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

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**News Briefing with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld**

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SEC. RUMSFELD: All right! Good afternoon.

I have at my right General George Casey, the commander of the Multinational Forces in Iraq. As you know, General Abizaid and General Casey are in town for meetings with the president, the National Security Council, with those of us here at the Pentagon, and for the combatant commanders conferences, which take place next week.

At the president's request, they have briefed Congress -- House and the Senate -- on the situation in Iraq and on the larger war on terror. The briefings over the past couple of days were an opportunity for the world to see the democratic process at work as elected representatives of the American people were able to ask our military leaders probing questions in a very public process. Time was spent assessing the progress of the coalition strategy and plans in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I thought it might be useful to also take a moment to look at the situation from the opposite perspective; to consider how al Qaeda leaders might assess the progress being made by the terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq. If they were called to account for the state of their strategy in those countries, consider what might be asked of them.

For example, they might be asked why they failed to stop millions of Afghans and Iraqis from voting in free and relatively orderly elections. Or how is it that the Iraqi Sunnis, who are supposedly the natural allies of the insurgents, have chosen, albeit belatedly, to energetically embrace the political process, registering in large numbers. Or why the terrorists failed to prevent nearly 200,000 and some 75,000 Afghans -- 200,000 Iraqis and some 75,000 Afghans -- I think it's technically 194,000 Iraqis -- from joining the Afghan and Iraqi security forces, despite their very best efforts at intimidation to prevent them from joining those forces. Or why the vast majority of Afghans and Iraqis have rejected the terrorists' twisted ideology and, instead, are supporting efforts to build new societies. Or how terrorists expect to succeed militarily when they cannot rely on sanctuaries in places like Fallujah or Najaf or Tall Afar to plan operations and to train recruits.

These would be awkward questions for them to answer, indeed, because by every one of those measurements, the enemy is losing. Though the transition of Afghan [sic] and Iraq from tyranny to democracy has been and remains violent, we know the importance of seeing this effort through, and we're seeing the progress that has come with patience, the patience, the adaptability, the resilience and the grit of our armed forces.

Consider four years ago these two countries were among a handful of regimes in the world that were labeled as terrorist sponsors, regimes that had the viciousness and the capability to support terrorism and inflict damage on our country. And today these two countries are joining a growing list of free nations that are fighting terrorism. And millions of their neighbors have taken notice of the reforms that are under way in these rising and predominantly Muslim democracies. These are important achievements.

And General Casey has been an important part of the progress in Iraq, and I welcome him here. And thank you, George, for your superb service to our country. We appreciate it.

GEN. CASEY: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Good afternoon. I'll just make a short statement here and then we'll take your questions with the secretary.

As we approach the referendum on the Iraqi constitution and elections for a government based on that constitution, the Iraqi people are locked in a struggle between tyranny and democracy. They're fighting for their future against the remnants of the regime that tyrannized them for the past three decades and against elements of a global terrorist network who seek to establish Iraq as a base from which they can export terror throughout the region and across the globe. I'm convinced that with our support, the Iraqis and the Iraqi people will prevail in this struggle.

We have crafted a strategy for success in Iraq based on historical lessons, established counterinsurgency principles and the realities on the ground in Iraq. And this strategy will enable the Iraqis to take charge of their future. To be sure, the next months will be difficult, as our enemies also recognize what's at stake. They are already challenging the referendum process with increased terror attacks to create the impression that attempts at progress are futile and that Iraq can never become a modern democratic society. They are attacking the will of the Iraqi people and they are attacking the will of our coalition publics.

They are failing in Iraq. Across Iraq, 98 percent of the eligible Iraqis have registered to participate in the referendum and election processes. Better than 90 percent of the Iraqis have stated their intent to vote. And most importantly, as the secretary noted, Sunni Arabs who boycotted the election in January remain committed to participating in the referendum and the election. This is a significant step forward from the boycott that took place in January.

On the military side, coalition forces and Iraqi security forces continue to pressure terrorists and insurgents across Iraq. And Iraqi security forces are progressing and continuing to take a more prominent role in defending their country.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. In May, Iraqi security forces conducted about 160 combined or independent operations at the company level and above, so about 100 people as company level, and about 160 operations. In September, that was over 1,300, and then our transition teams that we have put with the Iraqi security forces have greatly enhanced their development and their ability to operate with us. We are at the point now where 80 percent of all of the company-level and higher operations that are done are combined operations with the Iraqi or Iraqi independent operations -- big step forward.

