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**Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace**

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News Briefing with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Peter Pace

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SEC. RUMSFELD: Hello, folks.

I recently returned from Asia, where I had the pleasure and opportunity to visit with U.S. troops serving in South Korea, to thank them for their service and their sacrifice.

I noted to them that within my lifetime, the same now free and prosperous South Korea that they're helping to defend was almost completely destroyed by a terrible conflict. In the three years of the Korean War, nearly 40,000 Americans would fall in brutal combat, and U.S. forces endured many setbacks along the way.

President Harry Truman, now remembered as a fine president, would leave office in 1953 with an approval rating of about 25 percent, one of the lowest recorded ratings since folks started measuring those things.

Back then, a great many people questioned whether young Americans should face death and injury in Korea, thousands of miles from home, for a result that seemed uncertain at best. And today the answer is the Korean peninsula.

Satellite photo, Demilitarized Zone. This is Pyongyang, the capital. And it gives you a little idea of the contrast between a free political system and a free economic system. Same people, north and south. Same resources, north and south. The only difference is, the north has a repressive political regime and a command economy, and people are starving, and in the south the free economic system and free political system have created an economic miracle. But the question was, should young Americans be sent over there to -- at the risk of their lives? And of course the answer to that question is clear to anyone who visits the Korean peninsula today or who have the privilege of meeting, as I have done, some of the 3,000 South Korean troops who are helping the people of Iraq rebuild and secure their newfound freedom.

This week in Iraq, candidates and political parties representing all of the ethnic groups will begin campaigning in the parliamentary elections to be held on December 15th, something that's truly remarkable. Consider that just under three years ago, this same Iraq was home to one of the most vicious regimes of the 20th century, a regime that had invaded two of its neighbors, harbored and rewarded terrorists, filled mass graves with

hundreds of thousands of its own people.

These parliamentary elections are taking place under a new constitution, a constitution approved in the October 15th referendum by nearly 80 percent of the Iraqi people. During last month's referendum, in comparison to the January 30th elections, four times as many Iraqis applied to be poll workers, and approximately 1 million more Iraqis registered and over 1 million more voted, including a large number of Sunnis that had boycotted the last election and who are now forming slates of candidates to run for the new parliament.

Coalition commanders continue to closely monitor the Iraqi political environment and security situation on the ground. Based on those evaluations, they will shortly be making recommendations for future troop rotations.

In this complex and unconventional conflict, we are constantly looking for ways to strengthen our armed forces. For a number of years, the chairman and I and others have been working on plans to further improve the special forces. One of the results of those studies is that I've just approved the creation of a Marine Corps component in the U.S. Special Operations Command, which will increase the number of Special Operations forces available for missions worldwide while expanding their capabilities in some key areas. The department will provide additional details as they're available. I should point out that the Marine Corps was the one element of our four services that had not been previously involved with Special Operations.

It's important that we continue to assess and adapt because of the nature of the enemy that we face. It's an enemy that believes that we, the free and civilized world, don't have the stamina or the will to sustain a difficult effort over the necessary period of time. That is what Osama bin Laden has said. That's what Zawahiri and Zarqawi have said. They know that the center of gravity of this war is not in Baghdad, but in Washington and London and in the homes and the cities and the hearing rooms and the newsrooms of coalition countries. Their ultimate objective is a radical new caliphate that seeks to dominate the Middle East and to intimidate the free world, as totalitarians have tried over past decades.

I've watched the spread of Communism and the fall of Communism, the spread of Fascism and the fall of Fascism. At times, each toxic ideology was considered the wave of the future and was predicted to triumph over our way of life by people who should have known better. I'm confident that once again, when we do persevere, as we shall, what the American people will remember years from now will be our contribution to a new way of life for millions of people who, through struggle and loss and sacrifice, became allies that made possible the victory for freedom in this global war on terror.

General Pace.

GEN. PACE: Thank you, sir.

