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Updated: 02 Jan 2004

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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Friday, December 12, 2003 10:03 a.m. EST

Secretary Rumsfeld Remarks to the National Conference of State Legislatures

Rumsfeld: Thank you. Thank you so much, Speaker Stevens (sp). Ladies and gentlemen, I -- San Francisco would have been kind of nice, now -- (Laughter.) -- now that I think about it.

It is a pleasure to be with you. I appreciate the support that the people here and throughout the country provide to our armed forces. I know that many of you have supported resolutions in the legislatures supporting the troops. Still others encourage local communities to provide support and assistance to the troops and their families. These efforts are important, and they're appreciated.

The -- I understand that you have honored some 20 -- I guess you call them civic soldiers, members of the National Conference of State Legislatures that were mobilized last winter in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. We thank them for their service and for what they've done to help liberate some 25 million Iraqi people.

I guess when the framers of the Constitution set to work, they -- the first task they assigned to the new federal government was to provide for the common defense. Needless to say, we could not accomplish that critical mission without the contributions of the people of this country and the state legislatures and the state governments. The support for the Guard and Reserve, the hosting of our military installations across this land play an important role in our security.

The global war on terror began, one would say, with the September 11th -- although there were many terrorist acts well before that. Each of you have a stake in the success of this mission. Terrorists have demonstrated their willingness to kill innocent men, women and children; to kill them in this country and in many other countries across the globe; within the last two weeks, in several more. No longer can our country really depend on the two great oceans and the two friends, north and south, to provide for our security.

To defend our cities and our people and our way of life, some suggest that we should just hunker down and try to defend against a terrorist. The problem is, a terrorist can attack at any time, any place, using any technique, and it is physically not possible to defend at every place, at every moment of the day or night, against every conceivable type of technique.

Therefore, the only choice we have, as free people, is to take the global war on terror to the terrorists and to find them where they are and to deal with them and to deal with countries that provide haven for them. I remember when I was President Reagan's Middle East envoy, shortly after the 241 Marines were killed in Beirut, Lebanon, and it was a truck bomb that came in and blew up a barracks, the immediate reaction, of course, was to put these concrete barricades that you see around Washington in various

places around barracks. And of course, the next thing they did was started lobbing rocket-propelled grenades over the barricades. And the next thing, you'd go down to the Corniche in Beirut, Lebanon, and look, and here was the British embassy, and it had a wire mesh draped over a five- or six-story building to repel rocket-propelled grenades when they hit it. And of course, the next thing to do was the terrorists would go after soft targets, people going to and from work.

So the point is, they go to school on us and we go to school on them, but the idea that you can defend sufficiently without altering your entire way of life is just false. We can't simply defend. We can't hunker down and hope they'll go away.

The thing that's distinctive about free people is their freedom to act, their ability to do what they want and go where they wish and send their children to school and know that they're going to be able to come home safely. I think it was Lenin who said the purpose of terrorism is to terrorize. It's to cause fear and to alter behavior on the part of people. And to the extent free people are terrorized, they are not free, they are captive to that fear.

So we as a country and our friends and other free nations around the world are particularly vulnerable to terrorism, unlike a dictatorship, which can repress people and live in a circumstance where people don't have to do the things that free people have to do.

I do indeed recognize the role that all of you play in our national security. If you think about it, there's no way we could conduct a global war on terror without the Guard and Reserve, for example. More than 325,000 National Guard and Reserve forces have been mobilized to fight the global war on terror, and I think there's something in the neighborhood of 175,000 to 180,000 currently on active duty. We all know that when that occurs, there's a stress on the force. It's not easy. People leave their jobs, people leave their families, they go to distant lands and put their lives at risk.

The wonderful thing about what we're seeing in this world of ours is that every single one of them is a volunteer. They weren't conscripted. They weren't required to do this. They put up their hand and said, "Send me."

