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

**March 7,
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DoD News Briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Pace

SEC. RUMSFELD: Come on in, folks. Good morning.

Last week I had the privilege of visiting the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum in Independence, Missouri. The purpose was to pay tribute to the first U.S. president of the Cold War era and to consider what lessons might be drawn from that important period in our history.

The era we find ourselves in today is -- has a great many differences from the Cold War, to be sure, but these two eras also have some instructive similarities. Both were and are fundamentally ideological conflicts. In both, success required bolstering the capabilities of partner nations. And above all, both required perseverance by the American people and by their leadership.

So, too, today the key to success will be perseverance. In Iraq, the terrorists are obviously trying to ignite a civil war to divide that country and to demoralize the coalition that's helping them along the path towards self-government. The desire to foment civil strife was behind last month's bombing of the golden dome shrine. It has been and remains a time of testing for the Iraqi people, but the Iraqis are meeting that test thus far successfully, I would say, and defying the seeming rush to -- by some here and abroad -- to proclaim exactly what the terrorists seek, namely a civil war.

It's instructive to take note of several things that have happened in Iraq since the bombing of the shrine that must be disappointing to those who seek a civil war.

First, the Iraqi security forces have taken the lead in controlling the situation. Coalition forces assisted in a supporting role, according to General Casey.

And second, the Iraqi government leaders took a number of key steps that have had a calming effect in the situation. They imposed a curfew, and the leaders of most of the major parties have stepped forward to publicly urge restraint on all parties.

From what I've seen thus far, much of the reporting in the U.S. and abroad has exaggerated the situation, according to General Casey. The number of attacks on mosques, as he pointed out, had been exaggerated. The number of Iraqi deaths had been exaggerated. The behavior of the Iraqi security forces had been mischaracterized in some instances. And I guess that is to say nothing of the apparently inaccurate and

harmful reports of U.S. military conduct in connection with a bus filled with passengers in Iraq.

Interestingly, all of the exaggerations seem to be on one side. It isn't as though there simply have been a series of random errors on both sides of issues. On the contrary, the steady stream of errors all seem to be of a nature to inflame the situation and to give heart to the terrorists and to discourage those who hope for success in Iraq.

And then I notice today that there's been a public opinion poll reporting that the readers of these exaggerations believe Iraq is in a civil war -- a majority do, which I suppose is little wonder that the reports we've seen have had that effect on the American people.

General Casey has reported that overall levels of violence have not increased substantially as a result of the Golden Dome bombing. To be sure, violence continues to slow Iraq's progress. That's a fact, and we know that. In the coming months Iraqis will face difficult obstacles in controlling illegal militias, and we know that. They're working to try to strengthen their ministries, and we're trying to help them. And their efforts to fashion a unity government that will represent all elements of their society is clearly being delayed by the situation in Iraq. Nonetheless, the leadership being shown by the Iraqi security forces, by the Iraqi government officials in the wake of these attacks against the shrine has to be seen as encouraging, despite the apparent unwillingness of some to accept it.

Nearly 56 years ago, in 1950, the Truman administration issued what would become a framework for America's Cold War strategy for four decades. In a formerly classified document called NSC 68, the Truman administration said, quote, "Our fundamental purpose is more likely to be defeated from lack of will to maintain it than from any mistakes we may make or assault we may undergo because of asserting that will," unquote. Today our nation is again in a long struggle. And again, the toughest challenge will be to maintain our national will to persevere and to prevail.

General Pace.

GEN. PACE: Thank you, Sir.

Today was a landmark day for the Iraqi air force. They stood up a(n) operational C-130 squadron, co-located at the Baghdad International Airport; three C-130 transport aircraft, about 270 personnel. This culminates over a year of training and mentoring, and the stand up of the squadron is good for the country and good for their armed forces.

Your questions, please.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Charlie.

Q Mr. Secretary, I'd like to clear up exactly what you're saying here. Are you saying that this poll and that what you call the rush toward declaring civil war in Iraq, is that the result of intentional misreporting of the situation there?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I can't go into people's minds. All I'm doing is reporting on what we've seen. General Casey pointed out to this group here that he believes -- his data shows that the numbers of mosque attacks and the nature of the attacks and the severity of the attacks have been considerably exaggerated and that the number of civilian Iraqis that have been killed or wounded has been exaggerated.

