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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman General Peter Pace

Friday, March 18, 2005 9:05 a.m. EST

Town Hall Meeting at the Pentagon

SEC. RUMSFELD: I was about ready to call for a Saint Bernard dog to find me. (Laughter.) I feel like I've been enroute here for a half-hour. (Laughter.) I hope you all didn't come the same way I did. (Laughter.)

But it is very nice to see you all. I appreciate your being here. And also I guess a special greeting to those who will be watching on the Pentagon channel.

Tomorrow, March 19th, will mark two years to the day since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and I'd like to take a moment to talk about some of the changes in Iraq since that day and about the great sweep of freedom that is moving across that region and what it means for our country and the American people.

First let me say that the positive changes underway would certainly not have happened, they wouldn't have taken place without the hard work and the dedication of America's men and women in uniform, their families and indeed the efforts of all of you who have devoted your lives to our country's defense. I want you to know that we are grateful and your country is grateful to you for your able service.

And I might mention that a few weeks ago, a staff sergeant with the 1st Cavalry Division received a Silver Star for heroism. He had rescued some folks out of a trapped -- a burning Bradley Fighting Vehicle. And at his medal ceremony, he asked the permission to kind of break tradition and see if he couldn't have his father, his proud father, pin his medal on. And his father was a DOD civilian employee also working in Iraq. The story is a useful reminder of the many civilian and military personnel who are risking their lives every day to help build a more peaceful future in Iraq as well as Afghanistan and to eliminate a threat to the civilized world.

I also want to mention our sorrow and condolences to the family of Officer Feltis, who was a member of the Pentagon Force Protection Agency and who lost his life in the line of duty.

The men and women who serve are doing important work -- it's noble work. Indeed, when one thinks of Iraq today compared to what it was just two short years ago, the changes are truly remarkable. Think of what the coalition faced back then: Saddam Hussein and his vicious regime had twice invaded its neighbors; he was paying rewards to the families of suicide bombers; he defied 17 U.N. Security Council resolutions; was regularly firing -- weekly -- firing at U.S. and British aircraft and their air crews; and he had looted literally billions of dollars building lavish palaces while his people, the Iraqi people, suffered starvation.

The opponents of that regime were forced to whisper dissent, fearful of a midnight knock on the door from the Iraqi police service. Other Iraqis, who did receive those knocks on the doors that were so feared, were among the some 400,000 men, women and children who were callously put into the -- at the moment we believe hundreds of mass graves that have been discovered across that country.

Through an unprecedented combination of speed, precision and flexibility, U.S. forces, with coalition support, seized Baghdad, having marched farther and faster than any armed force in military history. And they did it while avoiding large numbers of civilian casualties, averted a refugee crisis, prevented Iraq from firing Scud missiles at neighboring countries, which could have ignited a region- wide war.

Since the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the coalition has engaged in a test of wills with an enemy determined to derail Iraq's progress. The extremists have beheaded aid workers, they have attacked symbols of hope, and they tried to make Iraq's election day one of bloodshed and terror. Their goal was to force the coalition into retreat, but their mission failed. The enemy sought to test America and the Iraqi people's will, and they found it firm. The Iraqi Security Forces successfully protected 5,000 polling places, providing the inner perimeter and the outer perimeter.

Millions of Iraqis -- the security forces showed courage, the people in the polling places showed a great deal of courage, and the voters showed courage. As they walked to vote they passed graffiti on the walls saying, "You vote, you die." But they voted.

And day by day the Iraqi people are building a future that safeguards the liberty that their citizens deserve, and on which the world's security increasingly depends.

History teaches that political and economic freedom go hand in hand. Today, unleashed from Ba'athist control, the Iraqi economy is growing, property values are rising, refugees are returning home, foreign investment is increasing. Indeed, in the hearts of the Middle East, Iraq is a country offering freedom and opportunity in place of what was a cauldron of tyranny and terror.