The forces that are currently in Iraq, for example, are working hard to try to help these recently liberated 25-26 million people to find a different way of life. Those people are scarred by decades of living in a command economy where they weren't allowed to do anything they weren't told to do and in a repressive dictatorship that was noted principally for mass graves with tens of thousands of people piled on top of each other, men, women and children; torture chambers; the use of chemical weapons against their own people and their neighbors; and they're being asked now to navigate from where they were to a system of government that protects the rights of the diverse religious and ethnic minorities in the country, to provide for their own security and to move from the command, Stalinist-type economy to a freer economy that will allow the energy and the entrepreneurship that creates wealth and opportunity for people.

Consider what they've accomplished, what's been accomplished in just seven months, or seven and a half months.

Our plan called for the establishment of an Iraqi cabinet of ministers appointed by a governing council. The coalition did that in four months. It took 14 months to do it in postwar Germany after World II.

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

The plan called for the establishment of a new Iraqi currency. The new Iraqi dinars began circulating in five months. It took three years to do that in postwar Germany.

The plan called for the establishment of a new Iraqi police force. It's still being built, but we had a reasonable number of them in place, trained, in two months. It took 14 months to do that in postwar Germany.

The plan called for the establishment of a new Iraqi army. We have completed and trained and deployed the first battalion in less than five months. It took 10 years to decide to do that in postwar Germany.

It called for rebuilding Iraq's hospitals and clinics. Today all 240 of Iraq's hospitals are functioning, and 95 percent of the 1,200 medical clinics are open and serving the Iraqi people.

The plan calls for getting electric power up to prewar production levels. That happened on October 6th.

The plan called for getting the Iraqi justice system up and running. Today some 400 Iraqi courts are back in business.

It called for the establishment of a free press. There are now 170 newspapers in the country of Iraq. Not all of them print things we like, but -- (Soft laughter.) -- but I guess that's life.

The plan called for getting Iraq's education system up and running. Today 5.1 million Iraqi students are in classrooms. Fifty-one million new textbooks have been printed and issued. Ninety-seven thousand Iraqis applied to attend college for the 2003 fall semester.

The coalition has done all of that, which is an amazing set of accomplishments, but they've done it not in a peaceful country, but in a country that -- where there is a low-intensity conflict that's been going on since major combat operations ended May 1st, where people are being killed, where people who are associating with the coalition and providing assistance in some instances put their lives at risk.

We've gone from zero to one hundred and sixty-plus thousand Iraqis providing for the security of that country. There are more -- now more Iraqis in the army, the police, the border patrol, the site protection and the civil defense units than there are U.S. troops, British troops and all of the other 32 countries that have forces in there. They -- the Iraqis themselves today represent the largest element providing security in that country.

The -- and they're not sitting around in their barracks talking. They're out, on the streets, and more than 115 of them have been killed in the last three and a half months. So they're putting their lives at risk to try to move their country towards a better life.

The attacks are not over. It would be nice if they were. But coalition forces are doing a good job. They're frequently out on joint patrols with Iraqis in the police or the civil defense. They're getting good intelligence from the Iraqis, who speak the language, know the neighborhood, have situational awareness that foreign troops simply can't have.

It's going to take patience, it's going to take courage, but those are qualities that the American people have in abundance, and anyone who has the opportunity to talk to the young men and women in uniform who are serving our country in that part of the world so courageously know that they have a great deal of pride in what they're doing. They have confidence that what they're doing is making a difference. And there's, I think, a lot to be grateful for as we move into this holiday season.

So, now, with that, I'll stop and respond to questions. And I'm told that 50 hands will go up at once. (Laughter.)

There's some microphones there. There's one there, there's one here, there's one over there. And if you kind of line up, I'll try to be not too wordy and respond.

Yes?

Q: Good morning. I'm Pam Maier from Delaware, representative. I'm interested in whether the idea of the draft or two years military service is a part of your plan for the future.

