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Updated: 17 Nov 2003

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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Thursday, October 30, 2003 1:36 p.m. EST

Secretary Rumsfeld briefs on Iraq

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SEC. RUMSFELD: Good afternoon. General Myers is not here, as you may have noticed. My friend is meeting with the chief of the armed services of Spain at the present time.

The task in Iraq remains difficult and dangerous. But as Jerry Bremer and John Abizaid, who were here, have said, there has been progress across a range of coalition activities over the past six months.

Our plan called for the establishment of an Iraqi cabinet of ministers, and the coalition did it in four months. It took 14 months in post-war Germany.

The plan called for the establishment of an independent Iraqi central bank. The coalition did it in two months. It took three years in post-war Germany.

Our plan called for the establishment of a new Iraqi currency. The coalition announced a new currency in two months, and begin circulating new Iraqi dinars in five months. It took three years in post-war Germany.

The plan called for the establishment of a new Iraqi police force. The coalition accomplished it in two months. It took 14 months in post-war Germany.

The plan called for the establishment of a new Iraqi army. The coalition began training within three months, and the first battalion had completed training in less than five months. It took 10 years in post-war Germany.

In less than six months, we've gone from zero Iraqis providing security to their country -- you don't have that chart; there it is -- to close to 100,000 Iraqis currently under arms. Indeed, the progress has been so swift that Iraq is already the second largest of the security forces in the coalition. It will not be long before they will be the largest and outnumber the U.S. forces, and it shouldn't be too long thereafter that they will outnumber all coalition forces combined.

Some have suggested that any statement that raises awareness of these successes is putting an

optimistic face on a difficult security situation. Not so. Every time we've discussed progress in Iraq, I have made clear that the situation in the country remains dangerous and that there will be setbacks.

Nonetheless, we have made an effort to point out the progress, because until we did so, progress was being largely ignored in the press. The American people were hearing plenty about terrorist bombings and sabotage, which exist, but precious little about the achievements that had been racked up by the brave men and women in both civilian and military who are serving in Iraq.

The difficult security situation makes the progress being made all the more remarkable. Not only has the coalition managed to outpace the progress in postwar Germany, Japan, Bosnia or Kosovo, they have done it under fire, while fighting a dangerous, low-intensity conflict, and they have done it not in a pacified country, but while fighting criminals as well as regime remnants and terrorists who are aggressively seeking to stop their progress.

Earlier today, some seven or eight members of the Congress, women, who traveled to Iraq very recently, were at breakfast with us, and came down here to meet with the members of the Pentagon press. And I saw a portion of their briefing, and I also heard them at breakfast. And Republicans and Democrats alike were struck by the progress that they see being made in that country.

The terrorists are attacking the successes that are occurring. They are killing an increasingly large number of Iraqis -- an Iraqi woman member of the Governing Council, and Iraqis graduating from the Police Academy, and the like. But those attacks will not deter the coalition. We will stay in Iraq as long as necessary to finish the job. The president has said unambiguously that he will stay the course, and that is exactly what we will do, to the great benefit of the Iraqi people, the region and the world.

Charlie?

Q Mr. Secretary, despite the progress that you cite here on Cabinet ministers -- ministries, banknotes, schools, and other areas -- international organizations seem to be responding to these increasing car-bombing attacks in Baghdad and, in a word, seem to be exiting Baghdad. The U.N. said in Geneva today it was pulling the rest of its international staff out of Baghdad. And the ICRC said yesterday, or early this week, perhaps yesterday, that it was reducing its staff.

What is your reaction to that? And are any, any extraordinary, short-term measures being planned, perhaps increasing troops in Baghdad or changing the mix, to curb these car bombings?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, the mix is changing, as you saw on the chart. The numbers of Iraqi providing for the security of the Iraqi people is soaring up to plus-or-minus 100,000 at the present time, and climbing. So that mix is changing. The U.S. forces have declined from the peak of the war at 150,000, down to about 131,000 or 132,000. The coalition forces have held rather level. And what's changed is the overall number of security forces has gone up because of the growth in the Iraqi security forces.

