



United States Department of Defense.

News Transcript

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040624-secdef0941.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

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

Updated: 25 Jun 2004

NEWS

 [News by Email](#)

 [News by RSS](#)

 [Print a Copy](#)

 [Email a Copy](#)

 [Search News](#)

Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Thursday, June 24, 2004 3:00 p.m. EDT

Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with Sean Hannity, ABC Radio

Q: [In Progress]... country. You've got to save us from John Kerry.

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Laughter]

Q: How are you doing? How's everything?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's going well. We've got a lot of things happening. I think it's going to be tough in Afghanistan and Iraq in the period ahead.

Q: [Inaudible] the battle that they're waging here.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wait one second. I'm not able to hear you. And someone else is controlling the dad-burn thing. Let me have it here.

STAFF: Yeah. Sean, can you have them kill the program, please – the Hornsby, please?

Q: Let me see if I can get them to do that. Hang on a second.

STAFF: Thank you. Appreciate that.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good. Now I can hear you fine.

Q: That should be done. Is that done?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It is and I can hear you fine.

Q: OK. Great. I didn't you were a big fan of Bruce Hornsby, Mr. Secretary.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I love country music.

Q: OK. [Chuckles] You and I both.

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Chuckles]

Q: Anyway, thanks for doing this.

SEC. RUMSFELD: You bet.

[DoD News](#)

[Advisories](#)

[Contracts](#)

[Live Briefings](#)

[Photos](#)

[Releases](#)

[Slides](#)

[Speeches](#)

[Today in DoD](#)

[Transcripts](#)

[American Forces News](#)

[Articles](#)

[Television](#)

[Special Reports](#)

[DoD Search](#)

[About News](#)

[News Archive](#)

[News by Email](#)

[Other News](#)

[Sources](#)

Q: I've been on vacation for a week and then I come back and then it's full board till November. And how do you feel about the president's chances, just between us?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I'm not allowed to get into politics. But I must say, I was at a cabinet meeting the other day and the report on the economy is just booming.

Q: It's unbelievable.

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Inaudible] it's strong. And it hasn't taken yet, in terms of public awareness of that, but all of the numbers, it's not like you've got a breeze at your back. You've got a full-blown storm at your back.

Q: Those numbers are looking great. And that the transfer can take place, you know, I know there's going to be some incidents. We saw that today. But, I mean, if we can get this moving along and people clearly see that there's an end game here, I think that would – and then maybe, you know, if we can get one or two high-ranking people in Afghanistan, I think we would be in very good shape.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'll tell you, just the blessing of being able to work with a single prime minister instead of a 25-person governing council is just unbelievable.

Q: And that'll help a lot.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, you've got somebody a face. He can go out there and say, "I don't like this, I like this, let's go this way." And the Iraqi people say, "Well, I'll be darned, there's an Iraqi out there."

Q: [Chuckles] All right. I'm sure you read my book by now. Hope you liked it.

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Laughter] Listen, I'm saving that for a vacation.

Q: All right. When are you going on vacation? Any time soon?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, not really, but I've got a 4th of July. I've got my three children and seven grandchildren coming in, so that'll be a good change of pace.

Q: Oh, yeah. I'm on vacation next week, so I'm...

SEC. RUMSFELD: Where do you go?

Q: I'm going to mostly stay home, but then I'm going out to Salt Lake City for a few days in Park City.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Where's home?

Q: Long Island.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Long Island. Yeah, well that's...

Q: On the bay in my boat.

SEC. RUMSFELD: What kind of a boat?

Q: It's a 31-foot Boston Whaler, Conquest, Twin 250s. It's just great.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wow. Twin 250s. That totals five, doesn't it?

Q: That sucker flies.

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's a [Inaudible]. I'll bet it does.

Q: Hang on one second. We're coming right in.

Q: And thank you, Scott Shannon. Hello. How are you? Welcome board. Thank you for tuning in now more than ever. One hundred thirty one days to go. And we are loaded up today. We're going to compare and contrast the old Al Gore. Somebody's gotten to him and we're hoping it's a professional, 'cause there is a distinct decided difference in the tone of his speech today and – well, not the wording, just the tone. And we'll let you decide what might have happened in all of this.

First, to help us get a handle, of course, the June 30th deadline is fast approaching in Iraq and here to shed some light on where we are and where we're going is secretary of defense, our good friend Donald Rumsfeld is with us.

