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# News Transcript

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

**Friday, February 11, 2005**

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## **Secretary Rumsfeld Remarks at Mosul Award Ceremony**

Rumsfeld: Think of how the Iraqi people must have felt on election day. They were told if they voted they'd be killed. You vote, you die. The election workers were told they'd be killed. The Iraqi security forces were warned not to show up. It must have taken a great deal of courage to go out.

They didn't know what their neighbors were thinking, whether their neighbors would go out, how many of them there would be. Some of them, I'm told, walked out some place near the voting place, didn't go in. Milled around for a while to see what was going to happen. At some moment, one of them went in, and the rest followed. They ended up learning something enormously important. They learned that their neighbors down the street had the same hopes, the same aspirations that they did.

So they found courage. Indeed, millions of people found courage. It must have given them enormous confidence and encouragement.

And it had to be a stunning blow to the extremists, if you think about it. They had issued statements declaring war against democracy, opposing the elections, telling people they should not vote. Today they have to know that their advice, their threats were overwhelmingly rejected by millions of Iraqi people.

This victory for liberty rightly belongs to the brave Iraqi people, let there be no doubt, but it also belongs to the coalition and the leaders across the world who chose to do what was right as opposed to what was temporarily popular. And it belongs to the American people who were confident and steadfast and supportive -- all of you. Let there be no doubt, the election's success belongs to the United States Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines. In short, it belongs quite simply to each one of you for your -- And I should add, it also belongs to your loved ones who sacrifice as well as you do.

I know that during the time you've been here there have been, had to have been a very high pace. Although there must have been moment when you wondered whether it was worth the effort. I suspect there were also times when you wondered if the people you were trying to help were really with you.

Well, when the time came they did just that. They passed the signs telling them not to vote and they went ahead and voted, and newly empowered Iraqis today are forming a government. They're deciding who should be in which posts. They're debating. They're discussing all the things that normal politics and democracy require them to do. They're engaging, in short, in the encouraging discourse of democracy.

The security forces that our military has helped train and equip I'm told stood their posts even though there was violence and bombs nearby. Some gave their lives to protect others from suicide bombings.

Now let's be clear. A week ago Sunday was a good day for this country, but there are still challenges ahead, let there be no doubt. But it was Thomas Jefferson who once said that we are not to expect to be transported from despotism to liberty on a featherbed. It's always been tough. It is not easy. It wasn't easy for our country, it wasn't easy for Germany or Japan, South Korea, and it wasn't easy for Afghanistan. It won't be easy here, but it can be done and country after country have shown that it can be done.

So the task ahead for us is to continue to help the Iraqi security forces to get on the job. That will take some time. Each of those trainees have different experiences and capabilities. Some have met success in helping to secure and defend Iraq against extremists in Fallujah and elsewhere. Others have never before been a part of an Army or a police unit so it's brand new for them. Many should not be expected to behave and operate as if they were battle-hardened veterans. They aren't. But one day soon they will be. They have to be because it is the Iraqis that are going to have to over time defeat the insurgency. It's their country, it's their responsibility, and they're the ones that have that obligation.

They're developing confidence and skill, there's no question about it, and once they have that confidence and that capacity and capability our forces, coalition forces, will be able to go home and go home with the honor that you will have earned. And I should add, go home with the gratitude of a grateful nation.

When you look back at this time in your life I believe that one day you'll see very clearly the history you've made. Early chapters will tell of hardships, of difficulties, of losses, but the final chapters will record true great achievements.

What's happening in Afghanistan and in Iraq, what has taken place in Ukraine and in the West Bank is part of the march of freedom. So I thank each of you for being here, for volunteering, for your service. I join in paying tribute to all of those who have fallen or been wounded in this struggle. We're proud of them, we're grateful to them, we honor them. They deserve not merely our gratitude, but our commitment to their unfinished work.

So may God bless each of you in your difficult work ahead, and may God bless our wonderful country.

Thank you very much.

[Applause].

I had an experience. I was in Seoul, Korea visiting the troops over there and talking with the Korean government. A young woman came up to me, a journalist, and stuck a microphone in front of my face and the Korean government, parliament at that moment was debating whether or not to send any forces over to Iraq. So that was the hot item to be debated and discussed.

She said to me, "Why in the world should our young Korean men and women go halfway around the world over to Iraq to possibly be killed or wounded?" I walked her over to the window and looked outside and in Seoul you see the excitement, the cars, the nightlife and energy, electricity, a thriving country with a free political system and a free economic system.

I pointed out to her that in North Korea the same people with the same resources, and it's black. It's pitch black. People are starving, people are in concentration camps. They had to lower their height to get into the military down to 4'10" because of lack of nourishment.

I said to her, "Why in the world should young Americans have come halfway around the world to Korea back in 1950?" I said, "That's why."

It has to do with freedom. It has to do with opportunity. It has to do with lives of desperation or lives of opportunity. And it's amazing that it's a lesson that each generation seems to have to learn.

I remember I had a high school classmate killed in Korea the last day of the war. I was putting a wreath out on a monument to the allied forces that fought in Korea and just as you walked, before you turned right to go out and lay the wreath in their monument they had each state of the United States and there were hundreds and hundreds of names of Americans on those plaques outside this memorial, and there was the name of my friend who was on the wrestling team with me in high school. I told her about that. I hope it sunk in on her because it seems that each generation has to learn those lessons, that there are things worth fighting for.

You folks are doing something that is enormously important. It's noble work. It's historic work. And you will look back with your children and your grandchildren and be properly proud of the contributions you have made to freedom. So God bless you all.

Thank you.

[Applause].

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