What's my reaction? My reaction is that everyone, every individual and every organization, has to decide for themselves what they're going to do and how they're going to conduct themselves. Our president has made his decision. Our Congress has made the decision, and overwhelmingly passed an \$87 billion, plus or minus, bill to support the efforts in Iraq.

What I find -- the only comment I would make -- is that I think all of us make a mistake by talking about Iraq as though it's a -- everything is the same across that country. It's not. The situation up in the north, above the green line, the Kurdish area is, obviously -- has been at peace, relative peace, for, you know, a decade. And international organizations can be of assistance there. The situation in the south tends to be quite peaceful.

There are problems from time to time, but the overwhelming majority of the incidents are occurring in Baghdad and the area north of Baghdad, as we know.

Now, that says to me that if there are organizations that want to be helpful, countries that want to be helpful, there are portions of the country where they can do that with -- one would hope -- with reasonable security. There's no doubt but that the U.N. building was struck. There's no doubt that terrorists are attempting to drive them out. And it appears that at least with respect to some organizations, they're being successful.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, do you --

Q I asked about short-term measures --

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Do you have any short-term measures, though -- I'm sorry -- that you might be planning to perhaps curb these bombings over the short term?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Look, a terrorist can attack at any time, at any place, using any technique. It's been going on in country after country across the globe throughout my entire lifetime and before. There aren't short-term fixes to these problems. The attacker has the advantage. And that is why the task is to root out terrorists and terrorist organizations where they are, to find them and to capture them or kill them. And that is what we are doing. And it's -- the idea that there's some short-term fix -- you can put up barricades around your building. Sure, that'll stop a truck. And you can do that. And you can put -- hang wire mesh over your building, and it'll repel a rocket-propelled grenade. And then they'll attack soft targets going to and from work. Terrorists are out to kill innocent men, women and children, and to alter the behavior and terrorize people. And free people can't be free and live in terror. Therefore, the only choice is to do what the president's doing.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, may I ask my colleague, who's big enough to play with the Green Bay Packers, to lean a little bit so we can see each other? (Laughs.) Let's go back to --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You could stand. You could stand.

Q Yes, sir. How's that? Thank you. (Laughter.)

Let's go back to the now-famous Rumsfeld two-page memo. Have you gotten any interesting feedback yet? Have you gotten things you can share with us? Are we winning the war on terror? What about another possible government agency? What about some of the questions you asked? Are you getting answers that are now perhaps definitive?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The answers are classified. (Laughter.)

No, we are constantly discussing these kinds of things, and I don't know that I can sit here and try and summarize them for you. But you bet we're getting answers. And I must say, one of the other things that pleases me is we've also gotten some other questions suggested by other people which are interesting and useful.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, you've -- we've been getting conflicting accounts on the extent to which foreign fighters are participating in these attacks. Can you tell us what proportion of those who are captured or killed appear to be from outside of Iraq as opposed to nationals? And secondarily, can you tell me how the counter-insurgency plan might be changing to respond to these recent attacks? For instance, are you deploying or speeding up the deployment of Iraqi nationals?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't have as good an answer as I ought to. I keep pushing at that and trying to find out. And at the moment, I do not have what I would characterize as satisfactory analytical information about all the people who have been captured or killed in terms of what was in their pocket; what do they say they were; what nationality; what were they really. I mean, one that was arrested in the last 48 hours claimed he was a -- I think a Syrian, and I think he was probably a Yemeni. And -- it takes time to sort through that.

