situations that --

Rumsfeld: We tended to avoid people who were brought on on that basis, avoid putting them into situations that required classification, classified clearances.

What they've done is they've done quick checks and done some interim clearances which we do in government all the time. And whether that was an element in the fact about these allegations which are currently being made about individuals in Guantanamo, I don't know. Those investigations are

underway. Time will tell.

If there are charges that are proved, we will know a lot more about how that process might have affected their getting in to a position where they could do something adverse to America's interests.

Q: Have you made any changes down there in the operations at Guantanamo as a result of --

Rumsfeld: We've made enormous changes down there over the period since it was first initiated.

Q: I mean since the chaplain was first arrested -- and this thing have snowballed.

Rumsfeld: I'm sure there have been. There have been, I've received one briefing so I know there have been changes.

Q: Anything you can tell us?

Rumsfeld: No.

Di Rita: You have just a couple more minutes left.

Rumsfeld: There were a lot of changes made prior to that, to these allegations as well. In other words General Miller went in and replaced somebody who was there, and we, like everyone, you learn as you go along. He instituted a number of adjustments of how they were doing things. The feeling is that the competence and capabilities have gotten better continuously since the activity first was established there.

Q: But was this General, was the change made, I know these espionage concerns were raised a couple of months before this became public?

Rumsfeld: No, the change was made well before that.

Q: So it was not --

Rumsfeld: Oh, no. And I also know that I've been briefed since and that there have been additional changes that have been made since the allegation.

Q: Any indication or any conformation that the information we got was compromised in any way by these people?

Rumsfeld: I don't think I want to get into what's going on. The investigation's going on. I don't find it useful.

Q: An unrelated question.

The President yesterday distanced himself from General Boykin's remarks. Do you distance yourself from General Boykin's remarks?

Rumsfeld: I have said what I have said, and it is that -- I don't know that I should even bother repeating it. I've been on the record on this four times and I'm comfortable with what I've said.

Q: Say it again.

Rumsfeld: I'd prefer not to. Someone will take the four times and line them up and say okay, you used this adjective there and that adjective. Why do I have to repeat it?

Q: How important is it to get Saddam still? And are we any closer to getting him?

Rumsfeld: It is important. He's such a vicious dictator and individual that just the thought that he might be around or might be able to punish people within the [inaudible] is an unhelpful thing. I can't measure it, I can't quantify it, but I have no doubt that it would be a helpful thing if he were found, and I believe he will be.

Q: Do you have any idea when or how close we are?

Rumsfeld: How can you know? How can you know?

Q: Have you always felt he was a vicious individual, a vicious dictator? Or is that an opinion that --

Rumsfeld: No, it --

Q: -- recent --

Rumsfeld: -- any of you reads the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch or any of these organizations about what's been going on in that country.

Q: I mean you personally. Your personal experience with him.

Rumsfeld: I only met him once or twice. He is what he is. He's a person who for whatever reason decided it was important to have his face in every office, on every street corner, in every element of the country, and to use chemical weapons against his own people and his neighbors, and to operate a Stalinist-like regime in that country to the detriment of a lot of people who are intelligent, energetic, reasonably well-educated. With resources, that country could have been very much like its neighbors, like many of the Gulf states and all its wealth if the people hadn't been so badly repressed and the country so badly abused.

Q: A North Korea question.

You've been characterized, I think the *Post* had something Sunday, as being in the camp within the Administration that favors a regime change in North Korea versus negotiations which would be the State Department's business.

What's your perspective on a solution to the North Korean problem? Can we negotiate it away? Or --

Rumsfeld: My position is identical to the president's. It's a foreign policy issue that's being handled in the diplomatic channels. I think the President's right to do what he's doing, that is to attempt to see if he can work sufficiently closely with the countries in the neighborhood so that there is a growing awareness on the part of the North Korean government that their circumstance is not advantaged by following through on the kinds of things that their leadership has been behind. And that their circumstance could be advantage and not disadvantaged if they respond to a growing number of countries that are advising that the peninsula should not be a nuclear armed peninsula and that the traffic by that country in ballistic missiles and the like is not consistent with the world's hopes and expectations of proliferation.

Di Rita: Thank you very much.

Q: [Inaudible] call you and -- can we find out if you have requested the transcripts from NBC?

DiRita: I'm not involved in the investigation and I'm not inclined at this point to ask the IG what he's doing in a case in the course of the investigation. We'll wait and see.

Q: [Inaudible] before the investigation?

Di Rita: Before the investigation I will tell you that we asked for copies of tapes from news organizations and they weren't forthcoming.

Q: Okay. So up to the point where the investigation was initiated, that was [inaudible] through public affairs.

DiRita: -- copies of any available public domain -- We didn't get it.

Q: Thank you, sir.



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

[Site Map](#) | [Privacy & Security Notice](#) | [External Link Disclaimer](#) | [Web Policy](#) | [About DefenseLINK](#) | [Contact Us](#)