



U.S. Department of Defense

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Monday, December 5, 2005

Secretary Rumsfeld's Remarks to the John Hopkins, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Thank you very much, Dean Einhorn. I see here Ruth Wedgwood in the front row, a member of the Defense Policy Board, and a couple of friends here from 30 or 40 or even more years back. Bill Coleman and Hal Simonfeld, it's good to see you. General Hickey, thank you for all you do, as well as you gentlemen.

This is an impressive institution with a well-deserved reputation as one of the important centers of strategic thought in America, and I'm certainly pleased to be with you and I thank you for your invitation.

The school, of course, is named for one of the giants of the Cold War, Paul Nitze, who I knew and worked with over the years. Paul was a driving force here, as has been my friend Paul Wolfowitz who led this school before returning to government -- in the Pentagon first, and now at the World Bank. And I'm pleased to be here to discuss America's ongoing mission in Iraq and the importance of it succeeding.

The other day I came across an interesting set of statistics that I'd like to mention. It seems that the Pew Research Center asked leaders in the United States their views of the prospects for a stable democracy in Iraq. Here were some of the results: Sixty-three percent of the people in the news media thought the enterprise would fail; so did 71 percent of the people in the foreign affairs establishment; and 71 percent in the academic settings or think tanks. Interestingly, opinion leaders from the U.S. military are more optimistic about Iraq by a margin of about 64 percent to 32 percent favorable. So is the American public by a margin of 56 percent to 37 percent.

And the Iraqi people are optimistic. I've seen this demonstrated repeatedly in public opinion polls, in the turnout at the elections, the referendum on the constitution, in the number of tips that the Iraqi people are providing to the Iraqi security forces and to the Coalition forces. They've gone from 483 a month to 4,700 tips per month.

This prompts the question, which view of Iraq is more accurate? Is a pessimistic view of the so-called elites in our country? Or the more optimistic view expressed by millions of Iraqis and by some 155,000 U.S.

troops on the ground. But most important is the question why should Iraq's success or failure matter to the American people?

I'd like to address these questions today before responding to your questions which I look forward to.

First, should we be optimistic or pessimistic about Iraq's future?

The answer may depend on one's perspective to a certain extent. Indeed, one of the reasons that views of Iraq are so divergent is that we may be looking at Iraq through different prisms of experience or expectation.

For starters, it must be jarring for reporters to leave the United States, arrive in a country that is so different, where they have to worry about their personal safety, and then being rushed to a scene of a bomb, car bomb or a shooting, and have little opportunity to see the rest of the country.

By contrast, the Iraqi people see things probably somewhat differently. They can compare Iraq as it is today to what it was three years ago -- a brutal dictatorship where the secret police would murder or mutilate a family member, sometimes in front of their children, and where hundreds of thousands of Iraqis disappeared into mass graves. From that perspective, Iraq today is on a vastly different and a greatly improved path.

A distinguished academician, I don't have the exact quote so I won't name him, said something to the effect that the situation in Iraq is terrible, and it's never been better.

If one is viewing events through a soda straw, they should know that they are by definition selectively focusing on some facts that may highlight their view and not seeing some other perspectives. A full picture of Iraq comes best from an understanding of both the good and the bad and the context for each.

Among the continuing difficulties, to be sure, are bursts of violence, including continued assassination attempts; attempts to intimidate Iraqi leaders and those who support the legitimate Iraqi government; hostage taking; continued U.S. Coalition and Iraqi casualties. Iran and Syria continue to be unhelpful, we know that. Calls for coalition withdrawal from some quarters that encourage those who are opposing the legitimate Iraqi government and aid their fundraising and their recruiting.

However there are also some positive developments to be seen if we look for them. The political process is on schedule. Iraqis now have a constitution that they wrote, that they voted for, and that they now are proceeding towards elections under that constitution in less than two weeks, a week and a half, December 15th.

There are hundreds of candidates who are politicking in those elections. There seems to be growing divisions among the enemies of the Iraqi people, particularly after the bombing of a wedding reception in Amman, Jordan, where now even Zarqawi's family is demonstrating against him.

Iraq's neighbors now seem to believe that this new democracy might in fact succeed which they doubted I think for some period, and they seem to be moving to get right with the Iraqi people and the perspective Iraqi government, and they're more active in their support, which is a good thing.

A vital and engaged media is emerging with some 100 newspapers in Iraq now; 72 radio stations; 44

television stations. An incredible number of cell phones which is an entirely new thing in that country.

And the Sunnis are increasingly taking part in the political process and further isolating those who still oppose the government of Iraq.

The stock market is alive and well in Iraq.

To be responsible, it seems to me one needs to stop defining success in Iraq as the absence of terrorist attacks. As Senator Joe Lieberman recently suggested, a better measure of success might be that a vast majority of Iraqis, tens of millions, are on the side of the democratic government while a comparatively small number are opposed to that government. I would suggest that this gives the Iraqi people an enormous advantage over time.

