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**Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld**

**October 13, 2005**

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**Secretary Rumsfeld Remarks at Townhall Meeting, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida**

Secretary Rumsfeld Remarks at Townhall Meeting, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Colonel. I appreciate that.

Well there's Dale Dailey sitting over there, so I know we've got some folks from the Special Operations Command. Who's here from that command? Are there very many folks here?

There are some hands. Good.

And I see John Abizaid over here, General Abizaid. It's good to see you and Lance Smith. We have folks from CENTCOM here too, huh? Not many. There are some, all right. Up in the balcony. Good.

Everyone else is from the wing?

[Hooahs and Applause].

Rodeo champions?

[Hooahs and Applause].

That's what the Colonel told me!

We also have someone here who is a broken down ex-Cabinet officer like I am, and he's now the United States Senator from the State of Florida, my friend and my former colleague in the Cabinet Mel Martinez. Mel, would you stand up and say hello?

[Applause].

Well, I am very pleased to be here. We've had some good briefings with General Brown and with General Abizaid. I must say that the work that you folks do is so impressive and so appreciated, and I hope you know that.

The able teams of people here that are some here, some overseas with your wing, some overseas with CENTCOM and with the Special Operations Command are doing a superb job for our country and the American people recognize that. I want you to know that you individually and collectively have my respect and my admiration for what you do.

I value very highly an opportunity to be able to look you in the eye and tell you that because it is heartfelt.

We meet here at a time when the world has seen some terrible natural disasters. We've seen Katrina and Rita along our Gulf Coast. The situation down in Central America and Guatemala is very serious and something that General Abizaid and our Southern Command representing the American people are working very hard to try to assist those folks who have suffered such a terrible tragedy.

We know what's happened in Pakistan and to some extent along the Indian border and the Afghan border. Enormous numbers of people killed and homeless and suffering. General Abizaid and his team have been working with all of us day in and day out in recent days to attempt to see that we can do everything humanly possible to assist those folks in what looks to be one of the worst natural disasters that I've ever heard of, and something that we do not still have really good visibility into in terms of situational awareness on the ground because of the bad weather and the fact that most of the roads and the passes and the bridges have been completely destroyed. We've had very little ability to look at it from the air and make an assessment. But the government of Pakistan is working those problems hard. I talked to President Musharraf last evening and I was interested that he particularly mentioned the fact that Afghanistan is assisting, their neighbor Afghanistan, which is a good thing to see that cooperation. And he made a particular point of mentioning also that along the line of control in Kashmir where there was damage as well, the Indian government and the Pakistan government are cooperating and working well together.

Certainly we're going to do whatever we can to come to the aid of our good friends and allies at this time of their suffering and we extend our sympathy and our prayers to those who have lost loved ones and are struggling to recover.

In the past year our country and other parts of the world have, as I mentioned, suffered a number of natural disasters that have affected millions of people and thousands of communities. If you go back to the tsunami in South Asia and the damage that was done there so recently, to say nothing about the ones I've mentioned. These disasters have caused a great deal of harm and a lot of death and dislocation but they've also shown the truly heartfelt compassion and professionalism of the men and women in the United States military.

General Abizaid joined us in Washington a couple of weeks ago to brief Congress and the American people on the progress that you folks in CENTCOM and Southern Command and the Wing have helped make possible.

If you consider what's been achieved in the Global War on Terror since September 11th, 2001, Iraq and Afghan security forces are taking increasing responsibility for defending their homelands against terrorists. Our global coalition is putting great pressure on the enemy all across the globe, staying on the attack and keeping the terrorists on the run.

Millions of Afghans and Iraqis defied terrorist bombings, intimidation and went ahead and cast their votes for new democratic governments in the case of Afghanistan, in probably the first popularly elected President in 5,000 years. It's an amazing accomplishment, what's taken place there.

And let there be no doubt, the people who agree to run and serve in those posts are under constant threat of assassination, of punishment for them, their families, their friends, their neighbors, and they've shown enormous courage. Anyone who denigrates that courage or suggests that the Iraqi security forces, for the sake of argument, or the Afghan security forces aren't doing a good job I think misunderstands the situation.

The Afghan security forces today are losing people killed in action twice the rate of our coalition. They are out there doing their job. They are out there defending their country. And they are out there doing so at the risk not only of their lives but in some cases at the risk of the lives of their families.