Rumsfeld: Well, my -- Pam, my attitude about that is that if we ever needed conscription, we ought to do it. If for whatever reason we weren't wise enough or clever enough or generous enough to attract and retain the people we need to serve our country, then to defend our country, we should have a conscription.

On the other hand, I was one of the first members of Congress back in the mid-1960s to call for an all volunteer military. And I submitted legislation and testified in both the House and the Senate in the '60s recommending that we go to an all-volunteer system. And the reason was is it was being used as a crutch to pay people about 50, 60, 70 percent of what they could be making in the civilian manpower market. We were drawing them in, training them, and then they were leaving because they didn't want to be there.

Now, you had to balance that. On the one hand, it was not efficient. The volunteer force we have today is professional, it's terrific, they're doing a great job. Everyone's there because they want to be there. That's a good thing. What's missing, and what was wonderful about conscription is that so many people got training they otherwise wouldn't have gotten. They got to know people from all across this great country. They had an experience with the military that was in large measure positive. They valued that, they're proud of that.

And so it requires a balance there. And at the moment, we see no need to go to conscription. We're getting adequate numbers of people volunteering. And to the extent we don't have the retention and recruiting numbers that we need, then all you have to do is alter the incentives, which is what everyone in business here does. If they can't hire the people they need to hire, they sweeten the kitty. So I think it's not likely.

Yes?

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I appreciate the opportunity to give us some information about why many of us are here. I'm a state senator, Bill Morrisette, from the state of Oregon. I'm concerned about available domestic spending, money available for domestic programs. In the state of Oregon, we have an \$800 million deficit that will probably go down in flames in this next election, which means we will cut further into health and human services. We've had people die because of lack of funding -- or lack of medication.

This morning we heard information about the new Medicaid -- Medicare approach, Medicare plan. And there's a provision in it called the clawback, which means that states will have to repay any savings that they have from dual eligibility, which will equal \$17 billion over the next 10 years. Now I don't expect you to know the details of that plan. I simply --

Rumsfeld: Good. (Laughter.)

Q: No, I simply want to make the point that --

Rumsfeld: I don't.

Q: -- there are many, many vital programs that we're not able to fund --

Rumsfeld: Fair enough.

Q: -- and with the amount of money that's been spent on the war and so on, there -- you mentioned balance. There needs to be a balance.

Rumsfeld: Yeah. Let me comment on that. I came to Washington in 1957, out of the Navy -- I'd been a pilot -- and knocked on doors, got a job working for a congressman. Eisenhower was president, and then Kennedy was president. In those days, the United States of America was spending 10 percent of our gross domestic product on defense.

I was secretary of defense in 1975, '6 and '7. In those days, we were spending about 4-1/2 to 5 percent of our gross domestic product on defense.

Today we're down to spending about 3 to 3.1 or 3.2 percent of our gross domestic product on defense.

Now can we afford that? Look at the alternatives. Without a peaceful and stable world, nothing is possible. Money's a coward. People don't invest. Jobs aren't created. Risks aren't taken. And all you have to do is look at a war zone and a -- you see what happens to the lives of human beings, and it's a tragedy.

So question: Can we make good choices as to what we do with our money? That's for state and local and federal officials to decide how they want to allocate that resources.

But we're down at one of the lower percentages of gross domestic product on national defense spending as they've been in my entire adult lifetime. And if one asked me, could we afford it? You bet. We can't afford not to invest to provide for our national security. (Applause.)

I take it that mike's not working? (Laughter.)

Yes?

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I'm Jack Hatch, state senator from Iowa. As a follow-up on that previous question, you mentioned in your opening remarks that the Constitution provides for the common defense. Well, it also requires the protection of something else. And President Truman mentioned that in 1959 when he conducted a series of seminars at Columbia University. He said it took the Supreme Court 150 years to find one word in the Constitution, and that word appears twice, and that word is "welfare" -- provide and protect for the general welfare for the people of the United States.