In the last two years, from Afghanistan and Iraq, to Ukraine and now the streets of Lebanon, we have seen again and again that the great sweep of human history is for freedom, and we are on freedom's side. We know that freedom and opportunity are the surest antidotes to extremism. Extremist ideologies suffer when governments such as in Afghanistan protect women and imprison terrorists instead of protecting terrorists and imprisoning women.

Extremist ideologies suffer when millions of Iraqis vote in defiance of a Zarqawi or a bin Laden. And the enemy's extremist ideology will meet its end when wider Middle East sheds itself of tyranny and of violence and extremism and carves out a future of tolerance.

As we join the Iraqi people in remembering this important anniversary, and it is an important anniversary, we might almost -- also take a moment to remember another anniversary. Sixty years ago this month, American forces fought on the island of Iwo Jima in one of the last and certainly one of the bloodiest of the Second World War. During one month of brutal fighting, some 25,000 Americans were killed or wounded. Those who fought in that conflict contributed to a great military victory, to be sure, but they also helped to unleash a wave of freedom that transformed tyrannies into democracies and enemies into friends.

Today America's men and women in uniform stand on the shoulders of those heroes who fought at Iwo Jima and in other great battles for freedom in World War II, and just as surely, tomorrow's heroes will stand on the shoulders of those who have helped free the people of Afghanistan and the people of Iraq, and those who are dealing crippling blows to the extremists who still threaten our people across the globe.

One day an accurate history of Operation Iraqi Freedom will be written. The early chapters of that history will properly tell of the great hardships -- and it has been hard and it still is hard -- but the final chapters will record historic achievements: the demise of a leading terrorist state and the spread of freedom throughout that region.

All of us in this department, gathered in this room or listening across the globe, carry on our mission in memory of all of those who have fallen in the cause of freedom; to the wounded, who demonstrate such great personal courage every day; and to all of their families who support our servicemen and women with their love and their encouragement. And we owe them our full commitment to their unfinished work, and we promise them that and more. May God bless them all.

General Pete Pace is standing to my left, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And Pete, I'd like you to come up and say a few words.

GEN. PACE: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

It's a great privilege to be here with the secretary amongst our DOD family and through the cameras in this room to our DOD family around the world, to echo his sentiments of thanks to, first, all those who are in harm's way right now and their families who are supporting them. We owe them an incredible debt of gratitude.

But as I mentioned to this audience once before and I want to repeat, if you are like me and you come to work in the Pentagon every day, you feel a little tinge of regret that you're not yourself in harm's way, a little bit of guilt, I think, at not being with our fellow service members and our fellow DOD civilians in harm's way. That's understandable, and I tell you that's good to have that in your heart, but you should never forget the enormity of the impact of the work that you do every day here in this building and elsewhere around the world even though you may not be in direct combat. Whether you're working on the Quadrennial Defense Review or you're working on the Base Realignment and Closure or you're working on one of the many, many analyses that go into the discussions and decisions that end up supporting our forces in combat, your hard work, certainly during this last two years and into the future, does have very, very real impact on the success of the forces in the field and the success of our nation's mission to help spread freedom.

So to each of you here, and all you watching, thank you for what you do. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you, Pete.

We'd be happy to respond to some questions. Where's the fellow who keeps asking about the Metro? (Laughter.) He's usually standing over there in the other room, but --

All right, anything? Ask Pete the tough ones, and I'll cheer. Yes, sir?

Q: Good morning, Mr. Secretary, General Pace. I'm Lieutenant Daryl Cardone (ph) from Navy Flag Officer Detailing.

Sir, I'd like to know when someone's briefing you about an aspect of the global war on terror what are the critical indicators you look at to feel comfortable the trends are going in the right direction?

SEC. RUMSFELD: General Casey -- well, we -- first of all, we have a strategy for the global war on terror which our team has briefed throughout the government now and is starting to brief on the Hill. And there are indicators that -- for elements of it, as opposed to indicators for the broad global war on terror. That's a very hard thing to do.

I was stunned one day to see a memo I had sent to Dick Myers end up in the newspaper, but I pointed out that fact, that it's very difficult to have metrics that you can track on the broad global war on terror.