Nonetheless, there seems to be growing confusion and some misunderstanding at least in certain circles about America and about the nature of the Global War on Terror that our country's fighting. Many of you have undoubtedly heard questions asked about why are our forces fighting this war in Afghanistan or in Iraq? How might you answer them?

Well, you can tell those who ask such questions that you and your friends across the world are standing on the front lines to protect them and to safeguard their freedoms as well as your own. And you can tell them something else, that America is not what's wrong with this world. What's wrong with this world are the terrorists, the beheaders, the hostage takers, the assassins. The people our force are fighting every day in a number of locations. They're what's wrong with the world, and our country's finest men and women are out there meeting them every day.

To those that may ask you what's your mission, what is it that you're about? You can tell them it's not to cower behind illusory defenses, that defenses don't work. We need to defend, but the only way to put pressure on the attackers is to go after them where they are, let there be no doubt. Nor is it to wait for danger to return to our shores as it did on September 11th.

Your mission is to be on the offense, it's to go on the attack. That's what our forces are doing. They're engaging the enemies where they live so that they do not attack us where we live.

Some may ask, well what's the goal of this Global War on Terror? What's the goal of the effort in Iraq or Afghanistan? Well, tell them it's victory. Unconditional, unapologetic, and unyielding. And you can tell them one more thing. That we know and we appreciate the cost of war, and it is costly. It's costly in time away from families; it's costly when one visits the wounded in the hospitals in Washington at Bethesda and Walter Reed and elsewhere around the country; it's costly in its pain and the tragedies that war involves; and every loss of life and every injury weighs on our hearts and on the hearts of America.

You confront a deadly enemy today far from America's shores and it's the only means to secure our freedom and peace.

You fight today so that our children and their children might not have to experience the heartbreak of something like September 11th.

And the men and women in uniform -- you and your associates all across the globe -- are displaying resolute courage, the kind of courage that's defined our country through the generations.

I am deeply grateful to you, to all of you, to each of you, to your families because they serve as well. And I thank each of you for what you do.

Now I'd be happy to answer some questions. I will respond to questions. I'll answer the ones I know the answer to and I will heave the ones I don't at General Abizaid or Del Dailey or Lance Smith or -- If you have any on Congress I'll even get Mel Martinez in the act. [Laughter].

Who has a question? Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. Sergeant Afton, Superintendent for the 91st Air Refueling Squadron.

Sir, currently there's a case study being done on the next generation tanker. Is there a timeframe for its completion? And what will be the next step after that completion?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I guess Abizaid's not the right guy. [Laughter]. That Colonel can do it!

The short answer is I don't know. Confession's good for the soul. We have been wrestling with this for what, five years, four years, to my knowledge. My personal view is that we're getting closer, that the Air Mobility Study helped move the ball down somewhat. There obviously are other aspects to the tanker issue. Gordon England, my Deputy, is the one who spends the bulk of the time between the two of us on that subject. It's something that the Congress has had split views on, as you may recall. What we've simply got to do is to, when progress broke down as it did, came to a dead stop, and we were prohibited from going forward, the various studies that were put in place, the independent analyses that were asked for, the assessments that were made have now been coming in and as they have it will require that they be put together, analyzed and then a recommendation made to the Congress and then, as they say, the President proposes and the Congress disposes.

That wasn't a bad answer for something as tough as that.

Question?

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary Major Dave Brown from 6th Air Mobility Wing.

There has been speculation that Iran is sponsoring terrorist insurgency in Iraq to destabilize the Middle East and create doubts about the success of our mission in Iraq. The terrorists predict that as we lose more soldiers in Iraq we will lose hope and want to pull out of the area. In return we would be less likely to commit forces against Iran, giving them the opportunity to move forward on their nuclear objectives.

If Iran is found to be supporting the insurgency, how likely is it that we will act and what actions would we take if the UN Security Council opposes action in Iran?

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Colonel, where did you find that fellow? [Laughter]. He's got about six hypothetical questions all linked together there and interacting in a semi-violent way. [Laughter].

Let me say this about that. Number one, it does appear to the world, certainly to the European countries that have been working with Iran or trying to work with Iran, that Iran is on a path towards the development of a nuclear capability. Much to the distress of the IAEA and the European countries that have been attempting to have them move in a different direction.