The last numbers that I can recall seeing was that captured -- not killed, but captured -- there were some -- in currently being detained, there was something in excess of -- somewhere between 2- and 300 foreigners -- people we believe to be foreigners. And admittedly, it's hard to get certainty on that, but we believe they're foreigners. And the high percentage were from Syria and Lebanon.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Can you finish the second half about that, though, about the counter-insurgency plan?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, yes. The answer is sure; General Abizaid and others are working both with our people and with Iraqis to strengthen the counterterrorism capability of the Iraqis and --

Q Mr. Secretary, have you seen the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- and a whole host of other things. I mean, we've had a -- you don't get from zero to 100,000-plus Iraqis involved just by sitting around thinking about it. They've got to push on all of those activities -- the army, the police, the site protection people, the border patrol, the civil defense people, as well as counterterrorism people.

Q Mr. Secretary, have you --

Q How do you speed that up?

Can we just stay on that one topic?

How do you speed that up, getting them into the mix? Is the training faster? Do you bring in people you otherwise might not have brought in, more senior officers?

SEC. RUMSFELD: You add money -- you add money. You set higher goals. You increase the number of Iraqis who are helping you doing the recruiting. You increase the number of countries who assist you with the training. And you adjust your techniques as to where you put your emphasis within those five or six categories, and constantly try to -- this is not my business -- this is the question General Myers would be answering, if he were here.

General Abizaid continuously looks at what's happening on the ground, and how does he -- where are the areas of biggest need. And then we move people, the intake, over to those areas, to the extent that we have the ability to do that. There are big differences in how you train them, the length of time. There are differences in how you equip them. But in many cases, the people could go into any one of those four or five activities. And therefore, they're constantly adjusting it to fit what they see to be the situation on the ground.

Fortunately, it looks as though the emergency supplemental that the president requested is close to passage, final passage. They've had, I believe, an agreement in conference. It will go to the House and Senate soon for final vote. And in it, we have funds for these, which we presented weeks and weeks ago, for acceleration of these activities.

Q Is there some concern that you're rushing it too much, particularly in the training?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Always.

Q I mean, can you talk --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Always.

Q And can you talk about that a little more?

SEC. RUMSFELD: And that's a fair issue. It's a risk issue. There are three, four, five risk issues that we're constantly trying to balance. And, you know, in a perfect world, you'd have a year's vetting process before you included anybody. Unfortunately, we're not in a perfect world. So -- so what we do is we vet them to the best we can.

Then, I think that Mr. Kerik said that he thought that it was appropriate to have about eight weeks training, for example, for police; that anything less than that, they're not really up on the step and ready to do the job in terms of values, in terms of experience, in terms of management of difficult situations, in terms of investigations. Some types of police work take a lot more training than others, you know, forensics and the type. So what's been done is that they've taken some people with fewer than eight weeks training in the police, put them out with the understanding they'd bring them back and give them the remaining course, as they're able to feed additional people through the process. And it was a way of getting more people on the street doing things.

The army is the one that takes the longest -- the heaviest equipment. And, of course, that's the least problem. Iraq is not likely to be attacked by armies, navies or air forces externally; it is being attacked internally. And so the army is -- you can accept that it takes a longer period of time.

The border patrol is an immediate problem, and we've got folks that are doing that.

Site protection probably takes the least training, and yet is quite important. But it doesn't require maneuvering, it doesn't require heavy equipment; it requires a presence and -- and of course, I've said it before, but I'll say it again, there have been something between 80 and 85 Iraqis, security people, who have been killed in the last three or four months. So it's not like these people are standing around not doing anything. They're out there doing things.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, have you seen the torture tape recovered by the 308th Civil Affairs Brigade in Baghdad? Can you provide details about how it was it obtained --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let's do -- I'll tell you what, I'll give you three or four questions, but let's do them one at a time.

Q Okay. Have you seen --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Otherwise, I have to disentangle everything as I go along. (Laughter.) And -- and --

Q All right, let's start with number one.

SEC. RUMSFELD: And it's hard. It's late -- I've been up since 5:00.

