

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld
General Peter Pace, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

18 April 2006

GENERAL PACE: I have no messages to transmit, I just want to answer questions. So wherever you want to take it, we're good to go. I'm happy to try to give it my best shot. Then the Secretary is going to come in and he can clean up what I meant to say. Yes sir?

QUESTION: Sir, pick up where you kind of left off on Iraq. There's a growing concern about two things. One, the political side I see here in the building for a government, and [inaudible] what appears to be [inaudible] of violence. So if you can give us a couple of comments on that.

Also just sort of the state of these that came up in your press conference, the paramilitary. If you can follow up on that fact. How worried are we that they really are starting to infiltrate particularly the police forces, a certain level of control, the hit squads we keep hearing about. Is it anecdotal? Do you worry about it?

GENERAL PACE: There are a couple of different questions embedded in your question I think. One has to do with the difference between the militia and those who may be in other units that they haven't been vetted properly, so I'll just take them one at a time.

Concerns properly focused on each of those. One, the vetting process. The Iraqi government now has a pretty good process for looking up "PFC Mohammed's" name and seeing whether or not they have anything in their records about previous affiliations with groups. They've got a computer database and those kinds of things they're running past, but like any system that's in its infancy, the database is not complete and therefore some guys get through but they've been pretty good at chasing those rabbits and making sure that the guys they're not sure of, they continue to check and go back and do rescrubs. It was what maybe a month ago, within the last month, they found a bunch of folks who were in fact not loyal to the unit to which they had joined and they culled them out.

So I know that they're anxious, they being the central government, is anxious to properly vet the units and they're working hard at doing that.

On the militias themselves, once the new government stands up they're going to have to deal with how they want to approach this. This is I guess what I didn't say very accurately in the press conference so I get another chance to try it here. What I'm trying to say is that some of these militias might very well be the kind that would be useful to the government if the militia were loyal to the government, so that's a way it could be assimilated. Another way it could be assimilated, which is what I was trying to say, was to disarm it, disband it. Or a third way would be to have the people who are in the units join the police or join other standing Iraqi security forces.

What you cannot have at the end of the day is standing militia units that are loyal to other than the central government. How quickly they'll be able to deal with that as a new government will be their business, but I imagine it will take them a little bit of time to kind of get their feet on the ground and determine the best way to hit it, but at the end of the day, long term, the militias either have to be assimilated or disbanded.

Was there a third part to your question?

QUESTION: The government getting set up.

GENERAL PACE: From my viewpoint, very important, and the longer that it takes the less certain the Iraqi people are of the final outcome of their government, the less willing individuals will be to take risk by turning in bad guys, calling the hotlines, and those kinds of things.

So the Iraqi people did what they were supposed to do and voted at the polls and elected their representatives. Now it's time for their elected representatives to do what they're supposed to do, which is form a government.

QUESTION: General, you may want to put this on background or whatever. What did we learn from the [inaudible] wargames that the Iranians just conducted? How does their command and control work? What did we learn from the missile shots? Can you tell us anything about that?

GENERAL PACE: I'm not playing games, I have not seen the reports yet. I do know they were conducted, I do know our guys are analyzing it. I have not yet seen the report so I cannot tell you yet what we have learned. But obviously of great interest to us. Beyond that I'm probably two or three weeks ahead -- You're probable two or three weeks ahead of me as far as asking the question.

QUESTION: I understand. We're hearing all kinds of things, that their command and control worked exceedingly well, they have major commands there. I just don't know if even that's true.

GENERAL PACE: I don't either, and I don't want to guess.

QUESTION: You may have noticed recently that your boss has been in the news. [Laughter]. Is that having any effect on troops deployed? Have you been getting feedback about how the young men and women who are in Iraq and Afghanistan, first of all I presume they're hearing this. Any sense on how that's playing?

GENERAL PACE: Two folks I talked to within the last two days, so this is what they told me. Mike Hagee was over there last week during this whole drill back here. Mike said that of all the places he went, all the groups he met with, thousands of Marines, in all the open forums he had where he had it open for questions nobody asked any single question about that. They were all properly focused on the mission at hand and what they were doing. All their questions were about the warfight at hand. That's on one end of the spectrum.

Sergeant Major Gainey, my Senior Enlisted Advisor, was also in the Gulf last week, and he came back and told me last night that same situation. He found aboard ships, on the oil rigs, on the ground, talking to folks, all the enlisted guys, and not one asked him a question about that. And because he didn't get asked any questions he did some probing to see what impact, and what he was told by the guys he was talking to was that they understand the process in Washington, they trust the leaders here in Washington, and they're about doing the mission that they're on.

So that's only two data points, but one's a four star general and one's a sergeant major, and they both came back with the exact same report from two different parts of the battlefield.

QUESTION: General, someone was asking a question about Afghanistan, same thing about Iraq. The impression of Afghanistan is of the Taliban resurging, that's the word that's out there. That's what he asked and then I'm asking the same thing about Iraq. In your statement, you said things are going pretty well. That's not the impression of the public, if I can characterize that accurately. So what can we say to the American public to say that there are not just some good things happening, but there are some things you can see that will make you feel better about what our military is doing and any progress we have made.

GENERAL PACE: First of all, there are good things happening and there are bad things happening. At the time I said things

were going very well was in a Sunday morning about a month ago when I was out on the Sunday morning shows and I failed to recalibrate myself from show to show. So when I was asked a question I was thinking about the Iraqi armed forces. When I watched the show I realized the question was a much broader question than that and if I could have taken back the answer I gave to the question I was really asked instead of the one I heard, I would have taken it back. Because what I said then was things are going very very well. I was talking about, in my own mind, the standing up of the Iraqi army.

Be that as it may, the reason I preface all of that is because there are things going well and there are things going not so well. The going well part is all of the training of both the Iraqi army and the Afghan army. Our guys and gals can be very proud of that. In addition to being proud of their own prowess on the battlefield.

So any mission we've given our armed forces, whether it be Iraq, Afghanistan, tsunami relief, hurricane relief, earthquake relief in Pakistan, no matter what was given our guys and gals to do, they've done it extremely well.

On the bad side of the house, clearly, the bombs are still going off. The good news in there is that the bombs are less and less targeted to us because we are finding more, disarming more, protecting our guys and gals better, and our tactics, techniques and procedures are changing so at the [inaudible] detonation, which is a hell of a way to look at it, you have fewer casualties, the U.S. military. The bad news inside of that though is that the bombers are now targeting soft targets -- crowds of people, folks lined up at recruiting stations and the like so the numbers of casualties on that side, on the civilian side, has gone up.