Second, it is true that we have found weaponry from Iran of recent vintage in Iraq recently. The weapons didn't just walk in there, they were brought in. With what degree of complicity or lack of complicity with the government is something that one can't know with certainty at this stage, but there is a clear concern about the fact that weaponry is coming out of Iran.

Third, there are certainly Iranian intelligence agents in Iraq attempting to affect the nature of the playing field there. The Iraqis are going through a tough time. If you think about it they had the Governing Council, then they had the Interim Government, now the Transitional Government. They're going to have an election -- They had an election to create this government, then they're going to have a referendum on the constitution in four days, and then they will have an election under the new constitution, presuming it passes, December 15th, and if it doesn't pass they will have an election to create a new assembly to create a new constitution on December

15th -- But I do think it will pass.

So the Iraq situation is a difficult one. Democracy is difficult. A lot of politics, a lot of pulling and hauling and arguing and discussing and trying to persuade each other as to what the constitution ought to look like and how they ought to establish their federal system. And if you read our history you know that's exactly what we went through -- big arguments over the power of the states versus the central government and the roles of different elements and aspects of our society. That's what they're doing and it's a tough business. Therefore, they're vulnerable.

And to the extent their neighbors misbehave, as has been the case of Syria and Iran, it's harmful and it creates an uneven playing field as they try to affect it.

What one can be absolutely certain of is that the Iranians do not want a flourishing democracy in Iraq. Their system is to have a handful of clerics control everything that goes on in that country and regulate the role of women and regulate the behavior of everybody and that is not what democracy's about. So clearly they're going to what they can do -- they're trying to do what they can do to prevent a successful democracy in Iraq.

What we are -- You're right. Terrorists have said exactly what you said they've said. The terrorists have announced that they believe that because of their watching the United States over a period of a decade and what we did after various terrorist attacks against our country, that we don't have the stamina, we don't have the staying power, we don't have the will to sustain an effort over a long period of time, and that therefore the battle is not on the ground out there. We're not going to lose any skirmishes, we're not going to lose any battles. We're certainly not going to lose the war in Iraq or Afghanistan or in the world. The only place you could lose the war would be here because it is a test of wills and that is precisely what Osama bin Laden has said. It's precisely what Zawahiri has said. It's precisely what Zarkawi has said. And their goal is not to win. Their goal is to outlast us and the coalition and the rest of the world and the people who believe in freedom and the people who believe that women should have a role in the world, and the people who believe that people ought to be able to get up in the morning and say what they want and go where they want and be what they want and not have their lives regulated and controlled by a handful of people.

I think they're wrong, those folks. I say that. I've been around long enough to watch the rise of communism and the fall of communism, and the rise of fascism and the fall of fascism. If you think of the Cold War. The Cold War was a test of wills. It was not something that was one, two or three years and ended with a surrender on a Battleship Missouri. It's something that required successive governments in multiple free nations, governments of both political parties over time, to be able to sustain an effort that was a sufficiently strong deterrent to dissuade the kinds of aggression that the Soviet empire aspired to, whether in Latin America or Africa or Eastern Europe or Western Europe. And because of that staying power over decades, the forces of freedom prevailed.

So without getting into some of the aspects of your question that I don't want you to think that I didn't know that I'm not getting into them, because I do know that I'm not getting into them -- [Laughter] -- let me say that we're on the side of history and history's on the side of freedom, and that's the side to be on.

Question?

Up in the balcony. I've never seen such a docile group. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Sir, Captain Bikes from the 6th Comptroller Squadron.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Captain, you look terrific up there. I hope someone gets a photo and gives it to you. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: You should look down and say I suppose you're all wondering why I've asked you to come here today. [Laughter]. Then you should launch out in a 40 minute foreign policy address.

QUESTION: Well, sir. Since you mention it -- [Laughter].

No actually, my question is simple. As we move towards a leaner and more --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I don't like it when he says that. Then if I can't answer it -- [Laughter]. First he describes how simple it is for me to answer it and then he asks it. That's not right! [Laughter].

QUESTION: As we move towards a more agile and leaner force do you have any career advice or guidance for military members that are serving in support career fields or support arenas that will be reduced or eliminated as we go through transformation?

[Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: First of all, giving career advice to someone I don't know very well is a risky thing to do and it varies from discipline to discipline, it varies from service to service, and it varies from circumstance to circumstance. What I would do is say this.