The other question I posed is of critical importance, that that was why does Iraq's success or failure matter to the American people?

Consider this quote -- "What you have seen, Americans, in New York and Washington, D.C. and the losses you are having in Afghanistan and Iraq, in spite of all the media blackout, are only the losses of the initial clashes."

The speaker was Zawahiri, the senior member of al-Qaida and a top leader in the effort to defeat U.S. and Coalition forces, and I should add, moderate Muslim regimes, around the world. The terrorists' methods of attack, simply put, are slaughter. They behead, they bomb children, they attack funerals and wedding receptions.

This is the kind of brutality and mayhem that the terrorists are working to bring to our shores. If we do not succeed in our efforts to arm and train Iraqis to help defeat the terrorists in Iraq, this is the kind of mayhem that these terrorists, emboldened by a victory, will bring to our shores. Let there be no doubt.

Indeed the most important reason for our involvement in Iraq, despite the costs, and they're considerable, is often overlooked. It's not only about building democracy, although democracies tend to be peaceful and prosperous and are in and of themselves good things to be sure. And it's not only about reopening Iraqi schools, hospitals, or rebuilding infrastructure though they are proceeding apace. These things are desirable and ultimately essential to stability in that country.

But simply put, defeating extremists' aspirations in Iraq is essential to protecting the lives of the American people.

Imagine the world our children would face if we allowed Zawahiri and Zarqawi and bin Laden and others of their ilk to seize power and operate with impunity out of Iraq. It would turn Iraq into what Afghanistan was before September 11th -- a haven for terrorist recruitment, training, and a launching pad for attacks against U.S. interests and our fellow citizens.

Iraq would serve as the base of a new Islamic caliphate to extend throughout the Middle East and which

would threaten legitimate governments in Europe, Africa, and Asia. This is their plan, they have said so. We make a terrible mistake if we fail to listen and learn.

In my view, quitting is not a strategy. Quitting is an invitation to more attacks and more terrorist violence here at home. This is not just a hypothesis. The U.S. withdrawal from Somalia emboldened Osama bin Laden in the 1990s. We know this. He said so.

The message that retreat in Iraq would send to the free people of Iraq and to moderate Muslim reformers throughout the region and the world would be that they cannot count on America. The message it would send to our enemies would be that America will not defend itself against terrorists in Iraq and it will not defend itself against terrorists anywhere.

What is needed in my view is resolve, not retreat; courage, not concession. Rather than thinking in terms of an exit strategy, we should be focused on a strategy for success.

The President's strategy focuses on progress on the political, and economic, and security fronts. You can read that strategy paper on the White House web site.

On the security side, today some 214,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained and equipped. They are of varying degrees of experience. Each day and each week and each month that goes by, they gain more experience and more capability. Working with Coalition forces, they are steadily improving in experience.

Coalition forces have handed over military bases to Iraqi control and also a complex of palaces in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

The Shiite areas of Najaf and Karbala and Sadr City, the scenes of battles last year, are more peaceful today. And in Tal Afar, 5,000 Iraqi troops took a key role in liberating and securing what had been a base of operations for extremists' networks and foreign networks.

I began these remarks by mentioning the contrast between what the American people are reading and hearing about Iraq and the views of the Iraqi people. I don't think we can close a discussion on Iraq without mentioning the media coverage and the current political debate that's taking place.

Recently, a member of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association reported on the intense discussions within the AP over whether or not their coverage of Iraq has been slanted or fair. For my part, almost every time I meet with troops I'm asked the same question. They ask why aren't the American people being given an accurate picture of what's happening in Iraq?

But let me say something in defense of the media. They have a tough job. It's not easy. A number of them have put their lives at risk, and some have been killed.

The media serves a valuable and indeed an indispensable role in informing our society and holding government to account. But it's important also for the media to hold itself to account. Government has to reassess continuously, and we do. So too, it's useful I believe for the media to reassess. We've arrived at a strange time in this country where the worst about America and our military seems to so quickly be taken as truth by the press and reported and spread around the world, often with little context and little scrutiny, let alone correction or accountability after the fact. Speed it appears is the critical determination, the determinant -- less so, context.

Recently there were claims by two Iraqis on a speaking tour that U.S. soldiers attacked them with lions. It was widely reported around the United States. It is still without substantiation. And yet that story was spread across the globe.

Not too long ago, there was a false and terribly damaging story about a Koran that was supposedly flushed down a toilet in Guantanamo, and in the riots that followed in several countries, some people were killed. And a

recent *New York Times* editorial implied that America's armed forces -- your armed forces -- our armed forces -- use tactics reminiscent of Saddam Hussein.

I understand that there may be great pressure on many of them to tell a dramatic story. And while it is easy to use a bombing or a terrorist attack to support that interest, it is not always the most accurate story or at least not the full story.