Additionally, we expect to have 60[000] to 70,000 more Iraqi security forces available for referendum security than we had in January, and by the time of the elections, we expect to have about 100,000 more Iraqi security forces available to protect those elections than we had in January. So as a result, for example, I only had to ask for an additional 2,000 coalition troops to protect the referendum and election process this year vice 12,000 in January.

Another example, in the recent success in Tall Afar, Iraqi security forces outnumbered coalition forces for the first time in a major operation. A year ago that division didn't exist. We've also had good success militarily against the al Qaeda network killing and capturing over 20 of their key leaders since July and including the recent death of a key Zarqawi lieutenant, Abu Azzam.

We and our Iraqi security force colleagues remain postured to provide security for the referendum and the election, and while I expect the insurgents to pull out all the stops to disrupt the process, they will not stop the political process from going forward.

We're in a tough fight in Iraq, but our country has been in tough fights before to advance the cause of democracy and to protect our way of life. We should not be afraid of this one. We and the Iraqi people will prevail in this battle of wills if we don't lose ours. We continue to make progress every day in Iraq. Some days the steps we take are smaller than others, but we are more relentless in our progress than those who are trying to disrupt it. We have a strategy and a plan for success in Iraq, and we are broadly on track in achieving our goals. Make no mistake about it, it's hard work, it's a challenging environment, but we have the best of America and coalition countries, military and civilian, committed to defeating terrorism and tyranny in Iraq, so that we can all live safer.

And I would like to express a special thanks to the families of all our service members serving not only in Iraq, but around the globe. They're just doing an absolutely magnificent job in defeating terrorism around the world.

Success here in Iraq will require patience and will, but both the region and the country, our country, will be safer when Iraq succeeds.

Thank you.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Charlie?

Q: General, you and General Abizaid and the secretary, and others, have said that in large measure, our ability to pull American troops out of Iraq will depend on progress in training the Iraqi forces. You've just given a large number of figures there. But you said yesterday that only one Iraqi battalion, army battalion now, instead of the three previously stated, are able now to operate alone without U.S. military help. And yet you say that's not a setback to U.S. hopes to leave Iraq.

Would you explain that? How is that not a setback, sir?

GEN. CASEY: Charlie, think about what you're saying; two battalions out of a hundred. One thing. Second, let me explain here the different levels and why we set them up like we did.

First of all, we purposely set a very high standard for the first level, because as we looked at our strategy, we said that whatever happens with the Iraqi security forces, when we leave them, we have to leave them at a level where they can sustain the counterinsurgency effort with progressively less support from us. So that first one is a very, very high standard. We set that standard knowing full well that it was going to be a long time before all Iraqi units got in that category. And so the fact that there's only one or three units, that is not necessarily important to me right now. Next year at this time, I'll be much more concerned about it. Right now

I'm not.

Second thing, level two. And this is -- this, for us right now is the most important level, because we purposely adopted a level that would allow us to measure their capability to take the lead in conducting counterinsurgency operations, with our support, with our transition teams and enablers. And again, while these numbers are classified, the numbers of units in level two have doubled since May. So that's where we should be focusing our attention at this point.

Level three are those units that are not quite at level two, but they are also in the fight with us. And I think you've heard that said; over 75 percent of these Iraqi units are out there with us in the fight every day. They're just -- some are leading; some are operating with us. Okay?

So, you asked me, is it a setback, and I say no, it's not a setback. I mean, unit readiness is going to fluctuate. And it is such a small number, and at this stage I'm not concerned about small numbers in level one.

Q: General, can you --

Q: How quickly -- do you expect other units to quickly move from stage two to stage one? Or do you think that will be a long time?

GEN. CASEY: I think it will be a while. I think before we see much movement from two to one, it's going to be a couple of months. But I think you're going to see, and we are seeing, monthly movement from three to two.

Q: General --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You know, this is -- just a minute. This is -- there are an awful lot of people chasing the wrong rabbit here, it seems to me. And let me put up this chart; it's illustrative. I don't want you to write anything --

Q: The reason I ask is much was made of this on the Hill yesterday --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I understand. And I -- that's my point. I think folks are chasing the wrong rabbit.

If you look here -- and I suppose I'm partly at fault here, because I was asked: Well, how are you doing with the Iraqi security forces? So I said to these people in the region, why don't you give us some numbers of what you have? And if you think about it, back there in January of '03, we started trying to gather the information as to what they had -- actually before that; it was down in here. And we got up there in April of '04 and we looked at some of the things that were in that number, and we said, you know, there's about 50[000] or 70,000 site-protection people in there that aren't part of the Ministry of Interior or Defense; we don't have good visibility into them. They kind of operate separately. Let's take them out. So that's why we dropped them out.

