



United States Department of Defense.

News Transcript

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/cgi-bin/dlprint.cgi?http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040623-depsecdef0922.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

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

Presenter: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz on MSNBC Hardball

HIGHLIGHT:

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz defends the administration's record on Iraq.

CAMPBELL BROWN, GUEST HOST: Tonight, one week before the June 30 handover in Iraq, one of the architects of the war, deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz, on America's long-term military commitment to the country, on possible plans to send in more troops, on the prison abuse scandal and the relationship between al Qaeda and Iraq.

I'm Campbell Brown. This is **HARDBALL**.

Good evening. I'm Campbell Brown, in for Chris Matthews. NBC News has learned that CENTCOM has asked the Army to prepare for the possibility of sending an additional 25,000 troops to Iraq, if the security situation there does not improve.

Paul Wolfowitz is the deputy secretary of defense, the No. 2 man at the Pentagon. Secretary Wolfowitz, it's very nice to have you here. Thank you for joining us.

PAUL WOLFOWITZ, DEPUTY DEFENSE SECRETARY: Good to be here.

BROWN: Talk to me about where things stand at this moment. The security situation on the ground, everything we're doing -- where are we?

WOLFOWITZ: Well, we're at a very critical stage of the five-step plan the president laid out a few weeks ago, where Iraq is going of to have a sovereign government and now a free sovereign government for the first time in 50 years. And it's a big event. The -- I was out there just recently, spent eight hours, I think, with this new team, the new prime minister, the new president, the new national security team. They're impressive people. They're heroic people because their lives are on the line. In fact, this killer, Zarqawi, who's been beheading hostages, has also sent a public message to Iyad Allawi that, You're No. 1 on our hit list.

BROWN: Well, today...

WOLFOWITZ: So we know they're...

BROWN: ... the militants were threatening to kill him, and as they have assassinated others, other members of the new government. How do you stop that?

WOLFOWITZ: Well, ultimately, right now, it's mainly with American forces. Ultimately, it's going to be mainly with Iraqi forces. And the main subject of our discussions with Allawi was how we could accelerate and improve the plan to build the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police and a new institution which he's decided to create out of something that we started to call the Iraqi National Guard.

BROWN: Can you confirm what we're reporting tonight, that CENTCOM has asked that 25,000 additional Army troops be essentially put on standby as a contingency plan? Is that the case? And do we need to send more troops over?

WOLFOWITZ: Well, I can't confirm in detail, but CENTCOM definitely has plans to deal with whatever may confront us. And we all understand that, particularly in the -- basically, the next six months -- I guess it's step four of the president's plan is elections at the end of this year, which is part of the U.N. resolution that was just passed, 1546. We know the enemy, which is a mixture of al Qaeda-type terrorists like Zarqawi and the killers of Saddam's regime, who've basically made an alliance with each other, are going to target this next six-month period to create as much chaos, as much mayhem as they can. So if more forces are needed, more forces will be on standby to reinforce. But the longer-term goal is to get Iraqis in the front lines. There are thousands and thousands of Iraqis ready to fight and die for that country.

BROWN: OK, I want to talk to you about -- I want to get into Zarqawi in a minute, but I want to talk to you about the security situation on the ground. And I want to...

WOLFOWITZ: Can I come back for one minute to those Iraqis, though, because...

BROWN: Yes.

WOLFOWITZ: ... it struck me as we were coming home -- we met a young Marine whose life was saved by five Iraqi civil defense corps members who rushed to rescue him when he was wounded. We met the head of the new Iraqi intelligence service, who lost three sons who were executed by Saddam. We met the prime minister, who was nearly axed to death in London by Saddam's killers. We met the president, whose predecessor was blown up in a car bomb two months ago. We met the deputy prime minister, who was nearly assassinated by killers up in northern Iraq. I don't know whether they were al Qaeda or Saddam.

And the most moving thing of all, this really beautiful young Kurdish woman who was our interpreter up in Mosul and the general who was with me, who had known her before -- turns out, her sister was assassinated because she was working for us. And we asked her, Why do you still work -- why do you continue? And she said, Because my father said you mustn't retreat in the face of evil.

