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**Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; and  
General Richard Myers, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff**

**Wednesday, December 22, 2004 3:00 p.m.  
EST**

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## Defense Department Operational Update Briefing

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good afternoon, folks. (Coughs.) I've got a catch in my throat, so I apologize, but I swallowed something wrong.

The tragic attack in Mosul, Iraq demonstrates again that the coalition and the Iraqi people face a vicious and a determined enemy. Freedom is at stake in Iraq and it's achievable. The only alternative to success would be to turn back to darkness -- to those who kill and terrorize innocent men, women and children -- and that must not happen.

My thoughts and prayers are with those who have been killed and with the wounded and with their families and with all those military and civilian personnel who have volunteered to place themselves at risk in our country's behalf. We honor them today, just as generations will come to honor their courage and commitment, and we pray for the successful outcome of their important work. They have the deep appreciation of our country.

The approach of the new year is an appropriate time to consider where we've come and what we face in the future. Coalition forces continue to pursue terrorists across the world. Thus far, more than three-quarters of al Qaeda's key members and associates have been captured or killed since the war on extremism began. Twenty-five million Afghans have been liberated, and there have been free and fair elections, marked by the inauguration of an Afghan president, who is now helping to lead the fight against extremists who plotted the September 11th attacks against our country and against this institution here.

In Iraq, the men and women in uniform have routed the insurgents in Fallujah and elsewhere. The coalition, with the recent help of NATO, is training and equipping some 120,000 Iraqi security personnel in an effort to place more and more responsibility for Iraq on the Iraqi people, where it belongs. Ultimately, only Iraqis can provide security for the Iraqi people. It's their country.

Here at the Pentagon, we're continuing to make progress in transforming for the post-Cold War period, making major and indeed historic changes in the global posture, implementing a modern personnel system that will help to move military people out of positions that can be filled by civilians, and reshaping the military services into a more joint, a more capable and deployable fighting force, and a great deal more.

As long as an important region of the world is condemned to tyranny and violence, with one-half of their population barred from full participation, with little hope for a better future, terrorists will have a deep pool from which to draw recruits and to attack free people across the globe.

Our forces are deployed for the critical task of fighting them there, so we don't have to fight them elsewhere. And our troops are making a difference; let there be no doubt.

That's why what our forces are doing in Afghanistan and in Iraq and in other areas of the global war against terror is so crucial and indeed so historic. When people are liberated, and when they have a chance to choose a life of freedom and to have governments that they guide and direct, they're far less likely to support terror, and they are still less likely to be attracted by the lies of the extremists or to be intimidated by the extremists.

We must do what it takes in Iraq. We cannot allow those who chop off people's heads to take control of a country from which they could plot and organize and indoctrinate people against everything that they don't espouse.

The coming year will offer Iraqis a chance to choose a future of hope, and there are some positive signs. Thus far it looks as though candidates from over 230 political entities have filed to run for the Iraqi national assembly, including Shi'a and Sunni and Kurds and other ethnic groups, and women. Seven thousand candidates will be competing in the various assembly elections.

There is violence in Iraq, to be sure. It is a dangerous and an unsettled situation. But notwithstanding that, hundreds of refugees are returning to Iraq every week. It's estimated that over 140,000 refugees have returned already. Why would they do this? What do they know? Clearly these refugees returning home see better days ahead. They're voting with their feet. They're voting and risking their lives. And they see Iraq as a country with a future.

And there is a too-little-noted recent example of how the future can look. Before he took office, the newly elected Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, took a moment to speak to the American people. And he spoke from the heart, and he said to all of us: "Whatever we have achieved in Afghanistan is from the help that the United States of America gave us." He went on to say that without that help, Afghanistan would be in the hands of terrorists, destroyed, poverty-stricken and without its children going to school or getting an education. "We are very grateful, to put it in the simple words we know," he said, "to the people of the United States of America for bringing us that day."

I have never been prouder to be an American.

The holiday season is an especially hard time to be away from friends and family. And wherever they are stationed around the world, I want every one of the men and women in uniform who are defending our nation to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers.

In a moment, I will be responding to questions -- Dick and I will -- about the problems and controversies in the global struggle against extremism. But I want the American people to understand how much our nation is contributing to a better world, how important that work is, and that the work of the armed forces of the United States is making a difference. And I should add how much it is appreciated by me and by all of us.

