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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

November 20, 2005

Stakeout After Appearance on CBS

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Q: Isn't Iraq already in the middle of a civil war and is the U.S. presence simply exacerbating it and if not, please explain why.

Rumsfeld: No, Iraq is not in the middle of a civil war. There is certainly subterranean strife and that there is no question that Zarqawi's folks are trying to incite civil war. But the behavior by the leadership of the Sunni community, the Kurdish community and the Shia community has been very professional and very responsible.

One can make the case that after decades of Sunni oppression in all elements of the country, that when Saddam Hussein leaves, that suddenly the Shia majority would try to assert their authority over everyone else. They didn't. The leadership in that country, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani, has urged them not to do that type of thing. And the leadership in all the sects has been very constructive. Indeed the Sunnis have understood they live in a [inaudible] until the election. And they have now participated in the constitutional referendum and are participating very energetically in the elections coming up on December 15.

Now, there is a tension that's there. Repression is what held that country together. Filling up mass graves with hundreds of thousands of human beings: that's how that country held together in the Saddam Hussein regime. All of sudden, they're now saying to people... a constitution, a piece of paper is what's going to hold this country together, what's going to protect you from each other. That's an enormous leap of faith and they are making that leap of faith and progress is being made.

Q: Can you tell us why 150,000 of our troops and 200,000 Iraqi Security Forces can't stop the road side bombings and the suicide bombings?

Rumsfeld: The reality is that we have 159,000 at the present time and 212,000 Iraqi Security Forces and other coalition forces that are there. And the fact is that a terrorist can attack at any time, at any place, using any technique and it's physically impossible to defend at every moment of the day or night, at every location, against every conceivable [inaudible] That's why one has to be on the offense, why you have to put pressure on the terrorist networks.

It doesn't take a genius to strap bombs around themselves and blow up a shopping center. It's been going on in the Gaza in Israel for many, many years. Ultimately and over time, the Iraqi people will be able to

completely reduce that insurgency and they will do it because they know that the insurgents are not against the coalition forces, the insurgents are against the Iraqi people; they are against the elected Iraqi government; they are against the constitution of the Iraqis and the Iraqi people are not going to tolerate that over time.