I believe this ties back to the issue of standing up the government in that I think more and more people will turn in more and more bombers and more and more bomb factories once they feel confident that their future is with the new government and not still hanging on the fence.

So we continue to encourage the standup of the government for lots of reasons, that being one of them.

QUESTION: Why is Jafari so reluctant to want to compromise?

GENERAL PACE: I don't know. I've never sat at the table with him.

QUESTION: Can you share with us, General, this [Mulis Kahn's] assessment of things in Afghanistan and what additional support he might have requested from you?

GENERAL PACE: Let me think about this. He was here three weeks ago, a month ago. A: very grateful for all that has taken place so far in training up.

Interested in modernizing the weapons that he has and culling down the numbers of weapons to one type of rifle, one type of truck, the same kind of thing we try to do. The good news is a lot of nations have given them things for their use. The bad news is, a lot of nations have given them things for their use and they're all not the same. So they have a logistics system just keeping various types of trucks and weapon systems on line.

A desire for more lift capacity, either through their own ownership of things like the C-130s and helicopters or ability to catch a ride on more.

I wish I had my notes with me for what else we talked about.

Intelligence sharing. The need for better intelligence sharing amongst the three parties who are the U.S., Afghanistan and Pakistan. And a desire for us to help in the understanding amongst Afghans and Pakis on what they really are trying to do with and for each other. As you all know, there is some suspicion there that he, the general, is trying to overcome by meeting with his counterpart in Pakistan, by sharing intelligence, by coordinating actions on both sides of the border so that through execution on the battlefield, they show each other that they are really good friends.

Interestingly, when I was in Pakistan, that's about three weeks ago, I guess. My counterpart there also was very open and energized about wanting to prove good faith in relationships with the Afghans. So it appears right now that both governments, Pakistan and Afghanistan, really want to work that out as best they can. And certainly General [Mulis Kahn] was leaning in that direction.

Personnel wise, they can have any size army they want. We're kind of targeting a number that I think is about 70,000, but that's their business. We can get to 70,000 if they want to go further they can certainly do that, but we're trying to help them get to that first tranche of folks who are well trained.

Operationally our guys on the battlefield, the ones I've talked to, are very comfortable side by side with the Afghan army. In fact I like to have them with them one, because they're

good warriors; and two, because they know the local people. So it's a good fit for our guys to be hand in glove with the Afghans.

Logistics. I don't think we discussed logistics other than being able to get things around the battlefield faster and better.

That's all.

QUESTION: He didn't talk about integration of the MOD and MOI? The police in particular with the army.

GENERAL PACE: he did not with me. That does not mean he did not while he was back here, but I don't recall that conversation.

QUESTION: Sir, talk about this business about your boss being in the news lately. A couple of points I'll just make and then I'll ask you to comment and tell us your views.

There have been reports that active duty officers have made contact with some of these folks that have spoken out and encouraged them. I think we've all served or been near outfits that had leadership issues where the commander has been dominant and that's worked a while and worked sometimes a long time, but eventually there's problems on behavior that you can characterize in a lot of ways, but I think you know the kind of outfits I'm talking about.

So I'm asking you how serious is this problem? Is this half a dozen guys? Is this more than that? What's your judgment? Not about what the soldiers are saying. Commanders can explain things to soldiers. But I do ask you your judgment as to how serious this issue is right now.

GENERAL PACE: Let me first tell you, I don't know who's talking to who. They'll identify themselves when and if they feel like they should.

Second, the fact that people have different opinions out here in and of itself is not a problem. That's healthy. People have different opinions.

Third, I can tell you what I know for a fact. That is that two Chiefs of the Army, Rick Shinseki and Pete Schoomaker; two Chiefs of the Navy, Vern Clark and Mike Mullen; two Commandants, Jim Jones and Mike Hagee; two Chairmen, Dick Myers and Pete Pace; two Vice Chairmen, Pete Pace and Ed Giambastiani; two Air Force Chiefs, John Jumper and Buzz Moseley; plus whatever number of the nine combatant commanders who have changed over plus the guys

that are currently in those jobs have all had numerous meetings, discussions like this around the table with the Secretary about numerous issues, but specifically with regard to Iraq.

The process included 50 or 60 times with Tom Franks sitting in a room like this with six or eight guys around the table talking to the Secretary about his plan, with the Chiefs in the room or with me and Dick Myers in the room. Ample opportunity for all of us to get our thoughts and concerns on the table. We did. Tom came up with a plan. Nobody would ever tell him no, you can't do that, or no you shouldn't do that, no you can't have that. Lots of questions were asked about how best to do things. He would go back, do his homework, come back again and give his next version of his plan.

At the end of the day each of the Chiefs individually and collectively as a body, blessed Tom's plan. We told the Secretary of Defense we believed it was a good plan and that Tom had the assets he needed. We told the President individually and collectively that it was a good plan and it had the right kind of assets. We had the responsibility to speak our mind and do so and have done so and continue to do so.

I don't know how to explain it to the American people any better than what I've been trying to do, which is to explain the process and how it is that guys like us who have had America's sons and daughters entrusted to our care take that pretty damn seriously. And oh, by the way, if you go back and count all the kids of all the guys I just mentioned who are currently in uniform, you come up with a pretty good number including my son who during his time was a captain in the Marine Corps as well. So they're all our sons and daughters not only figuratively but literally.

We all take our oath seriously and both Mike Hagee, but more importantly in this particular vein, Sergeant Major Gainey came back and said that folks who they asked, because nobody asked them the question, the folks they asked all had great faith in their leaders to be doing the right things and be giving them the right guidance. So I do not see it as a problem.

That does not mean that the issue being raised should not be looked at because if somebody feels strongly enough to raise it the way they're raising it, then we certainly ought to take a look at what is it about this issue that has them concerned. Why they didn't raise it while they had the responsibility while they were on active duty, I do not know. They'll have to answer for themselves on that. But I do know that the folks who were in the Tank, the folks who were in the combatant commanders conferences, the folks who were with the Secretary of Defense and the President spoke our minds very directly and very openly and will

continue to do so. So I don't see it as a problem the way I think I heard your question. I do think we need to listen to the issues and deal with the issues and not with the way the issues are being raised.

