


 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE


United States Department of Defense.

News Transcript

 On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040106-secdef1104.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

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

Menu

Updated: 06 Jan 2004

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

Tuesday, January 6, 2004 1:35 p.m. EST

DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers

(Participating were Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Photos taken during the briefing are available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jan2004/040106-D-9880W-031.html>, <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jan2004/040106-D-9880W-050.html>, <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jan2004/040106-D-9880W-037.html> and <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jan2004/040106-D-9880W-113.html>.

Rumsfeld: Good afternoon, and happy New Year to everyone. I hope everyone had a good holiday and is all rested up for the year ahead.

The last year was a busy one for all of us, certainly those of us in the department, as well as all of you covering it. And I suspect that the coming year will be a equally busy one.

Our agenda is clear. The global war on terror is continuing, and it will for the foreseeable future. As we prosecute the war, we'll need to continue to strengthen, improve and transform our forces; modernize and restructure programs and commands, which we're working on; streamline DOD processes and procedures. Already what I would characterize as remarkable progress has been made in these areas.

In addition, Afghanistan is free and moving forward. This past Sunday the loya jirga approved a new constitution for Afghanistan that represents a truly significant milestone in that country's path to a moderate, democratic society.

As all of you know, the new constitution balances power between the branches of government, extends equal status to men and women, promotes tolerance, extends protections to minority groups and paves the way for national elections this summer.

I think all of us have followed the process of taking a country and providing some direction and watching the Afghan people, with their various ethnic groups and divisions and difficulties over the decades -- civil wars, droughts, occupation -- and seeing how they have taken to this loya jirga process, compromised, discussed, debated, voted and stepped forward with a constitution that offers prospects for a future for that country that I think is historic.

Americans and certainly the 38 other nations that are part of the coalition in Afghanistan can be rightly proud of the Afghan people; of the leadership of President Karzai and his administration; of the role of the United States in this process and the coalition countries in creating an environment where that can happen, military and civilian leadership; and in the achievements that have been accomplished by the Afghan people.

A similar but different process is taking place in Iraq. After three decades of brutality and oppression, Iraqis are slowly taking control of their circumstances. Some two dozen Iraqi cabinet ministers now contribute leadership on a day-to-day basis to the business of the government. If all goes as planned, and it occasionally does in life -- not always -- an interim but sovereign Iraqi government could be in place sometime next summer.

Thanks to the work of our 36-nation coalition, ever-increasing numbers of Iraqis are involved in their own security, and Iraqis, now totalling something in excess of 160,000 Iraqis, now make up by far the largest component of the total coalition of Iraqi security forces in Iraq. Indeed, today is the National Army Day in Iraq, a holiday that predates the former regime and coincides with this year's graduation of some 705 recruits of the 2nd Battalion of the new Iraqi army. Today's graduates will assist the 1st Armored Division in and around Baghdad, and also help train new recruits of subsequent battalions, whose mission, unlike that of Saddam Hussein's army, is to protect and defend the Iraqi people, not to oppress them.

Terrorist networks worldwide have been damaged. Our 90-nation coalition in the global war on terror continues to track and hunt down and defeat terrorists before they strike.

Work continues on several ongoing initiatives here in the department. First, we're working to rebalance the active and reserve components in all of the services. That work is moving along very well. Experience thus far in the global war on terror, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, has shown that we have a somewhat of a Cold War mix of active and reserve forces remaining, and we really do need to adjust it to reflect the circumstances of this new century. The military departments are working with the Guard and the Reserve and the entire department to come forward with proposals that will set a new balance between active and Reserve that will fit the 21st century.

Second, we will be adjusting our global posture. As you know, we have been discussing it with our allies and our friends and partners around the world.

Third, we're in the process of implementing our new National Security Personnel System as an important step in better managing the civilian and military work forces. Executed properly, the new system, we believe, can play a key role in relieving stress on the force.

Going forward, we will continue to be aggressively pursuing the global war on terrorism, strengthening joint war-fighting capabilities, transforming the Joint Force, strengthening our intelligence capabilities, strengthening our ability to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; improving force manning through quality of life, infrastructure and other modifications. We'll be refining and improving DOD's role in homeland security. We'll be streamlining our budget contingency planning and other departmental processes.

We have a full agenda. It's what President Bush has asked of us. It is what the American people expect of us. And it is a work that we intend to proceed with over the coming months of 2004.

General Myers?