You can track pieces. For example, the success worldwide will depend on the size of the coalition, how many countries are helping -- really helping -- and that's something in excess of 85 countries now. It will depend on the extent to which we are successful in getting people to share intelligence, so that we can work together among all those nations. It will depend in part on the -- and we track these things -- and the extent to which we can close bank accounts and track the flow of money of terrorist networks. It will depend in part on our success -- and here we've had minimal success -- in seeing that nations that house these schools that train people not in languages, not in mathematics, not in things that can help them in contributing in a useful way in the world, but rather teach people to go out and kill other people. And that is a tough thing to do. We've had some luck, good fortune, some success in that area; but we don't have a good grip on the numbers of those schools. We don't have a good grip on the numbers of people being trained. We do know that Saddam Hussein is no longer offering rewards for people to go out and kill other people. But that's a difficult one.

But if you take piece of the global war on terror -- Iraq, Afghanistan -- you can -- General Casey, for example, in Iraq has numerous metrics that they track on a daily basis. And we track back here on a more macro basis a number of metrics as well. Take, for example, in Iraq one of the key things is how rapidly and successfully are we training and equipping and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces so that they're going to be able to take over responsibilities for their country, because they -- in the last analysis, the coalition forces are not going to defeat that insurgency. It's going to be the Iraqi Security Forces that are going to do it, working with the Iraqi people.

So you have to have metrics. I think you know after the golden rule one the best rules around is what you measure improves, and it forces you to have priorities, it forces you to track it. It's embarrassing when it's not improving -- your efforts are redoubled. So it's important to have metrics, and to track them and to select the right ones and to change them when you discover that you've got the wrong ones.

Questions? Put up your hand, and someone with a mike will wander around and find you.

There's one.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'm Gary Van der Putte (sp) from Army International Affairs. And first, thank you for your service and leadership.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

Q: Given the emphasis on coalition warfare and lessons learned, can you talk a little bit about the direction you'd like to see us go in terms of foreign area expertise, in terms of cultural awareness and language skills and so forth?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I would be happy to. It is something that we've been spending a good deal of time on. We have in the Quadrennial Defense Review, which is in its early stages, highlighted that particular skill set, discipline that we need to see is rewarded, you know. In life, you -- if you -- you get more of something if you reward it and less of it if you penalize it. So what we need to do is to make sure that we've arranged ourselves so that we recognize the value that accrues to this institution and to our country by having people who do develop those skill sets of an area and language capability. And we're -- we've made a number of changes over the past four years. We're in the process of reviewing what that progress has been and how we can accelerate it going forward.

Secretary of State Rice and the new secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings(s), and I have talked

about possibly having an activity among the three departments that would focus on language capability as well. So we're hard at it and -- but we don't have any metrics tracking it yet. (Soft laughter.) And David Chu is not here, but he is working on it, I know. (Soft laughter.)

Questions? If you put your hand up early, someone will get over to you with a microphone in short order, and then we can have less time between questions. There you go. Good.

What about behind me? Any questions back there? You have one. Terrific. We'll be right with you.

Yes, sir?

Q: Good morning, Mr. Secretary. I'm Sergeant Sweitz (sp) from Air Force Special Air Missions. And there have obviously been lots of lessons learned on how we fight in a joint environment in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was wondering what do you see as the next big steps in transforming the services to fight in the future. Do you see a more DOD air component which does more of the fixed-wing movements and tactical airlift, and the Navy does all the water, and the Army and Marines do anything with wheels?

(Laughter, groans.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. (Laughter, applause.)

GEN. PACE: You are now on my QDR team -- (laughter) -- because your questioning goes to the exact heart of the Quadrennial Defense Review study that's beginning now and is due to be delivered by the secretary to the Congress January/February of next year.

You need to start, first, with a joint concept of operations. How do we envision doing whatever it is the nation needs us to do 15, 20 years from now? Then, what does each service currently have that can accomplish that mission? And is it correct for that service to continue to do that, or might there be a better mix of service capabilities to provide the same outcome?

