



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

**Tuesday, August 23, 2005 1:17 p.m.
EDT**

Defense Department Regular Briefing

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good afternoon.

In 1982, when El Salvadorans battled an insurgency in their country, a grandmother was -- reported that when she was told that she would be killed if she dared to vote, she replied, saying "You can kill me, you can kill my children, you can kill my neighbors, but you can't kill us all." That suggests the power of freedom's appeal in the struggle against tyranny.

Since the liberation of Iraq in 2003, millions of Iraqis have taken similar positions as that grandmother had: the 8 million Iraqis who defied threats and bombings to vote in last January's elections, the tens of thousands who have joined the Iraqi security forces after being threatened that they'd be killed if they did so, and as we meet the Iraqis from all sections of the country that are engaging in the very hard bargaining and debate and negotiations on the next steps in fashioning their new constitution.

The process has been delayed a bit, but democracy has never been described as speed, efficient or perfect. And regrettably, completing the constitution is not likely to end all the violence in Iraq or solve all of the country's problems. But it will represent one more important step towards cementing a new way of life for Iraqis, one ruled by ballot boxes rather than by death squads. In keeping with Iraq's heritage, the draft under consideration reflects the country's Islamic beliefs, just as Afghanistan's constitution does, and it will require a respect for democratic principles and the rights of women and minorities.

Of course, some are arguing that the effort in Iraq is doomed. Recently we've again been told that Iraq may prove worse than Vietnam, and it's been alleged that we're not winning.

It's worth noting that the enemy does not appear to share that view. On the contrary, terrorists like Zarqawi are indicating concern about the lack of support from the Iraqi people, and the reasons are clear. They are -- the terrorists, the insurgents, are not a nationalist movement with a strong popular support. They have lost their safe havens in Iraq. Their most prominent leaders are not Iraqis, they're not Ho Chi Minhs with a nationalist base, but, in the case of Zarqawi, a Jordanian murderer. And their massacres of innocents have outraged most Iraqis rather than attracting broad support. Indeed, polls indicate that the anger against the terrorists and the insurgents is growing.

I'm reminded that a few weeks after Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan, a news story suggested that the U.S. was already in a quagmire. But it was several weeks later, only, that Kabul actually fell to the Northern Alliance and our forces. Throughout history there have always been those who predict America's failure just around every corner. At the height of World War II, a prominent U.S. diplomat predicted that democracy was finished in Britain and probably in America too. Many Western intellectuals praised Stalin during that period. For a time, Communism was very much in vogue. It was called Euro-Communism to try to mute or mask the totalitarian core. And thankfully, the American people are better centered. They ultimately come to the right decisions on big issues. And the future of Iraq is a very big issue. So those being tossed about by the winds of concern should recall that Americans are a tough lot and will see their commitments through.

Admiral Ed Giambastiani, the new vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It's a pleasure to have you here.

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. It's a pleasure to join you today for my first opportunity to talk to the Pentagon press corps as vice chairman. I look forward to engaging with many of these familiar faces and also getting acquainted with many of these new faces in the crowd.

If you'll allow me, Mr. Secretary, I did want to make a few very brief comments.

These are challenging times. Our nation is at war, a war that will be won by the collective strength of all of the elements of national power. The role of the Defense Department in that effort is significant, to say the least. Our men and women deployed around the globe are making a difference each and every day. As someone who has had the privilege to spend time with our military, civilian and contractor personnel deployed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, I can report that they understand fully the importance of what they do. They are proud of their many successes that they have achieved. Their morale is extremely high because they see real progress in the war on terrorism and in building democratic societies in the aftermath of tyranny.

I'm honored to serve as vice chairman and to continue to work for and with these great Americans.

With that, we'd be happy to take your questions.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Charlie.

Q Mr. Secretary, you spoke of "hard bargaining" going on in Iraq. And a question seems to be is, how much bargaining's really going on now? The Shi'a claim that there are not going to be major -- any major changes in this constitution before it goes to parliament, and the Sunni are saying that this could spark a civil war. I guess the question is, is there a real danger of American forces being caught up in not just a bloody insurgency, but a civil war here?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, Charlie, you casually say the Shi'a say this and the Sunnis say that. In point of fact, there is no one person speaking for the Shi'a or the Sunni. You find people all across the spectrum in both groups, just as you do the Kurds.