I am truly saddened by the thought that anyone could have the impression that I or others here are doing anything other than working urgently to see that the lives of the fighting men and women are protected and are cared for in every way humanly possible. And I hope and pray that every family member of those who have died so bravely knows how deeply I feel their loss.

When I meet with the wounded, with their families, or with the families of those who have been lost, their grief is something I feel to my core. And I should add -- and the American people need to know -- that the strength of our military and of their families is amazing. It is truly extraordinary to see it and to feel it. It never fails to give me strength, to give me encouragement, and to give me inspiration for the tasks ahead.

I, and I know others, stay awake at night with concern for those at risk, with hope for their lives and for their success. And I want those who matter most -- the men and women in uniform and their families -- to know that. And I want them to know that we consider them -- the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, the Marines -- to be America's true treasure, and I thank them and I thank their families.

General Myers.

GEN. MYERS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and good afternoon.

I wish to also extend my sincere condolences to the families of our forces who have lost their lives throughout

this conflict and this war against extremism. Of course, most recently we regret the loss of life in yesterday's attack in Mosul.

And here's what we know about the attack.

Shortly after noon yesterday, anti-Iraqi, anti-coalition forces attacked the dining facility located within the Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, killing 22 people, including 13 U.S. military, five U.S. civilian contractors, three Iraqi security force members and one non-U.S. person. An additional 69 people were injured in the attack, including 44 U.S. military, seven U.S. contractors, five Department of Defense civilians, two Iraqi civilians, 10 contractors of other nationalities and one of unknown nationality and occupation.

Twenty-five of the 69 who were wounded were returned to duty. Many of the wounded, as we've seen on TV, are being transported now to Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany.

Investigators are about to conclude their look into the exact cause of the blast. At this point it looks like it was an improvised explosive device worn by an attacker. This will be put in a statement that will come out of MNF-I in a couple of hours from Baghdad.

I assure you that everything possible is being done to get to the bottom of what happened and to take the appropriate steps so we can prevent potential future attacks of this nature.

I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about a few other topics of interest as well.

I recently returned from our annual USA USO holiday trip to the Middle East, Europe and the Horn of Africa. Like the secretary, I cannot begin to put into words what a terrific job our men in uniform are doing, whether they're in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Djibouti and for that matter many other points around the globe. I am extremely proud of our men and women in the armed forces, proud to visit with them, to listen to them and their stories and their concerns, and also to witness their enthusiasm and dedication, and particularly their focus on the mission. They are terrific, each one.

I went to several locations in Iraq and saw firsthand the many successes that are often understated. Every time I visit our deployed troops, I come away more inspired, as the secretary does, and it goes along with meeting the families of those that are severely wounded that we see from time to time, more inspired by their determination and their morale.

I know the celebrities that participated in this event with me feel the same way about our men and women in uniform, and I want to thank them for taking on the challenge and the weariness of such a long trip and appreciate all they did to bring a little cheer and a little bit of America to our troops.

In Fallujah we are continuing the process of delivering food and water and those necessary essentials to improve the conditions to allow residents to return home. Engineers and Iraqis are working to restore power to sub-stations and repair water mains. Obviously security is still a concern; in fact, yesterday U.S. forces uncovered several more weapons caches. These efforts to secure Fallujah are deliberate and they do take time, but we are making progress. In fact, tomorrow residents will begin the return to Fallujah to reclaim and rebuild their city.

The process leading to elections in Iraq is also on track. As the secretary said, the elections will be planned, conducted and secured by Iraqis. We are absolutely committed to the January 30th election date. Seventeen of the 18 provinces can support elections now at more than 5,500 designated polling centers. The number of polling centers in the one remaining province, Al Anbar, is not yet known.

But this process is not without challenges. Security for the elections is a top priority, with an emphasis on Fallujah, Ramadi and Mosul. Iraqi security forces will take the lead for election security; coalition forces will provide support where requested.

Efforts to defeat the insurgents in the anti-Iraqi, anti-coalition forces who are targeting innocent citizens and coalition forces remain a top priority. Intimidation, kidnappings and executions, especially those focused in Mosul, north Babil, Ramadi and al Qaim are particularly troubling, and these areas will be a focus of particularly increased security emphasis. Offensive operations focus on deterring and eliminating extremists whose purpose

is to undermine and derail the interim Iraqi government's control and legitimacy.