And then there will be gaps in what we believe we need to provide to the nation 15 years from now and what we're capable of providing the nation 15 years from now. And that's the heart of the Quadrennial Defense Review capabilities mix study that will recommend to the secretary how we should change the focus of the services and the joint community in a way that will provide the needed capacity in a joint way.

It's almost redundant -- almost redundant -- to keep saying joint this, joint that, because I really do believe, in the 20 years now that Goldwater-Nichols has been in effect, that we have in fact gotten to the point where we very, very joint. In the discussions amongst the Joint Chiefs and the TAG, I mean, you would be very proud as an American to listen to those discussions.

But it's also important to continue to use the word, because it reminds us that the proper, most efficient solution is going to be a joint one. And whether it's got wheels on it or wings on it, or whatever it has on it, we want to find the best way to mix and match to get the job done.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I like to protect our friend Pete here. Dick Myers is out of town -- his boss -- and I do not want anyone to run out and say that the Joint Staff has been renamed "the Staff." (Laughter.)

Q: Good morning, sir. I'm Tawana Megg (ph), U.S. Navy. Mr. Secretary, how will the loss of Undersecretary Wolfowitz affect the Department of Defense?

SEC. RUMSFELD: He is a -- really a wonderful human being. He has broad experience. He's been

involved with the Department of State, he's been ambassador to Indonesia. He's been involved with Department of Defense. He's headed up one of the premier schools of international relations at Johns Hopkins. And he is a brilliant person.

I -- it will affect the department, because I will have lost a superb partner and a good friend who has served this department with such enormous skill and thoughtfulness. We'll -- his -- he's going to be here for a while, however, so we're going to keep piling the work on until he leaves. (Laughter.) Thank you.

Question? Yes? Do you have a microphone? Yes, sir?

Q: Good morning, Secretary, General Pace. My question is with Poland withdrawn and Italy --

SEC. RUMSFELD: With what?

Q: With Poland withdrawn from the coalition and Italy withdrawing itself, do you anticipate other countries withdrawing from the coalition? Are we going to increase our troop strength over in Iraq, or are we going to leave it up to the current strength that's there?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I expect that there will continue, as there has been really from the outset, countries that reduce their forces from the coalition in both Iraq and Afghanistan, countries that increase their forces, and new countries that enter. That has really been the case since the beginning. As you know recently for example Korea has introduced troops into Iraq. But each country has its own circumstance. It has its own force capability and force sustainment capability, and it also has its own political circumstance. And as a result we've seen Spain do it abruptly -- not impressive. (Laughter.)

MR. : (Off mike.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Did you say that? It happens sometimes. (Laughter.) It's been, what, three and a half decades since I was an ambassador, so I've kind of lost that diplomatic -- (laughter) --

The -- but, on the other hand, many countries have come to us months and months and months ago and said, We're going to have -- we don't have the ability to sustain our forces there, and we want to begin figuring out how we do that. And we've worked with them. And a number of countries have adjusted their levels. Some have moved out of Iraq and into Afghanistan. Some have just reduced. Others have said they would prefer to adjust their purpose there and refocus and assist with the NATO train-and-equip effort, for example. So it varies from country to country, and it's fine. It's what you expect when you have a living coalition I think -- it's 40 countries, I think, in Afghanistan, and I don't know what it is in Iraq, but it's got to be 28, I think, maybe 27. And they come and they go, and they've been terrific, and God bless them for it.

Their folks have put their lives at risk, their political leadership have put their political lives at risk, and God bless them for it. In a period of years, they'll be able to look back with enormous pride at what's been accomplished in Afghanistan, the first popularly elected president in the 5,000-year history of that country, and what's taking place in Iraq with the successful election there. And it's fine. It works fine.

Now you ask the question of what about the total level of security forces, the total level of security forces are going up because the Iraqi security force are going up, and they're part of this coalition as well. Indeed, they're increasingly the most important part of the coalition, set aside the U.S. They're now up to, I believe, something like 145,000 -- I looked at it today -- trained and equipped of all types -- border patrol, policemen, army, special police commandoes, you name it -- and they're on a trajectory to continue to go up over 200,000.