I think with all that's going on, we can all take great pride in the fact that our nation has both the capacity and the compassion to assist the Pakistan government in their disaster relief efforts. Right now we have over 800 U.S. armed forces on the ground, side-by-side with their Pakistani counterparts, over 24 medium- and heavy-lift helicopters with nine more on the way. Fixed-wing airplanes are dropping relief supplies. Almost 4,000 tons of relief supplies have been delivered. Hospitals providing medical care, engineers and Seabees who are helping to clear roads and make it possible for the government of Pakistan to provide the help that those citizens need. So we are proud to be part of it.

With that, we'll take your questions. Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary? Why do you think Guantanamo's detainees have engaged in a hunger strike since early August, and will the United States allow U.N. investigators who have been invited to visit Guantanamo to meet with detainees?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I suppose that what they're trying to do is to capture press attention, obviously. And they've succeeded. The negotiations and discussions that have taken place with the U.N. folks have been to offer them an opportunity to go to Guantanamo and see for themselves. We have, however, not indicated to them, as I understand it, that they would have exactly the same opportunities that the International Committee of the Red Cross has. There's got to be a limit to how one does that. And the ICRC has been doing it for a great many years and has had complete and total access for -- ever since Guantanamo was opened. And so, we're not inclined to add the number of people that would be given that extensive access.

Yes.

Q Okay. Mr. Secretary, when you were in Beijing and South Korea, did you get any concrete indication that North Korea is now willing to back down on its tough position to continue building nuclear weapons? Or any progress?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. No.

Q None at all.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Barbara.

Q I'd like to ask General Pace a question. General Pace, the military has now seen October be one of the most deadly months in the war in Iraq. What's your overall assessment as to what's going on with the insurgency right now with respect especially to IEDs? Why are IED attacks up, what are you doing in the way of these new -- more sophisticated IEDs that are now being spoken about, that include explosively formed projectiles? Why are these new technologies now being seen in Iraq? What's your assessment overall of the IED situation?

GEN. PACE: Well, I think, first of all, it's understandable that the two months that have had the highest casualties were last January and this October. Both were election months in Iraq. Both saw coalition forces and U.S. forces increase their levels and individuals on the ground. And as we projected would happen, the insurgents were trying to divert the Iraqi people, prevent them from participating in the political process. So it did not surprise us that we had more attacks.

With regard to the IEDs, I do not want to get into the specifics of that because it is very much a tactics, techniques and procedures process, wherein we've -- we learn, they learn. It is fair to say, though, that the IEDs are a concern for us, and we are continuing to work through all of our technologies, tactics, techniques and procedures to provide to our soldiers and Marines on the ground the best possible personal protection, not only in the form of armor, but also in how we operate on the battlefield.

Yeah?

Q Mr. Secretary, along those lines, you also expect that December would equally be a volatile month because of the election coming up. Are you planning to either increase troop levels or extend any other troops to bolster the strength of those armed forces there for the election, and also to combat this IED increased threat?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The -- we have had a pattern of increasing the number of coalition forces during periods when there was an expectation that the insurgents and the terrorists would like to try to disrupt the political process. And we've made a conscious decision to try to prevent them from being successful in disrupting the political process, and we have been consistently successful in doing so. Our folks have done a wonderful job. The Iraqi security forces have done a wonderful job. We've done the same thing in Afghanistan each time there was a major political event. We'll decide what we're going to do about December as we go along, but it would not be a surprise to me that the commanders would want to have some sort of an overlap there.

Yeah, Bret?

Q General Pace, following on Barbara's question, can you talk about the insurgency overall? Have you seen a change in the makeup in recent months, in recent weeks? I mean, what do you think the foreign fighter, local insurgent and criminal element really is today?

GEN. PACE: I think what we have is an insurgency that is more and more aware of the fact that each time the Iraqi people go to vote, each time they state their own free will in the way they have at the ballot box, that the insurgency is more and more in trouble of doing what they want to do, which is to dominate those people. So from the standpoint of the insurgents, they are very concerned, as they should be, that the Iraqi people want to have a free lifestyle that they pick for themselves. And therefore, they are using attacks on civilians, primarily murder of civilians, as a way to try to get the Iraqi people to back down from their opportunity to live the way they want to live.