There's been a concern about the possibility of a civil war since before the war started. It hasn't happened. Indeed, quite the contrary has taken place. After the Sunnis made the mistake of not participating in the election, they announced that they had made a mistake by not participating in the election and said they did want to participate, and they are participating. The Shi'a had the possibility of announcing after the election that they won, Sunnis lost, and that it's their turn now. They didn't. They said they want to have a single country, and they reached out to the Sunnis.

It strikes me that the kinds of things one would look for if that were the concern, just the opposite's been happening. People have been moving together, talking, discussing things. You can always find someone who's going to try to be a dead-ender and say if you don't do this, I won't do that, but that's part of negotiation. We see that in the Congress and we see it in democratic systems all over the world.

Q So that -- I take it that is not a major concern of yours, that U.S. troops might be caught up in a civil war?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It hasn't happened yet, it is not happening now. And obviously it's something that one has to be attentive to and be concerned about, but I haven't seen anything that suggests that the risk is greater today than it was yesterday or the day before.

Q Mr. Secretary, might I ask Admiral G a question, a welcoming question, with your acquiescence, please?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I want you to pronounce his full name so people get used to it.

Q All right. Admiral Giambastiani --

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's pretty close. (Laughter.)

Q May I ask you to wear your Navy hat as well as your vice hat for this one? Was it perhaps too tempting to tie up two Navy warships in a Middle East port for over a week? And have the procedures for port calls to the Middle East changed since the attack at Aqaba?

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: What I would tell you is that we operate around the world; we're going to continue to operate around the world, day in and day out. Clearly, we have force protection concerns inside the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

But what I would say to you is that, as a Navy officer, as a former commanding officer -- twice, as a force commander and a fleet commander -- we're going to continue to operate, and we'll take whatever force protection measures are required, both in port and when we're at sea. And if we need to, we'll get them under way.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Bret?

Q Mr. Secretary, on that point, the Jordanian authorities are now saying that they believe that that terror cell behind the rocket attack is tied to Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi, based in Iraq. Do you believe that there is a spread of terrorism emanating from Iraq? We've heard a lot about terrorists coming into Iraq. Do you believe that there are terrorists spreading from Iraq to other neighboring countries, committing attacks?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The way you've cast the question suggests that that would be new. It wouldn't be. When Zarqawi -- well before the war in Iraq, well before the U.S. invaded, Zarqawi was in Baghdad, and Zarqawi was operating operatives in Iraq, in Turkey, in France, in several other countries, and that was being observed. So his interest and his activities outside of Iraq are nothing new.

Q Do you believe that Iraq has become a training ground, in essence, for terrorists to launch to other places?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. I think people are being trained elsewhere and going into Iraq.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, intelligence reports are saying that --

SEC. RUMSFELD: These are classified reports that you have?

Q No, no, it's not a classified report, no.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh. Just checking.

Q No, because that -- the Katyusha rockets used by the attackers against the U.S. forces in Aqaba were similar to the rockets used by the Hezbollah against Israel. Do you have any information that al Qaeda, after claiming this attack, and the Hezbollah are cooperating on logistics or training operations against U.S. targets?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The investigation in Jordan is still under way, and I'm inclined to let it continue and see what they learn.

With respect to any linkages with Hezbollah, I'm inclined to leave that to the intelligence community to decide what they want to talk about.

Yes?

Q On base closure, Mr. Secretary, the commission meets this week starting tomorrow. When the Pentagon's recommendations initially came out, you had said that you hadn't made changes to those recommendations, if I recall correctly.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I did not.

Q And the message that many of us drew from that was that you wanted the commission not to make major changes to that list. Traditionally, they've made about 15 percent changes on the closures. And they've questioned a number of things, including cost savings and significant cuts in base structure in the Northeast. Would you like to ask them now not to make any changes? Do you expect them to make significant changes?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let me say two or three things about this process. It's a very open process. It's transparent. It's on television. People can see and hear what individuals have to say. The thing to keep in mind are the following several points.