Myers: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

And good afternoon, and happy new year.

I'd like to echo the secretary's comments about the previous year. It was indeed a busy year for the U. S. military. Looking back on last year helps us focus on the priorities that lie ahead for all of us.

The U.S. military continues with deployments around the globe. And while there's roughly 125,000 troops stationed in Iraq and 13,000 in Afghanistan, we still have over 2,000 men and women stationed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, guarding al Qaeda detainees; over a thousand service members participating in Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, nearly 3,500 involved with the stabilization operations in the Balkans, and 1,500 in Central and South America conducting counter-drug operations and other training, just to

name a few of the many deployments our forces are involved in today.

As you would suspect, though, Iraq and Afghanistan remain top priorities and will continue to be so into the foreseeable future.

In Afghanistan, the coalition-led Provincial Reconstruction Team at Kunduz transferred authority to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in a ceremony today. This German-led PRT in Kunduz is the first in Afghanistan to operate under NATO control, marking another milestone in the planned expansion of the PRT program.

In Iraq, we're continuing the operations which have yielded us favorable results over the last several months. We continue to round up former regime elements and continue to confiscate large amounts of weapons. Our commanders on the ground are well equipped to counter those wishing to carry out violent acts against the coalition or Iraqi people. We are making great strides in Iraq and will continue to work with the Iraqi leaders and the CPA to ensure a smooth transition to self-governance later this year.

And with that, we'll take your questions.

Rumsfeld: Charlie?

Q: Mr. Secretary, you and General Myers often extol the virtues of our U.S. all-volunteer force, and you yourself have predicted repeatedly that the draft will not return. I wonder, sir, do you feel that the Pentagon is keeping faith with those volunteers in the numerous stop-loss orders that have been called in the past two years, including the one called by the Army yesterday in which prospective retirees will not be allowed to go from Iraq and Afghanistan, until they get home and possibly 90 days beyond that. Do you think that the Pentagon is keeping faith with those people?

Rumsfeld: I do, Charlie. I think the way one can -- first of all, you've got to remember that each person involved in the armed forces, active and reserve and Guard, volunteered, and they made a conscious decision to serve their country. And God bless them; we appreciate that they've done that.

The stop losses you've mentioned occur from time to time. You said numerous; I don't know what the definition of that is, but in this case I'm told there are about 1,500 out of a force in Afghanistan and Iraq that numbers, what, 130,000-plus, that are stop loss, another 1,500-plus, I think, are stop moves. Those are active duty people who aren't going to be moving at a normally predictable time.

And I think the answer to your question is that the -- what we're also trying to do, obviously, is to provide the kinds of incentives to reenlistment that would reduce that number, and I'm sure you were briefed on that. What we try to do is to take the full mix of incentives for the men and women in the service and see that we are able to continue to attract and retain the numbers and skill sets we need. And so far, we are.

And we've taken a lot of steps. We've got a number of programs under way to reduce stress on the force today, and I think that there has been a very positive response to the way that this is being managed.

I think I should also say something -- we talk about the people in Iraq and Afghanistan a lot, and we should. We've also got people in logistics and people in TRANSCOM and people all across the country here in the United States and across the world who are engaged in a enormous task of moving some 120-plus-thousand people from where they are in Europe and the United States over into that region, and 120 (,000) or 130,000 people out of that region and back, and equipment being fixed. And if one looks at it, it is always possible to look at it and say, my goodness, you have to have 1,500 stop losses, maybe. That's the maximum. That isn't -- a lot of those people may reenlist. They may volunteer to stay. And so that's an outside number, I'm told.

But what's taken place is this monumental task or feat that's being accomplished by the civilian and military personnel in this department that are spread all across the world. And even though there may be an instance where some 1,500 people have to have a stop loss for a period of whatever it is -- two weeks, a month, three months, I don't know --

Myers(?): (Off mike.)

Rumsfeld: -- 3,500 it is, stop loss? Yeah, it's a total of 7(,000); 3,500 stop loss? Excuse me, I correct myself. I thought it was half of 3,500; it's half of 7,000. So it's roughly 3,500, top number --

Staff(?): Stop loss.

Rumsfeld: -- stop loss.

Staff(?): And about the same for stop move.

Rumsfeld: And about the same for stop move. And of that, it will never be that number, because a number of the people will reenlist, a number of the people will voluntarily offer up, and a number of people we may be able to incentivize. So I think one has to give a lot of credit to the folks working these big tasks that are under way.