Q Have you seen this torture tape?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I have seen a torture tape. I wouldn't call it a "torture" tape. I don't think cutting someone's head off is torture, just to be precise. And I have seen a tape. Whether it's the one you're talking about, I just don't know. But there are a lot of them around, I'm told, and they portray a

regime that was about as vicious as any regime could conceivably be. When you have people filming, in front of crowds cheering and clapping, you have people cutting off people's tongues, and cutting off people's heads, and chopping off their fingers and chopping off their hands, throwing them off three-story buildings, you learn something about a group of people and how they live their lives and how they treated their people. And we are so fortunate they are gone and that those 23 million people are liberated.

Q Can you provide any details how that tape that you saw was obtained and -- or when it was made?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Someone here might be able to. I have no idea how it was made or where -- as I say, there are a number of them. I don't know -- you say "that tape," I just don't know about "that tape."

Q Mr. Secretary, Ibrahim al-Douri, number six on the top 55 most-wanted Iraqis, is still at large. Can you give us an idea of what role he might be playing --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I've read those articles, and I'm not in a position to confirm them.

Q Can you tell us whether you think he's playing any role in --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I really don't have enough conviction on the subject that I would want to try to confirm it or deny it. I just am -- I am in that awkward position that I'm aware of a little bit, but I haven't arrived with conviction on it.

Q Can you say with any conviction whether you believe these attacks are being coordinated or financed by a particular individual or --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I can't. They're clearly being financed because we have found some folks with money on them. I don't doubt for a minute but that some criminals have been hired. I don't doubt for a minute that some other people have been hired -- foreigners. We know that there are Ba'athists and regime remnants that were trained to do this type of thing.

The second piece of evidence that exists is that a number of the explosive devices appear to be using if not the same, at least very similar explosives --

(Interruption by audio from news network.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: There we go.

Similar, if not exactly the same, explosives.

Was that Fox?

Q CNN.

SEC. RUMSFELD: CNN. (Laughter.)

Jamie, defend yourself!

I don't -- and I just don't know. I think those folks are clearly trying to figure that out, trying to analyze it and try to gain a better understanding of it.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Sir, the U.N. secretary-general said today --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Just a minute. Just one second. Right behind you.

Q Are you looking at diverting any resources from the Iraqi Survey Group towards the counter-insurgency fight, even on a short-term basis? And if so, what resources? Can you talk about that?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I can talk about it. I -- it's really not something that I know precisely is taking place. I do know that Director Tenet and I talk frequently about it, and I do know that Mr. Kay and Mr. Dayton discuss these things. And there always have been a series of things that the Iraqi Survey Group had on its platter: Clearly, weapons of mass destruction was the principal one, but it also had POW, it had counterterrorism, various other -- there were four or five things on their list. And it has been a matter for discussion between General Dayton and Dr. Kay, and between Director Tenet and me. On the one hand, the task of finding WMD is important; it is a big interest in the world, understandably. It is also true that we're having people being killed by terrorists, so counterterrorism is important as well. We're not being killed by WMD at the moment. How they balance that off in any given day is complicated. My impression is that Kay and Dayton have done a good job, and that Director Tenet's done a good job, who Dr. Kay reports to.

If you think about it, you can't take it and put them in separate boxes. If you capture a high-value target, and you incarcerate the person, and then someone goes in and asks them questions, and you ask them a question about WMD or about the POW or one of the other priorities, and then you start talking to them, they may give you an answer that's on three different things that touches on all of them. And the task -- the difficult task that Dr. Kay and Director Tenet have is managing all of that in a way that is in the best interest of our country. And so that's what they're doing, and I have a lot of respect for the way they're doing it. And I think any implication that you're going to throw the switch from here to there or to there to one of the other priorities I think would be a misunderstanding of the complexity of the task, because I don't think you can break a single interrogation, for example, into all of those different pieces.

Yes?

Q Speaking of Dr. Kay --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I'm sorry. I'll come back.