So I see the insurgents' acts as a(n) indication that the Iraqi people are in fact moving -- making progress, moving forward, and their government is as well.

Q But on the makeup of the insurgency, are there more foreign fighters today than there were last month?

GEN. PACE: I don't know that that's definable. I think what is definable is the amount of territory that is being controlled, for example, by the Iraqi armed forces. Today we have one division headquarters, four brigade headquarters and 24 battalions that are Iraqis, who are in fact controlling areas of their own country, providing protection for their own citizens, and that will continue to grow, which will squeeze out the insurgents.

Q General Pace, back on the IED question a little bit. Without getting into tactics and techniques, the Pentagon and the U.S. military has spent a lot of time, effort and money to find ways to detect and defeat the IED threat, yet it still remains the number-one threat, if not killer, of American troops in Iraq. How is it that the insurgency is able to continue to use the IED so effectively?

GEN. PACE: Well, first of all, there's an enormous amount of ordnance in Iraq still, as is evidenced every week by the literally tons of ammunition that we find in locations we did not know about before. So that resource is available to the insurgents.

Beyond that, I do not want to get into specifics of how they are employing the IEDs nor how we are defending against them, because that really would put our troops at risk.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q General, though, in the last year, the U.S. has almost tripled the number of armored vehicles over there. It was like 16,000 last year before the "hillbilly armor" controversy. Now it's nearly over 40,000. Yet they're attacking troops in armored vehicles that we spent like \$4 billion on. What do you tell the public? You got two things going: more IED deaths, yet the increase in the armor is exponential and doesn't seem to be working.

GEN. PACE: Between the increase in armor and the changes in tactics, techniques and procedures that we've employed, the numbers of attacks -- IED attacks that have been effective has gone down, and the numbers of casualties per effective attack has gone down.

That said, there are more overall IED attacks by the insurgents, and we are working on that problem.

Q Mr. Secretary, recently Larry Wilkerson, the former State Department official, has described what he said was a cabal between you and Vice President Cheney in forming public policy leading up to the war. And he described what he said was a seriously dysfunctional foreign policy. I don't think we've heard you speak on that. Can you just respond to that?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I haven't read this. I've heard about it. And I don't know the man. I've never met the man, and I don't believe he's ever been in a meeting of the NSC. So it's hard for me to understand exactly what his insights might have been.

But, obviously, the president is the one who makes foreign policy, and the secretary of State is the one that implements foreign policy. And it's the country's policy.

I don't know what else one could say.

Q If I can just follow up. He seems to be complaining that the State Department's role in that was minimized in the lead-up to the war.

SEC. RUMSFELD: My experience in those meetings is that the president is the principal person who decides these things, and if he -- what was his job, this fellow?

Q He was -- forgive me, I cover the Pentagon, but he was the chief of staff to Powell.

Q He was chief of staff to Powell.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know what his perspective was or what his expectations were.

Q Do you think he was speaking for Secretary Powell?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh my goodness. Secretary Powell is perfectly capable of speaking for himself. I can't imagine --

Q You didn't interpret it that way?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I didn't.

Q So there was no cabal?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Of course not. My goodness gracious. The president of the United States makes these decisions, and he did it in open meetings and discussions that went on, and at great length. And that kind of a perspective obviously is looking through the wrong end of a telescope, I think.

Q Mr. Secretary, back to Guantanamo, why not allow the U.N. Human Rights officials access to interviews with the detainees? You know, wouldn't that put this issue to rest?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. (Chuckles.) It's very much in some people's interest to have it not be at rest.

And the International Committee of the Red Cross has total, complete, full access there, and has since day one. And second, it's not the Department of Defense's decision. This is a government decision, a matter of policy as to what extent they want to open that aperture and allow any number of additional organizations that exist in the world to do that, they've -- apparently the United States government's made a decision -- not the Pentagon, but the government's made a decision that they think that having the ICRC do that is the appropriate thing. And so that's that.