It is impressive, Campbell, how many Iraqis are standing up in the face of evil. And that's why we're going to win.

BROWN: Let me play a little bit of tape from your testimony yesterday on Capitol Hill. And I'm going to warn you now, it's self-serving.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP - JUNE 22, 2004)

WOLFOWITZ: Part of our problem is a lot of the press are afraid to travel very much, so they sit in Baghdad and they publish rumors. And rumors are plentiful. Our own media have some responsibility to try to present a balanced picture, instead of always gravitating for the sensational. And the violent is admittedly sensational.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BROWN: I hear the point that you're making, but I was there for about 10 days over the last few weeks. And in the 10 days that I was there, there was a car bomb that exploded about 200 yards from the entrance to my hotel, a car bomb exploded at the entrance to the Green Zone, where I walked every day to go to the briefings, and three of my colleagues were kidnapped in Fallujah. How can -- isn't it easy to sort of put the blame on the media? I mean, those are the circumstances we're operating under.

WOLFOWITZ: It's not blaming the media. But here's an example. We're down in Basra, and the British -- I think he's a brigadier who's got immediate charge of that area, said, Look we're suffering serious problems right now because there was a pipeline break and the media is putting out that there isn't going to be any oil exports for the next three months, and this is causing civil unrest. The pipeline was projected to be repaired in 10 days. It was actually repaired in five days. I don't think there was any media coverage of the fact that the pipeline repair took place so quickly. So it's -- the violence is terrible. The violence should be covered. I'm not quarreling with that. It is the biggest problem in the country. I'm not quarreling with that...

BROWN: But you can't believe that the biggest problem, either, is the media and how they're covering the story, especially when...

WOLFOWITZ: I didn't say the biggest problem's the media. I said the media picture seems to be unbalanced. And I'm not the only one who's saying it. I met sergeants up in northern Iraq who are dealing with one of the hard-core areas of Iraq, and they say, It's not what we see in the international media. The story isn't being described accurately. And I don't know if I'm allowed to use the word balanced on this network, but I think balance is an important part of presenting the picture properly. I'm not media bashing. It's a very, very difficult story to cover. It's a dangerous place to be in. There is a lot of bad news that should be reported. But I think there's a lot of progress that's been made.

I think the stories of the heroism of these people -- and frankly -- I mean, I'll give you an example. A couple of senators the other day, three of them, actually -- Senator Lieberman, Senator Santorum, Senator Sessions -- had a press conference to show the real torture tapes from Abu Ghraib, the kind of horrible things that were done under Saddam, and there's been zero coverage of that in the

media. Now, tell me that's not relevant to the current situation?

BROWN: Let me take it away from the insurgency or the violence, which we are covering, certainly, enormously.

WOLFOWITZ: By the way, it's not insurgency. An insurgency implies something that rose up afterwards. This is the same enemy that butchered Iraqis for 35 years, that fought us up until the fall of Baghdad and continues to fight afterwards. It was led by Saddam Hussein up until his capture in December. It's been led, in part, by his No. 2 or 3, Izzat Ibrahim al Douri, since then. It's been led by Zarqawi, who was a terrorist working for bin Laden in Afghanistan, who fled to Iraq in 2002. It's not an insurgency, in the sense of an uprising. It is a continuation of the war by people who never quit.

BROWN: But there are people there, the average Iraqis, many of whom I spoke with, who are not happy about the direction things are going and are...

WOLFOWITZ: Would you be happy if car bombs are going off every day? Of course, they're not.

BROWN: Well, you know what their concerns are? And I'll go through...

WOLFOWITZ: Yes.

BROWN: I went through some of the Department of Defense documents. It's quality-of-life issues that seem to be the primary concern. And I'll give you one example. According to a State Department study, the No. 1 fear in Baghdad is crime. And the murder rate there, 70 murders per 100,000 people each year. That's higher than the District of Columbia, which is 43. The Iraqi police force, according to DoD documents, your goal is to have about 90,000 police trained. And I know that's ongoing right now, but so far, only 5,800, a little more than 5,800 have received the training to do their jobs. So how...

