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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Edmund Giambastiani Jr.

**May 9,
2006**

DoD News Briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld and Adm. Giambastiani from the Pentagon

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good afternoon.

It appears that the process of assembling Iraq's new Cabinet is now in the final stages, which is a welcomed development after some months of difficult negotiations. I was encouraged by reports on the comments of the prime minister designate, Mr. Maliki, in his press conference earlier today, in particular his statement that the government being formed will represent all Iraqis and strengthen the unity of the country.

Secretary Rice and I, of course, met with Mr. Maliki and some of the Iraqi-elected leaders very recently. They seem to recognize that they have a window of opportunity to make headway on the serious challenges that their nation faces.

Since being liberated three years ago, Iraq has been governed by a series of temporary arrangements: a governing council, first, under the coalition provisional authority, and an appointed sovereign government, and then an elected interim government. These were necessary arrangements, but nonetheless, temporary. The establishment of this new permanent government under their constitution that was overwhelmingly ratified by the Iraqi people, I think, is a significant step forward.

Our enemies recognize that Iraq is the current front in the global war on terror, even if some observers and pundits don't. Osama bin Laden recently said of the United States: Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all their wars.

And let there be no doubt, while the priorities of the extremists are currently focused on Iraq, their ambitions do not end there, especially if the free world were to lose its will just as the Iraqi people have begun to chart a hopeful new course.

These positive recent developments make it all the more important that Congress pass the president's supplemental request for operations in the war on terror. Delay puts critical accounts -- in particular, operations and maintenance and training accounts -- at risk as the military services are forced to try to move needed funds around from other parts of their budget. The Army and Marine Corps have already been forced to defer contract obligations due to impending budget shortfalls.

In addition, cuts and delays in providing funds for the Iraqi security forces will delay what has been truly

significant progress in turning over greater responsibility and territory to Iraq's army and police. A slowdown in training and equipping the Iraqi security forces will have unacceptable harmful effects of postponing the day when our men and women in uniform can return home with the honor and appreciation they deserve.

Finally, the addition by Congress of non-requested, non-emergency related items in the supplemental legislation would have the effect of forcing tradeoffs in the support for our troops in the field. Our nation's defense should not become a bill-payer for other parts of the budget at a time when our country's at war.

Admiral Giambastiani.

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: As the secretary mentioned, U.S. and coalition forces are partners and are committed to assisting in the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces. To date, 254,000 Iraqi army and police personnel have been trained and equipped. The Iraqis are assuming more and more responsibility for their own security.

The amount of operational area under the control of the Iraqis has increased significantly in the past six months with 58 Iraqi army battalions overseeing vast areas of Iraq.

On April 24th, we turned over an area in and around Najaf, of approximately the size of the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island combined, to the Iraqi 1st Brigade of the 8th Division.

In addition, on the 6th of May, the Iraqi army opened a joint operations center to exercise command and control over all of their ground forces, country-wide.

The number of operations planned and executed by the Iraqis continues to grow. Seventy-five Iraqi security force battalions lead in operations, with coalition forces in support. Nearly a third of those operations are conducted independently by Iraqi security forces.

I think you'll agree the progress of the Iraqi security forces has been significant.

Finally, just in the last few days, we lost a CH-47 helicopter with 10 personnel on board in Afghanistan. Our condolences go out to the families of those crew members, just as it does with any who are wounded or killed in the line of duty.

We'll be happy to take your questions.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Bob?

Q Mr. Secretary, in your opening comments, you alluded to the prospect of U.S. troops eventually returning from Iraq. And given the positive political developments in Baghdad in recent days and weeks, which you also mentioned, why aren't you moving faster to draw down forces?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, the answer's, I would have thought, obvious. The new government is not in place. There's not a new minister of Defense, a new minister of Interior. And until the new government, constitutional government, supported by the Iraqi people, courageously supported by the Iraqi people, exists; and we have an opportunity to brief them, these new individuals up, the prime minister and the new ministers, as to what we think the conditions are on the ground and the kinds of conditions that we think will enable us to transfer more and more responsibility to the Iraqi security forces, it strikes me as not timely to begin making announcements unilaterally.