Coalition forces will continue to pare down. We're now moving from 152(,000) at peak, I believe, where

we overlapped, as you'll recall, during the election period. We're dropping down, I think, to something like 17 brigades over the coming month, maybe six weeks. We'll be down probably to 135(,000), 140,000 in that period. And as the Iraqi security forces go up and as the insurgency is dealt with over the period ahead, why, we ought to be able to adjust those levels. That will be a function of what General Abizaid recommends, General Casey recommends and what General Myers and General Pace and I recommend to the President. It's not possible to pinpoint a specific number, but we feel very good about the progress being made in the country.

And it's partly the security forces, it's partly their capabilities. And as we strengthen the command and control of the Iraqi forces, as they improve their sustainability and their mobility, their logistics capability, as they get a little battle-hardened -- some of them came right out of training. You know, you walk out of training and into a war zone, which is what they're in, a tough insurgency, that's not easy. But after six months, they get better at it, and that's what's happening. And the longer they're there, the better they're getting at it. And General Casey has been quite impressed with how they're doing.

So over the period ahead, we'll see some adjustments in numbers, but I would be the last person to think I'm smart enough to know what that rate at which their competence and capabilities will proceed relative to the intensity of the insurgency, because one of the other things that affects the insurgency is the extent to which the Iraqi people are willing to provide intelligence and tip in favor of their government.

And having had a successful election, they showed they've got courage. Their next task is to put in place this new government, transitional government. Then they're going to draft a constitution. Then they're going to vote on the constitution in October. Then they're going to have elections under the new constitution in December. And during that period, armed forces -- total, everybody's, coalition and Iraqi -- will undoubtedly bulge somewhat during those key election periods, but in the aggregate over time, one would think the non-Iraqi members of the coalition could adjust downward as the capabilities of the Iraqis increase.

GEN. PACE: If I could just add one point, which is to be a little more specific about your comment that if Poland and Italy were to draw down their forces, that they would be leaving the coalition. Those are not the same thing. If those countries were to decide to bring their forces down, there are still many, many staff jobs in the coalition's headquarters in which they participate.

Plus, they can very much be members of the coalition by doing what they have been doing in addition, which is training people in their own home countries and training people in other ways and providing support in other ways.

So the fact that a particular troop level changes does not at all signify that a particular country has made a decision to leave the coalition. And we should not forget that when we went across the line of departure two years ago, Poland went across the line of departure with us.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q: Sir, my question is about NSPS. Implementation is scheduled for July. Do you know when DOD employees will receive any specifics about that --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm sorry, you're talking a little fast and a little weak.

Q: Sorry. NSPS, sir.

SEC. RUMSFELD: "Soft" is the word I was looking for, not "weak."

Q: My question is about NSPS. Do you know when DOD civilians will receive any specific information

about that program that's scheduled for implementation in July?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Change is hard. (Laughter.) I understand that. But where we are is where -- I believe still in a period of comment, public comment. And there's a whole procedure under the law and under the rules and regulations of the government that we have to go through. So everything was posted for public notice. Public comment was engaged in; it either is still open or just closed. It's still open? Yeah. And it will close soon. Lots of input is coming in. At that point, Gordon England, the secretary of the Navy, and David Chu and the Charlie Abell and the folks who have been working on this National Security Personnel System will take all of that comment and then synthesize it and come up with recommendations and then go forward.

My guess is that after that will come the process where individual elements of the department, the civilian workforce of the department, will begin getting visibility as to what those rules are, how they're going to apply to their specific activities.

Does anyone have any better timetable than that?

STAFF: That's about it.

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's about it?

RAYMOND DUBOIS (Director, Administration and Management, DOD): The initial -- Spiral 1 begins in July. We are preparing now the training packages for those parts --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Stand up and say it. You're doing great, Ray. (Laughter.) There you go.