The implication of your question seemed to be that transformation would lead to a diminished need for combat support and combat service support. Is that the thrust of it?

QUESTION: Yes, sir.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I don't know that that's true. In fact I would guess it's not true.

Right now, if you think about it, one of the things that General Abizaid, General Casey, General Patreaus and now General Dempsey with respect to the Iraqi Security Forces, they've got a lot of shooters they've been putting out there and they don't have the enablers. They don't have the combat support, they don't have the combat service support, and so they're frantically trying to train these people up so that they've got a total package and the ability to go out and do that which they've been trained to do and sustain it for some reasonable period of time. I can't imagine the armed forces of the United States without those kinds of enablers and without that kind of support.

So whoever is whispering in your ear that kind of thing, I would get a second opinion. Other than mine.

Thank you.

Question?

Uh oh, it's written down. That really scares me. [Laughter].

QUESTION: It is short, sir.

Mr. Secretary, my name's Captain Sean Dell from the -- Excuse me. Major Sean Dell from the 6th Communication Squadron. [Laughter]. I just pinned on last week, you'll have to excuse me.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Congratulations.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

Sir, the question concerns our current force strength. The Air Force has been restructuring its enlisted and officer personnel to meet congressionally required end strength numbers while our Guard and Reserve forces are increasingly called upon to meet wartime requirements. Sir, I'd like to hear your thoughts on these seemingly divergent goals, and as a follow-up, do you foresee any non-voluntary cross-service force shaping initiatives in the future like our current voluntary blue to green initiative, sir?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: First, I think that at least during the present period the premise of your question was not accurate. You indicated that the Air Force was paring down to meet congressionally established end strength requirements, as I recall. The Congress does impose end strength requirements, which is a bad idea. They shouldn't. What happens is the Army goes up during the year and then has to come down at the end of the year to meet the end strength requirement without an emergency, when there's no emergency. And the Navy's been doing just the opposite. They don't need as many people as the end strength is so they've been dropping down below it and then having to come up to it. It's a ridiculous circumstance that we have that imposed on us as a department. We ought to be able to manage the end strength in a way that fits the circumstance of the year and the situation and the service.

So it is not the congressionally mandated end strengths because we have the ability during a national emergency to go above them or below them or do whatever we want, and that is what we're doing. We're well above, for example, the Army end strength.

The Air Force, the reason they came down was not because of those end strength numbers. They came down because they made choices as to where they wanted to put their money and they got -- I could be wrong, maybe you remember Jim, but something like 19,000 above, 11 or 19,000 I've forgotten which, above where they wanted to be and had to pull down. Not to meet the Congress' end strength thing because it's irrelevant when there's a national emergency, but because they needed the money and they needed the money for something else and they didn't want it where it was in the people piece of it and they needed to reshape the way they were doing their business.

You're quite right, we're doing a lot of, I think, very healthy, good cross-service assignments of people. The Air Force and the Navy have been pitching in with military police, with drivers for various types of equipment, with taking responsibilities for various things. I think the Navy took over down in Djibouti, if I'm not mistaken. They're going to. And they're stepping forward and recognizing that at the present time the stress is on the ground forces, and so to the extent they've got people who can do those kinds of things they've been -- Admiral Mullen and General Moseley have both been quite forthcoming in seeing that those are offered up.

We are currently doing rebalancing within services. That is to say getting skill sets within the active force the way they should be in the Army, for example. Fewer artillery and more of things that are currently needed. We're also doing rebalancing between the active component and the reserve component within a service.

To my knowledge we have not yet gone to the point of doing cross-service rebalancing, although it's the kind of thing that gets done without being ordered or mandated. They look at their circumstance, each service, and then as part of the budget process come in and individually they do it, and then it's look at at a cross-service basis rather than going in from the top and saying on a cross-service basis you ought to do this. So it's just the opposite.

Question.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Spencer, USSOCOM.

Do you think it is better for DoD for the Marine Corps to be formally integrated into SOCOM or

interoperable with SOCOM, sir?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Thank you for asking. [Laughter].

It has been clear to me for four years that our enemies are not stupid. They're smart. They've got brains. They adapt. They're unlikely to attack our great Army or our great Navy or our great Air Force frontally, conventionally, symmetrically. They are every likely to do what they've been doing and that's to try to find ways to attack us and harm us and tire us by every conceivable kind of unconventional, asymmetrical effort.