Q How soon do you think you could actually be in position?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I don't like to set deadlines. I mean, how long is it going to take the new Iraqi government to get their ministers in place? How long is it going to take us to brief them up? How long is it going to take them to have a consultation process among the president and the prime ministers and the deputy prime ministers and the parliament and begin those discussions? I don't know the answers to those questions.

But clearly it's something that we have been very successful in training and equipping the Iraqi security forces. They have been successful in their work, which is important work. The people training them and working with them closely and managing the people who are embedded with them, particularly the Ministry of Defense forces, have said that they have not backed away from fights, they have not left wounded or dead out on the battlefield, they have not been anything other than enormously supportive of the American servicemen and -women who are embedded with them and assisting them in their development and progress.

So, when that happens, General Casey and Zal will be engaged with the new government. They'll then make recommendations to General Pace and to me, and we'll then make recommendations to the president. And then, if we have something to announce, we'll announce it. And then you will have an opportunity to report the news as it actually exists -- (laughter) -- as opposed to pretend.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Pam.

Q Sir, with the resignation of Porter Goss and the appointment of a new director of Central Intelligence

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SEC. RUMSFELD: "Nomination" I think is the correct phrase.

Q Nomination. Sorry. One of the narratives that's going on in the background is about how Donald Rumsfeld is trying to seize control of more and more of intelligence operations.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah. (Chuckles.)

Q The -- one of the examples that's given is the creation of this new office in the Pentagon to have covert ops teams going after high-value targets and collecting intelligence.

Could you talk about the rationale for that, and whether or not you are in fact looking to have -- for the Pentagon to have greater control over intelligence collection or analysis?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The short answer is no, we're not. The better answer, the more complete answer would be that the quality of the debate on this subject is pedestrian and unimpressive.

Q Help us elevate it.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I will. In fact, I'm eager to! (Laughter.)

You know, if you stop and say what's the single most important thing about the discussion on intelligence, one would have thought that rational people, responsible people would have understood that it's trying to find the formula, the way, the structure, the arrangements so that we can provide the very best intelligence for the American people so that they can be protected. That's what's central to this.

And yet, if you look at the debate and the articles in the newspaper and the comments that are being

made, they are about theoretical conspiracies, they're about theoretical bureaucratic turf fights -- they're all off the mark. You know, there's a saying for people who miss the mark consistently, and they say that person has an instinct for the capillaries, as opposed to the more important arteries. And this debate really reflects that reality. It should be a bit embarrassing for people to see what's going on.

I read John Negroponete's press briefing yesterday, or interview, whatever it was, and I agreed with every word, insofar as his discussion with respect to the Department of Defense.

We do not have issues between John Negroponete. We do not have issues between Porter Goss or George Tenet, nor will we have with General Hayden, assuming he's confirmed. We have good linkages down in the field. We have good linkages in Washington. I'm sure there are people in the middle who bulge out from time to time, but those things get worked out.

There is -- you know, I don't know. We have lunch every week or two -- General Hayden and Negroponete and Porter Goss, I have for five years. I feel very good about the relationships. There's no power play taking place in Washington. People can run around and find somebody who will tell them almost anything they want. But it's interesting how little facts ever get attached to any of these thumbsuckers that get printed in the press.

Q Can I do a follow-up on this, Mr. Secretary? (Cross talk.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, no, no, I'm going to decide to who gets to ask. No, no, no! (Laughter.) Just behave.

Q We thought someone else was the decider. (Laughter.)

Q Mr. Secretary, one of the leading critics of the Hayden nomination has been Representative Hoekstra of the House Intelligence Committee, who says that putting a military man in charge of a civilian agency like the CIA -- it's just -- he's the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I -- the congressman is the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. He's a thoughtful person. He's knowledgeable, and the president obviously came to a different conclusion. The president knows the history, and the history is we have had military individuals -- both in and out of uniform -- as director of the Central Intelligence over the decades. I've worked with him in prior incarnations, and it is a -- it certainly has never been a stipulation that you should not have someone from the military as director or deputy director.