MR. DUBOIS: Spiral 1 will be beginning in July. The initial training packages for supervisors are being prepared right now. And for those elements and components of the department -- Army, Navy, Air Force and the Fourth Estate, which will be brought in Spiral 1, which is not anywhere near the entire department; it's only about -- less than 100,000, as I remember, of the civilians, of the 750,000 civilians in the Department of Defense. But a lot of time has been spent on those training packages right now so that those initial components will have them in advance of the July 1st initiation.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you, Ray. That's Ray DuBois, the "mayor" of the Pentagon. It's fortunate he was here.

I would say one other thing about it. I think that the -- I think it's important for everyone to know that most, if not all, of what may evolve with respect to the National Security Personnel System are things that have been tested over a period of many years, and which caused similar apprehension when they were first initiated on an experimental basis. And over the years subsequently have proven to be very popular, very broadly supported and agreed to as a reasonable way to go. And it was I think that fact that was part of the reason that the Congress approved the National Security Personnel System, because of the experience that had already existed.

Question? I saw a hand. Yes, ma'am?

Q: Mr. Secretary, Cindy Hilsinger (ph), 11th Wing Communications Squadron. My question is about NSPS also.

The Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act, which was voted into law in 1990, is meant to bring to closure within 5 percent civil service pay and industry pay. Will the NSPS bring that pay closure within a 5 percent gap? Right now the gap stands at 31.82 percent. Will NSPS bring that up to date, or is NSPS going to

sidestep the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Is "sidestep" a euphemism for "break the law"? (Laughter.)

Q: Well, I know when we get pay increases sometimes there's a lot of push and pull on, you know, is it going to be 6 percent? -- and it gets dropped down to 5 percent, 4 percent, 3.8, 2.9. And I'm just wanting to know --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah, that's something that takes place well above my pay grade. What happens is the -- (laughter) -- believe me, that is a big deal. That is something that the president and the Office of Management and Budget talk about, and then the Congress acts on, and there's a big debate and discussion on those macro numbers and their relationships. So it's not something that gets dealt with really in this department on a particularized basis.

Ray's dying to say something else. (Laughter.)

MR. DUBOIS: It's a Congressional -- (off mike.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Right. So I did it right.

MR. DUBOIS: Yes, sir.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I did it right. (Laughter.) Go with Rumsfeld. (Laughter.)

Question? Yes, sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, General Pace, Sergeant First Class Brown (sp) from Army Public Affairs. With the increased op tempo that our military has experienced over the last few years, I'm curious what your thoughts are on recruiting and retention. Specifically, numbers for recruiting have been down for the last couple of months. The Marine Corps has actually done probably better than most, but still missing mission as well. How do you see that getting better? How do you -- I'm curious what your thoughts are on how we can convince our young soldiers and other military members to stay in with such an increased op tempo, if that's not what they're expecting?

GEN. PACE: That's a great question, and it's an area we really do need to pay attention to -- have been and have added more attention to in the last couple of months. As you know, in January and February, both the Army and the Marine Corps missed the category of recruiting that is putting new recruits into the pool waiting to go to boot camp. The pool waiting to go to boot camp has been sufficient to continue to provide to the training depots the resources needed. But we're taking a little bit more out of the pool than we put in, in both January and February. That, correctly so, is a concern, and should be.

Each service has redirected leadership to that in the form of great staff NCOs, who have been added to the recruiting force to be able to get out and get more information to more perspective volunteers. And they've also added to the advertising budget to make sure the word can get out.

I think what we need to do is, in addition to those steps, as leaders, all of us, to talk about the value of service to country -- not just about military service to country, but about young folks finding a niche in this society, where they can serve the country for some time to in my mind pay back a little bit of what they have gotten from this country through birth.

But regardless of whether or not everyone decides to serve the country, there are certainly sufficient numbers of young Americans who want to serve and are just looking for a little bit of encouragement or a little bit

more information. And that's what the recruiting force is trying to do.

With regard to retention, it is instructive, I think, that those individuals who have actually served in Afghanistan or Iraq are reenlisting at a greater rate than those who have not.

Now part of that's because if you reenlist in a war zone, you get to have your reenlistment bonus tax-free. So we shouldn't just, you know, overlook very, very important details.