The war has drained significant resources away from domestic programs. And you said how could we not provide for the defense of this country. But also, don't we also have a responsibility to provide for the welfare? And when people in our states -- from Oregon, Iowa -- are suffering from a reduction of revenue, draining resources that we have, how fair is it to shift enormous federal funds away from domestic programs and putting at risk, great risk, not only the programs that we've had for the past 20 or 30 years, but also providing for the general welfare of our citizens?

Rumsfeld: Well, it's a fair question. And that's the question that the American people answer when they put people in public office. And each local government can decide what taxing policy it wants and what allocation of resources it wants. Each state entity can decide how it wants to tax its people and how it wants to spend for the people. And the same thing's true with the federal government.

And the idea that the Defense Department is draining away massive sums from the human needs of our country is factually just not true. How could that be the case if you've gone down from -- as a percentage of our gross domestic product, from 10 percent in the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, to 5 percent in the Ford and Carter years, down to 3- plus percent in the George W. Bush years? And even if it were true, then it's -- the answer to that allocation is in the hands of the people, and it is not, certainly, in the hands of the Department of Defense. What we do is make a case and compete for funds that the federal government decides it wants to extract from the American people in taxes and revenues. And we have to make a case, and the case is then decided by the president, in the first instance, with a

recommendation to the Congress. And then under our Constitution, Article I, the president proposes and the Congress disposes. And the representatives and senators from the people in this room, the federal level, make those judgments. And I happen to think they're making pretty good judgments.

Yes?

Q: Thank you. I'm not sure if that's working. (Referring to the microphone.) Okay?

Rumsfeld: You sound great.

Q: All right. Representative Cynthia Thielen, assistant Republican floor leader in Hawaii in the legislature. Aloha.

Rumsfeld: Aloha.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you listed a number of accomplishments that are occurring in Iraq. Every day on the mainstream press and television, electronic media, all we hear about are the problems, the blunders, the difficulties. How is your department going to be able to get more information out about the positive things that are happening so when we talk with our constituents and the people in our state, we're able to say we are actually making progress?

Rumsfeld: Well, I guess, you know, when you live in a free system, the press is going to decide what's news. And if they decide bad news is news and good news isn't news, there's not a whole lot we can do about it except to try to get more and more people knowledgeable. So we've been working very hard to do that.

The reality is that there are good things happening. The reality is that there are people being killed, there are people being wounded, Iraqis as well as Americans and Brits and Spanish and Italians and others. And the question is, is the task before us worth doing? And the answer is, we believe it is and 32 nations believe it is. And the Iraqi people believe it is or they wouldn't be volunteering to stand in line and serve in the Iraqi security forces and putting their own lives at risk. There may be some number of thousands -- for the sake of argument, say 5,(000) to 10,000 out of 23 million Iraqis that don't believe it's the right direction, who want Saddam Hussein back, who intend to commit terrorist acts until they're able to break the will of the coalition.

And the one thing we're doing is we've had over 120, I believe, members of the House of Representatives go over there and, I think, 20 or 30 senators, come back and now they're back in their constituencies talking to their people. They've seen, Democrats, Republicans alike, they've seen what they've seen. They've all come back and said that what they saw there was notably different from what they -- the impression they have had from reading the papers and watching the television.

And so I think there'll be an awful lot -- and the American people have a good sense of -- a good center of gravity. They've got good judgment. And my impression is that over time, enough people will know what the facts are, and they'll report the facts, and the American people will make judgments.

Yes, sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here today. I'm Representative Dave Hogue from the State of Utah House of Representatives. One thing I worry about with our troops in Iraq is -- and we don't hear a lot about it, we just hear from time to time in the media. But what's the role now that Syria and Turkey and Iran are playing in this whole situation?