Consider this. You couldn't tell the full story of Iwo Jima simply by listening, the nearly 26,000 Americans that were casualties in a brief 40 days at Iwo Jima; or you couldn't explain the importance of Grant's push into Virginia just by noting the savagery of the battles. And they were savage.

So too, in Iraq, it is appropriate to note not only how many Americans have been killed -- and may God bless them and their families -- but what they died for, or more accurately, what they lived for.

So I suggest, and I take for granted the good intentions of the people in the media. I suggest that we ask how will history judge, if it does, the reporting some decades from now when Iraq's path is settled?

I would urge us all to make every effort to ensure -- government and the media -- to make every effort to ensure that we're trying to tell the whole story.

Further I think it's worth noting that there are 155,000 or 156,000 today Americans in uniform who are sending back e-mails to their friends and families, telling them what they're seeing. And it's a slice of what is actually happening. It's not the total picture. But it's a slice. And it's an accurate slice. It's the truth as they see it, and much of it is different than what those in the United States are seeing and reading.

Our country is waging a battle unlike any other in history. We are waging it in a media age that's unlike any war that warfighters have ever known.

Think of it. This is the first war of the 21st Century. It's the first war to be conducted with talk radio, and 24-hour news, and bloggers, and e-mails, and digital cameras, and Sony videocams, and all of these things that bring so much information near instantaneously to people. And in this new century, we all need to make adjustments -- government and the media alike. And change is hard, let there be no doubt.

We are all Americans. We are all in this together. And what we do today will not only impact us, but it will surely impact our children and our grandchildren, and the kind of world they'll live in.

Thank you very much. I'd be happy to respond to some questions.

[Applause].

DEAN EINHORN: Thank you very much, Secretary Rumsfeld. This is a set of very serious issues that maybe a light moment will remind the Secretary that he was one of the great CEOs in getting that broadband technology widely distributed.

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I was also one of the sponsors of the Freedom of Information Act when I was a Member of Congress.

[Laughter].

I was young and foolish.

[Laughter].

I'm just kidding.

[Laughter].

DEAN EINHORN: Secretary Rumsfeld has agreed to take questions and we would ask for questions from our SAIS community only. So please raise your hand. And if you can also tell us your name and your affiliation with SAIS as a student, alum, faculty or staff member.

I would also request that you limit yourself to one concise question. We have limited time and we would hope to call on as many of the people here as we can. And the people who are handling the microphones and will bring them to you will let us know when it is closing time.

Secretary Rumsfeld?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: We've got a good chunk of time here we can do this. I don't think I have to leave until 10:30. If you all can stay, why I can.

[Laughter].

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming to Johns Hopkins University this morning. My name is Esther Brimmer. I'm a member of the SAIS faculty. It is my honor to teach these great students here at SAIS.

In our seminar on democracy, human rights and conflict prevention, one of the things we talk about are the great developments of the 20th Century including the signature on the Geneva Convention. Perhaps we can talk about something that might be an exam question in the seminar next spring. Why has the United States not been able to say that yes, we will formally abide by the Geneva Convention in the war on terrorism?

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You bet.

I should begin by saying I'm not a lawyer. I say that with considerable pride.

[Laughter].

Excuse me Ruth and Bill, I'm just kidding. I didn't mean that.

[Laughter].

We've got two distinguished lawyers down here.

No, the decisions were made by the Department of Justice and by the President. In their minds they do believe that they are conforming to the Geneva Convention. As you know, the Geneva Conventions provided that people should be treated in one way if they were functioning under the laws of war, if they wore uniforms, if they carried their weapons publicly, if they adhered to certain things. The Geneva Conventions purposely rewarded people, if you will, who conducted themselves in that manner and distinguished them from people who

did not.

The President obviously said that the situation in Iraq did lead to a situation. They wore uniforms, they carried their weapons properly. So the provisions of the Geneva Convention applied to them.

The President also decided that the terrorists and the people that blow up children and women indiscriminately and don't wear uniforms and don't carry their weapons out, did not merit the treatment, the same treatment that people who did conduct themselves in that manner.

However, he went on to say that notwithstanding that, they should be treated, they should receive humane treatment. That was his instruction. That was the instruction I put out throughout the Department of Defense, and that is, the policy of the department has been for those individuals who were the Taliban or the al-Qaida or other terrorist individuals as opposed to people who were part of an organized military.

Question? Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here. My name is Don Revieve, I'm a first year student here at SAIS.

You talked about this being a really new war with new media, new technology. I was wondering how those new communication mediums changed the concept of power and whether public perception in Iraq and here is something that the Defense Department or the military has to pay attention to. Thank you.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Oh, it's changed things just enormously, and we clearly have to pay attention to it.