But it's also a fact that those folks are coming home feeling very, very proud of what they have done in Afghanistan and Iraq. They see the results of their efforts, and they're saying, "I feel good about this. I'm staying."

So we need to take the goodness that those who are coming back understand and impart that knowledge to those who are thinking about joining, in a way that allows them to volunteer the way we know they will.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The other thing we're doing is reducing the stress on the force. We've got, you know, 20 or 30 initiatives under way that -- rebalancing the active and Reserve components, rebalancing skill sets within the active force, rebalancing skill sets within the Reserve component.

We are -- we still to this day have only used something less than 40 percent of the Reserves and Guard forces on -- in Iraq or Afghanistan, which means there's a large pool that's still available.

We're also -- as you know, thanks in part to the National Security Personnel System, we're in the process of taking a number of uniformed personnel out of positions that can equally be performed by civilian personnel and increasing the opportunities for the civilian side, and reducing the number of military people that are in posts that they need not be in and moving them into opportunities that do require uniformed personnel. So we've got a lot of things going on that should reduce that stress.

You have a microphone, madam.

Q: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Secretary, General. Major Heather McGee (sp) from Air Force Plans and Programs. Just as the technology of our nation's space systems continues to grow, do you feel that space will continue to play an important role in the fight on terror in Iraq and overseas?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I do. I think that it -- in my lifetime, I was in the early 1960s serving on the House Space Committee, as a young congressman in 1963 and '4 and '5 and in that period. And it was in the early period of space. And so I've been around long enough to have seen the changes that have occurred and the variety of ways that space contributes to our lives, both on the civilian side as well on -- as the military side.

There was a period, I think, where people were -- I don't want to say infatuated, but very -- properly excited about the opportunities that space offered, as they should be. And there became a focus on the technical things that can be done.

We need a balance. If you look at intelligence-gathering, for example, there are certain things you can do through technical means. There are also certain things that you can't do, and human intelligence is something that is enormously important.

So what we need to do is to keep seeking that proper balance. And I've been impressed in the last four years to see the progress that's been made in this department, in the space area. One problem area we have is some people say we don't do it as well as we want to do it. That means there are cost overruns, it's expensive, and one looks at those sums of monies and wonders: Well, why is it that way today, that there are such sizable

cost overruns?

One of the reasons is fairly self-evident, if anyone wants to look it. In those early days, everyone recognized how difficult some of the things we were trying to do in space were and that we were at the cutting edge of technologies and innovation, and that therefore they put in -- I've forgotten what it was, but back in those days, I think they were running 15, 20, 25, 30 percent margin for error in the budgeting. They were saying: We don't know how to do this perfectly. Therefore, we have to assume that we can figure out costs roughly, but we need to have that margin because we know from experience that it takes that margin, given the newness of what it is we're doing.

Well, some years back they took those out, those margins out, and so now we're finding we're overrunning in some instances in the 15, 20, 25 percent, roughly what the margin provided. So I have a feeling that that might be part of the reason. But it's a tough business. It's an important part of our activities in this department, and I expect to see it continue to expand and play an important role.

Question? Yes, sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, General Pace, good morning. Captain Steff Montoya (ph). I work in the Air Force Foreign Liaison Office. I was wondering if you could discuss what skill sets above and beyond those that are directly related to increasing our combat or warfighting capability that DOD needs to incorporate in its force development construct that will better enable us to work with nations to help put the economic, educational, civil organization construct or infrastructure necessary for democracies to flourish.

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's an important question. (To General Pace) You want to start and I'll finish?

GEN. PACE: Yes, sir.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'll clean up after you. (Laughter.)

GEN. PACE: I believe that DOD's focus must be, properly so, on warfighting capacity. And warfighting capacity includes the language and cultural education skills we talked about; it includes satellites; it includes all the things that not only bring kinetic energy against the enemy but also allow us to shape the environment before, during and after combat. A lot of what you talked about is, correctly so, a part of the U.S. government effort and part of the larger interagency process.

