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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 in Baghdad with Task Force Baghdad**

SEC. RUMSFELD: Keep eating. The food looks good, particularly the shrimp. [Cheers] way up there. I am delighted to be here. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas. I thank all of you for what you do for our country, for your service. It's an honor for me to be back in Baghdad and with the soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division. [Cheers] And also the folks in the Marines and the Navy and the Air Force and [Inaudible]? That's what I thought. I had a feeling. But Navy too. I expected some noise out of you. I was driving over with the general and we were talking about the AO [area of operations] you have here in Baghdad and it is a big thing. It's the largest city in the country, five and a half, six, seven million people. It's the seat of the government. It's the [Inaudible] international community. It is [Inaudible]. It's the [Inaudible]. And what happens here makes an enormous difference. It is a challenge to all of you to [Inaudible] challenge most of all to the Iraqi government, to see that this city goes well. [Inaudible] I know that [Inaudible] have displayed ingenuity and courage and compassion. You make our country very proud of you. You know better than anybody what you're up against. You've seen it up close and personal. You face a determined and vicious enemy. [Inaudible] variety of things. We've seen this most recently in Mosul in the attack in the last few days.

And once again, we've seen the truth that terrorists can attack at any time, at any place, using any technique and it's physically impossible to defend in every place, against every conceivable technique, at any time. That fact is a truth and that truth rises to the mission that we're on. We simply cannot as Americans, as free people, as part of a world community go on the defenses and simply expect to succeed. You have to be on the offensive. And that is why the global war on terror and the various locations that it's being fought recognizes that our task is to go after terrorists and go after terrorist networks globally has been [Inaudible] soon [Inaudible] we change the way they live their lives before they change the way we live our lives. Because they strike at something so fundamental, they strike at our ability to get up in the morning and do what we want, and say what we want, and go where we go and have our children go to school. And you see a [Inaudible] and to change that way of living which strikes at the very essence of our country. And I think all of us have a sense, if we imagine, the kind of world we would face if the people who bombed us the mess hall in Mosul or the people who did the bombing in Spain or the people who attacked the United States in New York, shot down the plane over Pennsylvania, attacked the Pentagon, the people who cut off people's heads on television to intimidate, to frighten. Indeed, the word "terrorize" is just that, its purpose is to terrorize, to alter behavior to make people be something other than that which they want to be and that is exactly what we cannot allow to happen.

The American people recognize the importance of your mission, that you're here for a purpose and that that purpose is not to run the country of Iraq. That's for the Iraqi people. It's not to find an American solution for Iraq. Indeed, it is to be here to try to help train and equip and organize and assist the Iraqi security

forces so that they over time will be able to take on responsibility for their country and this country will find a solution that will be uniquely Iraqi.

If you think about what's happened in Afghanistan three years ago, it was the training ground for terrorists, it was the place that the attacks against the United States were hatched and launched. And today they've elected the first popularly elected president in the history of the country. They are moving towards parliamentary elections in April. They have established a democratic system that's respectful of all of the various diverse elements in that country.

Women are voting for the first time. They're able to go outside by themselves, without being accompanied. Young children can fly a kite, can sing, can dance, which they were not allowed to do under the Taliban. The soccer stadium in Kabul is being used for soccer instead of beheading people. So the accomplishment in Afghanistan, it was a truly breathtaking experience. I was there for the inauguration. And President Karzai from the bottom of his heart thanked the American people and said that without that help, there would not a free society, they would not have been able to do what they're doing, that people would not be going to school. Here's a country that doesn't have any of the capabilities that this country does. It doesn't have the water, it doesn't have the oil, it doesn't have the population that is as well-educated as Iraq. This country has every chance in the world to make it and it's in an important location. It will have a big effect on this region. They have made good progress. If you think about it, they've gone from an Iraqi Governing Council to an interim government, moving towards elections at the end of next month, moving towards then the development of the constitution.

I've lived a few years -- a lot of years -- and I have seen fascism rise and fall. I've see communism rise and fall. We've seen the Berlin Wall get built and get torn down. And if you think about the message in all of that, we've seen Afghanistan go from a terrorist training ground to a democracy. Now what does that say? It says that the great sweep of human history is for freedom and that is the side we're on and that's the side you're on.

Just a few weeks ago, Fallujah was controlled by assassins and today it's a free city. Something like 140,00 refugees have come to this country from other countries -- Iraqis. Why do they do that? Why do they get up one morning and say to themselves, I'm going to leave where I am -- that's safer, to be sure -- and I'm going to go back to Iraq? They're voting with their feet. They are convinced that life is going to be good here, that there is a chance of making it and that people do need to pitch in and see that it happens.

I must say and as a personal message before I come out and shake hands and have a chance to tell you how much we appreciate your service. Let me just say that we know that you sacrifice. We certainly know your families do and they certainly serve just as you do and they are strong. I get a chance to see them in Bethesda and Walter Reed and other hospitals and I meet the families of people that have been wounded, your colleagues, people who've been here and gone back and are recuperating. And I must say the families are the most amazing thing. They are truly extraordinary. They're proud of what their sons and daughters do. They have strength and courage. And I don't think anyone can come away from being with them without gaining inspiration for the tough tasks ahead.

Now it's Christmas Eve and I don't want to, in any way, paint a picture that's pretty because it isn't pretty. This is a tough part of the world. This is a tough country. Your friends and your associates are at risk, as you are. And I wish I could stand here and say that the incidents of violence were going to calm down between now and the elections. I wish I could stand here and say that the incidents of violence will calm down after the elections. I can't say that. The people that we're up against have a lot to lose -- a lot to lose. They also have brains and they watch what we do and they adjust to what we do and they're determined, but so are we.

We are in a test of wills. There isn't a battle anyone could bring against you that you couldn't win. But you're not going to be faced with battles, you're going to be faced in the shadows, in the side streets and with people who are using every conceivable time, task and way of attacking you where you're most vulnerable and that's what we face. So there isn't any way that foreign troops – our troops, coalition troops or any other troops from any country – can provide security in this country. What we can do is contribute to security. What we can do is help to train the Iraqis and mentor the Iraqis and see that the Iraqis develop the capability, the equipment, the training, the organization, the chain of command, the experience, the rib cage, the officer leadership, the non-com leadership, the experience to take over responsibility for their own security and that's our task. That's what we have to do. That's what is being done and we've got wonderful people working on it. And I'm here to simply to look you in the eye and say thank you, everyone of you. God bless you.

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