Q: A follow-up on that?

Myers: The only thing I'd add to that is the obvious, but we've got to step back for just a second. You know, we are a nation at war. We've got a large part of our force over there doing very important work in two countries in a region that has previously and still is host to terrorist organizations. This is very important for our national security. It's very important for international security. And so, yes, the force is working very hard. We're asking extraordinary things from the force and their families. They're responding. I think most individuals understand and their families understand what we're asking them to do. We're asking them a lot. They're responding magnificently.

Q: Can you explain the reason why you have to have the stop loss? It might seem obvious to some. But is it a matter of readiness? Is it a matter of keeping troops there who are trained as the new ones come in? What are the priorities here? And what does it say about whether or not there are enough trained and ready troops?

Rumsfeld: Well, I guess I'll start and say it's probably all of the above. It's the combatant commanders' requests of the department for certain skill sets. It's the combatant commanders' requests of the department for a certain amount of overlap so that the day someone arrives, his predecessor in that post doesn't leave but there is a continuity. There's a transfer of knowledge and information and relationships that take place. In some skill sets, the transfer period can be relatively short. In others, it can be somewhat longer.

It is a reflection of the fact that we have a poor balance currently in the active and Reserve components of the department. They hadn't been adjusted the way they should have been to fit the 21st century, and we're now in the process of doing that.

(To the general.) Do you want to add some other --

Myers: And I think it's also reflective of the way that the secretary and the senior leadership decided to fight this global war. In World War II, the armed forces went to war, and they stayed until victory. In Vietnam, units initially went to Vietnam, and then we replaced people individually, not by unit.

What we've tried to do in this conflict is to use unit replacements. And so it's exactly as you said. If you have a unit that's ready to go, and somebody's only going to be around for six months and then would otherwise leave the service, the service has -- has always had -- I mean, this is a tool that we've used for years to -- in these situations, where you can extend that person to complete the unit move and

then come back and stop movement -- the same idea.

So --

Q: Could you talk about balance a little bit to fit the 21st century? What do you see as a better balance to fit the 21st century?

Rumsfeld: Well, if you look at the -- I'll just give you two or three examples by way of illustration. The -- for whatever reason, the Department of Defense, 15, 20-plus years ago, made a conscious decision that they did not want to have on active duty a number of the skill sets that are needed to go to war; that they kept those in the Reserve and the Guard. And therefore, any time you have an event like Bosnia or Afghanistan or Iraq, you need to get those people out of the Reserves and on active duty and doing their job.

If that happens two or three times in a row, you end up activating -- mobilizing and activating a set of Guard and Reserve people who didn't really sign up for full-time duty. They signed up for periodic duty.

And therefore, what you say to yourself is, "Okay, let's put some more of those skill sets on the active force, so that we don't have to overuse the Guard and Reserve," and put some -- and take a look at the active force and say, "What are some of the skill sets we haven't used," and put some of them in the Guard and Reserve, so that we're better balanced for going forward. That's just an example.

Myers: Can I --

Rumsfeld: You bet.

Myers: Can I -- for instance -- and what the Army has proposed and the secretary has approved is -- we need military police. We need more military police than today are on active duty and, in some case and for the most part, are even in the Reserve component, in fact, specifically. And so they've taken units that perhaps will be less useful in this security environment, some of the artillery units in the Reserves, and converting them to military police, which makes eminent sense, it seems to me.

And those sorts of things -- civil affairs teams, things that most people don't even know about, but movement control teams, these are small teams that the Army uses to facilitate the flow of equipment and people into and out of theater; absolutely essentially to working that flow. And it turns out that there are small numbers of these teams, and so they're enhancing those and trading off skills that probably will be less useful in the future.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'd like to ask you about the counterinsurgency effort in Iraq. I notice that a number of commanders there have said in recent days that not only has the number of attacks gone down, but the devices and the approaches used by the attackers have become less effective and a little more haphazard, suggesting that perhaps their resources are diminishing. I'm wondering if you are seeing indications that the resistance is fizzling or that you've broken the back of them?

Rumsfeld: You know, I see numbers that drop down, and the question is when is it a trend, and when might it turn and go up again? And I'm kind of conservative on predicting those things. And I guess my instinct is to -- I look at the numbers every week and see how many IUDs they have captured unexploded, I see how many were exploded; I see how many caches of weapons of various types have been captured; how many people were detained and arrested and captured, and how many of those were let go after it was clear that they were just scooped up in a broader net -- and the numbers are large. And you look at it and -- how many of the enemy were killed and wounded in an effort to attack our people or the Iraqi people? You see all that, and rather than leaping to a conclusion about it, my instinct is to let it run for a period of months.