Q -- and WMD, you know, we're three weeks after Kay's interim report comes out. You've obviously read it and digested it. In retrospect, were you a little too far-leaning in your statements that Iraq categorically had caches of weapons -- of chemical and biological weapons, given what's been found to date?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I think that's a bit of a non sequitur. You -- I said what I believed. I believed it then. I believe it now. I've not seen anything in Dr. Kay's -- first of all, his report is an interim report, and I've not seen anything in his report that disproves what I said.

Q But it hasn't proven that -- he talked about --

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's equally true. That's why it's called an interim report.

Q You painted a picture of extensive stocks though that even an interim report -

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wait, you go back and give me something that talks about extensive stocks. The U.N. reported extensive stocks. That is where that came from. And I said what I believed to be the case, and I don't -- I'd be surprised if you found the word extensive.

Q You used the word massive -- massive stockpiles of clandestine biological, chemical weapons. You've said that in congressional testimony. They haven't found any of that. That's all I'm asking.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I know. I've agreed with that, that they haven't. They've issued an interim report. They've also found that it's not true. They have not found that it is untrue. They simply are in the middle of their progress.

Q If it was so massive, why didn't they find it by now? That's kind of my point.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, massive. You could kill tens of thousands of people with materials in a room this size, and you're talking about a country the size of California. You know that.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, in the last two weeks, in some interviews and in some public statements, there's been an interesting, growing -- comments by some people -- in the administration on that side of the river that warlordism is a traditional factor in Afghanistan, and that whatever you call it, warlords will always be there. And they have opined that the United States should, perhaps, factor that into the way they approach Afghanistan and not deal with the problems of warlordism.

Do you concur with that emerging thought?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Where on the other side of the river are you hearing this? I haven't heard that.

Q Well, I'm reluctant to, obviously, disclose the names of these people, but --

SEC. RUMSFELD: No one's looking for names. Which -- which --

Q The National Security Council.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The NSC is saying that warlordism should be factored in? I just don't -- I haven't seen the reports and I don't know quite what that means.

Q No, I'm asking your personal opinion on these comments made in public, on occasion. Do you think that warlordism is something that should be factored into Afghanistan?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I don't know quite what it means in this case. If you're talking about militias existing in the country, clearly, militias have existed in parts of that country, not least of which are the Kurdish Peshmerga forces. And other elements have had militias --

Q Sir --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Just a minute.

Q Afghanistan, sir, not Iraq.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I'm sorry. Go to Afghanistan. I'm sorry. I was thinking of Iraq. No wonder I couldn't understand it.

(Light laughter.)

Q I thought you might --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm sorry. Yeah, I had the wrong country.

Thank you for --

Q They're close!

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes, they are. (Chuckles.)

I think that it is appropriate to take into account the history of any country, when you're dealing with that country. It is also true that there -- Afghanistan has had a history where they have had regional militias of various types and persuasions, some of which worked together, some of which worked against each other. That's still the case today, that there are elements that exist in the country.

The Loya Jirga, as I recall, produced a document which argued that they wanted a central government and they wanted a national government, and they wanted a national army. And that over some period of time, the capabilities of those regional militias or armies, in some cases, would presumably be incorporated in various ways into other security forces that are national. Some of that's taken place on a modest scale thus far. I know Mr. Karzai is interested in having that continue. How the Afghans will ultimately decide it is an open question.

I think the United States has been -- dealt with the Afghan situation and President Karzai in a perfectly appropriate and rational way. They've tried to be supportive of him. And the Bonn process, which is now moving along, and a constitution which addresses that to some extent, will help decide how that country ultimately goes.

In the last analysis, it's not going to be this side of the river or the other side of the river that's going to decide what happens in Afghanistan, it's going to be the Afghan people as they worry through their constitutional situation.

Yes?