The conflict we're in is not against a big army or a big navy or a big air force. The United States military is not going to lose a single war or battle or skirmish over in Iraq or Afghanistan. The competition that's taking place, the battle that's taking place is for people's minds, and very much they are convinced that they can effect the will of the American people and the American people's willingness to persist in this effort.

So too, al-Qaida has media committees. They go out and they plan exactly how they can structure their attacks to have the kind of drama and effect that will be carried worldwide, that will have the effect of intimidating people and persuading people on the one hand that they should not oppose the terrorists, and on the other hand that they should be recruited or contribute money. They can dramatize the success of what they're doing, and that increases the contributions they get from people who support that type of thing.

So it is an entirely different environment that we're functioning in, it's a difficult one, and it requires a set of skills that the United States government doesn't have in abundance. We've historically avoided doing much in that area, trying to effect people's attitudes and minds.

I remember when I was I think in Congress many many decades ago, the USIA existed and they put out a film on President Kennedy in India as I recall, and the Congress went through the roof, that it was taking taxpayers' money and turning it against the people of the United States to propagandize them, so USIA doesn't exist any more and the rules are very strict, and that's understandable. The problem is that if you say anything, you're talking to multiple audiences. Simultaneously, everything I'm saying here today is going to the people in the Department of Defense, it's going to the civilian and the military people, it's going to our friends and allies around the world, it's going to our enemies, it's going to other governments, and everything is right there, out front. And it's a very different situation.

I would go so far as to say we're not organized or trained to handle it in a particularly brilliant fashion. We have

a lot of restrictions on us that are understandable and in my view appropriate, but we're up against people who do not have those restrictions on them, and they're able to turn inside the turning circle. They don't have governments, they don't have countries, real estate to defend, they don't have to tell the truth, they don't have parliaments to deal with, and they're able to adjust and change and turn very rapidly. They break laws. We're not allowed to and don't. So it's —

They lie. A lie moves around the world at the speed of light. And as I think Mark Twain or somebody said, "while truth is still trying to get its boots on."

Recent reports about, I think it was in Iraq, some people in the military signed a contract with a private contractor, and the private contractor is alleged to have written accurate stories but paid someone in the media in Iraq to carry the story. That's an allegation. I don't know if it's true yet. That story has been pounded in the media, it's very attractive for the media because it's about the media and they like that.

[Laughter].

But we don't know what the facts are yet. General Casey is conducting an investigation and the problem is the story goes out all over the world over and over and over again, and we're still trying to find out what the facts are and what — We know what the policy was, and now the question is what did the contractor, was he implementing the policy properly.

I'll give you another example of a strange thing that happened just this week. We were at a press briefing and the question came up about the discovered abuse by Iraqis of Iraqi prisoners. And someone from the United States military discovered it, saw it, something wasn't right, or was told that something wasn't right. Went to the officials of the Iraqi government and said you ought to look into this. They went and looked into it and discovered that it now appears that there was some abuse by Iraqis, police I believe, possibly military, on other Iraqis. The question comes up, well, what should American military do about that?

Let me give you a little texture for the kind of — It sounds like a simple thing. Obviously you should stop it. That's not a good thing, abuse of somebody.

Another question is, well, how do you stop it? What they did was report it, which is right. The next step would have been to orally, if they saw it happening, to orally tell people they should not do that. And a third would be to use force to stop them, including lethal force to stop them. Now that's complicated.

You think of all these young men and women in the military. They travel around, they've got rules of engagement. Should they do that if they're in uniform or out of uniform? Should they do it in Iraq only, or should they do it in every country they're in? I'm told that people have been court martialed for doing it in countries because people don't know what the laws are in every country. They don't know what the culture is, what the procedures are. So reporting something that looks amiss is good; orally trying to stop something that looks amiss to me sounds very reasonable. Then the next question is, what level of force should they use to try to stop it if they see it happening in a country where they don't know the laws, they don't know the culture, and it could vary depending on whether it was being performed, the abusive act or the seemingly inhumane act, or possibly illegal act, whether it's being performed by an official of that government — a policeman or a soldier — or just by someone else.

So there are all these gradations in there that need to be thought through, and you end up having to have rules of engagement for people so that they know what to do when they get up and go out in the morning, and that's not an easy thing to do.

The rules of engagement that come in to me have been worked over by so many lawyers you can't

imagine it, and I read them, I can't understand them, and I say okay, I'm going to go outside in the hall and stop the first five people who walk by and see if they can understand it. Give them a little quiz. What does this rule of engagement mean? What would you do?

It's hard. You come out with six different answers.

So this stuff is not easy. It's complicated. It's tough. And the over-simplification of it, because of pressures of deadlines, is something that is a problem. And it isn't simple.

Question?

QUESTION: My name is Hamna Statweth, I'm an [inaudible] student here at SAIS.

Washington Post Magazine some weeks ago had an article where they said that you were not that in favor of the invasion. There was a memo which was classified which was written by you where you apparently warned about some of the consequences of this war.