And you're right, there are some commanders who have said that. And the other thing you have to remember is it's different in different parts of that country. It's not a uniform pattern in that country. It

may be down in one region and up in another, and you may be hearing a commander from the region that's down and not from the region that's up. So, I guess we'll know in good time whether the back is getting weakened.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'd like to ask you about the decision to award the same combat medal to service personnel serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, a move that apparently is somewhat unpopular with the troops. And some critics have even suggested that perhaps there could be a political motive for trying to blur the distinctions between Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Could you comment on that and --

Rumsfeld: I'll let General Myers comment.

It's a recommendation that came up from below. It was approved by the chiefs in the tank; they had a lengthy discussion and debate about it. It was approved by the undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness that has jurisdiction over this. And it was signed-off on by Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy.

Q: Was there any political agenda behind it?

Rumsfeld: Not that I can even imagine, no. This department is not involved with politics. And it's my understanding that this is the recommendation that the uniform and civilian people in the department unanimously recommended.

Myers: Right, and everything that goes into it -- the history of awards and the appropriateness of how we do that was all considered. And I can guarantee you, at least in our discussion, there was no political -- I mean we're just trying to do what was best for the troops, and that was the decision we came up with.

Q: Well, but, General, as a military man with a chest full of ribbons yourself there, you know that that's -- you wear your resume right there on your chest. Do you understand why a lot of troops would be unhappy that they're not being recognized with distinctive ribbons for these two different campaigns?

Myers: I see this from time to time and it almost doesn't matter what decision you make, somebody's not going to be happy with the decision. The Joint Chiefs of Staff sat and discussed this -- we discussed it with Dr. Chu and other folks, and we discussed it with the deputy secretary of defense. And we thought this was the best for our armed forces and that's why we made the decision. It had nothing to do with politicizing anything.

Q: Mr. Secretary, General Abizaid is said to be in favor of a new proposal to place a four-star general in charge of U.S. forces in Iraq as the country shifts to self-rule. I'm wondering what your thoughts are about that proposal and where that stands.

Rumsfeld: General Myers and I have talked about it, but not in a fully structured way yet. He is going to coming back to me at some point and discussing that. And we've been discussing a whole host of things.

If you think of where we are, we have a situation where we have a coalition of forces in the country. We have a combatant commander in General Abizaid that has a large region with Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa, and a whole host of things he has to think through. And we have a Coalition Provisional Authority that is the government of the country, for all practical purposes, working with the ministries and the Governing Council in governing Iraq.

We're engaged in a very extensive interagency process at the present time and have been for a period of several months, at least, I think. I can remember talking to Secretary Powell about beginning the

process of transferring over responsibility to an ambassador at that point where the Coalition Provisional Authority head, Jerry Bremer, departs, and the responsibilities go into an embassy of some kind, probably a beefed-up embassy, to be sure, and how we do that.

So we've been working on that. We've got dozens -- not dozens, but a couple handfuls of interagency committees that are thinking through the governance pieces and how that works and the essential service piece.

One of the pieces is the security situation. And it may very well be that we will want to make an adjustment and have some division of responsibility, as between CENTCOM, the relationship with the embassy, military -- office of military cooperation type task, as well as somebody that has the responsibility for the tactical, low- intensity warfighting that's taking place. It's not been decided.

Q: Do you expect a decision soon?

Rumsfeld: We'll have it in good time. We've got -- we must have 25, 30 things like that, that we're working through now, in advance, to try to see that that transition is as smooth as possible and that we have the right kinds of command structures, both civilian and military. And those things are under way and have been for some time.

Yes?

Q: Mr. Secretary, the leading candidate for the Democratic nomination, Howard Dean, has said that the capture of Saddam Hussein has not made the American people any safer. Politics aside, as one of those responsible for U.S. national security, what's your response to that?

And second, why not commit the same amount of troops and money, manpower, effort to capturing Osama bin Laden as was used in Iraq to capture Saddam Hussein?

Rumsfeld: I'm not going to get into the first subject. If I start responding to every comment by a politician in this country over the coming year, the department will inevitably be enmeshed in politics, and I just don't intend to do that. I think that's not good for the department, that's not good for the administration, and it's not good for the country.