The Special Forces Command clearly has a capability that is needed in this circumstance that we're in, and it's needed in numbers and sizes and capabilities greater than we had in 2001 prior to September 11th.

I started asking questions and one of the arguments was that the pool is small to draw the Special Forces from. It turns out they were drawing some folks from the Air Force to do what Air Force does; they were drawing some folks from the Navy to do what the Navy SEALs do; and they were not drawing people from the Marine Corps. I asked the stupid question, why is that? Well, I think it was basically the Marine Corps didn't want to do that. They wanted to do what they do and they did not want that pool of people to be used for that function.

I allowed as how I thought that maybe that was maybe fine before but not so good now, and got folks meeting a little bit and talking about it. What we ended up with is a couple of things which I favor but I don't know that it's gone as far as I'd like it to go. I can assure you it's not gone as fast as I'd like it to go because I am genetically impatient. [Laughter].

The first thing I said was I found out that Special Forces were training the people in Georgia and they were providing protection for the top people in a couple of countries that we were involved with. I said I can understand that, you've reached out to people who do it well and you know they do it well, they like to do it, so you ask them to do it. But I said the Army can do that just as well, so can the Marines. They know how to train the Georgia people, train and equip; and they know how to do some protection for various people, they do it all the time. I said if the challenges for the Special Forces people are so great, why don't we have them do those things that they do distinctively different from other people and drop some of those other things that other forces are perfectly capable of doing and have those forces take on those responsibilities during this period when you see that kind of stress on the Special Operators.

That's the first thing we did and we're doing that. We've pushed it. It's hard but we've pushed it and there are a lot of things that normally would have just flowed to the Special Operators that today are going to the Marines and the Army and other services.

The second thing I said was I want the Marines involved. And they have negotiated out, painfully, forever it's taken. I will be 85 before it's finished, I'm afraid. But they have negotiated out everything except who pays and they've got a role for the Marines where the Marines would be chopped -- elements of Marines would be chopped, as I recall, to the Special Forces people on occasion for assignments and go through a training process that would enable them to be both what you said -- interoperable to be sure, but integrated on order. That's where it stands at the moment.

I just found out today that the last linchpin in getting it done is money, and I made a note and I think I'll figure it out when I get back to Washington.

Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Question?

QUESTION: Sir, Captain John Duvall. I'm an augment to CENTCOM from Okinawa, 3 MEF.

A question, sir. This --

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: What's that mean? You were stationed in Okinawa and you were brought back here to augment the CENTCOM headquarters?

QUESTION: Yes, sir. For temporary assignment.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I'll be darn. How long is temporary?

QUESTION: Seven months, sir.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Good.

QUESTION: Just started.

Sir, this war is going to be won on the battlefields of intelligence. We need actionable intelligence to defeat this insurgency. In the wake of September 11th the intelligence community, especially at the national level, has been reshaped. I wanted to get your opinion, sir, on how that reshaping is going, and is it working? Thank you.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's a critically important question. No one ought to tear down what is unless you've got something better. You're right, the intelligence piece of this war is absolutely critical. It is going to be central to our success.

We had what we had and people looked at it and decided to make a bunch of adjustments, Congress did, and it happened. Now we've got new people in new structures, trying to figure out how we ought to shape that clay that's still soft, and to do it in a manner that we don't tear out what exists, the linkages and the connectors, until we know what we're going to substitute in their place. We've got very good people involved. We've got John Negroponte is the Director of National Intelligence, the new one. He's a thoughtful person. He's dealt with this issue during his long career in the Foreign Service. His Deputy is Mike Hayden who is a four star general, came out of the National Security Agency.

We have been -- Porter Goss is the new Director at CIA and his Deputy is a three star Navy SEAL, Burt Callens who's an enormously talented person.

What we've been doing is very aggressively giving them people from the Department of Defense to fill all of these open positions they have with these new organizations. Instead of sending them the one you don't want yourself, we're sending them people that we consider to be among the best. And the reason we are is because if you think about it, you've got a new piece of legislation, it's got definitions that nobody knows what they mean yet because they haven't got the flesh and bones around them. What's operational strategic planning mean? Or strategic operational planning, I forget which it is. But it's in the law. So somebody's going to have to figure out what that means and how it works and how it connects to the National Security Council.