And -- now, why someone or whoever did this, I have no way to judge. I'm not going to judge them. It's just a fact that he is saying that, and I believe he's correct.

Q But you said, Sir, that -- I believe that the reporting was virtually one-sided. Does that mean --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah, the interesting thing about it is they all seem to be of a kind. All the things that have later been corrected or need to be corrected or that he believes were exaggerated all seem to be on one side of the equation. We don't see the similar thing on the other side, which you normally would get in some kind of a random spread, one would think.

Q Well, do you believe that the media's been duped by the situation or doesn't understand it or what?

SEC. RUMSFELD: All I'm doing is reporting. I'm just reporting the facts. (Laughter.) The facts are as I've stated them.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: You'll have to draw your own conclusions about it.

But -- yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, about three months ago, when you were in Iraq, you announced that there would be some reduction in troop levels -- U.S. troop levels in Iraq this year. Have those been fully implemented? And has the sectarian strife of recent weeks dimmed the prospects for additional cuts this year?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We were at 160(,000). I said we were going to go down to 138(,000), which had been the baseline -- 37(,00) 38(,000) -- and that then there would be two brigades that would be not sent in, as I recall, is what I said some months ago.

The numbers have gone down today below the 138(,000) to, I think, 132(,000) --

GEN. PACE: That's correct, sir -- 132(,000) today.

SEC. RUMSFELD: A hundred and thirty-two thousand today. So some portion of it has happened.

Of course, there is always a lot of moving parts. We're also adding some people simultaneously to do various things. We're embedding some people with police. We are going to -- various other things change. So it's in process, I think, would be the way to phrase it.

(Cross talk.)

Q But what about the prospects for additional cuts in light of recent events?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know. It's the kind of thing where we'll let this settle down, and we see where we are. And it may or it may not.

Q But we've been told one of those brigades will be going in as trainers, not as combat troops. But --

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Off mike) -- said, we're adding some people to train and equip and to embed with the police.

Q Right.

SEC. RUMSFELD: And the same time, we're taking other people out. So there's -- it's constantly moving. We're now below the 138(,000).

Q And those two brigades would not be going in. What I'm saying is, we've been told that one of those two brigades will be going in, or the bulk of that brigade.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, you can get that from the office staff.

GEN. PACE: May I -- I may be able to help you with that. And that is that the brigade itself will not be going in as a brigade. Some of the leadership, the captains and majors and lieutenant colonels, who are the types of individuals you need for the transition teams to assist the Iraqis, can in fact go in and serve.

Q Are you holding up to two-thirds of that brigade? Is that --

GEN. PACE: We can get you the numbers on that.

Q Mr. Secretary --

GEN. PACE: But it's not going to be the major --

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's not going in, in the format it was, for the purpose it was.

Q But it's still going in?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, it's not. Some portion --

GEN. PACE: We'll get you those numbers.

Q Mr. Secretary, could I go back a little bit to what Charlie was asking about? And I wanted to get -- to make sure we're on the same page here. When you say it was one-sided, is this -- are you --

Q I didn't use that --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think it -- on the one -- most --

Q Well, on one side --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Most of the things that General Casey mentioned were of a kind --

Q Right.

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- on one side of the issue, not randomly spread.

Q And when you say one side, is that the Western press? Is that Al-Jazeera and comparable press? Do you feel it's a campaign of disinformation here that's taking place? Are you planning to counter that campaign even more than you are now?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, we're obviously not successful at all if we're trying to counter it. We -- because -- (chuckles) -- that would be like trying to stop the tide. It's not possible.

The -- we do know, of course, that al Qaeda has media committees. We do know that they teach people exactly how to try to manipulate the media. They do this regularly. We see the intelligence that reports on their meetings and -- now, I can't take a string and tie it to a news report and then trace it back to an al Qaeda media committee meeting.

I'm not able to do that at all. We do know that their goal is to try to break the will -- that they consider the center of gravity of this not to be in Iraq -- because they know they can't win a battle out there -- they consider it to be in Washington, D.C., and in London, in the capitals of the Western world.