So questions are going to get cast like that. They've been cast like that now for several months. And inevitably, no matter what I say, it will be, "He takes on some politician and says such and such in contradiction to what that person said." And that's lots of fun for the press, and it's not very much fun for the government. So I respectfully decline.

Q: The second part?

Rumsfeld: I think when you ask a question like that, you don't even deserve a second. (Laughter.) (Laughs.)

Q: There were entire divisions -- the division out of Tikrit was concentrated on capturing Saddam Hussein. They went on this intensive manhunt. There's a secret task force whose sole mission, apparently, was to capture Saddam Hussein. Why not --

Rumsfeld: Okay, you're misstating the circumstances. In fact --

Q: Well, why not put forth that same effort in attempting to capture Osama bin Laden?

Rumsfeld: You're not accurately stating the circumstance. The fact of the matter is the division where Saddam Hussein happened to have been captured was doing a lot of things simultaneously. The idea that all of those people got up every morning and worried about Saddam Hussein is just factually incorrect.

Q: But a large part of their mission was -- (Inaudible.) -- Saddam Hussein.

Rumsfeld: Just a minute. Just a minute. You've had a good crack at this. Let me have a crack at it.

They have been doing lots of reconstruction projects. They have been doing sweeps and capturing high-value targets and former regime officials. They have been arresting people. They have been finding caches of weapons. If you looked at what they've done during the period they've been in there, it is a long list of things they've done. It happens that in all over that region and, indeed, the world, we've had a lot of people focused on Osama bin Laden and also on Saddam Hussein and also on other senior al Qaeda and other senior Iraqi officials. And we have picked up, what -- I don't know what the number is on the al Qaeda officials, but it's a very high percentage at the present time of senior officials in al Qaeda. We happen not to have had UBL at this point, but my guess is if he's alive, we'll find him. And I don't know what the number was on the 55-deck of cards in Iraq, but my guess is it's over 40 of those folks that they've found.

So they have not been sitting around, everyone -- you haven't had 125,000 military people sitting around with their fingers in their ear wondering where Saddam Hussein was, they've been doing a lot of very important things -- with all respect to your poor question. (Laughs.)

Q: Mr. Secretary, on Saddam Hussein in the last two or three weeks, can you give us some insight into what's been learned in his interrogations? Realizing that the CIA is in charge of those, but is he providing any information that's helping locate the thus-far-elusive weapons of mass destruction stocks or helping with information that is dropping the number of insurgency attacks against U.S. troops?

Rumsfeld: I asked George Tenet -- and he agreed -- that one location ought to be in charge of Saddam Hussein's interrogations and the management of what he's saying, so that we can use it to our maximum advantage. And I'm not going to get into the subject. I've made that arrangement with George. He and I have agreed on it. It's the way we're functioning. And I'll let other people talk about what he's saying and what he's --

Q: Isn't there something you can tell us --

Rumsfeld: Sure. There's lots of things I could tell you. And I've decided not to. (Laughter.)

Q: Can I ask a question of General Myers?

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Q: General Myers, if I could ask you about a couple of military operations that occurred over the holiday, over the last couple of weeks, the U.S. military has conducted three ship seizures in the Persian Gulf, ships you believe were -- had al Qaeda connections and in fact were full of illegal drugs. And it has been announced that several of the crew members you took into custody are now at Bagram Air Base.

Can you give us your assessment of al Qaeda's involvement in the drug business? Now that you've seen these three incidents, do you think they're financing through drugs? What do these ship seizures say about their connections back up the line to Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Myers: Barbara, it's a good -- it's a very good question and one where -- we need to develop more data on. But if we go back a couple of years, it became clear pretty early on that there is a nexus between terrorism and the drug business and the financing part of that. And it's true in South America. It's true in the Middle East.

And you're right; there were -- some of the folks that we detained were probably just running the ship and were not of much interest and were repatriated. And there were some that were of more interest, that are being interrogated to find out their connections to other terrorist groups. And we're going to

have to let that play out.

But it's part of a larger effort that we've had ongoing for some time -- what we call maritime intercept operations, where we look for things like drugs moving, where we look like -- for things like weapons moving, or any of the terrorist personnel themselves moving, not only in that region, but in other parts of the world.

Q: Do you see any evidence -- any direct evidence yet between al Qaeda and the narcotics business? Are you looking for that yet?