And one of the best initiatives that has recently taken place is inside the Department of State they have stood up, underneath Ambassador Carlos Pasqual, a -- I'm going to get the name wrong, but it is an organization that is focused on phase four sustainment-type operations around the world, not only where we might have combat, but importantly in places like tsunami relief and other ways that we might be able to help in a humanitarian way. Ambassador Pasqual is very much aligned with our combatant commanders. He has visited each one of them. He has gone out to find out what are the kinds of tools and connecting links that we need between the various organizations in our own government to be able to effectively and efficiently deliver to that country whatever it is, the kind of support you're talking about.

So you're right that the nation, in the global war on terrorism and in many other ways, humanitarian relief, and the like, needs a more efficient organization. I'm very optimistic about what I have seen recently in initiatives inside of our government to tackle that issue.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I would add one thing. You were talking about skill sets. There's only so much one country can do. There's also only so much one country ought to do, because the more -- you know, Americans have that "can do" attitude, so if you're in a foreign country and you've been in a conflict and you're in the post-

conflict period and there's a ditch that needs to be dug, some Americans want to go dig it. And of course that's not what we ought to be doing; what we ought to be doing is teaching somebody how to dig the ditch.

And then we ought to do something even more important, and we ought to teach teachers how to teach people how to dig ditches -- or whatever it is, fly airplanes, provide police work -- and constantly create an institutional capability in other countries to provide for themselves. Our purpose is not to go to a country and stay there in perpetuity; our purpose is to be helpful to countries, help put them on a path, in the case of Afghanistan, a good example, where they're on a path towards democracy and where we continuously encourage them and assist them in developing the ability to sustain the kinds of political and economic and military capabilities that will enable them to have a peaceful and prosperous circumstance for their people.

One last question. There it is.

Q: Mr. Secretary, sir, Staff Sergeant Sharp (sp), United States Army Command and Control Support Agency. In regards to United States Forces Korea, we already have a brigade in Iraq, and I recently read in the Army Times that General LaPorte was recommending relocating an additional 3,000 troops. How do you feel about the readiness of United States Forces Korea in regards to the North Korean regime?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I feel very good about it. We're doing exactly what I just said in Korea.

The Korean War ended what, 55 years ago? I think it was nineteen-fifty- -- (off-mike comments from staff) -- fifty-three. And we have had a large number of forces right along the Demilitarized Zone, in downtown Seoul, for decades and decades and decades.

South Korea is a vibrant economy. It's been an economic miracle. It has an energetic and robust free political system. There isn't any -- and there isn't any reason in the world why they can't provide the security capabilities, along with some assistance from the U.N. forces, the United States.

And so what we've done -- General LaPorte's done a terrific job, along with Richard Lawless and others who have worked on this, to work with the South Koreans, the Republic of Korea, so that they assume a greater and greater share of the responsibility for providing the -- both the deterrent and the defensive capability in -- on the Korean peninsula.

Our forces will be, over time, in a careful way, as we pass off these responsibilities to the South Koreans -- will be moving into two hubs, basically a sea hub and an air hub, off the DMZ, out of Seoul and into positions where we can be helpful, where we can be supportive to the South Korean government, but not behaving in a way that creates a dependency on their part because we're doing all of those things for them. And it makes all the sense in the world to be doing what we're doing. The only thing that didn't make sense: that it took so long to get there, in my opinion.

Pete Pace, do you have anything you want to say?

GEN. PACE: No, sir. Thank you.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, folks, thank you very much.

Well, I'd -- there's one thing I do want to say. That lapel pin, before I forget, is the americasupportsyou.mil website reminder. There it is. Look at that. And if you go to that site, you can find ways that you can participate in supporting the troops. You can find ways that hundreds of other people across the country are engaged in activities that are worthwhile. And I hope you will do it. I hope you'll also tell your friends, because we are so fortunate as a country to have such wonderful people put up their hands and say they're willing to

serve our country and to serve it at risk to their lives and to serve it with such wonderful skill and dedication.

Thank you very much, folks. (Applause.)

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