QUESTION: General, what keeps you up at night?

GENERAL PACE: Having been educated at the Naval Academy I learned how to sleep almost any place. [Laughter].

QUESTION: That's an oxymoron.

GENERAL PACE: I've learned over 39 years to discipline myself to sleep when it's time to sleep so I can function better when I am awake.

If you asked me the question, when you're shaving in the morning what's the first thing that's on your mind every day? I'm thinking about whether or not I'm thinking about the right things. Am I focused on the things I should be focused on yesterday and today to take care of PFC Pace? I worry about, I'll use this term, there's more than one kind of abusive power. There's the abusive power that goes with what people usually think about which is doing too much with what you've got. There's also an abusive power of not doing what you should be doing with the responsibilities you have. That's really where I think folks in positions really need to be thinking hard. Am I doing the things I should be doing today for the guys and gals who are in combat?

QUESTION: Sir, let me track with that, because that's really -- It isn't about the Secretary, and I've been watching a lot of the folks who have been on television talking about it almost like George C. Scott, Patton, was talking. America hates a loser and loves a winner. If you look like you're beginning to lose you become very vulnerable in our society if you happen to be in a position that is either elected or appointed. The fact that you all opened your mouths and gave the best advice or gave no advice at all, you're still accountable about what's going on and so are those around.

So the real test about it all is how -- everybody, let me put this in the right frame. It appears that at least a majority or a major portion of the American people think we're not winning this thing or not doing as well as we should in this thing. That's their perception. Whether the troops have that perception or not.

The real question is, if they feel that way and feel strong enough they will essentially repudiate the leadership at some

point, as they have done in our time when we were young together and Vietnam was our turn.

So the question is, when you wake up and shave, or you and the Secretary -- I'm not worried about General Zinni shooting at somebody for their personality. The question is, how do you regain the initiative in the eyes of the people who are putting their sons and daughters behind you and the electorate so that Americans say we're going to get this thing done right. It's going to be okay. Not just that we trust. That's the query.

GENERAL PACE: I think a couple of things. Number one, you tell the truth as you know it as often as you can to as many people as will listen as you can.

Two, you admit your mistakes. If you don't admit mistakes then how can anybody believe that you learned from them or that you won't make more in the future. So I think it's really important to admit mistakes.

This does not mean that given the same set of facts two years ago that led you to the decision made that you wouldn't make the same decision again given the same set of facts. But you've got to at least say look, those are the facts I knew. This is what has transpired. If I knew this back then I might have done something different but here's where we are. But you at least have to admit that what you thought was true and what turned out to be true were different which leads you to where you are today. Then get on about understanding where you are and getting to where you need to be.

That doesn't mean that you just forget about history, but it does mean, especially if you have been sitting in a job that has a responsibility, that you spend a little bit of time thinking about how you got to where you are, but a whole lot of time thinking about where you are and where you should be, and you expend your energy publicly and privately to get to where you should be in as open and honest a way as you can.

Understand, that there are lessons to be learned back here which is why I'm saying for those people who are raising issues of concern, that they shouldn't be dismissed. They are to be acknowledged and the discussion ought to take place in a professional, at a level as professional and worthy of discussion and time as opposed to taking shots at each other's personalities.

QUESTION: So as you talk to America then you're not talking to PFC Pace's mom and dad and saying okay, here's what you'll see next that shows you that we who are running this operation in fact have the initiative and that we are moving in a direction

that will lead to an end that satisfies the goals that we set up. In other words, how do you reestablish that they should have confidence in you, that you can drive this thing to closure, and bring the kids home and we can declare victory or whatever we call it and get on with it.

GENERAL PACE: I think it's fair to say when, I use for example the Iraqi armed forces being trained up now as being the success story in the making. You have to admit that the first several months of trying to stand up the Iraqi army we didn't have it right and it took a while to understand that the best thing to do in addition to putting them through training was to have the embedded guys with them so that when they went out into battle they could get the air they needed -- just like our guys. They could get the air they need, get the medevacs they need, they can get the artillery they need, so that they have the wherewithal like our battalions do to carry the fight forward.

Once we understood what was missing then we were able to adjust and that has proven itself to be a major plus. Those are the kinds of things that I think you need to demonstrate along the way.

We're probably six months to a year behind the army with regard to the police because we just started police in the same way we're doing the army, on the 1st of October of '05. We're starting to do the embeds and those kinds of things.

So honesty, integrity, admitting your mistakes, telling folks where you are and where you're trying to get to I think makes a difference. And being believable in the process.

QUESTION: I think what Tom is getting at is, first of all, you're fighting a media that is kind of different than [name]. I really do, which is kind of unfortunate. And I can give you a lot of examples of insight [inaudible] some of the others.

But we haven't done, when they ask for mistakes, when you all were sitting around taking, we call them courses of action, I believe. And you don't select the course of action that says "mistaken". You select, as you said, the one that to the best of your knowledge you think will work the best. Of course with the microwave press and this, they have said well that's a mistake. I'm not sure that we articulate very well in a nice way to say the logic behind this course of action.

The enemy gets a vote. Sometimes they don't work so you have to adjust and it's a continuous adjustment. So in a way how we explain that to America -- America will understand, the press won't understand the course of action.

The other area that I think we have not done as good a job is on our forward strategy. The forward strategy you all have done I think is brilliant. It is damn good. But if you look at the cut and run crowd they want to come back and go behind somewhere and defend the ports. Defending ports, homeland security, does not defeat Islamic extremism. It's the ideology that is our problem and that's where I have problems with Tony Zinni. He thinks it is this instability in the region, it's not an ideology.

This is an ideology like Communism, Nazism, and Fascism, and we won in World War II by projecting power, changing it. We won in the Cold War with 500,000 troops continuously displayed forward. Most of us were part of that. And the only way we're going to win in this region is not dominate it by Islamist extremists and help the moderates is with a forward strategy. Now there is a penalty to it.

Frankly, from a military point of view the penalty, 2400 brave Americans whom we lost, 3,000 in an hour and 15 minutes, is relative. But that's a long term proposition to get these moderate governments up.

QUESTION: If I can just ask a question. What's the next big event that we can look forward to that we can highlight as members of the media that would give America some sense that -- would there be some military event that we could look forward to? Perhaps an operation or something like that that might give us [inaudible]?

GENERAL PACE: I'm happy to answer that, but let him finish his question.

