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Menu

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### NEWS

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

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

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[News Archive](#)  
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**Presenter:** Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Saturday, December 6, 2003

### Secretary Rumsfeld Media Availability in Baghdad

Secretary Rumsfeld: You've had a chance to see the situation up north and how the Iraqi security forces are being integrated into the security activities in this country. Down here you've had a chance to see some of the actual training of the ICDC -- the civil defense elements. We are working hard on it and investing in it. We have wonderful people training them, and they are increasingly taking over responsibility for security in this country. We've gone from, I guess, zero, in probably around June first to here in early December something in excess of 140,000 Iraqis who are engaged in providing security in this country in one way or another -- whether border patrol, police, site protection, civil defense, or the new Iraqi army. They are volunteering in large numbers. The work that they're engaged in is dangerous. There have been something in excess of 107 Iraqi security people who have been killed, it's my understanding -- the point being that they are out in front serving their country, helping to put this nation on a path towards stability and prosperity. I have heard nothing but in very strong words of encouragement about the conduct and behavior and courage of the Iraqi security forces. As you may recall Gen. Odierno and his team up there believed that the quality of the intelligence we're getting is improving every day in large measure because of the extent to which so many Iraqis are now engaged in the security activities -- people who know the neighborhood, they know the language, they can tell things that are unusual and that ought not to be the way they are coming forward with information that's improving the coalition forces' ability to aggressively weed out the remnants of the Sadaam Hussein regime.

Q: *[inaudible]* U.S. forces being aggressive enough *[inaudible]*.

Secretary Rumsfeld: They're doing a good job, you bet.

Q: *[inaudible]* insurgents *[inaudible]* in terms of who they are and what they are and how many there are?

Secretary Rumsfeld: I think what I've seen firsthand is that fact that the approach that we've taken attempting to develop Iraqi security forces is the right approach, that the training is good that the work they're doing -- the ones that have been trained and put out on the street -- the work they're doing is being done well and professionally, and that now they represent the single largest security force in the country. They are larger than the U.S. forces and they are, I believe, at this stage almost larger than the all the coalition forces combined.

Q: From what you've seen and heard to what do you attribute to the falloff of the number of average daily attacks *[inaudible]*.

Secretary Rumsfeld: Well I think that it's too early to say it's a trend. It's a good sign that they've dropped off -- and they have dropped off. General Sanchez and I have been talking about that fact, but

of course Ramadan has just ended, there has been some rain in parts of the country, so I'm not in a position to say we're on a favorable trend line. I do know that we've got a lot of wonderfully talented people doing a very fine job out here and they deserve an awful lot of credit. They're enormously talented.

Q: You're on your third trip here after the war -- are you convinced things are on the right track or are there things you'd like to expedite? Where are you?

Secretary Rumsfeld: I'm always trying to expedite things. I think it's genetic with me. I'd like to see us to the extent we can continue to try accelerate the training and recruiting and deployment of Iraqi security forces. I think we've got a good program, and the people in our armed forces that are doing the vast amount of the training are doing it very well, but I'm constantly trying to find ways to increase the pace.

Q: Are you happy with the overall picture of what you've seen here, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary Rumsfeld: I am indeed.

Mr. Di Rita: Thanks a lot folks.



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