You can be assured the commanders on the ground are working aggressively to further expand force protection measures for deployed forces. Units designated for duty in Iraq receive extensive training stateside prior to deployment as well as follow-on training in Kuwait and Iraq. This training includes convoy operations, improvised explosive device detection and reactive drills, and counter-improvised-explosive-device training.

Coalition forces also incorporate lessons learned from enemy attacks and update their tactics daily, as they need to. Additionally, we continue to use technological advances such as unmanned aerial vehicles and remote sensors to enhance our force protection measures.

The bottom line is commanders on the ground are continuing to exert all efforts to maximize force protection for our coalition and U.S. service members and aggressively pursue ways to defeat the enemy.

And with that, we'll take your questions.

Q Yes, Mr. Secretary, General Myers, what specific physical evidence was found at the explosion yesterday at the dining hall at Forward Operating Base Marez -- was caused by a suicide bomber? How did that conclusion get reached?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, the conclusion hasn't been announced yet. But they've been sifting through the site, and General Myers stated what their conclusion was at least an hour ago.

GEN. MYERS: That's correct. But we still have an hour or so to go before they release it. But the thing is, if it was a rocket, you'd find remnants of the rocket; if it were an improvised explosive device, you would find remnants of the improvised explosive device. So I assume when they're released they'll let you know what they found and what they didn't find.

Q Mr. Secretary, what does the incident at Mosul say about U.S. security on those bases? How could something like that happen? And what could be done to prevent it in the future?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well -- and I'll have Dick respond as well -- but as we know, someone who's attacking can attack at any place at any time using any technique, and it is an enormous challenge to provide force protection, something that our forces worry about, work on constantly. They have to be right 100 percent of the time. An attacker only has to be right occasionally. And we've seen that in all kinds of circumstances around the world over the decades. And I think that we've seen attacks like this previously in the country. Remember the attack on the U.N. team that was there when Mr. de Mello was killed? There have been other instances of it. It's a tragedy. The loss of life is just heartbreaking.

Dick, do you want to add anything?

GEN. MYERS: You bet.

This attack, of course, is the responsibility of insurgents, the same insurgents who attacked on 9/11, the same type of insurgents who attacked in Beirut, the same insurgents who -- type of insurgents who attacked the Cole, Khobar Towers, and the list goes on. So the way you prevent this is you win the war against the extremists, and I've talked about that at length myself. And I'm not saying that's a war in a sense that the military can do this, but that's how we do this. We make this kind of extremism, this kind of action, which shows no moral boundaries -- because while this was an attack against coalition forces, U.S. forces and contractors in Mosul, we've seen attacks on children in Baghdad and Iraqi citizens. So the way we prevent this is we win, and that's what we're going to do.

Q: But isn't this someone who made his way on to the base, someone who was a trusted individual, an employee or something? Somehow he had to get -- the base is not insecure. Somehow he had to get on the base with an explosive, with bombs.

GEN. MYERS: Well, we'll find that out when the investigation is complete, exactly how that happened.

Q: Mr. Secretary, how does yesterday's attack in Mosul and the need to up-armor \$4 billion worth of equipment -- how does that square with the notion that you're routing insurgents not only in Fallujah, but

elsewhere in Iraq? It seems they're getting stronger and more sophisticated and there's no end in sight here. How does this square with your original statement?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't have any idea what original statement you're talking about.

Q: We're routing the insurgency in Fallujah and elsewhere. You just said that a little earlier.

SEC. RUMSFELD: They did have a successful event in Fallujah -- effort, and they have had successful efforts elsewhere in the country.

We know that in terms of the totality of the country, some 18 provinces, that somewhere between 12 and 14 of them have relatively low levels of violence -- the north, the south -- and we know that four provinces have relatively high levels of violence. And the task is to have the violence reduced in those remaining four provinces. And I should add that those four provinces have higher population, one of them being Baghdad.

So it's -- it is an uneven situation. We've had unevenness since the beginning. The tasks of our armed forces and the tasks of the coalition forces vary from portion of the country to other portions of the country.

Do you want to add to that?

