



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/tr20050727-secdef3561.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

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Secretary Rumsfeld Stakeout with U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen. George Casey in Baghdad, Iraq

Rumsfeld: We just had a meeting with General Casey and the Ambassador and General Vines and General Petraeus and some of the senior folks in the mission here. Got updates. And the Ambassador and General Casey would be happy to answer a few questions. [Laughter].

Media: General Casey, [inaudible] at which the Iraqi security forces [inaudible]? Do you think that your projection [inaudible] bringing down the [inaudible] levels comparatively gives them [inaudible], is that doable?

Casey: Fairly substantial is what I said. After the elections. The answer is yes. We have built a readiness assessment that we've been doing now for the last several months. We have transition teams embedded with the divisions, and so we, when we get these reports we know they're solid. I do believe that if the political process continues to go positively, and if the government, the security forces continue to go as it is going, I do believe we'll [inaudible] after these elections [inaudible].

Media: Any numbers?

Casey: Not yet.

Media: What about the current status of the insurgency? We're hearing numbers all over the place about how many have been taken into custody, killed, captured. How many still may be existing, their capability? What is the status as far as you know about the --

Casey: I think everybody agrees on one thing about the number you referred to and that is that nobody agrees on what the numbers are and it's a very very difficult thing to do.

We've gone back and worked with the Brits and their experience with Northern Ireland, combat, all kinds of historical examples. And the true fact of the matter is that insurgency populations ebb and flow. Now maybe you also have a core of hard fighters and then you have supporters, and it's very very difficult to [Inaudible] that.

What I will tell you is, however strong that insurgency is, the level of [Inaudible] they've been able to generate has not increased substantially over what we've seen over the past year.

Media: -- consistent with what General Abizaid said in Washington recently, relative [inaudible]. What do you attribute to that ability? It seems that you haven't been able to weaken it and they haven't strengthened. It seems like a kind of a stalemate.

Casey: I wouldn't say it's necessarily a stalemate. Insurgencies need to progress to survive and this insurgency is not progressing. What you're seeing is a change in tactics for more visible attacks against civilians, and that's a no-win strateg for the insurgency.

Media: General Casey, how important is it that Coalition forces continue to move toward advisory rather than leadership roles in the battle against terrorism here?

Casey: I'm sorry, I didn't quite get it.

Media: The Coalition forces, how important is it that they move toward an advisory rather than leadership roles in battling terrorism?

Casey: I think you may be referring to the fact that we're actively working with our transition teams to move the Iraqis to a leadership role in the battle against the insurgency and that's very important. And we're making fairly good progress.

Can I introduce the new Ambassador? [Laughter].

Media: Ambassador, I'd like [inaudible] -- Do you believe that Iran[inaudible] stabilize Iraq? And what [inaudible]?

Ambassador: It appears that Iran and some of the other neighbors are not being very helpful. As a matter of fact some are being unhelpful. And the Iraqi government was approaching it to engage with these governments and the other neighbors to discourage these unhelpful policies from continuing. Iraq it is an important country in this region. It's very important for the neighbors of Iraq to understand that and to develop good relations with the emerging, very powerful, successful country. So Iraqis are likely to remember who was helpful and who was unhelpful in the transition to becoming an important government.

Media: [Inaudible] more aggressive, more assertive in expressing [inaudible]?

Ambassador: We'll see them being more assertive and active in this area. For example, [Inaudible] has proposed an Arab Summit on terrorism and PM Ja'afari wants to travel to other countries. So I think you will see them active with their neighbors.

Media: Mr. Secretary, earlier today you said that --

Media: -- drafting of the constitution was six months away, [inaudible]?

Staff: We've got to go.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050727-secdef3561.html>