So we've been sending over to work in those entities, intelligence entities, some very, very capable people off the Joint Staff, from other activities in the department, because at 7:00 o'clock at night when people put their feet up and they say what do we do about this tomorrow? We've got this set of problems. I want to make sure we've got military people who are operators -- not necessarily just intelligence people, but operators who know what they need out there in those meetings when they're sitting there having a cup of coffee at 7:00 at night and saying let's try this or try that. I want somebody in the room who has that background because we are the

major user of intelligence, the Department of Defense, and people are getting killed out there for the want of it.

So I think it's coming. You say how's it going. I don't know how it will end up, but at the moment I think it's coming. I think there are a lot of good people, they're sensitive, they're trying to do it right, there's an appropriate degree of caution about tearing things apart before they've got a way to knit it together, and I feel good about it. I feel that given where we are -- we've got the law, we've got these structures, and now what we've got to do is see that that clay gets shaped in a way that is in the best interests of the United States of America.

Of course -- I walk at this thing, I say to myself you don't want one source of intelligence. If anything, it's like research and development. You do not want a single research and development mechanism where everyone goes to lunch with each other and they all think the same things and they're all the same generation. You need to have a variety of views if you're going to get creativity and innovation. The same thing is true with intelligence. You don't want one source of information. You want multiple sources of information. You want to use open source information. You want to have people who are willing to look at all of that and think about it in different ways.

So my hope is when this all shakes out we'll have an improved intelligence capability.

You ask yourself, what is national intelligence? What is operational or tactical or military intelligence? The exact same piece of information can be all three. It can be of interest at the strategic national level to a President, but it can also be that which enables you to go, particularly in the kind of Global War on Terror we're in, it can enable you to go in and hit at the center of gravity of the enemy you're attacking.

So this is a big deal, what's going on in the intelligence world. We constantly need better intelligence. I hear it every day. We've got very good people at least at the upper levels which is where the changes were made. There were not a lot of changes down below yet.

We've got very good people who I think are sensitive to the risks and trying to do what's best for the country. I wish them well.

Question?

There you are. Hi.

QUESTION: Hi, Mr. Secretary. I'm Staff Sergeant Rennen Heart from 6th Dental Squadron, 6th Medical Group.

With the ever-increasing cohesiveness between our branches of service and the ever-increasing policies that are similar between all our branches of medical service, do you foresee the possibility of a Joint Forces Medical Command versus the separate medical services that we have today?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I always promise myself I won't blurt out an answer from a pinnacle of near-perfect ignorance. [Laughter]. Then occasionally I fail and I do it anyway.

I had occasion this week to go out to the Veterans Administration for a meeting of the Cabinet. And I looked at the system they have for medical records for everybody who's been brought into the Veterans Administration system. And it's electronic. The man sat there with his mouse moving it around and this fellow -- he was older than I was, and he managed that thing, he was fully digital, he was moving it around. He pulled up all the x-rays this person's ever had, all the medicines they get, everything's bar coded so that it's all connected to something else. And I go to a Navy hospital at Bethesda or Walter Reed and they're walking around getting a hernia carrying a written record that thick and they don't even have the x-rays or the MRIs or the CAT scans or anything in there and it would take them a half hour or an hour just to find something. I can't imagine why we

aren't joint. I can't imagine why we don't do a better job in terms of training and systematizing this.

There isn't any reason somebody who goes -- everyone who gets wounded over in Iraq or Afghanistan, if they're Navy or Marine they go to Bethesda unless they've got a need for a prosthetic of some kind and Walter Reed is the best for that, and they end up getting transferred over there. I'll bet you their systems don't even talk to each other. You can't pull up an x-ray at Walter Reed from anybody at Bethesda. It's crazy! It's inexcusable. Why don't you get it fixed! You're in that business! [Laughter and Applause].

QUESTION: Thank you.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Just kidding. [Laughter].

Yes, sir? The Colonel's going to give me a hook here so make this a good one.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I'm Captain Michael Horsey augmenting CENTCOM J4 from Headquarters Air Combat Command at Langley Air Force Base.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: What does this augmenting mean? I get the feeling that General Abizaid has a big headquarters and then he adds to it with augmentees? [Laughter].

QUESTION: I just go where I'm told to go.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: That's correct. I got it. Okay.