GEN. MYERS: I would just say that, you know, we have stood up here, the two of us, and talked about how the insurgency is going to get worse as we approach elections, because as we get to January 30th and beyond -- and by the way, I'm not saying there's not going to be a lot of challenges after January 30th; that will not be a panacea either -- but it would be a very important step in legitimizing the Iraqi government, delegitimizing the insurgents. And -- but we said it was going to be much more of a challenge as we got closer and closer to that date.

In the last several days, that's exactly what we've seen. We've seen some horrific attacks, not just against coalition forces but against Iraqi citizens.

Q: How can you say you're routing -- (inaudible) -- come up with a spectacular attack, though?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We have said all along that we expected the level of violence to increase as you got towards the election. That is not new. We have also said that Fallujah was a successful effort. It was. It seems to me that's crystal-clear, that it's unambiguous, and it was an important effort.

I would also say, as Dick suggested in his comment, that I think looking for a peaceful Iraq after the elections would be a mistake. I think our expectations level ought to be realistic about that. These folks have a lot to lose. The extremists and the terrorists and the people who are determined to try to take back that country are determined not to lose. And it is going to be a -- they're going to do everything they can to see that that opportunity they have succeeds. And we've got to do everything to see that they fail. (Cross talk.)

Q: Can I do a follow-up, Mr. Secretary, on that same issue? Do you and General Myers think it's unwise or was unwise to put 400- plus servicemen and civilians and others in a huge tent the size of a football field on a base in a combat zone, a base that had been hit by mortars and RPGs? And if you do think it's unwise, are either one of you or both going to sound off to Generals Casey and Ham, or take them to the woodshed?

GEN. MYERS: These are the calls that the combatant commanders make. And any judgment that General Ham is up there and not worried about force protection is ludicrous. This is a man that's -- I don't -- can't remember when General Ham first went in up there -- that has been working the security up there in that region for the Iraqi people for many, many months, at great personal sacrifice to himself and his forces. He has led them well.

We have had a suicide bomber, apparently, strap something to his body -- apparently a him -- and go into a dining hall. We know how difficult this is, to prevent suicide -- people bent on suicide and stopping them.

We understand how difficult that is. But I think -- this was the insurgents that did this. It's not General Ham that attacked his dining hall. I think he has a very good plan for force protection. I know what some of the long-range plans are up there.

This is an insurgency. And I think if you step back a minute and you think about insurgencies versus conventional warfare, in conventional warfare at some point you're going to get to an unconditional surrender, and in many cases you have very neat front lines. We have no front lines. The front line can be the dining hall, it can be the road outside the base, it can be the police station or the governor's office or the mayor's office down at Mosul. That's their territory. They operate all over that. They can wear -- and they do -- wear clothes like every other Iraqi. It's a much different thing and the mindset has to be much different.

What it tells us is -- and we know this from our history with insurgencies -- it's going to be very tough. And as this insurgency has changed in its nature and its character and has become more intense, our resolve just has to be all that tougher. And I know the Iraqi resolve is hard and tough and I know that our resolve is hard and tough.

Q: Would you --

SEC. RUMSFELD: It seems to me --

Q: May I do a follow-up?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Just a minute. No.

Q: No follow-ups?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let me respond -- (laughs) -- to your first one before you follow up.

If you think about it, it's a normal reaction to see something like that and say, "Why wasn't it stopped?" Or a beheading, and say, "Why didn't somebody stop the beheading?" And of course the other way to look at it is, think of the people who did the beheading. Those are the people we're up against.

Someone can say, "Well, people are coming across the border with jihadists from Syria; why aren't they stopped?" The other question is, why doesn't Syria stop the jihadists from coming across the border?

It is a -- it is something that one has to put into context. And I say that in respect for the military commanders on the ground, who have multiple tasks, are challenged constantly. I mean, think of the murders that take place in every major city in the world; one can say, "Well, why aren't they stopped?" Or the fires that take place and things that happen.

And there are terrible things and the loss of life is heartbreaking, and it's a normal human instinct. But the other way to think about it or an additional way to think about it is think about turning that country over and letting them win, those people who are doing those things. It would be a terrible loss for civilized society.

Q: Would you not agree, both of you, however, that putting 400 people in a huge tent is a tempting target for the insurgents or anybody else?

GEN. MYERS: There are lots of congregations like that of various formations where it's, for a(n) individual bent on suicide with a VBIED -- vehicle-borne improvised explosive device -- or one strapped to their body -- we've seen in other countries -- and so, I mean, it's not a viable strategy to ask everybody to separate. So I think commanders are very much aware of that and try to prevent that. Absolutely, Ivan.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: General Myers?