So I wonder, has the war been according to what you foresaw at that time? And were you originally in favor of this invasion or not? Thank you.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Yes, I do support the President in the decision. Did then and do now.

Did it go according to what people thought? No. I guess no war ever does. I guess the famous saying is that no war plan survives first contact with the enemy, and you know that when you start, and you therefore fashion war plans that have various scenarios and excursions that you can undertake.

I think what that article may have been referring to, as is my tendency I sat down and I wrote out a whole host of things that could go wrong, and I discussed them at great length inside the Pentagon and I discussed them at great length with the President. Many of them didn't go wrong, they didn't happen for a variety of reasons. But we talked about the possibility of major refugees and internally displaced persons. It just didn't happen. We were concerned that the bridges could be blown. It didn't happen.

Our folks moving up from Kuwait put on chemical and biological suits every day as they went out, not because they thought they looked nice but because they were deeply concerned about the risk of the use of chemical weapons. Here was a country that had used them, had them and used them against their own people as well as their neighbors. So that didn't happen.

There was concern about any number of things. If you recall Saddam Hussein's people when they went into Kuwait blew up all the oil wells, and we were concerned that there would be this enormous environmental disaster as a result of doing that.

We found in some instances on bridges and oil wells, some munitions, our folks did, but for the most part there was very little damage done to oil wells and very little damage done to bridges because the people moved so fast.

We were very concerned about fortress Baghdad, a last stand by the Saddam Hussein group in Baghdad, putting millions of people at risk and causing a siege of that city, and that didn't happen.

So there were a lot of bad, terrible things that could have happened that did not.

On the other hand, obviously several things happened different. We've not discovered weapons of mass destruction, although the two people who have been in charge of looking for them reported -- it wasn't reported widely, but they reported that there was no question but that they had a desire for them and had disobeyed some 17 UN Resolutions, and that these weapons were unaccounted for. One still has to this day to wonder why the Iraqis if they really didn't have those weapons, did they handle it the way they did by not accounting accurately and actively trying to deceive the United Nations.

So there were many things that did happen that were expected, and there were a number of things that did not happen.

There was always an assumption that I think it was the 4th Infantry Division would be able to get in through Turkey. It turned out the Turkish Parliament voted, they favored it by one vote but they needed a larger margin, and as a result the 4th ID never got in from the north and never put the pressure on the Sunni Triangle that would have occurred had they been able to get in from the north. They had to come in from the south, it took much longer, and as a result the insurgency was much larger I think than people estimated. Those are the kinds of things that were considered.

Question?

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. My name's Kate Turner. I'm a first year student here at SAIS.

There are currently thousands of private military contractors in Iraq, and you were just speaking of rules of engagement in regards to Iraqi personnel and U.S. personnel. Could you speak to, since the private contractors are operating outside the Uniform Code of Military Justice, can you speak to what law or rules of engagement do govern their behavior, and whether there has been any study showing that it is cost effective to have them in Iraq rather than U.S. military personnel?

Thank you.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Thank you. It is clearly cost effective to have contractors for a variety of things that military people need not do, and that for whatever reason other civilians, government people, cannot be deployed to do.

There are a lot of contractors, a growing number. They come from our country but they come from all countries, and indeed sometimes the contracts are from our country or another country and they employ people from totally different countries including Iraqis and people from neighboring nations. And there are a lot of them. It's a growing number.

Of course we've got to begin with the fact that, as you point out, they're not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. We understand that. There are laws that govern the behavior of Americans in that country. The Department of Justice oversees that.

There is an issue that is current as to the extent to which they can or cannot carry weapons, and that's an issue. It's also an issue, of course, with Iraqis. But if you think about it, Iraq's a sovereign country. They have their laws and they're going to govern, the UN Resolution and the Iraqi laws, as well as U.S. procedures and laws govern behavior in that country depending on who the individual is and what he's doing. But I personally am of the view that there are a lot of things that can be done for a short time basis by contractors that advantage the United States and advantage other countries who also hire contractors, and that any idea that we shouldn't have them I think would be unwise.

Yes?

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. My name is James Horn. I'm a SAIS student.

You've become famous for, shall we say, epistemological musings in the press. It's interesting that --

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: -- those big words like delicatessen and television --

[Laughter].

QUESTION: We are at SAIS, sir.

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You are. I'm not.

[Laughter].

QUESTION: Fair enough. It's interesting that of all the U.S. officials, the high U.S. officials, you have been concerned with certain musings on the nature of truth and knowledge, as we have seen here today.