Q Can I follow up? Do you approve of the forced feeding of detainees who are on hunger strikes?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I guess -- I'm not a doctor and I'm not the kind of a person who would be in a position to approve or disapprove. It seems to me, looking at it from this distance, is that the responsible people are the combatant commanders and the Army as the executive agent for detainees. They make -- have expert medical people who make decisions of that type. And they've made a decision that they think it's appropriate for them to provide nourishment to people who, for whatever reason, at various points in their detention decide they want to not provide normal nourishment to themselves. There are a number of things that one can glean from the way it's being done. I don't think there's a serious risk of people -- well, I shouldn't say that, I'm not in a position to know that. But there are a number of people who go on a diet where they don't eat for a period and then go off of it at some point, and then they rotate and other people do that. So it's clearly a technique to try to get the attention of you folks, and they're successful.

Yes?

Q One difference between the ICRC and the rapporteurs is that the ICRC operates under confidentiality arrangement, whereas the rapporteurs are going to make their findings public. Is that what the government or the department is concerned about? Is that the reason they're trying to --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Not at all. The ICRC does it for a very obvious reason. They do it because that's the only way they can be assured that they're going to have access to countries around the world. And there's a very good reason for the ICRC policy. Obviously, the other people seem not to find that reason valid. But I'm not involved in the decision. That is a decision that the government of the United States has got to address because it's a precedent that applies across the government.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: You have new glasses.

Q Just for reading. You know, I'm getting older. (Laughter.) (Off mike.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: You look so studious and thoughtful-- (laughter).

Q Also, I can take them off and make this dramatic gesture.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes. (Laughter.) In the old days you could have a pipe and do that, but those days are gone.

Q Jim Schlesinger did that very effectively.

Q Your -- President Bush's nominee to be the chief Pentagon spokesman, in fact your chief spokesman, Dorrance Smith, ran into --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I think of Pete as my chief spokesman. (Laughter.) You're not going to -- Larry DiRita as the chief spokesman. I don't know that that person is necessarily the chief spokesman. I think they're --

Q Well, assistant secretary of Defense for public affairs --

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- is in charge of a large set of activities, one of which involves speaking to you from time to time.

Q Is this going to be one of those things where you challenge the premise of my question -- (laughter) -- and you never actually answer my question?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I kind of like to -- (laughter).

Q Well, the nominee for the assistant secretary of Defense for public affairs --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Mm-hmm.

Q -- ran into some turbulence on Capitol Hill from Senator Levin about some writings in which he suggested -- and I think I'm characterizing this accurately -- that the U.S. television networks were, in effect, "strong partners," I think was the phrase he used, with terrorists because they re-aired material from Al-Jazeera that had -- provided by terrorist organizations. And I'm wondering if you share that view, that the U.S. networks are, in effect, partners in that? And secondly, do you think that Mr. Smith will be confirmable by the Senate?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I've not read this article that is -- that I've been told about. But he -- I've interviewed him several times, and find him to be a very intelligent, thoughtful, experienced person, and I expect that he ultimately will be confirmed.

Q But do -- you haven't had a chance to read his op-ed piece that he wrote in The Wall Street Journal?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. No. But I know it's terribly important to you, Jamie, but I have a few other peas on my knife that I -- (laughter) --

Q Well, do you believe that the -- you've criticized Al- Jazeera before.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I have.

Q Do you believe --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I will do it again, if you'd like. Prompt -- prompt me.

Q Do you think that the U.S. television networks are, in effect --

SEC. RUMSFELD: If I wanted to say anything about the U.S. television networks, I would say it without referring to some article that he wrote. I have nothing to say about them.

Yes?

