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# News Transcript

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

**Monday, April 11, 2005**

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## Secretary Rumsfeld En-Route to Iraq

RUMSFELD: We are en-route to Iraq. I'm going to meet with the folks in the Interim Government who have in my view done a good job and thank them. I'll be meeting with those that have been selected in the Transitional Government and discussing with them some things that are of importance to the United States. Certainly, when you think about it, we have -- We went from the Governing Council to the Interim Government, now we're going to the Transitional Government and then the constitution will be drafted, a referendum will take place, and then an election under that new constitution so there will be still more changes coming in December and January.

Our folks are fighting an insurgency and the Iraqi security forces are fighting an insurgency, and people are being killed and at a time when money is being invested in the country in terms of structure and the like. It's important that the new government be attentive to the competence of the people in the ministries, and that they avoid unnecessary turbulence. It seems to me that we have an opportunity to continue to make progress politically, economically and the Iraqi security forces are making progress, to be sure, and that anything that would delay that or disrupt that as a result of turbulence or lack of confidence or corruption in government would be unfortunate.

So one of the things I'll be visiting with them about are those important aspects of strengthening the ministries in ways that they can do a still better job for the Iraqi people.

I'll be meeting with troops. We'll stop by a hospital, a military hospital which I'm told must be the fifth busiest trauma center in the world. They're treating Americans, coalition folks, Iraqis -- Iraqi security force people as well as Iraqi civilians at this hospital, and apparently doing an outstanding job.

We will be going from there to Baku, I think I'm going to meet with the Minister of Defense there on military-to-military relationships. We'll then go into Afghanistan, to Kulat and Kandahar and then [inaudible] new Provincial Reconstruction Team. I'll be meeting with troops in Afghanistan as well.

General Barno is moving towards the end of his tour and I'm planning to present him the Department of Defense award for his fine service.

I have a number of things to talk to President Karzai about. Here again, the importance of having strong ministries that are well staffed and doing their job. The upcoming elections in April. [inaudible].

One thing I didn't mention in Iraq I'd like to go back to, and that is I'll visit with the new government about the importance of not delaying the process that has been put in place. Our hope is, I think [inaudible] provided for the possibility of a six month delay, and our hope is that that will not occur.

PRESS: [inaudible] the constitution?

RUMSFELD: And then the subsequent elections.

[Background]

PRESS: Back to Iraq?

RUMSFELD: Yes.

PRESS: You talked about the importance of confidence. Now Iraqis are building a security force. It's hard to imagine they have the proper people to do the kind of vetting you're talking about as well. Will there be some new American effort to help them in quality control and vetting and so on, sir?

RUMSFELD: They can do a better job of vetting. No.

[Background]

PRESS: [inaudible] being elected, what kind of message that sends that the Kurds have elected [inaudible]?

RUMSFELD: Back on the record. I think it's a decision for the Iraqi people. They voted. And the process was laid out and those decisions were made. The President and Deputy Presidents [inaudible], and the Prime Minister and the Ministries will fill out, and what we'll find is there was a lot of political debate and discussion and the electorate will get what it is that their votes prescribe. It is for the Iraqis to decide those things, not by [inaudible].

PRESS: You talked to [inaudible] today about [inaudible] commanders saying things are beginning to cool down in Iraq, and they feel that there could be troops reduced, reductions, et cetera. There have also been talks about in Fallujah --

RUMSFELD: -- right there.

PRESS: [inaudible] Washington Post [inaudible] and not a single [inaudible] of the New York Times [inaudible].

RUMSFELD: You've earned it.

I think that -- You know, people get asked those questions, they answer them. What do they answer? What they're seeing, their [inaudible], their area, this period. That's fine. When I talk about that stuff I have to talk about it in the aggregate. On a macro basis. It's an entirely different thing. I have to listen to all of those [inaudible], hear what they have to say, see what Abizaid, how he [inaudible] with him, how Casey does, and then think about all the questions I can ask them to make sure I'm satisfied that they've thought through all of the different pieces of it, and then I'll come to some judgment as to what I want to recommend to the President and the President will make any announcements on that.

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