Q Are you talking about the Western press or are you talking about the Western press AND the Arabic language press or --

SEC. RUMSFELD: The bus incident was on the Al-Jazeera, as I recall. It was reported on Al-Jazeera. And the others -- you see the same things I see. You can be the judge.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, you seem to be saying that reports of the potential for a civil war in Iraq as a result of the attack on the Golden Dome -- we're exaggerating it.

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, I was just quoting General Casey, and that is not quite the way it was.

Q Okay. Do you believe --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You were here probably and heard his briefing.

Q Right. Do you believe that the reports of the potential for civil war were overstated?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I -- it's not for me to judge that.

The -- I do not believe they're in a civil war today. There's always been a potential for civil war. That country was held together through an oppressive regime that put hundreds of thousands of human beings into mass graves. It was held together not by a constitution, not by a piece of paper, not by respect for your fellow citizens of different religious faiths, but it was held together through force and viciousness, and that's gone. And the natural, historical differences that have existed in that community still exist, and they're being reflected and manifested in one way or another.

Q If I may --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Fortunately, a lot of it's being manifested in the political debate, which is a good thing. Here they are, they're arguing and debating and pulling and tugging about who should be this and who should do that job, and that's basically a very healthy thing.

Q But if I may, Ambassador Khalilzad told the Los Angeles Times that he believes -- I'm quoting here -- "The potential is there now for sectarian violence to become a full-blown civil war, and that Iraq is really vulnerable at this time."

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, he's there. He's an expert, and he said what he said. I happen to not have read it, but I certainly am not going to try to disagree with it.

There's always been a potential for that. We've -- I mean, that's something that people have talked about from the beginning.

Q Well, Ambassador Khalilzad also said that the toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003, in his words, "Opened the Pandora's box of ethnic and sectarian violence." What do you make of that?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I haven't seen the full text of it, but clearly if you take away a repressive regime that puts -- slaps people in jail, kills them, fills graves with hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens, uses chemicals on their own people, and you stop doing that, and you say to them, "Folks, a constitution, a piece of paper is going to be what's going to hold this place together" -- that is an enormous step.

And the fact that the Iraqi security forces, particularly the MOD forces, have held together and provided security during this period, the fact that the leaders of all sects have stood up and said, "Hey! Wait a minute!

Caution! Behave! Don't engage in sectarian violence, don't engage in retaliation," that's been a, I think, a fairly significant thing that's worth mentioning, which is why I thought I'd mention it.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, what would a civil war look like? And General Pace, what are the signs you're monitoring there that, in your eyes, haven't come to pass, but if they come to pass, would indicate a civil war? What are -- what are some of the signs that we haven't seen yet?

GEN. PACE: Well, what you have seen is the Iraqi armed forces and the Iraqi police are loyal to the central government. They have been on the streets protecting the Iraqi people. The police have gone to the mosques and protected the mosques. You're seeing all the things you would want to see to preclude the kind of things that would lead to civil war.

It -- the Iraqi people -- Sunni, Shi'a, Kurds -- have walked up to the possibility. I believe they've looked into the abyss and have said, "This is not where we want to go. We want to have calm, we want to have a peaceful future." And the Iraqi armed forces and the Iraqi police are performing extremely well in providing the security for their government to make the right kinds of decisions that they are.

Q (Off mike) -- look like? Would it be Iraqi police not -- just standing off on the sidelines letting militias pass through their lines? What would chaos and civil war actually look like to the public?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Why don't you ask the other question: what would it look like if there's not chaos and civil war? And that's kind of -- kind of what people have been describing. If you have on the one hand the Iraqi security forces succeeding, that's good. The back side of that would be they wouldn't be. They would disappear, or they would fall apart, or they would engage in sectarian violence themselves, or they'd refuse to obey, or something like that.

The leadership -- you want to know the other -- you want to know the worst, obviously. What would it look like, what would be terrible for the people -- the political leaders and the government figures to do exactly the opposite of what they're doing, and that is to stand up and say, "By golly, we're not going to take this. They bombed one of our mosques; let's go bomb their mosque." And they said just the opposite. I know it's -- it's amazing to think that. But that's what's happened.

