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# News Transcript

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**Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld**

**Thursday, December 23, 2004**

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## **Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld En Route to Iraq**

SEC. RUMSFELD: We've been coming out here about every three, four months. And we purposely did not come from Afghanistan because we knew we were coming here. We've got four stops - Mosul, Tikrit, Fallujah and Baghdad. We're going to meet with the senior military at each spot, we'll meet with the troops at each spot, meet with Casey and Metz and I'm sure an embassy rep - Jeffrey probably. He's acting in Negroponte's absence and meet with the president [Inaudible]. We'll meet with Metz and Casey on the military situation and training Iraqi security. We'll be talking mostly about the preparations for the elections and also [Inaudible]. It's hard to know how the day will play out. I guess I did not want - it's a burden when I go someplace. It's a burden to the people on the other end. And you don't want it to cause them to [Inaudible]. It's the 24th, yeah, so we avoided the 25<sup>th</sup> because they have plans. So we want it to kind of [Inaudible]

Q: Do you take into consideration when you think about going whether your presence once it becomes known in the country adds to the threat to the troops who you're visiting?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes. It certainly did when I was in Lebanon in the Middle East as Middle East envoy. There would be shelling and rockets right where we were staying and it did interfere. Once I'd get into the country and go meet people, then they'd know it and they'd start targeting me. In this case less so. We tend not to announce it. We move around. Off the Record.

Q: On the record about Mosul. Well, I guess, it's about Mosul - any particular reason you're emphasizing visits to hospitals?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I do it everywhere I go. I've done it before in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was just in Walter Reed again last night. We are the hospitals? There's one in Baghdad that's [Inaudible].

Q: It's in the Green Zone.

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's right. Then there's one where - in Mosul.

Q: They all have their own hospital.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah.

Q: And in Mosul you wanted to go to that one because of the attack?

SEC. RUMSFELD: As I say, I go to hospitals. I don't take press with me when I do. I hope you will [Inaudible] I'm sure [Inaudible] I'm sure [Inaudible].

Q: So they put [Inaudible] Iraqi [Inaudible] Iraqi [Inaudible] [Inaudible] I don't know about [Inaudible].

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, actually, [Inaudible] an Iraqi [Inaudible] American [Inaudible] who was a contractor [Inaudible] in Iraq. He's at Walter Reed.

Q: There were other Iraqi [Inaudible] during the major hostilities [Inaudible].

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Inaudible] American citizen over there [Inaudible] translation with the Polish division.

Q: Can you tell us how long ago you planned this trip?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, gosh. A month or two, three. We kind of lay out the year and we've already got down the first six months of next year. But it's always subject to change. The certainty of it [Inaudible]. The plan was undoubtedly six months ago. The harder plan was a couple months ago and the certainty of it was when we purposely went to India after Afghanistan. [Inaudible] Iraq [Inaudible] generally do [Inaudible].

Q: You said the trip was to thank the troops. Do you have a - will you be talking to them at all about security issues?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, if they ask me. The field commanders are the people who think day and night about force protection and security issues. It's not for me to go in and bypass commanders and talk about their tactics, procedures and techniques. That's not even something that Abizaid at his level or probably even Casey or probably even Metz. It's more something for company commanders, division commanders - those people.

Q: Is it something other than a general thank-you and [Inaudible].

SEC. RUMSFELD: [Inaudible] working [Inaudible] planned [Inaudible]. The [Inaudible] of doing that on a [Inaudible] basis and I kept asking him to [Inaudible]. [Inaudible]

Q: Whenever we go on these trips, as you get closer to [Inaudible] notion what will be the best [Inaudible] and the best [Inaudible] appreciate [Inaudible] secretary that [Inaudible]?

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's the problem they [travel plans] get changed even while your on the ground. I mean like you get in to see the president of Iraq and things get swapped over a half hour. And then things get crunched at the other end.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I know you were asked quite a bit yesterday at the news conference about the attack on the mess hall facility. Is there anything since then that you - can you tell us anything more about what you believe happened there and how that happened?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No this morning and what they do is this site explorations and they have a - let's go on background.

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