QUESTION: So the fact is, I don't think the American people, because the administration hasn't explained it as well, understand why we're forward, why we want to be there.

The other day I'm driving in and Chris Coor's got a vote on do we need to bring the troops back to protect the border, or do we need them over there? I was amazed. People are talking about bringing them back. Two entirely different issues.

Islamic extremism is coming here like they did on 9/11 if we don't have a forward strategy. It's been very successful. Almost five years we've kept them away.

So I say you've got a brilliant strategy but I'm not sure we've articulated it in a way that every day it comes up.

Their strategy over there of Islamist extremism, and every day, as you know, it's open source. Number one, it's a crusade.

Number two, they want our oil. Number three, they want to humiliate us. If you stay with this we'll bring victory and we will not let them humiliate us. Every day on the internet, every day in Al Arabiyah and every day on Al Jazeera they're seeing that.

Now in the American media people see, well we're losing. We're losing. Hell, we're winning. I think that's Tom's point. How do we get that across in a way that the American people accept?

GENERAL PACE: Guys like me need to make ourselves available as often as we can to not only groups like this but business leaders and other groups who are opinion leaders in the community. Not to sway them one way or the other but to tell the truth as we know it so they can factor that in with what they're seeing on TV or they're reading in the newspapers so they can put it all together in their own heads.

If you recall, back in the very beginning of the war we had embedded reporters. You had 24/7 coverage. Anybody who wanted to could watch TV, read newspapers, read magazines, and form their own opinion. Now because news is a business there's much less time available to covering, therefore the folks who are covering are looking for the news item that's going to get them air time and that's normally the bombs going off, those kinds of things. So in that kind of environment it's even more important that we make ourselves available to answer questions to include the one about what the next major event is going to be which is the standup of the government.

It's going to be a critical moment when they decide who is going to be in that government and whether or not those selected individuals are viewed by the general public as a unifying representative government. If each Kurd, Sunni and Shia believes that whatever the government stands up is representative of them, then we're going to be in good shape. If a sector feels isolated because of whatever team is put together we're going to have problems.

So my answer to your question would be the next most important thing is the standup of the government.

QUESTION: Real quick follow up on that, sir, to Tom's point. I think it's vastly correct, one-hundred-twenty percent correct that the troops - this all passes over them. They could care less. This is all inside Baseball back in Washington and who cares?

But I have heard a few guys say to me, you know, one of the problems is --

[Secretary Rumsfeld arrives].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Stay here, keep talking. Answer the questions.

GENERAL PACE: Alright, sir.

QUESTION: One of the problems is that the United States Army, United States Marine Corps, DoD, it's at war right now. The rest of it has got to stop. And as a consequence, does that perhaps [inaudible] translate out and it doesn't get out because for the average American -- we haven't said to America as often as we should have or sought after different ways or caused them to think that they were really at war, so they're going to pay more attention to the Duke Lacrosse team or Michael Jackson or some other damn thing.

GENERAL PACE: I think the good news and the bad news is exactly the same.

QUESTION: So, we're not task organized as a government for war, is what I worry about.

GENERAL PACE: The good news and bad news is the same thing which is a lot of Americans don't wake up every day thinking that their country's at war because we have not been attacked since 9/11 here at home and therefore it's been four-plus years since that has happened.

So you can see where fellow citizens would not be thinking each day that the country is at war and what are we going to do about it. Whereas the fact of the matter is we are at war; in a very real, tangible, threatening to our society way. That's why any opportunity I get to talk to any group of influencers I like to do that because it gives me a chance at least to put my thoughts on the table so they can blend that in with the rest of the thoughts they've been hearing during the course of that week and determine themselves what's right and what's not.

The Secretary of all defense is here. Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: First of all, thank you for coming. It's good to see you. I appreciate those of you who have been out talking and putting in context what's going on in the world. [Inaudible] some things and talk about Iraq and the global war on terror. I don't think you need any long remarks from me. I'd be happy to just answer questions and respond to things that might be on your minds.

QUESTION: Sir, has what's gone on with regard to you and these generals had an impact on your credibility, on this administration and on the military?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I guess time will tell. It's awful hard for me to be instantaneously inclusive about something like that. It is clearly a distraction and unhelpful, but our democracy has lots of distractions and things that are unhelpful. If you believe, as I do, that the center of gravity of this war is not in Afghanistan or Iraq or elsewhere, it's in the capitals of Western countries. It's not an accident that Zargawi and Zawahiri and bin Laden have media committees and they sit down and think how can they impact the body politic in the United States. They're good at it and we're not terribly good at it.

So it becomes part of that debate, what's going on. Have we lived through things like this before? Sure. My goodness. The Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II.

~~I can remember when I was Secretary the last time they were digging graves in my front lawn, the Barrigan brothers, and spilling blood on the Pentagon front steps and stuff like that. President Johnson had buses around the White House because they didn't have those concrete revetments in those days and he couldn't go out and give a speech.~~

So it's not like this is new what's going on. Wars aren't popular, and I suppose they shouldn't be.

On the other hand, think of our country. If we tossed in the towel every time things got tough and people started fussing -- Yes, sir.

QUESTION: It seems that the President spoke about his desire for you to stay put.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: He's been unambiguous.

QUESTION: Right. One of the things that impressed me about how the initiatives [inaudible] after the hurricane in New Orleans was when Honore chastised the press about getting stuck on stupid. [Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It was wonderful. Can you imagine? I'd like to think I was a genius and I had him located there to - [Laughter] - just in case there was a Katrina. But it was just an accident. The guy is fabulous.

QUESTION: The point is, what is is, the past is the past, it's for historians to review.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Sure.

QUESTION: But in the meantime, not only are we trying to do this thing in Iraq but if you look at the polls, the American people to huge numbers, like over 70 percent, believe that Iran is a major threat to this country, and an equally high double digit percentage, 65 to 70 percent, think that a military strike against Iran to keep them from getting nuclear is something that we should be considering.

Now it seems to me that doing good in Iraq is one of the best things we could do to off-set a lot of these potential problems with Iran and the focus of the American people ought to be in that future, not -- I mean if I were you I wouldn't even be answering a question about this. It's over.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Why don't you go down to the press room and tell those folks -- [Laughter].