Then we said, you know what's important, it's not just how many you have out there, setting aside the 70,000 site protection people. So the number comes down to there. All the time we're sending out assessment teams. Eikenberry went out. Who else went out? Somebody else?

Q: Luck, Gary Luck.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Gary Luck went out.

Then we said let's see how many of them are trained up to the standard that's appropriate for their function -- police, army, special police commando, border patrol -- whatever it is. So then we got a number and

we started tracking that.

And then we said well, what's really important is training and equipping. So let's knock that number down. And so people, well the numbers have moved around, and it looks like we're getting worse. We're not getting worse, we're getting better. Every single day the Iraqi security forces are getting bigger and better, and better trained, and better equipped, and more experienced.

If I wanted to, today I could go up there and say, you know, what's important -- this number doesn't say how long they've been out there. Some of them are green as grass; they just arrived out from boot camp and they're out there, they're in the number. They're trained and equipped, but they just arrived. Why don't we say trained, equipped and six months experience? We could drop that number down some more, if we wanted to.

We could keep doing this. What's important is -- the central fact is that the one and three are irrelevant. What's important is that every day the number of Iraqi security forces are getting bigger, and they're getting better, and they're getting more experienced. And General Casey can tell you they are doing more. They are literally out there -- I don't know if the number's still right, but at one point we thought that they were doing about -- that U.S. was doing about 80 percent of the patrols and the activity, and the Iraqi security forces about 20 [percent]. And today it's probably roughly reversed, that the Iraqi -- independent and Iraqi combined are probably 80 percent, and maybe 20 percent are U.S.-coalition only.

Now if you think --

GEN. CASEY: Company level and above.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Company level and above.

GEN. CASEY: Company level and above.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Now if you think about it, we started embedding what, six months ago.

GEN. CASEY: In February, yeah.

SEC. RUMSFELD: February. That is to say, we're putting U.S. into the Iraqi people. As we did that, we learned a lot. We started seeing a lot of information and -- that was critically important, and as I've always said -- I must have said it 10 times down here -- the numbers are interesting, but the soft stuff, the things you can't quantify, are as important or more important.

And what are they? What's the relationship between these Iraqi security forces and the intelligence community? What's the relationship between the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police in a given area? How strong is the rib cage of that organization, the noncommissioned officers and the junior officers? What's the morale? What's the leadership? How strong is the ministry, and how effective is that chain of command?

Now those are things you don't quantify. Those are things you begin to learn and see if you have people embedded, and then you can make real-time changes. You can say they need this equipment, or they need better leadership, or this is weak, or that's strong, or they don't have a linkage with the intelligence information.

So those -- the idea that the country could get fixated on one and three battalions out of a hundred is really unfortunate, because it totally misses what's important and the big picture.

(Cross talk.) Just a second! Just a minute! Just a minute! Just a minute! Just a minute!

He knows so much more about this than I do. I just want to make sure -- did I say anything that's even

close to not quite right? (Laughter.)

GEN. CASEY: No --

SEC. RUMSFELD: No --

GEN. CASEY: No, sir. I clarified the one point I wanted make sure you were straight on --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah --

Q: There's still one point that's a little confusing, and it gets right to the point that you're talking about. You've described how you keep raising --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Are you going to chase that wrong rabbit again?

Q: You keep raising -- I just want to make sure we've nailed down, so everybody precisely understands what the facts are here. You've described how you keep raising the bar, and therefore the number goes down. But it's a function of raising the bar, as opposed to going back. That's what you've described here. And perhaps you could just clarify, because I listened to your testimony yesterday, and I still wasn't clear on this. The reason that you went from one -- from three to one -- was that because the standards were raised, or was there an actual degradation in that -- in those two battalions that no longer were in one?

GEN. CASEY: Oh, the specific units.

Q: Because there seems to be a lot of confusion -- created the perception that --

GEN. CASEY: Okay, I understand. I understand what you're saying.

Q: You're going to kill the rabbit.