Q Thank you. The U.N. secretary-general today said that the violence in Iraq seems to be moving into a new phase. Could you put the last five days, the string of bombings, into perspective for us in terms of is this some sort of new offensive, is it coordinated -- just how you view what's been happening.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I view it unfavorably. And I -- needless to say -- it's always heartbreaking when you see fine young people, men and women, in our services, coalition forces, the Iraqi security forces, and innocent Iraqis being killed. And there have been a lot of innocent Iraqis that have been killed in the last three or four or five days; a large number of innocent Iraqis have been killed by Iraqis and by foreign terrorists.

I think it's hard to put it in perspective while it's still going on. I don't know that I am wise enough to look ahead and then look back and say, "Well, this is what that was, those three or four days." It may be an isolated spike. It may have to do with Ramadan. It may have to do with an increase that will continue in incidents -- that's possible. And none of us can predict the future.

So I can't put it in perspective, except that we do know that it has been a higher level of incidence in the last period -- week, for example -- than had been the case previously.

Q Can I follow up?

Q And the extent to which it's coordinated?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I answered that earlier. It is something that they're looking at carefully. They've seen some signs of coordination, and in other instances, they don't -- haven't developed final certainty on the subject.

Q Mr. Secretary, have you responded yet to the letter that Senators Warner and Levin sent concerning Lieutenant General Boykin? And if so, can you tell us about your response?

And more broadly, can you talk to us for a minute about your relations with members of the

Republican Party on the Hill these days? Senator Warner is reported to be rather upset at the way he's been treated. Senator McCain has suggested that his treatment has been shabby. Is the department's relations with the Hill deteriorated to the point that your transformation agenda is in jeopardy?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Um -- it's like a Gatling gun! (Laughter.) I'm standing up here, and now I'm trying to remember what are the five questions that he asked. Is this the latest thing, that everyone has to ask five questions?

Q Burst attack!

SEC. RUMSFELD: You just -- you just can't believe --

Q We're conditioned by the Gatling gun responses!

SEC. RUMSFELD: You can't figure out a question that's good enough that it can stand on its own two feet -- (laughter) -- it has to be propped up with four soldiers underneath it? (Laughter.)

Number one, and help me along, folks, if I miss three or four -- the letter. I believe we have answered it. (Aside.) Where's Larry?

LAWRENCE DIRITA (special assistant to the secretary): Right. (Off mike) -- with Senator Warner.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I signed the letter. I had lunch with Senator Warner and discussed it. You know the content of the letter. And we had a very good lunch and a very good visit. It is also -- it is true that his position is slightly different than mine. It is also true that his position is slightly different from a lot of members of the House and the Senate. And it's always the case when you have 100 senators and 435 members of the House, that they're not going to agree with things that the administration does in every instance. And of course, once the founders of the Constitution divided the marbles and said, "You have some and you have some," they proceed to make judgments, and they do. And that's why they're there. That's why it's Article I of the Constitution. And the fact that there's a difference that occurs from time to time, it seems to me, ought not to be taken as a surprise. It's always been thus.

Second, there is no question but that Senator McCain is a very senior member of the committee and is in strong disagreement with the tanker proposal that was made by the United States Air Force, and that's a fact. And he's done a lot of work on it and he's made a lot of statements about it. And there -- I'm told by Senator Warner, when he was down having lunch, that they are working on a compromise of some kind.

Needless to say, I would like -- political compromise is what we do when the marbles have been divided, and it's to be expected. What will actually happen with that, I don't know, but I -- as one individual who would dearly love to see it solved and sorted through in a way that provides tankers for the United States Air Force to help the entire armed forces and in a way that is comfortable for the key members of the United States Senate.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q Sir, also, one of the major concerns that Americans have is the cost of the war, the economic cost. And when you or other members of your administration are asked why it differs by orders of magnitude from what you suggested before the war -- for instance, Andy Natsios saying \$1.5 billion for reconstruction --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You're going a little too fast for me.

