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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Secretary Rumsfeld Stakeout with Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari

Prime Minister: I want to welcome the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America and of course we have very many issues that are very apropos at this time. We have talked about the performance of the security and the army, especially that I have visited two days ago the [inaudible] and with my own eyes I have seen the graduation of Iraqi officers and the [Inaudible] training with weapons for the security police and the Minister of Defense and I have closely watched the performance of the Iraqi police and the Army. When we have talked about the support that is needed for this effort because it's such an important step as well as equipping and recruiting and training because that will affect the length of time that the MNFI will be here. That is why the great desire of the Iraqi people is to see the Coalition forces be on their way out as they take more responsibility.

We have also talked about the detainees and [inaudible] because of the detainees and [inaudible]. We have talked that Iraq is a front in fighting terrorism because this terrorism is not only threatening Iraq, but it is threatening the whole world. We have also affirmed the importance of the support that we need in security and in the training of the armed forces. I would like to leave the floor to Secretary Rumsfeld, whom I welcome.

Rumsfeld: Thank you so much, Prime Minister.

I was very pleased to have a chance to meet with the Prime Minister and his national security team. Discussions included the Minister of Defense of Iraq and the Minister of Interior, and General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad were joining us as well. We, as the Minister said, had a good discussion about the progress being made with respect to the Iraqi security forces and our common interest in seeing them develop to the point where they can take over full responsibility for security here in Iraq.

Tough questions to the Prime Minister -- [Laughter]. I'm just a visitor.

Media: [inaudible] from the Europe [inaudible] Iraq. I carry a message from my heart to the Secretary of Defense, first of all we thank you for the effort you are expending. But however, this but carries with it both the [inaudible] and the pain of the mothers and the families of Iraq because of the wrong-killing that is happening on the Iraqi streets. We understand that there is a great threat against the U.S. forces on the Iraqi street but

[inaudible] that Iraqi life and blood should be cheap to them. This happens because of danger or because of wrong actions. We ask Your Excellency to give this message to the U.S. forces so that they may see it with the Iraqi people and be careful about the many lives that are at stake.

My question is to the Prime Minister. Has there been a discussion about the reduction of U.S. forces in the cities and in the streets of Iraq?

Prime Minister: Before I answer your question I thank you very much to give this message to Secretary Rumsfeld. And this is the opportunity to tell you that there was a good meeting between me and General Casey [inaudible] and this is the wrong-killing of the Iraqi [civilians]. And I have asked for an investigation and the apology to the families of the victims. And even to the point we discussed compensation.

General Casey has addressed a letter to me that he is investigating this matter and I think there is no disagreement at all on the issue because the Iraqi, the MNFI and the U.S. forces have come here to preserve and defend Iraqi life and we hope that these events will not repeat. [Inaudible] to Iraq. It definitely means for us to start preparing for the MNFI and [inaudible] the withdrawal, the reduction in the U.S. forces will be balanced by greater performance and competence on behalf of the Iraqi forces. That is going to take some very specific steps [inaudible]. If there are other questions for the Secretary please do so because he has another commitment.

Media: Bob Burns, Associated Press. Prime Minister, I'd like to ask you first. You mentioned the withdrawal of American forces. How soon do you believe that American forces should begin to withdraw from your country?

Prime Minister: We have not limited to a certain [inaudible], but we confirm and we desire speed in that regard, and this [inaudible] has two aspects. The picking up the pace of training of Iraqi forces both in training and equipping, and the other aspect is planning with the MNFI that the withdrawal of the MNFI will happen as much as the Iraqi forces take hold of the land. We do not want to be surprised by a withdrawal that is not in connection with our Iraqi timing, but at the same time we do not justify their presence as to when we are performing and [inaudible].

Voice: Thank you all very much.

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