QUESTION: I'm serious. There are only so many minutes in a day.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You're right. Put yourself in the shoes of Iran and the people there. Having a representative system that's at peace with its neighbors and a moderate voice in the world in Afghanistan and in Iraq on their two borders is not a happy prospect. It is clearly a difficult thing for the Ayatollahs and the clerics that are running that place, and they don't want it. And they're obviously contributing to the problems we're seeing in both countries. And you can't blame them. It would not be good for their system.

But the important thing in Iraq is to get a government formed. It's going to happen. It's taken longer than one would hope. But I think it will happen and I hope that it happens at a pace that it has the kind of favorable effect on the country that the people who, the 10 or 12 million people who went out and voted and risked their lives, they were threatened by the terrorists when they went out and voted, that they'll look at it, nod their head and say not bad. The constitution's there, the government, these people are inclusive. They're reasonably going to govern from the center rather than the edges, and we can put our confidence in it and get about our business. I hope that's what happens. I think it will.

QUESTION: Sir, by most recollections of the press and around, and I asked General Pace about it too. It would appear that we've lost whatever initiative we might have had initially in dictating the courses of action that lead to a positive conclusion. After all, as you just said, I hope that the government turns out right. And by the way I hope, and in fact

what I'm hearing is they must form a government or it isn't going to work the way we think it should. The same thing at home, more importantly. The initiative at home that would keep the American people focused on the idea that we're moving forward to a positive end.

So what are we doing to fix that?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, the Department of State and the President are on the phone with the people out there frequently. They're trying to do it with a touch that isn't too heavy-handed. The goal is to have whatever government is formed look like an Iraqi government and not an American template that we imposed on them.

So they're doing it privately. They're doing it I hope successfully, and time will tell. I have no crystal ball, but our people out there, General Casey, General Abizaid, Korelli and others are talented people. They're very capable people, and they are doing exactly what they believe ought to be done. They've persuaded General Pace and me that what they're doing is what ought to be done. And there is a tension between, on the political side, a tension between being so insistent and so visible and so threatening and so public to the political figures that whatever comes out looks tainted, it looks American, it looks like they acquiesced, and we got what we want but the Iraqi people didn't get what they want. We don't want that to happen.

So they're trying to help the Iraqi people who are making these decisions understand the seriousness of what's taking place, the importance of getting it done, and the importance of getting it done in a way that the government is seen by the Iraqi people as being Iraqi and something they can have confidence in to protect them from each other. That's not easy.

The same thing is true on our forces. We have to manage our forces, General Casey does, in a way that he recognizes the tension between having too many forces and being too intrusive and breaking down too many doors, and scooping up too many detainees to the point where we look like an occupying force that's there to get their oil and feeds the insurgency. Or, on the other hand, is so intrusive that it creates a dependency on the part of the Iraqis and they don't do things, they don't have to do things, because we're filling every vacuum and doing it all for them. Against having too few troops that the political situation doesn't go forward in an orderly way and that's the tension. And there's no guidebook. You don't get taught this in war college, you know that. You've all been there. This is tough stuff. It's an art. It isn't a science. And I hear all these people out there criticizing this and fussing about that and I look at it and I say well, that's fine, everyone can have a

view. But for me I'll put my money on Abizaid and Casey and Korelli and Dempsey. I think they're -- Pete Pace and I sit there with them by the hour asking them questions. Why are you doing this, what do you think about that? They answer the questions and discuss this and discuss that. I come away and I look at the shallowness of a lot of the people who were opining about this and opining about that and I say to myself any day I'd take Casey and Abizaid's opinion.

QUESTION: Sir, a follow-up quickly. It's not about Casey and Abizaid.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: What's it about?

QUESTION: It's about what you said first, and the American people haven't heard that or they'd be perhaps more positive --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I thought this was on the record.
[Laughter].

QUESTION: That's right. And one of the difficulties is not always what you say, it's what they heard.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's true.

QUESTION: and the point I'm trying to make again, I don't know where you're going to do it, and I wish I could give you some kind of magic answer, but I don't have one either. But they haven't heard what you said about those tensions. They haven't heard that some of this, despite our best efforts, is really out of our control except that we can blow it because if we lean too far in one direction or the other, that's a heck of a message.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: What I've just said I have said dozens and dozens of times publicly. Now the fact that the American people haven't heard it, it's complicated. It isn't a simple formulation. It's not a bumper sticker. It's a lot of paragraphs and I admit that. But it's not anything new, what I've just said. It's something that I've worked with -- Pete Pace and Abizaid and Casey and I have talked about this balance, the tension between these two things for three years about how to do it.

QUESTION: It's not getting out. I think what he's saying, you're spot on, Mr. Secretary. I think Tom's point is you're talking -- it's the forward strategy which is I believe the [inaudible]. The fact is every American ought to understand why those troops are there. You know, and it's one of these repetitive things that we have to say, and articulate it in sound bytes because things stick. But we won World War II, we won the Cold War with a forward strategy and we have a homeland defense

and a homeland strategy, but the forward strategy will defeat this radical Islam ideology. That's why we're there in presence, so the moderate governments that we're trying to get will stand up. It's one of these things that you understand it brilliantly, but I think Tom's point is somehow the American people don't see this.

I just mentioned to General Pace on Chris Coor the other day there was a vote whether we ought to bring the troops home and defend the borders from the immigrants, or over there. Two separate issues and he didn't explain --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I know.

QUESTION: -- Islamic extremism, one is an immigration problem. A lot of bright people came on and didn't get it.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You're right. The other day I was embarrassed, I sat down and I thought of all the time that all of us spend trying to figure out what we ought to be doing and how we ought to be doing it compared to the amount of time I spend on how you ought to say what you're doing or why you're doing it. I don't spend any time on that, it just comes out. And that's probably not smart. It's a terribly important issue how you say these things and how you impact it. If in fact the center of gravity's here in Washington and in the United States, then we darn well better spend more time thinking about that and doing a better job on it.

QUESTION: In terms of the political ties, NSA dropping, all the rest of these things, it seems like the political tie has been kind of ebbing away from you guys for a while. Now we've got a new year, we got a lot more war to fight. But is there some way that you're thinking about to maybe kind of regain the political tide in your favor by going on the offense. Things like, I was encouraged when you said in your press briefing a while ago, you know, maybe we ought to think about the Solomon Amendment. Are you going to go out there and, forgive me for the analogy, but start kind of poking people in the nose politically a little bit --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: A nice guy like me? [Laughter].

