



**U.S. Department of Defense**

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

# News Transcript

On the Web:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/cgi-bin/dlprint.cgi?http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050211-secdef2122.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact:

<http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html>

or +1 (703) 428-0711

---

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

**Friday, February 11, 2005**

---

## **Media Availability with Secretary Rumsfeld; General John Abizaid and General George W. Casey, Jr**

Rumsfeld: You folks know General Abizaid and General Casey. We have been busy today and had a very good opportunity to see some of the Iraqi security forces that are part of the Ministry of Defense, and some that are part of the Ministry of Interior. There's no question but that progress is being made in their recruiting and organizing and training and equipping.

I've had a good chance to visit with General Abizaid and General Casey about the way forward here in Iraq and I feel good about the progress that's being made.

We'll be visiting this afternoon with the Prime Minister, and then visiting some additional Iraqi security force activities.

If you have any difficult questions for General Casey or General Abizaid, they've just had a very nice lunch and they're tough and ready.

Press: General Casey, have you seen a tangible reduction in violence since the election? Can you quantify what the situation is on the ground?

Casey: In broad terms, yes we have.

I'd start off saying we're extremely pleased with the success the Iraqis had on the 30th. Absolutely magnificent. The levels of violence have dropped off very substantially since the election day itself and basically have settled into the levels that we saw in early December [inaudible] and sovereignty. Around 60 incidents or so a day, country-wide. That's a relatively low level.

Press: Still with the bulk of those in the four provinces?

Casey: Still in four provinces that we were tracking before [inaudible].

Press: Mr. Secretary, what impressed you the most of what you saw today of the Iraqi and U.S. forces?

Rumsfeld: I've been visiting with Iraqi forces that are in various stages of training for a great many months now, and I sense that the coalition effort is well organized, focused, and that the professionalism of these units is advancing.

In the past when I would visit various units they would tend to be individuals who were fairly green, new, in training or just out. Today the units we visited have been repeatedly in combat situations and counterinsurgency situations and have had a very good record. One of them we visited today has had a record of accomplishment in Fallujah activity.

So what we're seeing is the more mature and better developed activities, although I should say the ones I visited this morning tended to be specialized units which of course have a particular value in an insurgency.

Casey: If I could just add to that, we are also seeing, since the success of the elections and since the success of the Iraqi security forces in the elections, a much greater sense of pride in the Iraqi security forces across the country, and also a much greater level of confidence of the Iraqi people in their security forces.

Press: From what you saw today and what you heard today, do you think that it may be any more possible to draw down U.S. forces sooner than had been hoped?

Rumsfeld: We never told you what had been hoped.

Press: [inaudible]. [Laughter].

Rumsfeld: I guess you could answer that question, yes and have it mean absolutely nothing, right?

No, we obviously are constantly planning and we plan at a steady state, we plan at a state where for whatever reason coalition forces have to go up, and we plan for a drawdown of coalition forces, including ours, and project those things out. Then what we do is watch the conditions on the ground and watch the evolution of the political situation.

Clearly we've always said that the political and economic and the security situations have to move forward together. We have hopes that you'll see in Iraq over time that the political situation will improve the security situation, so to speak. Certainly the security situation in Afghanistan has improved as the various elements of the Bonn process have moved forward, and it is reasonable, I think, to suspect that that could happen here in Iraq. We will have to wait and see it happen.

But as that happens, goodness, we've always said our troops are here while they're needed and not any longer. So we're working with some of the coalition countries to help them pare some of theirs down as their circumstances require it because it's stress on their forces; and our hope is that as we go forward we'll be able to do the same thing but we're not projecting calendar dates.

Press: General Abizaid and General Casey, if you could both [inaudible] General Luck's assessment and recommendations. I wonder if you could tell us how you plan to proceed in terms of the training and mentoring that's going on and give us any sense of the levels of trainers you expect to have, how you plan to incorporate some of those suggestions, anything else that you found particularly salient in his assessment.

Casey: As we looked and talked through with General Luck when he was out here, the general agreement is what we want to do is work this year to begin the transition of the counterinsurgency effort through the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi government. So we're working with them and will over the next weeks and months here to figure out the key elements of that transition.

I think you know we have been talking about some assistance teams that we would put with Iraqi formations and we would work with them to enhance their operational effectiveness and increase their level of competence. We're moving out with the Iraqis to begin the implementation of that over the next weeks and

months.

Press: What are you projecting in terms of numbers? In terms of how many teams and how many individuals overall might be embedded? There's quite a [inaudible].

Casey: I think we're still finalizing the numbers, but I'd say we're probably in the 2,000 to 3,000 range of folks that will be in those jobs across the country.

Abizaid: I think it's safe to say that 2005 is going to be a very important year of transition for the entire theater. In Afghanistan we have NATO taking more responsibility. In Afghanistan we also have Afghan forces taking more responsibility. Here in Iraq you'll see Iraqi forces taking more responsibility.

So in the theater we have an awful lot of opportunity to reshape the force, to help the nations in the region help themselves, and we are very optimistic about the progress that both Afghan and Iraqi forces have made. We're also very optimistic about the success of Saudi, Kuwaiti and Pakistani forces have had against the extremists in their area.

Rumsfeld: Sometimes confession is good for the soul. I know none of you might believe that, but I learned something today that is slightly different than something that I've said publicly, so just for your information on a background basis...

<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050211-secdef2122.html>