Second, the background of General Hayden -- anyone who looks at it obviously understands he's an intelligence professional is what he is. He did not come up through the operational chain in the Department of Defense, and then at the last minute slide over into the intelligence business. He's a person who's had assignment after assignment after assignment in the intelligence business, and clearly, that is what his career has been, and he's been very good at it. He did an excellent job at the National Security Agency. He -- I was not as close to it over at DNI, but from everything I can see, he's done an excellent job over there, starting up a new activity, which is not easy, with John Negroponete.

And the president knows him and has confidence in him, and clearly I support the nomination.

Q Now, he was not voicing opposition to General Hayden himself, but the fact that it was going to be a military man in charge of the civilian agency. He just thought it was the wrong time for that.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, obviously, the president came to a different conclusion.

Q Mr. Secretary.

Q Mr. Secretary, do you believe that the Guantanamo prison should be closed and the detainees put on trial, as President Bush stated in an interview with German television?

SEC. RUMSFELD: What are you trying to do, position me opposite the president on this issue -- (laughter) -- the way you cast it?

Q Perhaps.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Perhaps. Yeah. That's nice. (Laughter.) Most certainly, I would say, would be a more accurate response.

The president and I have talked about this. I don't think there's anybody who wouldn't very much like to see every prison closed and the people repatriated to their countries, where they would be dealt with appropriately by those countries. The problem is -- or tried. And the problem is that we've been working very hard in an interagency environment to live with the rules and regulations as they exist to try to persuade other countries to accept the detainees currently in Guantanamo and take them to their countries and treat them in a humane manner and see that they're tried as appropriate. We've simultaneously been going down a different track here, and that is to try to get the military commission process going in a way that, in fact, we would be able to take those individuals, where it would be appropriate -- and this is the president's decision, obviously, and he's the one who makes recommendations to the department to try some individual in a military commission. But regrettably, the court system in the United States has been used very skillfully by defense lawyers to the point where we've not been able to have military commissions try these people.

So it's a Catch-22-kind of a situation at the present time. And -- but there's certainly no one in the Department of Defense who wants to get up in the morning and be the manager of detention facilities for people from other countries, and they would like to see the process finally cleared away so that military commissions could go forward. And I don't -- I don't recall precisely what the president said, but my guess is that there's no daylight there, notwithstanding your efforts.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Mr. Secretary, I -- getting back to the question of the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Add something!

Q The last time we had an active duty military officer heading up the CIA was even before you were in government -- 1953, I believe.

And I'm just wondering --

SEC. RUMSFELD: What was Vernon -- didn't Vernon Walters do it? Didn't Studeman do it?

Q Studeman did it too.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah. I think you may be wrong. I've not researched it. I should.

Q Active duty.

ADM GIAMBASTIANI: He was active duty. He was acting.

Q Okay. Well, my point really -- my question remains the same. Is do you --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Even though the premise is fallacious. (Laughter.)

Q It's been a long time -- will you at least go with that? -- it's been a long time since we had an active

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SEC. RUMSFELD: There's no rule against it.

Q Flawed, not fallacious, flawed.

Q Do you think it's important to have intelligence that is independent of the military, to have an agency which is not military? Or is there any reason why all intelligence-gathering couldn't be done effectively under the Pentagon?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, let's just take a minute on that. People have a way of wanting to put things in baskets, so they talk about national intelligence and they talk about tactical or military intelligence. The truth is that a single piece of information -- intelligence -- can simultaneously be both; it can be of national intelligence value and simultaneously of tactical or military intelligence value.

Intelligence can come from multiple sources. It can come from electronics, it can come from human intelligence, it can come from other techniques. The user doesn't really care where it came from, and the user doesn't care if at the same time it's also being used by somebody else.