QUESTION: You are the last to commit acts of politics. [Laughter]. But it's got to be the kind of thing that -- what the two Toms are saying about the political, the people not hearing the political message that you're trying to send sometimes may be seeing you on the offense a little bit.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You're right. I can play it round or square. I can go on offense. I'm not very good on defense. I don't think that makes a heck of a lot of sense.

Maybe I should be doing more offense, it's a fair question.

The question of what we're doing over there is, think of the dire consequences if that place tanks. Think of it. Having the Zargawis of the world have that country with that oil and that water and that population and that location, our lives would be miserable if they were training terrorists in that place and financing what's going on in the world. I'd a heck of a lot rather be fighting them over there than fighting them back here.

And there's no way we can defend against every terrorist in this country. We all know that. It's the only way you can deal with it. They've got the advantage if they're on the attack. We've got to go after them where they are. We've got to root them out. We've got to find them and capture them and kill them.

QUESTION: It's the forward strategy.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It is, absolutely.

QUESTION: Two words people get. The word taking the offense, the forward strategy is an offensive game. Homeland defense is defense. We don't win back here protecting the borders. So the forward strategy you all have laid out is great. I mean you're winning.

The point is, back here the media is just all on the negatives, the car bombs. Every time a car bomb goes off people ought to think they're killing innocents. The worst kind of people in the world.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: They are.

QUESTION: How do we play this and articulate it so again, it comes out. Killing innocents. That's all they know how to do is kill innocents.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: This is the first war that's ever been run in the 21st Century in a time of 24 hour news and bloggers and internets and e-mails and digital cameras and Sony cams and God knows all this stuff, and wire transfers, all the electronic things that are going on, and it's a different world.

We're not very skillful at it in terms of the media part of the new realities that we're living with. Every time we try to do something someone says it's illegal or immoral, there's nothing the press would rather write about than the press, we all know that. They fall in love with it. So every time someone

tries to do some information operations for some public diplomacy or something, they say oh my goodness, it's multiple audiences and if you're talking to them, they're hearing you here as well and therefore that's propagandizing or something or it's not fair or it's not right. We don't have the right rules or the right understandings yet for this century.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, one of the things we've learned in the media, painfully, is that often times simple is better.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Yes.

QUESTION: Peel off the edges and focus on the -- you know the old Army saying: The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Yeah.

QUESTION: And you just said something that I thought would be profound as a message. In one of your speeches you ought to say, everybody stop for a minute and imagine an Iraq ruled by Zarqawi, and then you just go down the list and say all right, we've got oil, money, sovereignty, access to the geographic center of gravity of the Middle East, blah, blah, blah. If you can just paint a mental picture for Joe America to say oh my God, I can't imagine a world like that. That would be a good 15 minute sound byte that --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It would be. I've never done it.

QUESTION: I think you ought to try it.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I think you're right. I'd rather be lucky than smart. I'm glad you told me I said something worth saying. That's helpful. [Laughter].

QUESTION: I'm an old intel guy and I can sum all of this up, unfortunately, with one word. That is PsyOps. Now most people may hear that and they think oh my God, they're trying to brainwash --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: What are you, some kind of a nut? You don't believe in the constitution? [Laughter].

QUESTION: Well, he is. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Some would characterize me that way. But I would also disagree with you sir, respectfully. You are absolutely brilliant in front of the camera. And anybody --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: But I don't spend any time --

QUESTION: It doesn't matter. The point is that you are. And I think most of us would agree with that. But if the offensive is --

Many of us go on every day, we don't agree with everything the administration does, maybe with some of your decisions, but we get beat up on television sometimes when we go on and we are debating and then we take, and we're all thick skinned or we wouldn't continue to do this. But we would love, I would personally love and I think I speak for most of the gentlemen here at the table, for you to take the offensive, to just go out there and just crush these people so that when we go on we're forgive me, we're parroting, but it's what has to be said. It's what we believe in or we would not be saying it. We'd love to be following our leader as in fact you are. You are the leader. You are our guy.

QUESTION: You go on O'Reilly and you've got him eating out of your hand because you're smart and of course the rest of them are afraid to go near him. When you take the tough ones on like that and quite frankly it's because I think you have to, the world starts seeing you. You're on the offensive. You're on the offensive of forward strategy. We're winning over there. They're voting. The government's changing. And all of a sudden you take these initiatives away because every time one of these congressmen gets up there or senators, cut and run and that whole crowd. Cut and run stayed out there and stayed out there and no one ever came up and said you know, you did on your press conference but who's watching you at 1:00 o'clock? It's got to be the prime --

QUESTION: and you're constantly defending yourself or your decisions --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- instead of putting them on [the defensive].

QUESTION: You're brilliant when you do it. When you're out there --

QUESTION: That's a simple thing. Stuck on stupid, remember, it stopped [inaudible]. [Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It's been done before. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Do it again.

QUESTION: -- detailed, logical analysis that ends up being countered by detailed, logical counter-analysis and the American people just turn to American Idol or something.

World War II, sacrifice equals victory. Simple themes. Every day, every classroom, billboards, on TV, in movie theaters. Same thing with the Cold War. We were all raised, we all knew what it was all about. There were sacrifices happening everywhere but we knew what the simple theme was. Stay the course, stick to our guns.

In this war, and that's the other issue, if you ask most Americans what do you think of the war, they'll talk about Iraq. The context is Iraq is a battle. It has to be framed, again anew, there has to be a worldscape view of the global war on terror and it has to be termed global, too. Between those two messages, simplicity and that theme of a global war, Iraq in context.

QUESTION: You know what they call PsyOps today, they call those public relations firms. [Laughter]. So they kind of phase that out.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You people should be taking notes. I'm taking all the notes! [Laughter].

QUESTION: I wanted to talk about mistakes. Mistakes in strategic planning, mistakes in strategy, and all that. The group think that's taken over, if we had simply had more troops - 300,000, 250, 500, whatever it was, things would be a lot better.

Can you go take us through your thoughts on that now? If you knew then what you know now.

*[SECRETARY RUMSFELD: This is on the record? Let's do it off the record. Background or whatever you call it.

QUESTION: Background means what to you guys?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: We're saying it's not Rumsfeld. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Great. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Department of Defense official and it doesn't sound like it's anything we can quote [inaudible].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Pete, calibrate me as I walk through this.