Q: Mr. Secretary, you said that you were truly saddened by some of the things your critics have said, particularly this perceived insensitivity to troops and their needs in the field. And this is --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I said -- I said slightly differently, and I said just what I felt.

Q: Okay. And this is the most personal response to critics we've heard from you here. Know you've been in a lot of political battles over four decades of service. How does this one over the past two weeks rate? And do you think it has affected your ability to do your job?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, you know, it is -- you get up in the morning and you think about what our troops are doing and I must say, if they can do what they're doing, I can do what I'm doing.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Pam.

Q: I have a short question and a longer one.

The first one is, is the -- the non-U.S. person identified as killed, is that believed to be the body of the bomber?

And my second question gets into some armchair generaling. The 101st Airborne Division, with 17,000 troops, was replaced by the -- by Task Force Olympia, that has about 9,000. One of the tenets that I was exposed to when I was over there was this idea of persistent presence and that's the way you could beat this insurgency, by having enough troops in enough places frequently enough that the insurgency can't gain a foothold in places it hasn't been. Mosul was one of those places that was doing really well before. So do you see -- is there a relationship between the reduction in the footprint of the U.S. forces in Mosul and the subsequent reliance on an increase in Iraqi forces? Because they're also considered part of Task Force Olympia.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Go ahead.

GEN. MYERS: On the unidentified person, I think that's to be determined. I don't want to speculate on that because we don't know.

On persistent presence, if you're going to have security in any society, you need persistent presence of police and other agencies. Certainly persistent presence of coalition forces, U.S. forces, is not, I don't think, what was implied by that statement. It might have been at the time, but as time goes on then you look at the forces that are in that country to provide for their own persistence and their own presence. And I know General Casey has just visited in Mosul. He has done that a couple of times since we changed, if we advanced our strategy in that part of the country. Those kind of questions have been asked internally, of course, so it's not armchair-generalship; real generalship has been doing that to try to answer that question to see if we're postured properly.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let me --

GEN. MYERS: And the answer is that, to date, that we are.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think Dick touched on something that's enormously important. Presence, of course, has the advantage that your question suggested and Dick mentioned. It also creates targets. And that's just the reality.

If I were to elevate a concept, it is that the task for the coalition, for the United States particularly, and ultimately for the Iraqi people, is to have the Iraqi people take over responsibility for their own security. Therefore, if I were to ask you what is our principal job there, our principal job is to work with the Iraqis so that they develop the persistent presence of Iraqi security forces in that country so that there is a penalty for the kind of behavior one sees with a suicide bomber or a random rocket or mortar. And in the last analysis, that is our task. Our task is not to get in there with a persistent presence of Americans over a sustained period of time, because that has the counterproductive aspect of it of creating additional targets and creating a sense of occupation. Our goal is to enable and create an environment that's hospitable for the Iraqis to step forward and do the things they need to do.

One of the things that we haven't talked about here much, and I think it's an important part of the equation, is intimidation. And when -- and they are effective. The enemy is effective. The enemy's got a brain. The enemy alters its tactics. As things happen on the ground, they see what we do to respond to it. They then change their tactic. And intimidation is the kind of thing that can prevent people from providing intelligence. It can prevent people from running from office. It can inhibit people from being responsible and stepping forward to vote, for example.

We saw some election workers that were killed. And it is the balance between how successful the

intimidators, the extremists are as opposed to how successful the Iraqi interim government is and the people who are signing up for these 200-plus ballots and these thousands of people who will be running.

And it's that tension that's taking place in that country, and it's complicated. I wish it were simple, I wish it were easy to explain in a bumper-sticker type sentence, but it isn't. It's a very tough, complicated business.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: General Myers? General Myers, can you explain to us the vetting process that contract workers inside these facilities, non-Americans, go through? And is it a military responsibility to do that, hire these, or is this left up to the contractor, such as KBR?