Rumsfeld: Turkey is being helpful. We are using Turkey as an access point into the northern part of the country. They're doing a good job of guarding their border. And Syria and Iran are being unhelpful. Sometimes I understate for emphasis. (Laughter.)

Yes, sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, I thought I should balance off the mike situation.

Rumsfeld: Good! I'm glad to see you over there!

Q: I retired from the Army in 1993; served in Europe three times, the last being in 1991. But after the Desert Storm conflict, they cut the -- on the Army side, that I'm most familiar with, from 18 divisions to 12, as you know. And then, under the Clinton times we went from 12 to 10. Given the threats nationwide, the war on terror, do we have enough forces in the military to do what we're doing?

Rumsfeld: The Joint Chiefs and the Joint Staff work with the combatant commanders looking at the various contingency plans we have as to the kinds of things that can go wrong in the world that we might have to be able to deal with, and their answer to that question is yes.

Now, is the force currently stressed? Yes. You don't have a spike of activity and have 130,000, 125,000 -- whatever it is -- folks over in Iraq and not have a stress on the force. But the total force concept, as you know, was designed for that. It was designed to have an active force, a Guard and a Reserve, and in a time of crisis, they would be called in and you would spike up in activity, and then not stay there over a prolonged period of time; you would do what you had to do and then it would taper down.

I just left a meeting with General Pete Schoomaker, the new chief of staff of the Army, and all of us four stars who were in town, talking about that subject. And right now, we are up, I think over 2 percent over their authorized end strength which is allowed in the law for a situation like this. And we may very well go to 3 percent over his authorized end strength. They're doing analysis now. And to the extent we need more end strength, needless to say, we'd ask for it and the Congress would give it. At the moment, we don't have any studies that would -- any analyses that are sufficiently persuasive that at the present time it's needed. And it's expensive, so if you do it, you've got to not do something else. And they're considering that issue.

We do have a very good thing that happened. We got some transformational legislation through the Congress which is going to enable us to do a much better job using the civilian workforce and the contracting workforce rather than using military people for tasks that need not be performed by military people. Right now it's estimated we have over 300,000 uniformed personnel doing tasks that don't require a person in uniform. So to the extent we can use contractors, for example, for force protection in various locations, to the extent we can use civilian personnel, but the problem has been the civilian personnel system is so antiquated that in some instances a manager would have 100 people working for them, and they'd have to have four, five or six different personnel systems for 100 people. And they couldn't deploy them. They can't -- it takes months to hire somebody. It takes years to fire somebody. So anyone with any sense in the Department of Defense who wanted a task done would reach in, grab a person in uniform, knowing they could tell them what to do, have them do it, if they don't do it, deploy them someplace else and get on with life. (Laughter.)

Now we've got changes, flexibility in the personnel system now that we believe will make better use of civilian personnel because people won't be driven away from them by virtue of the fact that we didn't manage their system, that system. The personnel system for the Defense Department, civilian side, is managed by the Office of Personnel Management, and we manage the military side. And so that's why everyone's gravitated towards people in uniform.

Yeah?

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming. We appreciate it. (Off mike.) -- state representative from Indiana. And I have the privilege of serving a large number of civilian professional and support persons

that work at Crane Naval Base. People are surprised to learn that there's a naval base in the cornfields of Indiana. (Laughter.) We also have an Army component at Crane Naval Base, a large munitions depot.

We are very concerned in Indiana because this is our last military base in Indiana. And if we lose Crane Naval Base through the next BRAC, we not only believe that we will be hurting national defense, but also, that area of our state will be come a ghost region. (Off mike.) -- many states that are concerned about the upcoming BRAC. Could you give us some comments about that and what you see happening? Thank you, Mr. Secretary

Rumsfeld: Sure. Thank you.