Q So the level of -- so the level of violence and attacks should not be seen as a barometer of civil war, the intensity or the duration or quantity of attacks. That's -- that's one thing -- you don't think that's a valid barometer, whether it's --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know that I'd commented on that. But I did happen to just look at that list, the -- that barometer of attacks. What --

(To General Pace.) Do you want to describe it?

GEN. PACE: If you take it from a year ago to now, month-to-month, January to January, February to February, the attacks now are down compared to last year. However, if you look at the last month or two, the attacks have been up a little bit, but of a -- not of a magnitude that indicates a significant change. To answer your question, the attacks are terrorist attacks on the infrastructure and the leadership of the country.

They had a division -- Iraqi division commander who was assassinated yesterday. Our hearts go out to his family. Here's a man who believed in the future of his country and stands up and takes command of a division, and those who do not want the Iraqi people to be free gun him down. That's the kind of violence you're seeing. It's not -- it's not the other kind.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, I want to ask about the U.S.-India agreement last week. What impact could have this agreement on Iran and on its relation with China? And my second question, if you don't mind --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I -- I do. I'm going to leave that for the Department of State. That was handled through the Department of State and the White House, and they're the appropriate people to respond to that.

Q Okay. My -- okay, my second question, what about the visit of the Egyptian MOD -- minister of Defense -- today to the Pentagon?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think it is today. He is --

Q Yes.

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- here. Yes, indeed. Yes. And I'm looking forward to it. He's a gentleman that I've met over a long period of time -- many years, and he comes here periodically, just as I go there periodically. And I --

Q Any discussion regarding the military cooperation between the U.S. and --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm sure we will. We always discuss military-to- military relations with Egypt and with our other friends and allies.

Pam?

Q I have two questions about the long war, and both of them sort of come up in your opening statement. You in late January circulated a memo that Newt Gingrich wrote sort of listing what he thinks need to be the changes that the country needs to make in order to fight and win the long war. You asked for responses --

SEC. RUMSFELD: When was this?

Q January 30th.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh.

Q You asked for responses back from it, and they should have been due in last week. And I was wondering if there are any specific things that came out of that that you are thinking of including in the QDR planning documents, which was the purpose of the -

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah, I haven't seen the responses.

Q Well, you'd better get on it. They were due March 3rd. The -- (laughter).

General Pace, you're on the list. (Laughter.)

GEN. PACE: I'm sure when I get -- I'm sure my responses will be just right. (Light laughter.)

Q Sir, the second question then, if you'll take it, is, listening to one of the pillars of your plans in fighting the long war is helping government to stand up their own forces against terrorist forces and to keep areas from becoming ungoverned that terrorists could then use.

During the Cold War, the United States pursued a similar policy, and it ended up having some benefits and also some disadvantages, including in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden was one of the recipients of some of the U.S. aid and standing up Afghan forces against the Soviet Union.

I don't see an alternative to the plan that you guys are pursuing. But I'm wondering what you're doing to mitigate the long-term possibilities of something like that happening, and then in the short term trying to help governments fight terrorism, while in the long term not creating our future enemies or not training them.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's always a risk. You've got to --

Q Are you doing anything to mitigate it? How are you thinking about it?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know how many countries in the world, but -- 180, 90, something like that, and you reach out and see a situation. In no instance is it perfect, and you end up making a judgment that you want to be helpful to a country for good reason. And then, you can look five years later, and the circumstance could change in that country, particularly if it's a democratic country or if there's a coup, and different people take charge. We've seen that where some MANPADS have ended up in the hands of the wrong people, and we've had to find programs to go out and try to purchase them back and find ways to avoid having them used against us.

So I guess you have to, you know, deal with the world and make best judgments, successive administrations do that, and generally, I would say, given the past record, the country -- our country's been pretty successful at it in the last 50 to 60 years with periodic potholes in the road, as you suggest.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q I'm not actually sure whether this issue has come to attention of either of you gentlemen yet. But are either of you broadly aware of these hate groups that have been showing up at military funerals across the Midwest, and if you have any reaction to it yet or any view about the impact these people are having on military families trying to bury their dead.

GEN. PACE: Yeah, I've heard about this. And here you have a family that has lost a loved one. That loved one has served his or country to the best of their ability, and we're trying to render proper honors and respect to them. And while the family is in probably the height of its mourning period, any entity, any group, any individual who would try to use that solemn event for some other purpose I think is really wrong.