GEN. MYERS: We can get you a fact sheet on that. And that's -- I think I prefer to do it that way. We'll get you a sheet on exactly how that's done.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll take one last question. Right here.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you expect to declare any sort of operational status for your missile defense system in 2004? If not, when do you plan on doing that? And also, does the recent results from the recent missile defense test cause you any concern about the deterrent effect of such a system?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The last portion of your question first. One always would wish that every element of a test environment would be perfect, and they never are. That's true in any research and development or high technology effort in any field in any country anywhere in the world. I'm told that, with respect to the recent test, that they -- the normal sequencing would be to have a series of interceptors prepared and ready to fire, and in the event the first assigned interceptor missile had a computer signal that something wasn't right, it automatically chops over to the second one and the second one would fire. This test did not have it in sequence; it was just to test a single one. And as a result, it didn't fire, and they'll then go into that and figure it out.

And I must say, having been in the research and development business over the years -- pharmaceuticals and electronics and various other things -- the interesting thing, people think of those as failures. Most people think of them as learning experiences; that is, it is that process of trying things and learning from it that enables one to step ahead and advance science and technology. So the answer to your question is no. It's expected that there will be things like that that will occur.

The first part of your question's -- (chuckles) -- a little harder. It would be nice and neat if every system was either in development or operational.

In this case that's not going to happen.

What we have here is a developmental system that is well along and there are interceptors in the ground, and at some point soon it will have a modest capability, but it will still be in a test phase, it will still be in a developmental phase, it will still be, as happens with other systems over time, being perfected and improved. They have developed the command and control procedures; the rules of engagement are being developed; the testing of safety in various procedures have been exercised.

And I can't answer your question as to when or if we would have an announcement, but I would guess that the announcement would be very much like what I just said; that we are proceeding, that we have interceptors in the ground, and that each month and each quarter and each year, additional pieces of it will evolve and be added.

Q: Can I ask a follow-up, sir? The administration had made very clear that it wanted to have an early operational capability that would switch from a test scenario to an operational scenario as needed in 2004. Are you backing off of that?

And also, does the issue with the test that you mentioned as to not having a backup rocket there like you normally would operationally indicate that maybe you need to test as you would operate, as opposed to just having sort of isolated testing scenarios?



SEC. RUMSFELD: Eventually you would test as you would operate, and I don't know that they didn't have an additional interceptor prepared, if available. But that's not what they were testing. They were not testing the ability to move from one interceptor to another to another in the event there is a computer signal which says that this interceptor isn't prepared. That wasn't what they were testing. So, you know -- and the other portion of your question --

(To General Myers) You correct me if I'm --

GEN. MYERS: No, you're exactly right.

SEC. RUMSFELD: You're more knowledge about this than I am.

We had hoped that we would have some sort of a characterization that in 2004 we had a preliminary capability, an initial capability. I don't mean an initial operating capability, I mean a very modest capability. I don't know that that's not true today. I'm not announcing it, but if you, or example, said that there was some reason to -- that there was some threat that was evolving and it would be desirable to go out of a test mode and see the extent to which you could be in an operational mode, my impression is it wouldn't take long to get there.

GEN. MYERS: That's correct.

SEC. RUMSFELD: But we don't see that threat. Therefore, we're not pressured. Our task at the -- in the immediate period is to get it right and to keep working on it.

Q: Mr. Secretary, what do you say to families who after yesterday's explosions want to see more and better protection for the forces over there? Do you think there's anything more that can and should be done? And with the additional forces that are gathering in Iraq in anticipation of the January 30th elections, could some of them be diverted, perhaps, more to force protection, in light of what just happened?

GEN. MYERS: I would only say that force protection's inherent in every mission, and so it's not that you have certain people doing force protection. It's kind of job one to protect the force as you do your mission. So -- and that's why we put the types of forces -- extended the types of forces we did and put the additional forces in there was precisely for that reason, so they could fulfill some of those responsibilities that you spoke of.

And in terms of the rest of it, as the secretary said, I think, in his opening statement, we are working very hard to ensure what the commanders want, they get as quickly as we can produce it, field it, get it there, make it there, or whatever.

So I think families need to be assured that we will give them the best that we can humanly produce for them to protect their loved ones. And --

SEC. RUMSFELD: And there is a real sense of urgency in the field by the commanders and in this department by the services to do exactly what Dick said.

Q: One last question, Mr. Secretary --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think we're probably through.

Q: In the holiday spirit --

SEC. RUMSFELD: We're --

Q: Merry Christmas to you and your families.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Merry Christmas to all of you. Thank you. Have a good New Year.

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