The Department of Defense is, I think, without question, the largest user of intelligence information. I can't prove that, but I have no doubt that it's correct. What these folks do, the hundred-million-four-plus people who are on active duty, is take information, intelligence, and then use it to help defend this country. I have statutory responsibilities in the intelligence business of having within this department certain entities that are active in providing intelligence information not only to the combatant commanders who have a military or tactical use for it, but also, simultaneously -- in some cases the same information -- for national intelligence purposes.

Now, what I do is get up and try to fulfill my statutory responsibility. I don't -- and to see that our commanders have the kind of information they need. If you talk to our combatant commanders, I think probably the thing they mention the most is the fact that they wish they had more intelligence, that they wish they had more timely intelligence, that they wish they were able to access information in this new 21st century that's more appropriate to the 21st century.

You know, it's one thing to have an intelligence community focused on conventional war or nuclear postures, as we did during the Cold War, and worry about big armies, navies, air forces and ballistic missiles. It's quite another thing when you're dealing -- moving away from that kind of a world where you're worried about nation states with big military entities, into an asymmetric world with irregular warfare, with non-nation states, with people functioning in countries that we're not at war with. That requires a totally different intelligence approach.

And we've got wonderful people in the intelligence business spread throughout our government -- in the agency, in the DNI, in the State Department, in the FBI and in the Department of Defense -- who are making that transition and doing it.

It isn't, in my view, something that any one entity necessarily ought to be in charge of, to go after your question. It's something that we're trying to figure out what the -- the Congress and the executive branch are trying to figure out what the arrangements ought to be. So you have a piece of legislation that's new, that is -- how do you characterize it -- it doesn't tell everyone in the intelligence business what they should do when they get up in the morning. It was an effort to try to -- on a macro basis, which is what legislation does, as opposed to a micro basis -- try to set up a structure that might be more appropriate. And the players, the actors in this scene, are busy trying to put the flesh and bones on that new structure in a way that's in the best interests of the country.

And yet all we read about is: "Oh, this bureaucratic fight there, and someone's doing a power grab there," and "Oh, my goodness gracious, there's a conspiracy about this." There isn't anything we're doing in the Department of Defense on intelligence that has not been worked out with the Department of State, that has not been worked out with the White House, that has not been worked out with the Central Intelligence Agency, that has not been worked out with the Director of National Intelligence. It is something that is continuous. It is going on all the time. There is nothing mysterious about it. I'm sorry to say that to some of these folks who want to write these theories about -- trying to mystify everything. It is a collegial and open process, and it is a comfortable process and it is an ongoing process, all of the articles, hundreds of articles you're reading to the contrary notwithstanding.

Q Mr. Secretary, I have a question for Admiral G.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, thank goodness. (Laughter.)

Q But in truth, maybe for both of you.

However, Admiral Giambastiani, were you and General Pace consulted at all about the nomination of Mike Hayden for this job? And was the gentleman next to you consulted at all about the nomination? And was General Hayden your choices, if you both were consulted?

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: The way I would --

Q (Inaudible.)

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: The way I would answer that is, is that -- was I consulted on a nomination for him as the director of CIA? No.

Do I have tremendous respect and support for him? Yes. I've known him for about 17 years, and he is just a superb officer who is a tremendous professional. I first met him when he was a colonel working in the National Security Council back in 1990. And all I would say to you is, I strongly support his professional credentials.

Q The gentleman on your left?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good answer.

The president knows Mike Hayden well. He worked with him when Mike was head of the National Security Agency. He's been working with him over a period of five years. And he obviously made the decision. And in my view, Mike Hayden is a true professional, and he'll do an excellent job for the country.

Q Can we just -- can we -- one of the things that -- you've decried the dearth of facts surrounding this

reporting. And one thing that keeps getting reported --

SEC. RUMSFELD: The obvious dearth of facts.

Q And I know you like to set the record straight --

SEC. RUMSFELD: The monumental dearth of facts.

Q One of the things that published reports have suggested is that you weren't happy with General Hayden back in 2004, when he testified that --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, let's get right down into the minutiae. Won't that be fun? Let's not talk about how we get good intelligence for the American people. Let's get down on who said what to when (sic) five years ago, three years ago, two years ago.