Myers: Oh, sure, you always look for that. You look for ways that they obtain their financing. So that would be a part of the quest.

And I can't answer that right now for you. I'll get -- we'll get back to you.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Q: Mr. Secretary, you spoke, near the outset of the briefing, about the continuing need to reshape the department. And the department is now working on the 2005 BRAC round. You've sent out requests to base commanders for various information about their bases and their operations, and we're told that those questionnaires will not even be released. Can you tell us why, with the need obviously to have transparency in this process, that you won't even let us know what base commanders are being asked about their base?

Rumsfeld: I guess the short answer is, I don't know why.

The process is prescribed by law, in large measure. It is in large measure a transparent process. And certainly at that point where any recommendations are made, the basis for those recommendations have to be made and defended. I understand that those recommendations, by law, come, I think, in May of '05.

Q: Yes, sir, there's no question about the recommendations. But questions have been raised in the past about the process being rigged. And it would seem that you would want people to know what went into your thinking as you went through this process.

Rumsfeld: And as I just said, when those recommendations are made, we would disgorge all of that basis for the recommendations so people would see that it is transparent. And the law set out what had to be done, and I can assure you every single wrinkle in the law will be fully complied with.

And we're at the very beginning stage, as I understand it, and it is nothing -- I don't think you'd find it terribly enlightening. I asked somebody about it coming down here, and they said what they've asked is hundreds of installations and activities around the world in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, you know, what they've got out there; how many square feet of this and how many -- so much of that; and how many people, and what are they doing; and what's the cubic square meters of so many activities that they're engaged in, and various things. That's what they're doing, and that's how this thing goes. And how many square miles of land do they have, and all of that. It's no big deal.

The idea that there's anything mysterious about it, I mean, we've been through these before. The law is what the law is. It will be complied with. It's going to be examined 16 ways from every direction, as you can well imagine, by local officials, by members of Congress, members of the House and Senate.

Q: Well, but that's part of what prompted the question. But it is going to be looked at by all these people?

Rumsfeld: Exactly. I mean, it's just -- there won't be a single bit of this that won't be under a microscope, and with clear, very, very open, transparent understanding of it. There's no mystery about

any of this stuff.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Rumsfeld: I've never been through one of these before, so I'm far from an expert. But I can assure you that every inch of that law will be fully complied with.

Q: Could I take you back to the strain on the military of fighting a war in Iraq and the war on terrorism? And just for clarity, do you absolutely rule out ever recommending to the president that a draft be reinstated? Is that just a bad policy?

Rumsfeld: If -- I never rule out anything almost; almost never. I guess never say never. But I just -- if I saw a circumstance where the national security of our country was such that it was not being properly defended because we were unable to attract and retain the forces we needed, and the only alternative were to turn to compulsion, obviously, anyone with the responsibility to defend the country would turn to whatever direction you had to turn to to see that you were capable and competent to protect the American people.

Now, the presumption in that, however, is that you would have tried everything else. And the way we've decided to -- we have a choice; we can either use compulsion and force people to serve who don't want to serve, as we did for a period of decades, and say that we're not willing to pay them sufficient amounts to attract and retain them voluntarily. Instead, in those days, I forget what we were paying people, but it was probably 60, 70 percent of the competitive manpower wage in the private sector. And so they came in, and we spent a lot of money training them, and we spent a lot of money replacing them and bringing in new ones and training them, as they left because they didn't want to be there.

The country made a big decision back in the late '60s, early '70s, and it said, look, we want to pay -- we want the people, the men and women in the service to want to be there, to volunteer. And we want to pay them what we need to pay them to be able to attract and retain the kind of skill sets that we need.

Therefore -- what other activity in our society uses compulsion? The FBI doesn't. Corporations don't. All of them use exactly the same thing, and that is incentives -- the totality of the circumstance in which they work. Are they getting paid properly? Is there proper retirement? Is there proper health care? Are the working circumstances acceptable to them?

And there isn't any reason in the world why we could arrive at a point where we wanted to go back to compulsion because we had to. If we decide that we want to pay and provide the proper incentives to attract and retain the people we need in the armed services to defend this country, even at higher levels than we currently have, under more difficult circumstances than we currently have, we can do that, and it would be a totally different decision. It wouldn't be a decision because we had to go to compulsion. The only reason one would go back to a draft and compulsion is because you made a conscious decision that you wanted to go back, because you wanted to pay people a lot less than they're worth in the civilian manpower market, or because you think it's a good thing for everyone to serve in the service. But it wouldn't be everybody because there were exemptions for the married people, there were exemptions for people in school, there were exemptions for teachers, there were exemptions for conscientious objectors, there were exemptions for people that were married. It was only a limited number that we took under compulsion.