GEN. CASEY: Remember we started this in May. Okay? We didn't have a readiness assessment reporting on the Iraqis until May. So the first one we did, we said, all right, let's get it out there and let's have people try it. We knew it was going to take several iterations for everyone to understand the standards properly and to report accurately. So the very first one came back and we got three. There were three in there. And we looked at that, and we answered their questions from the field, and we adjusted the standards and things so it was all more understandable, and then they came back and it was one. And it was actually different units. The three that were there was one brigade and two battalions. They dropped out, and the second time it was different units.

Q: Category two is an important number. What is that number? Maybe we would chase that rabbit if you threw it out there for us.

GEN. CASEY: The numbers are classified, but I --

Q: But why is the number "one" not classified, then?

GEN. CASEY: Because unfortunately it got out and was -- (laughter) -- in the media.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We send classified and unclassified up to the Hill, and then we get asked questions off of both.

Q: We still don't know what happened to these two battalions.

Q: Right. Yeah, why did they --

Q: I mean, just very simply if you could explain what happened to the -- where did they go? What happened?

GEN. CASEY: I don't know the specifics of what happened to each of the battalions. But when we were assessing these guys, you're assessing manning, you're assessing training, you're assessing leadership, you're assessing equipment. So you're looking at all those different categories. Now, maybe one of the battalion commanders was relieved and the transition team with him decided that the unit needed a little more training because of that. I don't know the specifics. But that's what happens with all readiness reports. If you follow our readiness reporting --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Same thing.

Q: -- you'll find that unit readiness goes from C2 to 1 to 2 to 3. I mean, it fluctuates based on a lot of different factors that we're measuring.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The important fact is what I said, and that is that every day, every week, every month, the Iraqi security forces are larger, they're better equipped, they're better trained and they're more experienced. And that is the central fact.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you said that it was irrelevant as to whether it was three or one. But isn't it relevant the number eventually that need to be able to operate independently before U.S. troops can leave, or is that not connected?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The --

GEN. CASEY: (Off-mike) -- at it?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Sure, go ahead.

GEN. CASEY: I tried to explain this yesterday a couple times, because the congressmen and senators had the same question. There is not a specific number out there of Iraqi units that have to be capable before we start reducing coalition forces. What I tried to explain is that condition-based reductions in coalition forces is part of our overall counterinsurgency strategy and it will take place in varying places around the country as these Iraqi units -- brigades, primarily -- take over pieces of Iraq. So we're not saying we have to get to a hundred level ones before we can start reducing U.S. troops. That's not the plan.

Q: But that's one of the conditions that need to be met -- the conditions-based; isn't that one of the conditions, that the Iraqis have the capability?

GEN. CASEY: In that local area.

SEC. RUMSFELD: In one area.

GEN. CASEY: In one area. Okay.

Q: Okay.

SEC. RUMSFELD: You know, I mentioned yesterday in one of the hearings, think of our NATO allies; think of our other alliance partners. We often are the country that has to provide some element, some enabler to

make the mixture of that work. And that's what we're doing with the Iraqis. Why would we hold the Iraqis to a higher standard than we're holding other people?

Q: You want to leave Iraq eventually, right?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well sure. And they're going to get better every day, every month, just as they are now.

Q: Mr. Secretary, may I ask General Casey a question? I'm not chasing rabbits here.

General, you backpedaled somewhat from your statement when the secretary was in your backyard some months ago, about when a substantial number of U.S. troops could possibly withdraw. But it seems to me that an equally important question than what we're discussing now is how long will U.S. forces be needed in Iraq embedded with Iraqi units? You said yesterday that it was important to have the embedding continue.

GEN. CASEY: Yeah, I can't put a timeline on that --

Q: Months? Years?

GEN. CASEY: It's, I think, a couple of years for sure. And it will all be based on their progression.

Can I go back to backpedaling?

Everybody -- as I said yesterday, any time you make --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You don't have to take his bait! (Laughter.)

Q: I learned from you, Mr. Secretary! (Laughter.)

GEN. CASEY: Any time you make predictions, you make it based on assumptions. And I said there were two critical assumptions that would drive that process: That the political process continued satisfactorily and the development of the security forces continued.

Now, this constitution has come out, and it didn't come out as a national compact that we thought it was going to be, and there's a little division there. It's not a bad constitution, but there's a little divisiveness because of that, and that caused the situation to change just a little bit.

But as I said just a second ago, condition-based reductions of coalition forces is still very much a part of our overall counterinsurgency strategy. And I was asked yesterday on the Hill, did I expect that to happen in '06, and I said yeah, I do.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let's go back to the embedding question, Ivan.