WOLFOWITZ: Campbell, this so-called insurgency -- people aren't killing Americans and blowing people up because there's crime in Baghdad. It's the other way around. There is crime in Baghdad because people are butchering police because they don't want to see a free Iraq emerge. So we are trying to do reconstruction in the middle of a war. The only program, the only agenda the enemy has is to block that progress. And I'll tell you, that -- it's both our greatest weakness, is these are very effective killers and they've been terrorizing people for a long time, so people are afraid. On the other hand, they have nothing positive to offer, whereas we've rebuilt schools, we've rebuilt hospitals, we are rebuilding the police. And I'm absolutely certain now that the equipment is starting to flow in -- we have a really first class American general running the whole equipping and training program for Iraqi security forces -- there are going to be much, much better police in Baghdad in six months. But it doesn't happen overnight.

BROWN: You're right. It doesn't...

WOLFOWITZ: Remember when the Marshall plan was initiated? That was 1948. It was to...

BROWN: I wasn't born yet.

WOLFOWITZ: Well, OK, but you've read the history books. It was three years after the end of World War II when we had concluded things were so bad in Germany that we have to do a major bailout. That's how difficult it was after World War II. And the Nazis basically did stop fighting on VE Day. The killers that worked for Saddam did not stop fighting.

BROWN: We've got about a minute before we have to take a break. I also want to ask you -- here's another thing I found rummaging through your Pentagon papers. Money appropriated by Congress, the full amount -- and I think we have a graphic here that'll demonstrate it -- of that, only about -- of the \$18 billion, according to what the DoD documents say, only \$333 million has been spent? You've got something like \$4 billion obligated. But why -- why aren't we spending the money?

WOLFOWITZ: Because we have a system of checks and balances that requires that this stuff go through pretty elaborate competitive bidding processes. And it -- and it's now -- you're going to suddenly see...

BROWN: There's got to be a way to cut through the red tape, though, given that -- given the needs.

WOLFOWITZ: You deal with our red tape. We're cutting through it, and a lot of -- it's flowing by the billions now. If you notice the difference between spent and obligated, that obligated money is going to be spent in the next few months. And if we're not careful, people will start saying that we're spending imprudently. This is a three-year -- this was supposed to be for three years. They'll complain that, Gee, it was for three years, and it's all gone after 12 months.

But something else that's missing in this picture. That's not the only money around. There's been \$20 billion of Iraqi money -- \$20 billion -- that's almost never mentioned. Ten billion of it was leftover oil-for-food money. Ten billion is brand-new oil revenues. There's another \$8 billion that's projected, if the killers don't destroy the pipelines, by the end of this year. That will be \$28 billion of Iraqi money. It's paid for repairing, I think it's 200,000 schools and 2,200 hospitals. It's paid for 350,000 teachers, 100,000 doctors. Health care expenditures in Iraq are up 30 times over what they were under Saddam. And that's not with U.S. taxpayer money, that's with Iraqi money. So there is a lot happening.

I want that supplemental money to move faster, but people look at it as though it's the only thing. It isn't the only thing.

BROWN: We got to take a quick break. We'll be back in just a moment. Coming up, I'll ask Paul Wolfowitz about the relationship between al Qaeda and Iraq and why the Bush administration and the 9/11 commission don't seem to agree on what that relationship is. And later: Who's to blame for the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib? More with Paul Wolfowitz in a moment.

You're watching **HARDBALL** on MSNBC.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BROWN: I'm back with deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz. Let's switch to post-9/11, the day after 9/11, according to Bob Woodward's book -- and you've talked about being an early proponent of the war in Iraq. Do you still feel that way, that that should have been the focus immediately after 9/11?