Q Mr. Secretary, you've said that this political force training to form a new government is a good thing, even though it's delaying --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Politicking.

Q -- yeah -- even though it's delaying things a bit forming the Iraqi government.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I don't think the politicking is being delayed by this. I think that the attack on the Golden Dome shrine is delaying it -- has delayed it and the difficulties that that posed.

Q And you've also said that it's clear the terrorists are trying to provoke civil war.

Do you think the longer the Iraqis take to actually form this government leaves them more vulnerable to pushing them over some cliff towards that civil war?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know, but I don't think so. I mean, I can't give evidence as to why I say I don't think so. I think that these things go in bursts, and the burst has passed. And it's been handled pretty well, and there'll be another burst at some point down the road simply because that's the nature of that part of the world and the situation. It's a tough, tough situation.

On the other hand, I -- my guess is that General Pace is correct; that if you have those political leaders who have put their lives at risk to run for office and to be put in a position of vulnerability -- we saw the general was -- the Iraqi general was killed, targeted for assassination.

Others have been targeted for assassination. And they've shown the courage to do that and they've shown the capability to do it, and God bless them for it.

It's their country. They're going to have to run that country. And they are fully -- they have to be fully aware that if this does not work, they and all of the people who have supported them lose everything, if this turned into a civil war. And they can't want that. They want just the opposite, and they've demonstrated the courage to show that they want just the opposite.

And my impression is that they will sort through this and fashion a government of some sort. And I hope that it's a government that is not simply reflective of all elements in the country, but even more is -- in addition to that is agreed to govern from the center, and to see that all the ministries are fair to all elements in that country,

and to see that they end up with a platform or a program that is going to move that country forward rather than simply dividing up the political spoils, as happens from time to time in our country and other countries as well.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, the vice president just addressed the issue of Iran and said, quote, "We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon." He said if Iran remains on its current course, it will face "meaningful consequences."

So my question to you is, first, do we have the ability to keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon? And what are those "meaningful consequences"? Could they be military?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I have not read the full text of that. The president and the vice president and the secretary of State have all spoken on this issue. It's -- I am not going to get into details of anything relating to that.

I will say this about Iran. They are currently putting people into Iraq to do things that are harmful to the future of Iraq. And we know it, and it is something that they, I think, will look back on as having been an error in judgment.

Q Why is that?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I've said all I have to say.

Q But which -- which people?

Q What kind of people do you --

Q Yeah, which people? What kind of people?

SEC. RUMSFELD: They're putting Iranian Quds Force-type people into the country.

Q What kind of force? I'm sorry.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The Quds Force. The Revolutionary Guard types.

Q Well, are we talking about for actual violence or for political purposes?

SEC. RUMSFELD: To the extent we find that -- I don't think we could consider them religious pilgrims.

Q Are you seeing weapons, Iranian-backed weapons, coming into Iraq, sir? Are U.S. forces engaging these Iranian elements?

Do you consider them to be enemy forces, red forces, essentially? What do you see happening here?

GEN. PACE: There have been some IEDs and some weapons that we believe are traceable back to Iran.

Q Well, there was one shipment that was -- (off mike) -- last year that you have talked about. Are you seeing more recent shipments of Iranian -- of weapons you believe manufactured in Iran and shipped across the border?

GEN. PACE: The most recent reports have to do with individuals crossing the border into Iraq.

Q Do you believe it's backed by the government, or are they individual elements not backed by the central government?

GEN. PACE: I do not know.

Q Roughly how many, general? Any idea?

GEN. PACE: I do have an idea. I cannot tell you that number.

Q Have you seen a steady increase?

GEN. PACE: It's hard to answer that question because we get periodic reports and I don't know what that snapshot in time is, whether it's the only thing that has happened or the one that we happen to catch. So I should not answer that because I don't know the spectrum.

Q Are there more coming? Are there --

SEC. RUMSFELD: In a country the size of California with a population of 28 million people and porous borders with Iranian pilgrims going back and forth all the time, it's not an easy thing to make those kinds of good judgments.