But we sat down with Tom Franks, and the combatant commander is the one who develops the plan. The plan on the shelf was a decade old. This is the one that Zinni says we should have implemented. It was really kind of out of date. At least Tom Franks thought so and I thought so and General Pace thought so and Dick Myers did. So he started working on a new plan. He brought it in and we talked and it went back and forth and back and forth. Eventually he'd take it into the Tank and the Chiefs would look at it. Eventually there was a plan that was agreed and recommended to the President. It had been approved by all the Chiefs and by Dick Myers and Pete and me. It had an escalation in it where we could have kept going with some excursions off at any time that Franks decided he had enough.

So we were able to go in, I forget what it was. It was 300,000, 400,000 or 500,000.

GENERAL PACE: Just shy of 400,000.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: 380,000?

GENERAL PACE: Everything that was put in the pipeline --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: And they could have gone right in. It was programmed and en-route. At some moment General Franks said I think it's time to stop adding it in. By this time he had probably already taken Baghdad. I don't remember when it was. But he made that recommendation. I had no reason to disagree with it, you had no reason to disagree with it. We agreed with it. And we were very worried about a lot of things that didn't happen. Just to get it up on the table, we were worried about the use of chemical weapons. These guys were getting on these suits every day-burned day, not because they liked them or they were comfortable, because they were worried about it. We were worried about Fortress Baghdad and the possibility that they were going to have a standoff there for a long period of time and kill a heck of a lot of people. We were worried about refugees and internally displaced people. So many things. We were worried about the Fedayeen Saddam who were going into mosques and schools and hospitals and using them as armories and headquarters. We were worried about the bridges being blown up. We were worried about the oil wells being set afire. Tommy had things he was going to do with respect to all of those.

We wanted to get the 4th ID in through the north, obviously. The Turks by one vote decided we couldn't do it. We got a majority of the votes but they need more than a majority for some reason. And therefore the 4th ID did not have the advantage of coming in into the Iraqi-Sunni area, into the Sunni Triangle. My personal view, would that have made a difference? Possibly. If

we had captured or killed more people in the Sunni Triangle. By the time Tommy got to Baghdad the army kind of dissipated, just disappeared. It was gone. It didn't exist.

Go ahead, Pete.

GENERAL PACE: Part of the nation didn't know it had lost. It was the only part of the nation that didn't know it had fought a war and lost.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Now, then the question is what if you had had another 100,000 troops? I don't know. We didn't. We could have. They were en-route. We stopped them.

Recommendation, I agreed with it. I don't know anyone who disagreed with it.]*

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, again, what we're talking about is the old Yogi Berra thing. You come to a fork in the road, take it --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You bet.

QUESTION: You know, you've got a situation where we're never going to know whether those things would have turned out better or not.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Right.

QUESTION: And they would have presented their own unique set of problems.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Right.

QUESTION: So the future threat right now, according to the American people, is Iran. Iraq is a must win if we're going to affect Iran. If we lose Iraq, this whole thing comes unraveled and it will be generations that are going to have to face this. Generation after generation.

So the future, the focus is the future.

QUESTION: Just an observation. I don't think that these retired officers who have spoken out have served us particularly well. I think it's one thing if you make a personal attack or critique, but I think what's valuable is if they could have sort of saved that and channel it into lessons learned for future maybe even shorter term things.

But if it has served a purpose, maybe like we're talking about here today is to remind us that we do need to communicate

with the American people. We need to give them a point like [name] pointed out before you walked in, sir, that what's the next event? What's the next thing like the elections were last January, 2005; like the elections were in October, 2005; and remember how good we all felt when those events happened? What are the next things we can point to and say these are turning point kinds of things? I wouldn't spend any more time --

QUESTION: Milestones.

QUESTION: Milestones, yeah, whatever the good term is. But we can help you on that. And we will.

QUESTION: [inaudible] I'm not sure I know, [inaudible] speaking of the past and what these six gentlemen have said, but it is interesting that no one of them has said we should pull out of Iraq. Not one.

QUESTION: Nor have they given an alternative solution.

QUESTION: But not one of them has said --

[Multiple voices].

QUESTION: Which makes your point, right? I mean history is history, and you can talk about what happened then, what might have happened. But that will get you almost nowhere except having an intellectual exercise. But the point is, in terms of what we ought to do now in terms of pulling out of Iraq or trying to see this to the end, you're in agreement with them -- they're in agreement with you.

QUESTION: People are also looking for facts on the ground. Whether you're fighting the political battles here or the ideological or military battles there. They're confused. They don't understand the details of what's going on and how many battalions are at level one or level two -- right over everybody's head. I do five radio hits a day and people just, they glaze over. You can see their eyes glazing over even through the telephone and the microphone. But you've just got to get to the point where things are actually happening, people believe --

QUESTION: Iraq is a battle.

QUESTION: Well whether or not it's Iraq, and I don't want to disagree with Chuck and Wayne. This is a wider war. And whether we have democracy in Iraq or not, it doesn't mean a tinker's damn if we end up with the result we want which is a regime over there that's not a threat to us.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Yeah.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, one other question I would ask, if you would consider or if you're thinking about doing some kind of reaching out. The culture I was brought up in, many of us too, taught us that when we went to war it was usually a crusade. We were good and we were doing something that was noble and that our people were in some way sacrificing for something greater than themselves. That probably shouldn't be ignored because we all feel that to a great extent, especially people who are in the service.

QUESTION: You don't mean the word crusade. You mean a mission.

QUESTION: I mean a mission that puts something grander than yourself, grander than what we're doing. Crusade is perhaps not the word that you'd want to use, but -- [Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's the understatement of the afternoon. [Laughter].

QUESTION: But nonetheless it describes the picture that you now can play with to get to where we want to. That there's a sacrifice involved for a greater good.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I agree.

QUESTION: People rally to that and always have. That message can play in any town in America because they look for that kind of leadership. It motivates them outside of where we live every day and the problems that we all face every day. It just seems to me that as you work on that then it isn't about personality, it isn't about whoever is saying something about who shot John. It's about why America exists and what Ronald Reagan said in his final speech when he was President. We're the shining light on the hill. We didn't say that. People who want to come to America say that every day. So we don't even have to color it or anything else.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's helpful.

QUESTION: Sir, the danger with the strategy, if I could be so bold, is the next big event that you and General Pace have talked about is the standup of the government. If you allow the Chris Matthews and the Wolf Blitzers of the world to immediately start dissecting the standup of that government and say this guy is bad, Chalabi's a crook, assuming he's part of the government, and on and on and on, and you do not respond immediately, we are going to lose that capability to say what we did was honorable and good and right.