QUESTION: Sir, I don't have my question scripted, so I hope this comes out right.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Just wing it. You know this is the last one.

QUESTION: All right, sir, I'll try.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Unless I don't like it in which case I'll go for a better one after. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Sir, you alluded to earlier, we are in a sense fighting against guerrillas over in Iraq and a goal of guerrilla warfare is to outlast your enemy specifically until public support turns against you.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Yep.

QUESTION: A big key to that is our media and our media relations and how we portray what we're doing in Iraq with our American public.

As you talked about earlier, we're doing great things there. Things that some of the population there probably never believed would have occurred, yet it seems like every night on CNN, on Headline New, whatever, we see one Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine killed and then a biography of that person killed and nothing going on further to discuss what the operation was, what resulted from that action, and that maybe 15 to 20 insurgents were killed or captured, and that that in turn would have led to even more freedoms for the people. It seems like we take that first step to portray the negative and not the positive. And I've even myself had people ask me, aren't we just sitting ducks there being killed for nothing? I try to go on and explain no, we're doing great things there, and try and tell them the things that I know.

My question is, sir, what, in a sense of like even an information warfare stance, how do you view our media relations with what's going on in Iraq, and what efforts are being made to try to get the media to help out in this war at home to maintain our public support?

[Applause].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Promote him. [Laughter].

QUESTION: Sir, [inaudible]. [Laughter].

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, you heard the response. I think all of us who know what's going on in Iraq and Afghanistan and other parts of this globe and the courage and the dedication and the success that's being achieved and the accomplishments that have been made recognize that in five or ten or fifteen years people here in this room, and your friends and colleagues are going to be able to look back and be just enormously proud of the accomplishment that's been achieved.

One asks, why is it that the public impression is so different from the reality? You asked about public affairs and information operations and letting people know the truth. I guess one of the advantages we have is that there are e-mails today and the people over there are e-mailing back constantly, and there's a growing number of people -- 140,000 people over there in Iraq and 19,000 in Afghanistan. They're sending back constantly e-mails that are in direct conflict with what's being presented in the aggregate in the United States and in the rest of the world.

So think of our American people are seeing and hearing on a daily basis the truth -- a balance of what's happening as opposed to an imbalance that they're receiving through normal channels.

I say that's an advantage. That's never been the case before, but I do think it's an advantage. If you believe democracy works, and I do. I'm absolutely convinced that as Winston Churchill said, it's the worst form of government except for every other that's ever been tried. It isn't perfect, but the others are so much worse. If that's true, if democracy is the best by definition and it means that people, citizens with imperfect information, given sufficient information over time find their way to the right decisions on big issues. And they do.

The other thing they do is, if they constantly see something that they begin to learn wasn't the case, not a single fact because nobody's perfect, but in the aggregate if they're getting one impression from traditional channels and they're getting another impression from the people who are on the ground, they then will begin having a lesser opinion of the people that are getting the impression that they have concluded is not correct. And to the extent they get a poorer impression of those people and what they do, they will end up believing them less, they will have less credibility, and over time it sorts out.

So either you believe our system works and that people given sufficient information do find their way to right decisions. And you made the phrase, any effort to get the media to help. We don't. The media certainly is not going to help. You can't enlist them in the cause of trying to present only one side. We have to present the side we see and we have to do it aggressively, and you ought to be able to go out and talk to people and tell them what you know, what you believe in your heart.

But the media's not going to be enlisted to help. They're going to keep doing what they do in whatever way they do it. A lot of them do it very well, some of them do it less well. Some of them are always on one foot, and some kind of walk on both legs. But I believe that over time -- First of all I recognize that the center of gravity of this war is in the United States and it is in the homes and capitals and the cities and towns of our coalition countries, and that the point that was made that the terrorists and the people, the enemies of freedom are determined to outlast us and they're determined to make the price too high and the cost too great and the time too long for free people, and I don't believe they're going to win. I think history believes, shows, teaches that freedom over time will prevail and that's the side we're on.

So I think what we have to do is to recognize that we are in a test of wills and we have to keep getting up

every single day and recognizing that and doing what we believe is right and saying what we believe is right and letting the people who are out across the ocean in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere know how much we appreciate what they're doing and help spread the message here.

Thank you, folks. I appreciate it.

[Applause].