WOLFOWITZ: I wasn't sure it should be the focus immediately, but I was sure it should be part of the campaign. And you know, the president laid that out, I think, correctly within a few weeks, that our enemy wasn't just Usama bin Laden or even just al Qaeda, it was the whole network of global terrorism and the states that support it, and that we had to put an end to thought networks and had to put an end to state support for terrorism. And clearly in the latter category, Iraq was pretty much No. 1 on the list, for a number of reasons.

BROWN: The reasons for war did become confusing to a lot of people, especially what we know now. And you had a quote that was in a profile that "Vanity Fair" magazine did for you, where you said, "For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on." Explain that.

WOLFOWITZ: Well, think about it this way. The president went to the United Nations early on -- by the way, we've been trying to work the U.N. with considerable success most often, from the beginning -- went to the United Nations in September of 2002. He laid out a whole agenda of concerns and issues we had with Iraq pretty much under three categories: weapons of mass destruction, support for terrorism, and terrorizing, oppressing his own people. The U.N. kind of said, Wait, wait. That's too much to deal with. Let's get him to clean up his act on weapons of mass destruction, and we can implicitly -- the idea was we'll work these other issues by means less than the use of major force. You'd have to say that was the implicit bargain.

But part of it was to say, OK, this guy's had how many, 16, 17 resolutions? This is his last and final chance to come clean. He has to fully disclose everything he's got, and he's got to fully cooperate with the inspectors. And people seem to have forgotten that that was the bar he had to clear. It wasn't for us to prove that he had massive stockpiles or that he had weapons ready to go. He had to finally come clean with an inspection regime that he'd been defying for 12 years. And even David Kay, who gets advertised for the fact that our intelligence was off -- David Kay says very clearly Saddam was in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441. He was lying about what he had. He was deceiving inspectors. He was obstructing the implementation of his last and final chance to come clean.

BROWN: All that's true, but we didn't find any weapons of mass destruction.

WOLFOWITZ: Campbell, there is no doubt that this man had the capacity to build those things and to recreate those programs the minute he was out from under sanctions.

BROWN: But that's not what the administration told us. We were...

WOLFOWITZ: Excuse me. That's not -- that's not what the Clinton administration told us. It's

not what the Bush administration told us. It's not what the American intelligence community told us. It's not what any international intelligence community told us. Everyone believed that his programs were more active than they appeared to be. But recognize he had a lot of time to move stuff, a lot of time to hide stuff. There was some systemic looting that went on at the time of the fall of Baghdad, and there are a lot of people who know stuff who still aren't talking to us. So we still don't know the whole picture. But Campbell, we do know this man had weapons, had used weapons, knows how to build weapons, never gave up on the idea that he would cheat and defy U.N. inspections, and it's very clear where he was going. But that wasn't the only concern we had.

BROWN: Well, let's go into the other concern, the connection between al Qaeda and Saddam, whether or not they were collaborating. The 9/11...

WOLFOWITZ: The connection between Saddam and terrorism. It's more than just al Qaeda, although it includes al Qaeda.

BROWN: But al Qaeda was mentioned numerous times by the administration...

WOLFOWITZ: That's right.

BROWN: ... as being in collaboration with Saddam Hussein. We've heard from the 9/11 commission. They say it's not the case. Do you still...

WOLFOWITZ: Wrong. Wrong. Excuse me. Excuse me.

BROWN: "Collaboration" was their word.

WOLFOWITZ: Excuse me. What -- I hear a lot of stuff about how the 9/11 commission disagrees with the administration. Seems to me the 9/11 commission disagrees with "The New York Times" presentation of the 9/11 commission. They disagree with Richard Clarke, who says there's not a shred of evidence between -- connecting Iraq and al Qaeda.

BROWN: Do you still today think there is a strong connection between Saddam and al Qaeda?

WOLFOWITZ: There are many connections, and I don't know how strong...

BROWN: Before the war, not -- not what's happening now.

WOLFOWITZ: Absolutely. Let's take -- this is not me. This is an indictment in southern district court of New York under the Clinton administration in 1998 that asserted, based on a man that Richard Clarke says was the key witness to understanding al Qaeda -- says that in 1992, '93, Saddam and al Qaeda made an agreement not to attack one another and to provide mutual support. I mean, when people say..