Q: And the circumstances that conceivably could lead to a draft just don't exist, right? I mean, the suspicion lurks around the country, I think, that because the military is under strain, that there may be a draft at some point.

Rumsfeld: I just can't imagine it.

Myers: It's hard to imagine, and none of the indicators today point that way. In terms of recruiting, meeting goals; in terms of retention, meeting our goals. Nothing points that way today. That doesn't mean it can't change, but --

Q: Can I follow up on that? The incentive the Army is going to start offering, \$5,000 and \$10,000 bonuses for those coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq, can you talk a little bit about why that's being done? Are you worried that some of these folks are going to start voting with their feet, that we're going to start now seeing recruiting and retention start to fall?

Rumsfeld: I'd rather have David Chu come down and talk, or the Army or the services, about that. I will just say this. And Dick, you may want to comment on it. And this should be the last question.

In the civilian government side, bonuses are paid. The law's been adjusted and arranged so that some civilian bonuses get paid in some departments and agencies. In the private sector, if service is above and beyond in the private sector, a bonus gets paid. So there's nothing unusual about a bonus being paid in a non-compulsory system. Fact number one.

Fact number two. We have currently a situation where we can't know -- at least I don't think I know with certainty -- what the world's going to look like a year from now. And I'm happy to confess that. I don't know what the demands on our forces will be a year from now or two years from now. The problem is that we need to have a steady state of capability for the country. And were we to find out and be surprised that there was a drawdown in some of the key indicators that Dick Myers said are fine right now -- that is to say, in recruitment and retention in various skills and disciplines -- then you'd have to play catch-up. So what we're trying to do is to manage the force now so that we don't have a fall-off in recruitment or retention a year from now and then have a gap where we have to scramble to try to rectify that.

Q: If the Army is setting aside \$63 million for this program, somebody somewhere must be concerned or aware anecdotally of problems within the ranks, people willing to vote with their feet.

Myers: You know, bonuses -- just to follow along what the secretary said -- bonuses have always been used as long as I can remember --

Q: When was the last time you --

Myers: -- have always been used --

Q: When was the last time you had \$10,000 sign-up bonuses?

Myers: Oh, not very long ago. You go to any service and you can find bonuses of varying degrees. I mean, how much did we give pilots when we had the big pilot shortage? We gave them far more than that.

So, we target career fields for the very reason the secretary said, to retain those where you want to make sure you have a robust capability. And they're just a tool we use; we've used them for a long time. This is -- in my view, this is not unusual at all. It's business as usual for the department in trying to retain those folks we need to retain them and maintain our strength. It's just another tool the services use.

Rumsfeld: I would do one other thing. I would avoid taking out one single aspect of all in compensation and incentives and separating it. It doesn't work.

I mean the fact of the matter is that we're trying to do things like reduce the total number of permanent changes of station. And the Army's, I think, got a good concept to do that. The Navy's got a good concept to do that. And if you think of a career, the families, where more spouses will be able to not lose a job because of one or two or three extra permanent changes of station, where kids will not be jerked out of high school precipitously because of fewer permanent changes of station -- that's an incentive as well.

And we're doing, we have to be doing 30, 40 different things like that that we're trying to create an

environment that is hospitable to the kinds of skill sets and talents and dedication that we simply have to have in the men and women in uniform.

And I think that David Chu and the services, working together, are doing a good job of it -- and myself. And I read once in a while some newspaper says that someone up in Personnel and Readiness has declared war on benefits or some nonsense like this. And it's just silliness. I mean, we spend an enormous amount of time making darn sure that that force is properly treated. And every time we see an instance where there's a glitch, where somebody falls between the cracks, it gets rectified. And it not only gets rectified, but we try to take it like an ombudsman would, and say, "Gee, if that happened, how might it have happened, and what might we do to see that it doesn't happen again?" and try to fix the system. And we're constantly tweaking it. And it's a big, complicated system.

Q: Mr. Secretary, given that --

Rumsfeld: We made that -- that was the last question.

Q: No, no, no.

Rumsfeld: (Laughs.)

Q: One more about another group of soldiers, treating them properly --

Rumsfeld: That was the last question.