Q Well, this apparently is the basis of some of these stories --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Is this an elevated network question?

Q I thought you could set the record straight about whether or not you were -- I mean, if this is the source of some of the speculation that there's some tension in the relations between General --

SEC. RUMSFELD: There isn't. I just said that. There is no tension. I've been working with Mike Hayden for five-plus years.

Q But were you upset with him in 2004? And did you scold him privately, as some published reports have suggested?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't get upset, if that's the word you want to use. Did -- have there been times when Ed Giambastiani or Mike Hayden or, goodness knows, anybody else in this building might have a view different from mine? Sure. I mean, my recollection is that Mike Hayden favored having the NSA move under the DNI during a time when the legislation was being considered and when the president had not made a decision. My view was, as someone who was appointed and nominated by the president, and serves at the pleasure of the president, that I was -- thought that the Department of Defense ought to wait and see where the president comes down on that issue. And he eventually came down on the issue that it should stay in -- technically in the Department of Defense, but to have joint responsibilities with the DNI and the secretary of Defense with respect to various budget aspects or acquisition aspects.

And Mike was on one side of that issue, and I was without -- I was kind of where the president was. And then, when the president decided not to move it over, I was in favor of that. Now, is that a big deal? Not --

Q You tell me.

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- not that I know of. Nor was it then.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q A follow-up? A specific on an intelligence question, last week the issue of pre-war intelligence came up again in Atlanta. You dealt with that as you did. Go -- looking forward, given the pre-war intel failures

on Iraq, how confident are you on all the assessments you've been getting about Iran's not only nuclear capability, but intent? Why shouldn't the American people, given the pre-war failures in Iraq, be confident in what they're getting from the intelligence community on Iran?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The -- well, let's just take a minute on that.

The intelligence community had views on Iraq. That information was available to the president, to me, it was the information that was available to Secretary Colin Powell and Condi Rice, when they and George Tenet worked on his presentation for the United Nations over a period of many days. It was the intelligence information that was available to the Congress of the United States. It was available to other countries that had exactly the same view that we all did. It turns out it was wrong -- that intelligence.

Fair enough. It's a tough business. It's a difficult thing to be right all the time. And the information was not correct. Does that give one pause? You bet.

Q (Off mike) -- on Iran's capabilities and intent. That's what I'm asking --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You bet. And you're dealing with a closed society there. And so, clearly, one has to be very careful.

Q Well, what are the policy implications that, if you've got Hayden going into the CIA -- if he's approved. And what improvements have to be made within the agency --

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's their business. I'm not going to do a work plan for Mike Hayden over at the CIA, or for John Negroponte. I think they're doing fine. They're hard at it, and we're working closely together, and it's a very constructive set of relationships.

Q But you're the consumer. You're asked to go -- to plan military strikes based on intelligence that you may have pause about. That's why I'm asking.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I -- I'm not going to get into that.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary? Mr. Secretary, just the connection between terrorism and nuclear weapons, including of Iran.

You have just come from the area where Osama bin Laden was not very far from the area you've been. And now A.Q. Khan is a free man, he can travel anywhere, including in Iran. And China is still supporting Iran. And Iran's president has said that they are not moving as far as their nuclear program is concerned; he will go ahead. And he has even written a letter to the president.

So where do we stand as far as Osama bin Laden or this connection of terrorism and the nuclear?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I suppose the answer would be roughly this, that where we stand is that we've not caught Osama bin Laden. Anyone who reads what he says and what Zawahiri says and what Zarqawi says, it's clear they represent a very vicious strain of terrorism, and they've already killed thousands of human beings. They cut off people's heads. And the thought of their gaining access to weapons of increasing lethality is something that ought to give any thinking person pause. It is clear that it is giving thinking people pause in that region, in Europe, in the United Nations, and, clearly, in the United States.

But beyond that, I don't think I'd have anything to add.

And we'll consider that the last question.

Thank you folks.

Q Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

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