Q I'm sorry. When you or other members of the administration are asked why the costs, the

actual costs, differ by orders of magnitude from what was projected by people like Andrew Natsios, who said Americans will pay no more than \$1.5 billion to reconstruct Iraq, the common answer seems to be that we -- one thing we did underestimate was the deterioration of the Iraqi infrastructure. I have two questions about that.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wait a second! You're just going so fast with so many pieces. I never -- I don't know what the individual you cited said, Natsios. He doesn't work here. He may have said what you said he said, he may not have, I don't know. And it may have been in a context that he was talking about his department -- I think it's AID; he may have been talking about the State Department budget; I just don't know. I mean, if you think about it, no one could say that number and have any sense of what it costs to maintain a hundred-plus- thousand U.S. military people in that country.

Q Well, let me just finish the question, if I --

SEC. RUMSFELD: It has to be in a different context.

Sorry.

Q Okay. Well, in any case, you and Condi Rice and others have said that you --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Be careful what you say I've said. I can't speak for others.

Q You and Condi Rice have said that the reason it's more expensive than anticipated was that you underestimated the deterioration of the Iraq --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I have not said that. And I do not believe you could find where I have said that.

Q Well, I asked you that two weeks ago, and that's what you answered, I believe.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, we'll get the transcript and see.

Q My question is -- if I could ask the question. (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: And we'll give it to you.

Q Skip the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: And I'll have an apology -- I'll have apology on it, if I'm wrong. But I'm -- you won't see one. (Laughter.)

Q My question is this: There were all these nightmare scenarios that did not happen, largely because of successful military planning. Now, how is it that all those good things are offset, and then some, by deteriorated Iraqi infrastructure? And isn't that something we should have known about?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wow. (Chuckles) I wish we -- we ought to have one of those things where someone can type it up on the board as it's being given, and then we could all see it and check the sentence structure.

Q (Off mike.) (Laughter; moans.)

(Inaudible cross talk.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Where's Torie when we need her?

THE PRESS: Ohh! (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: I do not believe that I ever once even came close to speculating on what it would cost. Indeed, I not only don't believe I did, I know I didn't because I knew I didn't know, and I didn't believe it was knowable. And people who did speculate as to what it was, I rolled my eyes and said, "My goodness, how do they have that kind of visibility into the unknowable? Why can't the people in my department have that visibility -- (laughter) -- if they're able to do that?"

I didn't know. I don't know. And I never speculated.

Q Mr. Secretary --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Now, it is true that I said -- I believe I said; I hope I said, because it's true -- that the infrastructure was more degraded after the years of Saddam Hussein than I had realized, or than the experts who advise us had realized. Fair enough.

Now, were there things that didn't happen that could have cost money -- which is a good question -- and why didn't they net it out? And the answer is, they did net it out. And the number is not any different than we didn't know before. We now know what we think. We now have seen the World Bank, we've seen the IMF -- or I think it was the IMF -- a couple of international organizations opine that it could cost somewhere in this range. And we've said that, "Gee, our portion of it is about this" -- the 20 (billion dollars). And we've said we're going to go out and get donors to contribute another chunk. And we've said Iraqi oil is going to pay for another chunk. And then we've said, from there on, the Iraqi people are going to have to rebuild their country, and that the United States would migrate next year, the next budget year, towards a more normal relationship -- was the phraseology I believe Josh Bolton has used. So I think -- I think the premise of your question is, as I have tried to suggest gracefully, imperfect. (Laughter.)

And the time is up! It's good to see y'all.

Q Mr. Secretary, one of the news weeklies said -- asked whether you had lost your mojo. (Laughter.) It's a simple question, without a premise. (Laughter.) Have you lost your mojo? Or do you need to consult the Oxford English Dictionary? (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: I didn't, but I consulted someone who did. And they asked me that, and I said I don't know what it means. And they said, in 1926 or something, it had to do with jazz music.

Q Magic.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Magic.

Q 1925.

SEC. RUMSFELD: And I guess the answer is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I don't know enough about mojo to know. (Laughter.)

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