Q Is this a threat to Iraq's security?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think that the Iraqi Shi'a are Iraqis, myself. I think that they're not going to be enamored of having help from across their border. So it is clearly a problem. Is it a threat to their security? I mean, I don't know. Is it possible some more Iraqi civilians will be killed? Sure.

Q Do you think this is backed by the central government in Iran? What's your --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, of course. The Revolutionary Guard doesn't go milling around willy-nilly, one would think.

Q Is there any way you can shore up the borders more, particularly --

SEC. RUMSFELD: We don't have evidence of that, but it just clearly -- pardon me?

Q Any way you can shore up the borders more, with more troops or surveillance or --

GEN. PACE: We're working with the Iraqi government to enhance the capacity, the total numbers dedicated to border control, and also their capacity.

Q Has the Iranian border become more of a problem than the Syrian border?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't want to compare them. They're both problems.

Yes?

Q I'd like to ask about the realignment in Japan.

SEC. RUMSFELD: About the what?

Q Base realignment in Japan.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Mm-hmm.

Q In this month, a final report will be released in this month with the Japan government, but in Japan there is still local protest feeling even now, and it seems to me very difficult to get an agreement with the local community. And in this situation how do you look at this situation?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, you know, if you've got millions of people in a country, there are always going to be different views. That's the way it is, and you expect that. That's what democracy's about. And therefore, the government will make a decision. And the government has made a decision -- of Japan. And there will be people who will agree with it and people who don't agree with it. And that's -- life goes on.

Q So you mean if Japan government -- Japanese government couldn't get an agreement with the local people, you can get a final report in this month?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm not going to get into that. First of all, it's not our final report, it's a final report, and it's something that we've negotiated out with the government of Japan. The government of Japan is very supportive and comfortable, and then they work with their local communities to sort things out, the details, and then they'll come back to us and life will go on. Not to worry. It will be fine. It will all work out.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, the German government seems to be in trouble because of a contribution, just before the war started, of two intelligence agents. Were you at that time aware that they were there -- (i.e., the members, at the time, of ?) "old Europe" -- and --

SEC. RUMSFELD: First of all, I wasn't. I'm not aware. I wasn't aware then. I'm not knowledgeable today. And the government that was involved during that period is not the government that's currently in, which makes me wonder why you say the current government's in trouble.

Q Because part of the old government are part of the new government.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Uh-huh. Well --

Q But anyway, was the contribution --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'll bet they survive it.

Q Probably. But was the contribution substantial or not --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I said I don't know.

Q You don't know.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I wasn't aware then, and I'm not now. It's something that I guess the German government's looking into. I just don't know.

Yes?

Q Are you reconsidering your opinion about the Germans? Been looking back? (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, there's a newly formed commission on the Reserve and Guard -- formed and kind of announced them -- their creation, and signaled --

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll make this the last question, so make it a good one.

Q -- sure -- (scattered laughter) -- signaled a hope that NORTHCOM could have an expanded role in the light of a natural disaster and other incidents. I was wondering if you generally support an --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You say a commission was formed that expressed that the first day they were formed?

Q They expressed -- they signaled a hope for that down the road.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Is that right? Yeah, I haven't seen that signal. It's hard for me to believe --

Q It is not --

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's hard for me --

Q They haven't made their formal recommendation --

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's hard for me that a commission that's just been formed --

Q Right.

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- could be opining on their conclusions before they've met.

Q Would you generally support an expanded role for NORTHCOM in that regard?

SEC. RUMSFELD: First of all, I wouldn't characterize it that way -- NORTHCOM. I mean, the -- it's -- the issue isn't NORTHCOM versus the National Guard, active versus Reserve or something like that. The issue that was posed in the lessons learned report that went to the president and to all of us was a(n) issue that was sent to me and Secretary Chertoff. And we were asked to come back to them with any recommendation we might have as to that question, that very question. And we have not gone back, nor have we had a meeting. And unlike others, I would prefer to have a meeting before characterizing an answer.

Q What's the mission of these Quds forces, Mr. Secretary? Is it intelligence? Training? Fomenting violence?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Don't know. Don't know. It's certainly not to be in support of a -- of placing on their border a country that's democratic and notably unlike the regime in Iran.

Thank you, folks.

Q Thank you.

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