BROWN: Is that what Vice President Cheney means when he says long-established ties between...

WOLFOWITZ: Well, it's one of the things he means. I was told in Iraq by very senior Iraqis that people there are convinced that the operation was run for a long time out of Sudan, through the Iraqi embassy in Sudan, which was the largest Iraqi intelligence station abroad.

BROWN: But what's the most compelling evidence of a connection?

WOLFOWITZ: There are many things. There are meetings between senior Iraqi intelligence officials and bin Laden. This was not meetings between...

BROWN: Do you still think that...

WOLFOWITZ: ... Iraqi officials and some humanitarian organization to try to figure out how to fund hospitals. There's one and only one purpose you meet with al Qaeda, and that's to arrange for terrorism. There is the fact that Saddam, up until his fall, was harboring the only fugitive from the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. And for some reason, for 10 years, particularly in the last administration, there was no effort to get this guy rendered. I don't know why not. But those are pretty important connections.

BROWN: Real quick. We're almost out of time. But do you believe that Mohammed Atta -- the meeting between hijacker Mohammed Atta and an Iraqi official took place in Prague, as has been mentioned?

WOLFOWITZ: Have I stopped -- no. I have -- I don't -- I have never believed it. I believe it's an open issue. I don't think it's ever been decided one way or the other. But look...

BROWN: Even though the CIA and FBI say he was in Florida at the time.

WOLFOWITZ: No, they don't. They say his cell -- no, they don't. They say his cell phone was in use in that particular window. Everyone seems to agree that he made an unusual trip to Prague on his way to the United States in June of 2000. Look, the -- we could argue that one to the end of kingdom come, but the issue isn't whether Saddam was intimately involved in planning 9/11. It seems to me that's a little bit like saying if you breed Rottweilers but you don't specifically tell them to attack your neighbor, you're not responsible when they attack your neighbor. You do not consort with Usama bin Laden and al Qaeda for any purpose other than improving their capacity to attack the United States.

BROWN: We got to take a quick break. When we come back, more with deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz on the role of Ahmad Chalabi. Why did the Pentagon's biggest ally fall out of favor?

You're watching **HARDBALL** on MSNBC.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BROWN: I'm back with deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz. I want to talk about Ahmad Chalabi. You said yesterday in your testimony on the Hill that there's quite a bit of street legend out

there that somehow he is the favorite of the Pentagon. Do you feel like he has betrayed you, though? You also say that he said some things lately that -- or his recent behavior has been puzzling to you. What did you mean by that?

WOLFOWITZ: Well, there's an issue which I can't really talk about, though it's fairly well known, about possible compromises of intelligence. And that's clearly something we take very seriously and need to get to the bottom of. But look, we've been trying to say all along, and somehow people don't want to listen, we don't have favorites. We want to see a government that's supported by the Iraqi people and, eventually, an elected government. And now there is a government that is the government of Iraq, seems to enjoy some broad support, has some very impressive figures in it, including some that I've worked with over a long period of time, including the deputy prime minister, whom I've known for more than 10 years, the prime minister, whom I've had great respect for.

BROWN: We're almost out of time, so can I clarify the thing that you can't talk about because I can? Chalabi is being investigated for allegedly passing classified information to the Iranians. And he went on "Meet the Press" and said, George Tenet, the director of the CIA, is setting me up. It's all his fault. Who do you believe about this, Chalabi or Tenet?

WOLFOWITZ: Well, you know, there's so much bad blood between the two. I think it would be good if somebody with real objectivity could investigate it.

BROWN: A mediator?

(LAUGHTER)

WOLFOWITZ: I don't know how...

BROWN: Can I quote you on that?

WOLFOWITZ: No.

BROWN: We have to go. It was a delight to see you, and thank you very much.

WOLFOWITZ: Thank you.

BROWN: Deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz.

Up next, Senator Saxby Chambliss and Senator Jay Rockefeller will be here, one week off the transfer of power in Iraq.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040623-depsecdef0922.html>