One size doesn't fit all. We may end up, at the request of the new Iraqi government, of having some embeds in their Ministry of Defense for some period of time. That does not mean you would have embeds in a platoon or a company or even a battalion. You know, you just -- you don't know. You see how it evolves. And the visibility we've gotten -- our folks have gotten into their circumstance so that we could rapidly fix their -- help them get better equipment, help them get better leadership, and help them connect with each other better, has made an enormous difference in their effectiveness.

Yes?

Q: Mr. Secretary, that kind of dovetails into my question. General, you both -- you and General Abizaid both talked about this yesterday. He testified that: "We are not yet organized to the extent that we need to be to fight this enemy with coordinated and synchronized international and interagency action."

How is it that the U.S. government, after all this time that the war has been going on, hasn't been able to sort of get together and shake this out? And what do you think needs to be done to reorganize the international interagency effort?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I'll give you one example. We have legislation pending up on the Hill with respect to the -- and both the State Department and the Department of Defense are working together to try to get the approval -- to do a better job of training and equipping other countries' militaries and to strengthen partnership capacities, so that we can pass some of the load to other countries and do less ourselves. And that's the kind of thing that it just takes time for Congress to go through it and discuss it. We've tried it for three years. It took -- I don't know -- what, 18 months to get approval to get an assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense? About that, I think. It takes -- it just takes some time.

And first of all, you have to figure out what makes sense, and then you have to persuade people in the Congress that that makes sense and work your way through it.

Q: Why is it that you have to go in and take over the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior? Why is it that we're at the point where everybody has to say, "Well, the Department of Defense is the only agency that can handle this hurricane?" What's going on here?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I think one of the things is that other departments tend not to have people who sign up with a willingness to be deployed anywhere in the world, at any moment of the day or night, and put themselves in danger. And the very best people volunteer to do it. And other departments and agencies tend to be domestic departments or they have rules and procedures, and it just takes time for those things to adjust and change.

But the international effort, if you think about it, we went into Afghanistan in a matter of days, very few weeks, less than a handful of weeks. And NATO now is in there. But it didn't happen fast. It took some time. And now they've taken over in the north, they've taken over in the west, they're going to move into the south. They were in Kabul to start with.

And it just -- the reality is that in our world today, there are very few countries that have the ability to move fast and to do something important.

And if you think of Haiti, where we had to work to get the kind of -- put together a group of countries to go into Haiti -- think of Liberia. We had to work there, do some facilitating and assisting to get the ECOWAS, it was, I believe, that followed in and helped out there. That's no big surprise. That's -- the United Nations, for example, takes months and months and months to pay the people in Haiti. When I was traveling in Latin America recently, a couple of countries were quite concerned that their troops hadn't been paid by the U.N. for that.

So the more -- you need international support and cooperation, and it takes time to get it. And we just have to figure out ways that we can help other people do a better job to assist in some of these kinds that exist in the world.

Bret?

Q: A question for General Casey. You opened up and said the enemy is attacking the will of the Iraqi people and attacking the will of the American people. They are failing in Iraq. Are you suggesting that the enemy, with these spectacular attacks, is somehow successfully chipping away at the will of the American

people?

GEN. CASEY: What do you think?

Q: It's not my question to answer – (laughter)

GEN. CASEY: It is your question. But look, you guys read the polls just like I do. And this is a terror campaign, and they are trying to create the impression that we and the Iraqis cannot succeed in Iraq. And what do you think? Is it having an impression back here at home, the levels of violence? I think it is.

SEC. RUMSFELD: There's no question but what the general says is correct, that they have a media committee, multiple media committees, the terrorists do. They know what they're doing. They're focusing on public opinion in the United States. They're trying to do things that are dramatic and affect that. And they're looking for allies and ways that they can get the echo chamber going. They work closely with Middle East networks and arrange to have cooperative arrangements with them.

No, I mean, they can't win a battle, they can't win a war out in the field. The only place they can win is in a test of wills, if people say the cost is too high and the time is too long.

(Cross talk.)

Q: Yesterday you were asked numerous times about the border area and whether you were going to use this Tall Afar model, go in, put Iraqi forces to hold it. Do you have enough forces to go in, capture something, and then hold it with Iraqi forces?

GEN. CASEY: We do. In the last several months, for example, out west, there have been five -- five -- Iraqi brigades, and we've also put about a brigade's worth of coalition forces out there. So yeah, we do have enough force. And I get that question all the time. And what I --

SEC. RUMSFELD: These are Iraqi brigades doing these things! I mean, it takes the one and three business and sticks it over there off to the side. And he's got Iraqi brigades out doing things. Important things.