So my question is, in a war where perhaps truth is a matter of contention, that the matter of credibility becomes the central factor. And as you said, we all know that war is hard, but didn't we say at the beginning of the war that this is all going to be very easy?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I don't know who "we" is, but I certainly didn't. There is no question there were people who believed it would be, that they would be met as liberators and indeed they were for a period and still are in a number of parts of the country. But anyone who had an optimistic view I think has confronted reality and it is clearly not easy. War is never easy. You never heard a world like that out of my mouth, I don't believe.

Question?

QUESTION: Good morning. My name is Stafford Ward, a second year SAIS student.

At last week's DoD press conference you stated that you didn't care for the word insurgents, and that you had another word for this term, [inaudible] didn't have a legitimate gripe or didn't have the cohesion or a thing of that nature. What is the other term that you had for insurgents that you said you couldn't remember at the time?

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I don't think I said I couldn't remember at the time, I said I hadn't thought it through well enough to know that there was a simple bumper sticker that one could substitute for the word insurgent.

But I was musing the fact that --

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's fair.

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I prefaced it by saying look, I was over the weekend bothered by the word insurgent. It seemed to give them a legitimacy, number one, that I don't think they have. The people of Iraq have every opportunity in the world to change that government peacefully with a vote coming up in two weeks.

Second, insurgents, to lump them together seemed to me to be not as precise as I would be comfortable with because they're different people. They're people who are leftovers from the Saddam Hussein regime that want to reestablish the Ba'athist regime in that country. They're Sunnis who enjoyed having dominance in that country and recognized that they're a minority and are unlikely to have dominance after this election. There are criminals who are doing it for money. There are Zarqawi types who come from other countries and recruit people in from other countries. So it's not a single cohesive group. It's an aggregation of different people who want to have that country be different than a democracy.

So I just said I'm uncomfortable with it. It sounded almost like legitimate, it made them more legitimate than I would think they merit. I said I didn't have a good substitute except to call them what they are. They're people who are indiscriminately killing people and they are opposing the legitimate government of Iraq that has a constitution and it has an election process, and they're enemies of the government of Iraq, and therefore they're enemies of the people of Iraq. And they're a relatively small number, as I mentioned. I mean there's what, 25 million people in Iraq, 26 million, and I don't know how many thousands of them there are of these people. It goes up and down and some come across the border in from Syria and what have you.

But I began by confessing I didn't have the answer, but I did want to express my discomfort with the phrase.

Yes?

QUESTION: I'm Brian Carlson. I'm a student here at SAIS.

Mr. Secretary, you have of course been a strong advocate of military transformation. What lessons have you learned from the war in Iraq that can be applied to those efforts?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, you know you learn something new every day. And I hope -- I think of transformation as probably not the best word. Now I don't want to get in trouble here.

[Laughter].

I'm going to muse for a minute.

[Laughter].

Transformation leaves the impression that you start untransformed and then you do something and you then become transformed, and it isn't like that. It's a continuum, it's a process, it goes on and on and on because the world's different out there.

The situation in Iraq is different in different parts of Iraq. The situation in Iraq is different from

Afghanistan. The kinds of capabilities we as a Department of Defense need are the things that we'll have to be able to defend the American people and deal with the kinds of 21st Century challenges that we will have a dickens of a time trying to predict.

If you think about it, no one asked Bob MacNamara in his confirmation hearings about Vietnam. And no one asked Cheney in his confirmation hearings about Iraq. And no one asked me about Afghanistan. And yet after September 11th we were required to go halfway around the world to a land-locked country in a matter of days and weeks.

I think if I had to pull out one lesson that we've learned over the past four or five years, it would be that in the 21st Century we're going to have to stop thinking about things, numbers of things, and mass, and think also and maybe even first about speed and agility and precision.

A couple of examples. If you count things, you'd say to yourself well, you began with ten bombs, dumb bombs. It took eight or ten to hit a target. Or you'd begin with five bombs, which is half as many, and they're precision weapons, and each one hits a target. So you've got half as many bombs and you can hit five times the number of targets as when you had ten dumb bombs. That's just a simple example.

Another would be the Navy. The Navy for the sake of argument has been able to go from X number of ships down to a much lower number of ships and have exactly, roughly, almost exactly the same number of ships deployed at any given time. How did they do that? Well, they did it by managing crews, crew swaps. They did it by doing a quite different thing with respect to stairs and repairs. So today we're able, for example, to have half again as many carrier battle groups deployed with 11 carrier battle groups instead of 12, than we did with 12, and half again as much deployed time. And that doesn't even address the firepower in those carrier battle groups which is vastly greater than it was five years ago.

So we're stuck in a mode of talking about how many people – A soldier today is so much more capable. This business about the Army's broken, that you read in the press every once in a while, isn't true. The Army is probably as strong and capable as it ever has been in the history of this country. They are more experienced, more capable, better equipped than ever before.

So I think of it, having been in the pharmaceutical business -- If you think about a hospital room. Someone says well, ten years ago a hospital room cost X and today a hospital bed, one day in a hospital costs 5X. That's true, whatever it is. But it's a totally different situation. The treatment you're getting, the medications you're getting, the care you're getting, the services that exist are vastly different.