Mr. Secretary, thank you, as always, for being with us. How are you?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you. I'm excellent. I'm glad to be with you and appreciate your invitation.

Q: Boy, I bet you haven't had a day off in, what, two years?

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Laughter] I don't get much time off, but I must say we're making progress in Afghanistan and in Iraq and that's encouraging. And as you've pointed out, the changeover in terms of sovereignty is going to take place in a week or so. And it will be a good thing for the Iraqi people to have an Iraqi government that has responsibility and authority and the chance to fashion an Iraqi solution to their problems.

Q: Well, let's get into this a little bit here because the transition of government in Iraq, what the Iraqi people will ultimately do for themselves, et cetera, we knew this day was coming. What does it mean for the average American that's listening to this interview? I mean, in many ways, even though we will be there for some period of time, this is, hopefully, the beginning of the end for our presence there. We have completed a big portion of our job. There's still more to do. But I mean, in many ways, this is a very key date that we're approaching.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It certainly is. If you think about it, a year ago, there were 25 million Iraqis that were living under a vicious regime that was repressive and filling up killing fields with mass graves and taking pliers and pulling tongues out and cutting them off, chopping off hands, throwing people off the tops of buildings. And today you've got a situation where there's an Iraqi prime minister and the president and two vice presidents and a set of ministers that are functioning in their ministries. And they are Iraqis and they are going to have the task of moving ahead, fashioning a constitution, electing a constituent assembly, electing a new government eventually next year. And that is, I think, an important thing because in the last analysis, security is only going to be accomplished in the country if the people feel they have a stake in that country and a future in that country.

Q: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is with us. The president predicted, Mr. Secretary, that there would be an escalation in the violence leading up to this June 30th date. In fact, we're seeing that today. As has been reported, about 90 people now have been killed and close to 300 injured in this wave of attacks across Iraq aimed at clearly sabotaging the handover to Iraqi rule in, what some six days from now?

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's exactly right. And they're not going to be successful. There's no question that but there's a relatively small number of people and many of them foreigners – terrorists

– some of them Iraqi extremists who are determined to not allow that country to move towards a representative system that includes women and is respectful of all of the various ethnic and religious groups in the country. And there's a struggle taking place in the world, not just in Iraq, but in the world, between extremists and determined to kill innocent men, women and children and moderates who are going to oppose them and be steadfast and resolute in that opposition.

Q: Well, now, the one other bit of news that came out today is Al-Sadr has clearly called off his insurgency. And apparently, there's a level of progress that has been made on that front with him. What can you tell us about that?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, that's been an off-again, on-again thing over the past months. And while I was encouraged to see what you saw, I am a little bit from Missouri on that one and I'd want to watch him awhile to make sure he stays stuck.

Q: Yeah. Well, then we can always hope so. And one of the things that is somewhat frustrating to me and I was reading a couple of reports about the attacks across Iraq today. And in just about every report I see -- every news agency, I think, is pretty much guilty of this -- long wire stories and there never seems to be any mention of all the tremendous accomplishments and all the good that has happened and all the great work that the U.S. and its coalition partners have made in Iraq under what is clearly difficult circumstances, not a word about the hundreds of local governing councils that are now cooperating with us and the schools that are open, the oil fields that are pumping oil and utilities that are functioning, not a word about 25 million Iraqis liberated. I mean, are you upset about the bias in the media?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, it does worry you that the American people basically hear the negative and the difficulties and the ugliness which can occur. And it's not balanced with the things you have mentioned, namely, that the schools are open, the hospitals are open, the currency in Iraq, the dinar, is quite strong. Refugees are coming back into the country, not fleeing the country. And that it is -- nonetheless, it's a violent society and the violence gets reported, but the progress seems not to be.

Q: Yeah. One of the things that has really frustrated me, Mr. Secretary, is -- and everybody including yourself, have condemned what happened Abu Ghraib prison. But I think all told, we have less than 15 soldiers that are responsible for what took place there, as far as I can tell, about 15. We have 140,000 troops there and we've lost about 800, that have done everything they can do to take a country from genocide and tyranny and move them towards for the first opportunity in their lives freedom. And I just think it has been so blown out of proportion and not put in its proper context. It seems like there is a concerted effort to undermine this effort.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's interesting. One of the congressmen recently had some remarks on the floor of the House where he pointed out that there was something like three times as many stories about Abu Ghraib in a certain newspaper as there were stories about the D-Day invasion back in 1944 when it occurred. And it is harmful. First of all, it was certainly the things that were depicted in those photographs were wrong and abusive and illegal and to the extent people were involved, there will be fair trials and people will be prosecuted. One person's already been convicted.