BRAC, for the uninitiated, is a base-closing commission. I've never been through one of these before. They came into life and being when I was back in the private sector and had left the government. But the experts estimate that the Department of Defense has something in the neighborhood of 20 to 23 percent more base structure than force structure. That is to say, we're wasting the taxpayers' money by having bases and force protection for bases and maintenance for bases that we don't need, and that those funds could be better put in other places. Therefore, the Congress passed a base-closing commission which is going to go into business, I think, next year and then make a series of recommendations eventually the following year.

And it will be a bipartisan, serious, substantive look at what's the most cost-effective way of doing our business. We're doing the same things overseas, only we do it without a commission there because we have the flexibility to just look at the overseas basing structure. And for the most part, it is kind of, in some respects, a leftover from the Cold War, and it's time to fix that, too. And we're in the process of doing that.

All I can say is that, as the gentleman over here said earlier, we have to have priorities in where we spend our money, both between defense and non-defense; we also have to have it within defense, so that we see that we're proper stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. And we'll do our darn best to see that that happens.

Yes?

Q: Thank you. I'm Representative Tom Anderson from Alaska, and I just want to speak on behalf of my colleagues here and the state of Alaska that we really appreciate your service to the country.

Rumsfeld: Thanks.

Q: And she stole my question about base closures, so I'll ask if you plan on increasing the infrastructure in Alaska, that very important area. (Laughter.)

Rumsfeld: Well, first of all, thank you for your compliment. (Laughter.) And second, no special pleading! (Laughter.)

We are already putting some missile defense interceptors up there at Fort Greely, as I recall, so I would say that's an uptick. (Laughter.)

Yes?

Q: Thank you. Senator Becky Lourey from Minnesota. It's always said that if you hear something three times, you tend to remember it. So I will echo what some of my other colleagues have --

Rumsfeld: Sounds like piling on to me. (Laughter.)

Q: Yeah. Well, but if you think back, it's helpful. Even though health and human services is not your

area of expertise, the fact that the states have to pay for dual eligibles is pretty scary for us in these times of deficits, particularly when the federal government, you know, has so much more control over setting policies and handling a deficit and has a much better opportunity for collecting revenues than do the states.

So I thought that I would suggest an area where perhaps you could find some savings in the military. And I want you to know that my second son is flying helicopters in Baghdad, so every time a report comes out, I hold my breath until I find out whether or not it is his plane that has gone down.

Rumsfeld: Tell him thank you. We appreciate the service.

Q: He is really thrilled -- (Applause.) -- but with that applause, I must admit that I wrote a resolution in the Minnesota Senate against going to war unilaterally. (Laughter, applause.) But --

Rumsfeld: That's why we went in with 32 other countries.

Q: But now that we're there, I know we cannot leave, as we did before. You know, we need to stay there. And I am proud of my son for being there, and he is in fact very happy to be there.

But the point I don't want to be diverted from making is that -- (Laughter.) -- is that I'm very upset about the services to our servicemen that Halliburton is providing. Not only could we save a lot of money if they weren't overcharging us as much as they are, but the services that they are providing now for our servicemen are not as efficient as, for instance, they were in Bosnia, when my son was in Bosnia, and the Army was responsible for that.

So I hope you will really look into that. And it is a great concern when our servicemen and -women are over there, and an entity, non-bid, such as Halliburton, is not doing the job that our own Army had always done much better.

Rumsfeld: Let me make a couple of comments. First, if I'm not mistaken, we have moved from uniform personnel providing food services for the men and women in uniform, in many, many places we've moved to private contractors and they've done a very good job. And to the extent they don't do a good job, they get let go as a contractor and it gets changed.

Second, I'm not intimately knowledgeable about what you're talking about with respect to this particular company. But I was advised this morning that what is going -- there was no overpayment to any company, and in fact, there is a fairly normal process going on where they submit bills from their subcontractors and from their own; it gets discussed and debated. We've got auditors that crawl all over these things. And what you're reading about in the paper is not an overpayment at all, it is a disagreement between the United States government -- it may -- I am not an expert; I shouldn't be speaking about this. But my understanding is it may be a disagreement between the company and the Department of Defense as to what -- and possibly between the company and subcontractors as to what ought to be charged. But there has not, to my knowledge, been any overpayment, and I wouldn't want your comment to leave these good folks with a misimpression.