Q Thank you. As Iraq operations and the hurricane recovery put more and more pressure on the federal budget, do you feel that it's gotten to the point where it's hurting your ability to plan for the future? And are you planning for what you might invest in, based on the money you might -- you think might be available instead of maybe looking exclusively on what you think you might need?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Instead of looking what you might -- no, you do both all the time. You're constantly asking how you can arrange this enormous sum of money that the Department of Defense has each year from the -- recommended by the president and approved by the Congress and paid for by the taxpayers. You're constantly every year looking at how you can arrange that in a way that you have the kinds of capabilities you need for conventional conflicts of -- potentially, and also how you can be arranged to deal with the obviously increasing number of asymmetrical and unconventional threats that we face in this world because of the capabilities of our conventional capabilities. I mean, there's not a country in the world that's going to go straight

up against our Army or our Navy or our Air Force. It is -- at the present time, that is not something that you get up in the morning and worry about. On the other hand, we do know that there are a lot of threats and a lot of problems and a lot of dangers and a lot of challenges. And so we have to take those funds and move them around in a way that provides for the kind of consistency and continuity that we need as a nation over this period ahead, but also arrange them so that we can do a better and better job every year in dealing with the kinds of things that were discussed earlier about IEDs and insurgents.

Q What's your top priority, from a budget perspective?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll announce it when the president puts it to the Congress in February, and you'll have a chance to see it.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, what's your best -- or the department's best estimate for the general whereabouts of Osama bin Laden? And will any of the U.S. personnel in Pakistan doing earthquake relief be involved in the hunt for him?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, the earthquake relief is that. Those people, the equipment, the things they're doing, the way they're doing them, the places they're going to are designed to help the Pakistani people who are suffering greatly. Tens of thousands are dead, and many more thousands are homeless. And winter is approaching. And President Musharraf has asked us for assistance; he's asked us for more tents and more medical assistance, understandably, because it's a terrible, terrible tragedy.

With respect to the first part of your question about Osama bin Laden, we don't know.

Q Thank you. At Saturday's two-plus-two meeting with Japanese officials, you released a report that included many compromises on U.S. force realignment in Japan.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Compromises?

Q Yeah.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Is that the word you used? Oh.

Q That's -- I think that's an accurate word.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Interesting.

Q And yesterday, the governor of Okinawa and other local leaders in Japan voiced strong criticism and pledged resistance.

So I'm wondering, is there further flexibility in the U.S. position or is this your final offer?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't think of it as a final offer -- or a not a final offer, either one. It is an arrangement that our two countries, our two governments have entered into. It's done. We have an agreement, we have an understanding. It's in both of our interests.

We're moving numbers of thousands of people off Okinawa towards other places. And we are rearranging ourselves on bases in a way that we're sharing bases more often with the Japanese Defense Forces. These are discussions -- they're significant changes, and they've been under way for -- goodness, I think two years we've been working on them. It ought to come as no surprise that somebody doesn't like them. If you do

anything, somebody's not going to like it in life. And -- but the government of Japan has entered into these arrangements. And you were probably here and saw the announcements by the foreign minister and defense minister, and by Condi and me. I mean, they are what they are. And they're bold, they're new, they're significant. They represent a maturity in that relationship that's healthy and looking forward towards the 21st century.

Q Sir, could I follow on Japan, just briefly? Since your meeting on Saturday, there's been some changes in the Japanese government, including a new Defense minister, Mr. Nukaga. Do you have any comments about working with him as the alliance goes forward? And is there any --

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, I look forward to it. I've sent him a letter today. I've met him previously, and -- mm-hmm.

Q Is there an advantage to having him as a Defense minister as the alliance goes forward, since he was so closely involved with the negotiations on the bases in Okinawa?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I wouldn't want to draw comparisons. (Chuckles.) I don't think that's terribly elegant.

Q Mr. Secretary, can we ask you to just clarify something?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. Let me get some other people here with questions.

Q Mr. Secretary, was --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q -- was this department involved in, aware of, in any way, in the alleged efforts by the Vice President's Office to learn about Mr. Wilson's trip to Africa?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Not to my knowledge, but how could one answer that? I mean, you've got a department of hundreds and thousands of people, millions of people, and you say, "Was this department in any way involved in some allegation?" My goodness gracious. Only a --

Q You never spoke about it with the vice president?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I -- how would I know if I ever spoke about it with the vice president over five years? I don't recall speaking it -- with him about it, and I don't recall the department being involved. Is it possible? I mean, my goodness, that's -- that question is such a -- it's -- what is that game? Fish. Give me all your sevens or something. I mean, that's not for me.