Q: We'll give you a bonus -- (Laughter.) -- to stick around!

Rumsfeld: (Laughs.)

Q: Ninety days!

Q: I have a question of fundamental importance to the American system.

Q: Ah, how can you pass that up?

Rumsfeld: Let's go back to this one. I like this one better. We'll make this the last question.

Q: Whose responsibility is it to pay former Iraqi soldiers who have been demonstrating today, particularly in Basra, saying that they're not being paid the 50 (dollars) to \$100 a month stipend, or 50 to \$150 a month stipend which they say that they were promised. Is that --

Rumsfeld: There's five different categories of Iraqi security forces. There's the regular army, there's the border patrol, there's the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, there's the site protection people, and there's the -- one other.

Q: The Iraqi police. Who's --

Rumsfeld: The police. The police. Just a minute. Just a minute.

It varies. It -- that's my point. It depends on which category you're talking about. And each time that's happened -- first of all, they're getting paid a whale of a lot more than Saddam Hussein paid them. Let there be no doubt about that.

Second, every time there is an event -- that is to say, Ramadan occurs, so many didn't come back, and someone says, "Gee, what's the pay?" And then you start talking to the people and finding out maybe the pay's too low. Maybe the pay scale's changed or something.

So they've -- I don't know what the current number is in each of those categories. It varies whether

they live at home or whether they live somewhere else, whether they're provided food and barracks. And -- but the people responsible are either the Iraqi ministry, which have some funds that -- some of which we've provided, some of which come from their oil revenues and frozen assets and various things -- the Coalition Provisional Authority. In some cases, I believe, other countries that are doing some of the training provide some of the resources for both salaries and equipment. In some cases, it's the military that is doing the recruiting and pays, using -- what's the name --

Staff: CERP --

Rumsfeld: CERP funds. And that -- so it's varied. But every time it happens, as you say it does -- and it does happen, just like it happens in the United States. I mean, you look -- what do you think a strike at the police force in some town in some state is about? I mean, they say, "Gee, we're not getting enough money." And then somebody figures out, "Well, either you are or you aren't, and if you aren't, we pay you more, and if you are, goodbye." And that's the way it works. Fair enough.

All right, Pam. You've got your pitiful look on your face.

Q: It's a good way to start the new year.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Q: Thank you. Could you give us an update on the status --

Rumsfeld: Dick Myers is going to answer --

Q: -- he might help -- an update on the status of Saddam Hussein as a detainee and what the disadvantages are to giving him official prisoner of war status? And my suspicion is you're going to say something about lawyers are deciding this, but I have to think that the lawyers might have been thinking about this well before his capture. So if you could address that, please.

Rumsfeld: He is in good hands.

Q: I accept that. But legally, why is he not a prisoner of war? What's the disadvantage to the United States of giving him that status?

Rumsfeld: I'd have to get a lawyer to answer that for you. It's a technical reason.

Q: But haven't you been --

Rumsfeld: He's being treated under the -- with the privileges of the Geneva Convention.

Q: I'm thinking like Manuel Noriega, Manuel Noriega was a prisoner of war, and I'm trying to understand the difference.

Rumsfeld: Well, I'll take that under advisement. Do you want to answer that question, counselor?

Myers: No. (Laughter.) My degree is in engineering.

Rumsfeld: We'll tell you the difference between Noriega and -- yeah, between Noriega and Saddam Hussein's legal circumstance. But it's a mire, if I start getting in -- excuse the use of the word -- (Laughter.) -- it's a morass if I start getting into it.

Q: It's an important rule of law and fair play and -- (Inaudible.) -- of American character.

Rumsfeld: Of course it's important. Absolutely. Yeah. We'll get you a good answer.

Q: All right.

Rumsfeld: And you're going to like it.

Q: Sir, if -- (Off mike.) -- answer that one, can you -- (Off mike.)?

Rumsfeld: (Laughs.)

Q: (Off mike.)

Rumsfeld: Okay. You'll be hearing from the lawyers.

Copyright © 2003 by Federal News Service Inc., Ste. 220, 1919 M St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 USA. Federal News Service is a private firm not affiliated with the federal government. No portion of this transcript may be copied, sold or retransmitted without the written authority of Federal News Service Inc. Copyright is not claimed as to any part of the original work prepared by a U.S. government officer or employee as a part of that person's official duties. For information on subscribing to the FNS Internet Service, please visit www.fednews.com or call (202) 347-1400.



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

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