Ah, ah, ah! We're going to move around the room. (Laughter.)

Yes, sir?

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. John Ulmer, state representative from Goshen, Indiana. One, I appreciate you and the president's defending our country. The question I have is what is the mindset of al Qaeda and other terrorists against the United States?

Rumsfeld: I don't think it is against the United States. I think that what we have happening in the world is a -- probably a relatively small fraction of a religion is being taught that anyone that does not

live the life the way they think it ought to be lived, and has values that are different than their values, is corrupting the world and corrupting the people in the world, and that therefore, the thing to do is to have that influence go away. And it basically is Western values, Western culture.

One other aspect of it that I think is probably important is that the countries that are being relatively successful in the world are those countries that have freer political systems, freer economic systems, systems that include women in their activities, in working and voting and participation, not countries that exclude half of their population; not countries that reject advances in technologies. They're the ones that tend not to be doing.

So when they get up in the morning and look at the world and they see this disparity, and yet they know -- they teach, I should say, a small portion of that religion teaches people in some radical madrassas schools that there's some reason why they're down and others are up, and that those values have to be opposed. And so what you found in that region was a rejection not so much of us, but the Western presence in the region, and a rejection of the governments in that region which they put at risk for cooperating with Western nations such as the United States and Western Europe.

But the idea that there is some sort of a personal animus against the United States, I think it's no more so than simply it's always the way it is when you're the largest country and the most powerful country, and particularly a country where our culture -- think what our movies and our music -- how they spread across the globe and, from some people's perspective, affect or infect -- (Chuckles.) -- I think they feel, infect their societies with our values, our culture, our music, our movies, and that is in many respects totally different from what they believe in. So I think I would kind of put it that way.

I also would add, I think that it's going to be awful tough for those of us here to change that. I think the change is going to have to come in within that religion; they're going to have to recognize that a small group of people are hijacking and misrepresenting what that religion is about, and training people to go out and kill innocent men, women and children, including people in that region and people in that religion, let there be no doubt about; I mean, the attacks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the attacks in Turkey very recently are examples.

Yes?

I'm getting the hook. We'll make you the last one. How's that? (Laughter.) You will be the last one.

Q: No.

Rumsfeld: No, she will be the last one. Sorry. (Laughter.)

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'm Mike Balboni. I'm a state senator from New York. I chair the legislature's Homeland Security Committee. And in that regard, there have been recent press accounts about weapons of mass destruction being able to be used by the Iraqi army right prior to the invasion.

First of all, what kind of a threat does the United States still face as a result of weapons of mass destruction in that region of the world? And could you please compare that to the threats that we face in the former Soviet Republics and their inability to catalogue any of the biological and chemical weapons that were available at one time.

Rumsfeld: Generally, weapons of mass destruction, they talk about nuclear weapons, biological weapons, chemical weapons. None of those countries in that particular region currently have nuclear weapons other than Pakistan and India. Some have programs. We've just learned a great deal about Iran's program, a company that is on the terrorist list, and they have a nuclear program which the International Atomic Energy group, the IAEA, just discovered they have been hiding for a good many years.

One of the problems with these societies is, in a closed society, it's very difficult to know what they're doing. We do know that a number of them have chemical weapon programs. Syria clearly does. Saddam Hussein had programs. In fact, he used chemical weapons on his own people as well as on the Iranians.

The biological piece of it I would elevate as extremely worrisome. It is so easy to do, relatively. It doesn't require moving big things. It can be put together in relatively small rooms. And it can be moved across borders because of dual-use aspects of so many elements involved with biological warfare. And you're quite right, the former Soviet Union had a lot of those activities taking place in Russia proper as well as in some of the former Soviet republics.