And that aside, the truth is that the young men and women over there in uniform are doing such a wonderful job. They're making an enormous difference. They're doing noble work. They're being deeply appreciated by the Iraqi people. And God bless them for it. We're so fortunate that they all volunteer and step up to do that.

Q: Do we need more troops on the ground there?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, you know, that's a question I always ask the combatant commander, John Abizaid and General Sanchez. We ask them frequently what do you need that you don't have. And they claim that they believe sincerely that they have the right number of troops, that they do not need additional troops. Indeed, the concern about it is that they would end up -- what they really need is

more Iraqi troops. They need more Iraqi faces with better situational awareness and policemen, army site protection folks border patrol, civil defense crews. And to the extent they're able to train and equip those folks, that will be a better solution than simply more foreigners. Most countries don't want foreigners in their country providing security.

Q: Yeah.

SEC. RUMSFELD: So our generals tell me that they have what they need and if they need more, we've told them they'll get more.

Q: There has been a lot written, including in today's New York Times about the White House policy in terms of the interrogation of prisoners and these recently released documents. And The New York Times writes, quote, "By late 2002, the documents show that you" Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, "was flushing out policy under intense pressure to squeeze more information out of people seized in Afghanistan and that you briefly approved techniques, including using dogs by the April 2003 and under some condition interrogation techniques including changing diet, reversing sleep cycles and isolation."

I mean, first of all, is that true and is it even bad?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We've released all the procedures that were used in Guantanamo Bay and that have been used. And they all follow the president's admonition and my admonition that they must be humane and we will only treat prisoners in a humane way. Now, people can argue that doing a certain thing to a person is bad. For example, one of the things is to take them from hot meals and have them eat the ready-to-eat meals that the United States military eats, the so-called MREs.

Another technique was to have people stand for four hours. You know, on the other hand, people will look at that and say, well, that's not anything terrible. [Chuckles] And it is important to realize that we're in a war, that the people that have been taken off the battlefield and detained are people who have information about Osama bin Laden and the people who were trying to kill additional American men, women and children.

Q: Well, I got to tell you something, reversing sleep cycles, changing diet, isolating people, is a far cry from video that I showed on Hannity and Colmes the other night, Mr. Secretary, of Saddam in the prison beheading – his henchmen beheading, cutting off arms, fingers, beating and torturing. I mean, it seems, you know, if these are the people that may have information that may result in innocent life being saved, I mean they seem fairly innocuous based on what I'm reading here. It doesn't not seem – I don't even think you could use the word "torture" in any way shape, matter or form, if you're talking about, well, upsetting somebody's sleep cycle.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I agree that those kinds of things should properly not be described as torture. On the other hand, there are people who contend that it is torture simply to hold somebody at Guantanamo and not tell them when they're going to be released. That's a form of mental torture is the argument that's made by some people.

Now torture, to me, means imposing pain on somebody and that's what the dictionary says.

Q: Versus discomfort.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Exactly. And in any event, we've had a good process here. We've had lawyers check these things at each stage. We've had the joint chiefs of staff check them in anything that's been approved at the Pentagon, it was approved by me and by my deputy and by the chairman of the joint chiefs and the vice chairman and the lawyers in the joint staff and the lawyers in the Department of Defense and the lawyers in the combatant command. So I feel comfortable that in terms of what has been authorized, that the procedures have been good. What we now have to do is run down the rest of these investigations to determine whether or not there's anything else that we can discover

that was mishandled by somebody at some level in which case, we want to fix and get the process right and the procedures right.

Q: All right. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Mr. Secretary, it's always good to talk to you. Thank you for all you and your service to your country. And this has been a very successful effort, in spite of the way the media has tried to portray this. And we're very honored you're with us. Thank you.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you so much.

Q: I appreciate it. Don Rumsfeld on The Sean Hannity Show.



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Privacy & Security Notice](#)

[About DoD](#)

[External Link Disclaimer](#)

[Web Policy](#)

[About DefenseLINK](#)

[FirstGov.gov](#)