Q Mr. Secretary, one of the implications of the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think he thinks I just fell off a turnip truck.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, the Army is the executive agent for taking care of Guantanamo. How does that -- and you also were saying that the deciding --

SEC. RUMSFELD: For detainees, I said. I didn't say for taking care of Guantanamo. That happens to be

--

Q As far as allowing or not allowing U.N. inspectors to come in and look and see what's going on, what kind of input does the Army, as the executive agent, provide to the government, as you said, who is the one who is --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know. I know that the policy office provided input to that question in the interagency process. If I'm not correct on that --

STAFF (?): That's right, as well as the other elements of the department that are involved in detainee matters. So there's been interagency discussions --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah. It was a full departmental process on detainees. The Army is part of that. And then the policy shop and the Joint Staff provide input to the interagency process on that subject. I happen not to have gone to the meetings that -- where that was discussed. I just don't know about it.

Q Mr. Secretary --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q -- let me finish something I started earlier. One of the implications of John's question --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Who's John?

Q John Hendren over here.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, John -- that John. Okay.

Q Yeah. About the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I was afraid it was the question back here and --

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Laughs.) I'm not surprised.

Yeah.

Q One of the implications of all of these questions right now is that there was somehow -- there are aspersions being cast on the integrity with which this administration went to the war in Iraq. And I wonder if that's anything you'd like to respond to. That's one of things that Colonel Wilkerson was talking about. It's one of the questions that seems to be spiralling out of this whole indictment of Lewis Libby. Is that anything you'd like to talk about --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, what you've got is you've got an indictment pending, and then you have people who are going to have to work their way through those things. And it seems to me that opining on it from the side is not a useful thing to do or a particularly thoughtful thing to do. We know -- anyone who looks at this process knows what it was. The president of the United States made some judgments based on the best advice he received, and he went to the Congress, and the Congress received the same information. He went to the United Nations, and the United Nations had the same information. And he made a decision, and the process, I think, was transparent. And it is what it is, so --

Q But with integrity in the process, was it really the best advice that the president received?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I have just answered your question. I said the president received the best advice that was available in his government and went to the Congress and went to the United Nations. And they all had the same information, and he made a decision. And the people of Iraq are a whale of a lot better off today.

Thank you very much, folks.

Q Can you clarify whether you're profiting from holding stocks that are doing business with the avian flu? There seems to be some allegation that you're personally profiting because of the stock holdings that you have. Can you just set the record straight on that?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I don't know how I could set it any straighter than it is. I think, Larry has passed out the information that describes precisely my circumstance, that I have had a holding for many, many years, and it was a holding that the ethics committee and the Senate committee approved and still do. And we've looked at it and asked ourselves what is the best way to do it and consulted, you know, the Office of Public Ethics and the Senate committee staff and the counsel of the -- at the White House and the counsel here and --

STAFF: Justice Department.

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- Justice Department and hired a security lawyer to look at it. And they've proposed a path whereby I recuse myself from any decisions relating to it, and under the Senate committee rules, it's not a defense contractor.

Q But the stock has gone up.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It started at zero a decade and a half ago. (Laughter.) One would hope so. If people -- if investors put in hundreds of millions of dollars, one would hope that it didn't go down from zero.

Q Did you consider divesting yourself of that stock and then decide not to because that would appear that you were cashing in on it?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I did consider every option and went to all of these people for advice and made -- finally made a decision that it would be a problem were I to sell it in the current situation.

I think you've briefed on this. Haven't you talked to people? Surely we've got a letter that outlines all of this. It's not --

Q We like to hear it from you. We're authoritative that way.

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- it's totally transparent. There's no mystery to it, and -- you like to hear it from me, huh?

Q (Off mike) -- shares on to us, Mr. Secretary. (Laughter.)

Q And do you think the U.S. military would have a role in responding to any avian flu outbreak? (No audible response.)

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