Now, what I'd like to suggest, we'll take a few more questions, but I'd like to take them from people who haven't had a chance to ask one. (Cross talk.) Just a minute. Just a minute.

GEN. CASEY: I'd like to do one --

SEC. RUMSFELD: And we'd like to have only one question per person from those that haven't had a chance to ask yet.

GEN. CASEY: Can I finish up this?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Sure.

GEN. CASEY: You mentioned the Tall Afar model. I think that's a good example. Three Iraqi brigades and a third Iraqi infantry division went in Tall Afar with one of our brigades. Urban fighting. I mean, the toughest type of combat. And these Iraqi units were right there with our guys. And what happens is more and more we're seeing them -- and General Vines told me this morning -- in about half the cases now our guys are providing the outer cordon, and it's the Iraqis that are going inside; frankly, because they're much more effective in understanding what it is they're seeing there. But that's kind of the Tall Afar model. And none of those brigades that went in there were level one. They were level two and three. And so I'm trying to give you some sense of the capabilities of these guys.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let me clean up something I said. You said I used the word irrelevant for the one and three. I shouldn't have. Its relevance is minimal compared to the relevance of the things I've been saying. It's not irrelevant or else we wouldn't have put up these categories. And over time, it will have some relevance. And I just wouldn't want any of you to go out and use that word because it wouldn't be right, it would be wrong.

Q: Mr. Secretary, how -- or I'm sorry, General Casey, how is it that Zarqawi and al Qaeda in Iraq has replaced the insurgency as the most immediate threat, according to your own intelligence officer now in Iraq?

GEN. CASEY: If you look at the levels of violence that they are responsible for in Iraq and the number of Iraqi casualties that they are producing, and their attempts to foment sectarian violence -- I mean, you saw Balad yesterday, Hillah today, the 14 September attacks -- I mean, those were day laborers; guys standing in line to try to get a job for their families, and they crashed in there. The declaration of war against the Shi'a. They are the ones that are threatening not only our border in Iraq, but they are the ones that also, I believe, are generating the car bombs and the high casualties that are affecting our coalition publics.

And so, as we looked at this, we said we need to defeat these guys in the next six to 12 months, restore Iraqi control over the borders, keep them from bringing in the suicide bombers and the foreign fighters, so that after these elections the Iraqis have the opportunity to deal with the former regime elements, which are still a threat and probably generate numerically more attacks over the course of the day; but they're not effective attacks, not the things that are producing mass casualties. But they also are the ones that can be brought into the political process. Al Qaeda in Iraq is not ever going to enter the political process in Iraq. They've got to be defeated, and they will be.

Q: One question --

GEN. CASEY: If I can just finish up on one thing.

This has also given us an opportunity -- the 14th of September attacks and the declaration of war against the Shi'a -- because the Iraqis spoke out against that and they are becoming clearer and clearer that they don't want Zarqawi in Iraq. And Iraq's not going to be safe until all Iraqis stop protecting terrorists.

Q: A question for General Casey. Sir, yesterday you and the secretary --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Last question.

Q: Thank you. You and the secretary both took a letter from Senator Warner about concerns from news organizations about media safety in Iraq. I wanted to ask both of you to lay out your assessment of the safety situation for journalists working in Iraq; the recent stated accidental shootings, the detention of journalists. And just very fundamentally, what is, if any, the responsibility of military forces in Iraq to assure journalists' safety, simply because it's an issue on the table now. What's your thinking? What are you going to do with the letter you got?

GEN. CASEY: What I told Senator Warner, one, that I would respond to the author of the letter as soon as I get back. And then I was going to bring some local folks in, some representatives of the press, of the media, in Baghdad and talk to them about what their concerns are and what we can do about it. As you know, this is a very difficult environment, and people that get out and get close to the combat often put themselves at risk.

SEC. RUMSFELD: People who are embedded less so.

GEN. CASEY: Right. And we encourage folks to take advantage of embedding with our folks.

The other thing, I think, is there is an element -- and I'm not saying this applies everywhere -- but some of the local hires of some of the local media organizations do their agencies a disservice because they've got links to insurgents and terrorists organizations. We have not found that rampantly, but we know it's true in a few cases.

Q: General Casey, can you clarify --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm afraid I've got to go.

Q: Can I just very quickly --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm afraid not. We agreed on one question, and I think we should go. It's been wonderful to see you all.

Q: What about --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

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