We need to understand those distinctions and not simply look at mass and numbers of things, and instead think about the ability to – In Afghanistan the Soviets had, I don't know, 200,000 people in that country for year after year after year after year. We ended up with tens of thousands in a matter of what, eight, nine, ten, twelve weeks did what they weren't able to do in years. Why? Well, we did it differently and we were not an occupying country and we didn't want to stay there, and that helps if you don't want to stay there.

Question?

QUESTION: My name is Daniel Todd. I'm a second year SAIS student from Germany.

My question is on a scale from most favorite ally in Europe to least favorite ally in Europe --

[Laughter].

Would you name some countries, maybe excluding the United Kingdom, and tell me where my country fits in.

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Don't applaud him. It will just encourage him.

[Laughter].

The President asked me to stay out of U.S. politics, and I have. And I don't think that Condi Rice and the President need Rumsfeld to be helping them out by opining on some sort of a pecking order in Europe.

[Laughter].

So I think I'll pass on that one.

[Laughter].

Yes?

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Elizabeth Wells, first year student here at SAIS.

You spent a lot of your time criticizing or questioning the coverage of the U.S. media --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I wouldn't characterize it that way. I was just --

QUESTION: Well you --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I was discussing it.

QUESTION: Discussing the role of the U.S. media.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: When you're in your second year you would use the word discussing --

[Laughter].

QUESTION: I'm not a diplomat yet.

[Laughter].

QUESTION: I'm wondering what would be more fair to you. You were talking about the opening of schools. Should that receive larger headlines than say the deaths of two Marines? And what sort of ways are the Pentagon, through public affairs or information operations, doing to counter what you see as, well, you did question the quality of the U.S. media coverage.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: It's different than what people who go there see and come back and talk about. It's different what people who are serving there see. And it's, I can't say every one, but if you talk to Members of Congress of both political parties when they come back they have a different perception than they did from what they were hearing here.

Now if you look at the communications from the military and ask their families, why is it that every single group of military people I meet with, somebody in that room asks me that question. Why is there the disparity? I don't know why there's the disparity. My job's tough enough for me without trying to figure out how these folks should do their jobs. I don't know how you do that, and it may very well be if you tried to report something about a school being built or a new generator for a hospital or a group of people helping out children in Iraq, that it would never make it in the paper. And it may be that the papers are looking for drama. I don't know. There was something like 16,000 homicides in the United States last year. There were 42,000 traffic deaths. Think of that. Sixteen thousand homicides and 42,000 traffic deaths. Something in that neighborhood. That's close enough for government work.

But you would think that the reporting on 16,000 homicides in our country in a given year, that that would be quite a story. But you've got to search to find that. You'd think 42,000 traffic deaths, people killed in cars and pedestrians hit by cars, that's a pile of people, a lot of dead people. And you'd think that would be a big story. I don't know what's big.

I guess when I get up in the morning at 5:00 and I walk by my bed and my wife rolls over and she says, "Now Don," talking about the press, she says, "They have their job and you have your job." And she's right.

Yes?

QUESTION: Good morning. Again, thank you so much for being here. My name is Carna Cohen. I'm a PhD candidate temporarily at SAIS. I'm from New Orleans, Tulane University, but graciously here.

I'd like to refer back to that article in the *Washington Post* that was brought up earlier. There is a comment here, a discussion of the Defense Science Board referred to as your own advisory think tank. And it says that they concluded that the architecture of the Iraq war lacked necessary knowledge of Iraq and its people and that they failed to factor in well-known lessons of history. In quote, "It is clear that Americans who waged the war and who have attempted to mold the aftermath have had no clear idea of the framework that has molded the personalities and attitudes of Iraqis, the Board declared in a report bearing the official seal of the Department of Defense. It might help if Americans and their leaders were to show less arrogance and more understanding of themselves and their place in history. Perhaps more than any other people, Americans display a consistent amnesia concerning their own past as well as the history of those around them."

Now I can certainly come up with many things that I would --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's still all in quote?

QUESTION: I'm sorry, after the end, it's now me.

[Laughter].

QUESTION: I can come up with things that I would consider amnesia, and what have we done to respond to that and to change our knowledge and how have we reacted?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, we do have a big nation's problem. We have the problem of a nation that's got two oceans on either side. A small country in amidst other countries, the people tend to learn languages. They tend to understand better the culture. They tend to travel more and they understand different cultures.

In the United States we are a melting pot, to be sure. People come from all across the globe and want to live here and they want to work here and they want to invest here and that's a good thing. They make up this

country today.