So I would end the answer by saying this: The United States of America cannot deal with this problem alone. This is a problem that requires a broad group of coalition of nations to recognize that those weapons in the hands of terrorists can put at risk not 3,000 people, as were killed in September 11th, but 30,000 or 300,000 people. And that is a very serious problem that we face as a people.

And it's quite clear, given the proliferation of ballistic missile technology and the proliferation of nuclear technologies, the proliferation of these other WMD capabilities, only an initiative in the U.N. or outside the U.N., with a very broad group of countries agreeing that that's a serious problem and coming together to figure out ways to reduce the proliferation of those technologies, are we going to -- I mean, think what the world would be like if we had double the number of nuclear powers and double the number -- and that half of the new ones had biological weapons, for example. That's a worrisome world five, 10, 15, 20 years out.

Thank you.

Last question.

Q: Thank you. I'm Pat -- (Off mike.) -- representative from Kansas. And I'm really asking a state-level question.

Rumsfeld: Don't.

Q: (Off mike.)

Rumsfeld: We'll go over here, Pat. (Laughter.)

Q: No --

Rumsfeld: I don't know the answers to state-level questions!

Q: You know more than I do. (Laughter.) (Off mike.) -- state legislator, and you are not the first person to bring the National Guard into a foreign engagement, but the magnitude of the reliance on the National Guard is much greater than in other conflicts. Where our employers -- (Off mike.) -- our burden in Kansas is much less than other states', but it's had serious losses of life. But we need to plan. We have overtime in corrections. (Off mike.) -- our Public Safety Department. Our families, who are proud to serve, also have different benefit structures from the traditional military, and a lot of their families are (experiencing stress?), because they're proud to serve, but they didn't expect to be over there. I --

Rumsfeld: Okay. Let me comment on that.

Q: I'd like you to know -- to ask and to share with us: Do you foresee a continued heavy reliance on National Guard, number one? And number two, recognizing and being very happy that Congress did something on the benefits side within the past month or two, is there a formal way that (we can partner ?) to make sure that those folks, when they come home, get what they need and that their

families are getting what they need -- (Off mike.)? (Applause.)

Rumsfeld: Let me -- in the event it looked as though our country in the 21st century would be required to function in a world that meant that we needed to have a larger force, active force, and therefore make less use of the Guard and Reserve, obviously our country should do that. That is not readily apparent at this moment.

One of the things we are doing is rebalancing the active force with the Guard and the Reserve. Twenty-five years ago or so, the -- someone decided that the way to do things was to put critical elements in the Guard and Reserve and not have them on the active force. So as a result, we've got five, six or 10 skill sets, like military police or whatever, where 95 percent of them are in the Guard and Reserve, instead of the active force -- Civil Affairs people -- and there are any number of other disciplines like that.

The result is that, therefore, when you're in a situation like we're in, you have to reach into the Guard and Reserve and activate people. Well, that's not the way we should be living. We need to rebalance that.

And that's what I was meeting with General Schoomaker about this morning. He's in the process of moving some skill sets to the Guard and Reserve that we have too much of in the active force, and taking those skill sets that are in the Guard and Reserve that we need on active duty. The net effect of that is, there will be fewer people called up, and people will be called up less often. And that is a good thing, certainly from the standpoint of families, from the standpoint of employers and the like.

The other thing is, I mean, the fact is that these folks signed up to do it. Every one of them volunteered. Everyone wanted to do that. Everyone's employers know that. Their families know that. And they are doing a superb job.

And there are relatively few skill sets where people are called up too frequently. There are some; let there be no doubt.

But our goal is to not call the same people up over and over and over. If they wanted to be in the active force, they would have volunteered for that, instead of the Guard and Reserve. We understand that. But we think we can get this thing back in balance, and it's -- we're working hard on it and trying to do it.

Thank you very much. I wish you all well. (Applause.)

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