QUESTION: These are global war milestones. Not just Iraq. It's milestones expressed for Afghanistan, Iran, China --

QUESTION: If they're able to paint this government as a bunch of crooks and a bunch of ne'er do well politicians, we're going to fall right back into okay, what are we there for? What could we do to make things better?

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary one of the things that's stuck with the American people is the long war. I don't think you realize how effective that was. The American people may not think that this is a, that they're going to go donate aluminum cans, but when you said long war you changed the psyche of the American people to expect this to be a generational event. And again, I'm not trying to tell you how to do your job, but if you could --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Welcome, everyone does. [Laughter]. Get in line. [Laughter]

QUESTION: But if you could just play on that theme a little more about the long -- You don't necessarily have to talk about a World War II psyche, but at least you could put a little case of the timeline.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: The Cold War, look how long that took.

QUESTION: Exactly.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It took patience, it took persistence, and it took people of both political parties over a sustained period so they had the brains and the understanding to know how important it was not to toss in the towel.

QUESTION: So something like Iraq becomes a milepost or a signpost along a continuum of the long war. If you paint it that way then people won't look for terminal events --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Good point.

QUESTION: Victory in Iraq doesn't necessarily translate into victory in the war on terrorism.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It sure isn't.

QUESTION: That's what you've got to make sure of. They've got to understand that Iraq is a battle.

QUESTION: When General Hamm walked us around the world and the current activities --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: He's good.

QUESTION: It was very useful. If the focus is on Iraq and it's not on what's going on in the Caribbean and it's not off Somalia and it's not in the Philippines and it's not elsewhere, then they don't feel surrounded. In fact we are surrounded. Even on our border we have some issues with some of these al-Qaida groups. So you have to not only portray the threat, the long war, but clearly the --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Remind them of these other pieces.

QUESTION: They have to understand that we are surrounded.

QUESTION: Yeah. We don't talk about that nearly as much as we should.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's helpful.

QUESTION: NATO transformation is right in Afghanistan.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, can I ask a question about Afghanistan? [Inaudible] dropped off the scope on that a little bit. But given that we are moving, and the plan is to have ISAF take over more security responsibilities in those various provinces, what's your comfort zone and what's Minister [Wardock's] comfort zone as to the commitment of those NATO nations to provide the combat enablers that the Afghan army needs to conduct combat operations against the Taliban, against al-Qaida and against the narco-traffickers that are there?

*[SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Let's go back on **background**.

They're nervous.

GENERAL PACE: I think our belief in NATO is stronger than the Afghan government's belief.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: At the moment.

GENERAL PACE: At the moment.

Now I'll go **back on**.]*

GENERAL PACE: The Afghan National Army will continue to be trained by U.S. military. And the stand up and fielding of the army will continue to be through U.S. military training. The equipment that they have and the embedded training to go with that [inaudible]. When they get to where they're going [Inaudible]. Let's take the southern sector, where we've got

Canadian lead. They will have Dutch and Brits [inaudible]. They'll be side by side. The NATO logistics system will be part of that. But the combat, I'm not sure I'm answering the question, but the combat part [inaudible] will still be the [inaudible].

QUESTION: The reason why I asked the question was the logistics system, the transportation system, is but a piece of it. I'm over there every three months doing seminars with [inaudible] and Wardock. And the concern is because unless some of these nations have a very defense-oriented posture, and right now they rely on us to provide the lift, the artillery, the close air support, those kind of things, and I think the concern is as the U.S. withdraws, even though we're going to keep JTF-76 focused on al-Qaida and everything else, and until they have their own combat [inaudible].

*[SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You're right. They're nervous. You're absolutely right. They're nervous. And they're nervous -

QUESTION: Does that concern you? Do you have the same --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Absolutely. [Wardock] and Kharzai are nervous. They're nervous because the more NATO comes in it looks like the more we get out. They don't equate the two of us in terms of capabilities or competence and correctly so.

On the other hand what they don't quite get is that we're part of NATO and we're going to have forces in NATO and we're going to be part of the enablers and it isn't as though we're just passing off to the non-U.S. portion of NATO. We're passing off to NATO and we're part of it. I think they're getting that a little bit better now.

The other thing is they're poor. They know that they need us and they don't want us to lose interest and have less interest. But I think we've worked our way along, we've crafted this strategic agreement we have between the two countries, and they were reassured by that. I think it will ease out.

The biggest problem we've got in Afghanistan, this is still on **background** or off the record or whatever it is, is narcotics. I'm afraid they'll buy the dad-burned parliament. That's the risk. It's so corrosive, the amount of money involved is just enormous.]*

VOICE: We have time for one more question.

[Pause].

GENERAL PACE: Do you want to tell the crowd how much you like your Chairman, sir? [Laughter].

QUESTION: You're not really arrogant are you, sir? [Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: What ticks me off is he'll never listen to me. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Thank you for your time, sir.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Thank you. Well, I appreciate your coming in. I've got two pages of notes. It's helpful. I wish I knew all the answers to these things, but I sure as heck don't. We're trying to figure it out and we're trying to do it right. And I still believe we're going to get it right. The country will get a government and it won't be perfect and it won't look like the United States of America, and that's pretty good. It probably shouldn't because it's an Iraqi government and not an American government.

A bunch of people will fuss about it as someone suggested, and they'll fly speck it. And they fly speck everything, I guess. *[But I think those people -- The Sunnis are leaning very far forward all of a sudden, and the Kurds obviously are, and the leadership in the Shia community has been very responsible.

This is still on **background**. Sistani, you couldn't ask for any more. He's said the right things at the right moments, and so I'm anxious to get it done. I don't know how many of you know Casey or Korelli or Dempsey, but I'll tell you, these guys are good. They know one hell of a lot more than half the other people who are out fly specking what they're doing and fussing at them. I think this Dempsey is an impressive fellow and he's working that problem hard. He's doing it well as did his predecessor and --

QUESTION: [Inaudible].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Is he? And Casey, God bless him, he keeps agreeing to stay longer and he keeps doing it. He and Zal are connected at the hip and the coordination and cooperation is just terrific between them. There isn't any daylight there or problems that are caused. So]*

[but] I feel like we've had a good team in place over there.

Thank you. I appreciate it.

(END)