But as a people, we are not highly skilled in languages. We are not highly skilled in knowledge of other cultures, and that's a problem. We have been working at the Pentagon for several years to try to shift the language training into languages that are going to be important in the period ahead, to increase the number of people who develop regional and area expertise and to see that they're properly rewarded. The Defense Science Board —

One thing the Pentagon does a good job of is after the fact they go in and look at lessons learned and try to see what was done and how might it have been done differently and what can we learn from it.

If you take Iraq, for example, there was an intensive lessons learned effort that was actually conducted during the course of the war, and still is, and then they went to the Iraqis that had been captured and got their perspective on what took place, and they ended up with meshing the two lessons learned.

You've seen these, Ruth and Hal, they do a very good job of it, and they're critical. And that's fair. That's good. We need that.

Am I getting the hook?

Yes?

QUESTION: Charles Doran, Johns Hopkins faculty member.

My question to you is this. Maybe it's useful to end on a strategic kind of question.

While it's understandable people hurry to see the transfer take place to Iraqi forces, my question to you is this. Can you give us assurances that this is not going to impact negatively on the energy situation? Seventy percent of the exportable oil and natural gas for the entire world, everybody from France to China to others, comes from that area. How are we going to do this without jeopardizing that security of supply?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: No.

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I cannot give you assurances. I'm not in that business. I haven't been, and I don't intend to get into it. People who try to make predictions about things or assurances often find they're wrong.

It seems to me that you began with the premise that there's hurry to get out. There naturally is a desire to not be there. On the part of the Iraqis, no country wants to be occupied or have foreign forces in their country. We know that. No one in our country wants to have our forces overseas if they don't have to be there, if there wasn't a very good reason. So there is a desire, not a hurry, but a desire to have things be arranged so that the Iraqi people can manage their own affairs.

I would say one word on that. I've still got a couple of minutes by my watch.

There is a tension with respect to the size of our force and the duration of their presence. The tension is this. You want to have enough to assure that your troops have the kind of force protection and have the capability of doing those tasks which are important to success. You don't want to have any more than you need

because it's intrusive, a large footprint is irritating and aggravating to the Iraqi people. It unquestionably can have the effect of encouraging people to be opposed to the Coalition and opposed to the Iraqi government because the Iraqi government is invited and encouraged and agrees with the presence of the Coalition forces, so there's that tension there constantly. And at any given moment you can find someone somewhere in that country that wishes they had more troops, and by the same token — and that becomes a task of allocating troops within the country for these different tasks. And at the same time the commanders, General Abizaid and General Casey, have to look at it from a macro standpoint and they are determined to not have more troops. The more troops you have, the more combat support assistance you have to have, the more force protection you have to have for those troops, and it grows.

So what we're doing is attempting to train the Iraqi security forces so that they can assume responsibility for their country. We're turning over bases, some 17 bases have been turned over to the Iraqis. The goal is to leave a stable environment there. When I say stable, not stable like Washington, D.C. or some place, but —

[Laughter].

I'm not going there.

[Laughter].

But relatively stable for that region and for that country. And the answer to your question is, if we are successful in doing that, obviously people that have oil have a desire to sell the oil and to reap the benefits of having sold that resource. Iraq has a lot of oil and they could have an awful lot more if they'd fix their infrastructure and invest in it and allow outside investment, create an environment that's attractive to investment.

But it's — We didn't go in there for oil. We're not going to stay there for oil. We went in there for the reasons the President stated. The goal is to transfer responsibility to the Iraqis. It's their country. They're going to have to grab a hold of it. Every aspect of it. And when you hear people say oh, you should be guarding the border, or you should be protecting the infrastructure — you meaning the United States — I think that's not the case. I think it's the Iraqis' infrastructure and it's the Iraqis' borders and they're going to have to have relationships with their neighbors and they're going to have to find ways to get the people who live in the neighborhood of that infrastructure to get on that tip hotline and pick up the phone and call people and say to the Iraqi security forces or the Coalition forces, listen, there's terrorists down here and they're planning to blow up this pipeline or water system or electrical system.

In the last analysis there's going to be a tipping of these people and they're going to decide that there is going to be a democratic government in that country. They have a chance to be a part of it, and it's a whale of a lot better than turning it over to the Zarqawi's or even the Saddamists that are left, or the criminals that are left in that country. I think that the folks who have served there from our country and from our Coalition countries —

I'll tell you what runs me up the wall is people denigrating the Iraqi security forces. Are they perfect? No. To some extent do they have infiltration? You bet. Are some not properly equipped still? Yes. Are some inexperienced? Yes. But they are out there doing a very good job, they're risking their lives, and people who run around denigrating what they're doing it seems to me is inexcusable. I'll say the same thing about people who denigrate our Coalition partners. Our Coalition partners are there, there are a couple of dozen countries of them, and they're, it took political courage to do it and it takes personal courage for those troops to go in there and do what they do, and God bless them, we're delighted to have them.

Thank you very much. I wish you all well.

[Applause].

<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20051205-secdef4421.html>