One, the Department of Defense has spent something like two, two and a half years working on this. The recommendations came up from the services. Then they were looked at across services. And then they were fashioned into a package, costed, the data was arranged and the data was certified, and the data was then presented to the commission with the recommendations.

What we've seen since is not certified data. We are seeing marketing data from various states and cities and communities that have a deep concern about -- understandably -- about the circumstances of their states and their cities. But one has to give different weight to certified data that was shaped over two and a half years and information that's being gathered for the sake of making a point.

Second, on costs. There's been -- I don't -- I did not -- I do not know precisely what the commission has said, nor do I know precisely what the GAO has said. I only know what I've read in the paper, where the papers

are saying some things with respect to cost. And it strikes me it's important to take a moment and explain this.

You all know that there are people in Congress who are recommending that we increase the size of the armed forces. In addition, General Schoomaker came to me many, many, many months ago and asked that I and the president agree with him that we could increase the Army by 30,000 on a temporary basis while the resetting of the force and the modularization takes place. So let's take the number 30,000 or some number like that where we need to increase the size of the force.

There's two ways to do that. We need 30,000 more people available to do the things that the Army needs to do. You can get them from several places. You could get them by bringing them in and taking a year or two or three to train them, or you can get them by moving them out of civilian jobs and putting them into military jobs, or you can find efficiencies. For example, if you've got two bases that do roughly the same thing and you decide that you're paying double force protection and double logistics and you can save a thousand or 5,000 people by bringing them together and having single force protection or single logistics just for a simplified example, then the question is what -- let's say you've got 5,000 people that you've just saved. You don't need them at that other base. Someone says that that's a saving only if you cashier them out of the military. Anyone who -- that's kind of a green-eyeshade auditor approach to it. On the other hand, if you say that you're going to have to add 5,000 because of the modularization and because of the stress on the force and the things you're trying to do and you use those 5,000, then you don't have to add 5,000 and you've had cost avoidance. They're exactly the same thing financially, and any suggestion to the contrary, that any of the cost savings that have been projected are not, in fact, really cost savings, it seems to me would be a misunderstanding of the dynamics that are taking place in the armed services.

The only other thing I'll say about the BRAC is that we have to be appreciative of the chairman and the commissioners and the work they've done. You're quite right; previous BRACs [Base Realignment and Closure] have made some changes. I looked at this two-and-a-half-year work product and all the data and the past history where people were concerned that politics had entered into it and made a decision that this was our chance in maybe in a quarter of a century to reset our force, to look at military value, and to connect it with the important things that are coming back from Europe and around the world -- 70,000 military probably, maybe 100,000 dependents, contractors -- and have it all come together in a way that's in the interests of the taxpayers of America, that's in the interest of the United States Armed Forces. These are all recommendations that they produced. They didn't come out of midair. And there wasn't an ounce of politics in any aspect of it.

And I did exactly what you said: I looked at it and said that it would be risky for me to try to second guess all of that and pull a thread out and have some non-intuitive effects that one couldn't anticipate because I hadn't spent the two-and-a-half years doing it. I feel that we made very solid recommendations. I suspect that the commission, when all is said and done, will endorse the overwhelming majority of those recommendations. Whether they make some changes is up to them. The next step, then, would be for us to make our recommendations to the president as to any changes that are made or might be made, and advise him as to his next step, which is either to send it to Congress, if he's comfortable with any changes they might make or not make, or send it back to them to review any changes they thought they might like to make. And time will tell.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, the presence of Cindy Sheehan outside the president's ranch in Texas drew a significant amount of attention. A two-part question for you. Your thoughts on her protest; and also, if you have a chance to talk to her, what would you say?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, anyone who lives the lives we live in this department and meets families of those that have died and meets families of those that have been wounded has to feel a great deal of empathy for each one of them. What one says is never perfect, but one always tries to help those that are grieving

understand the importance of what their sons and daughters have been doing, the fact that it has contributed to the liberation of some 50 million human beings in this Earth, the fact that the alternative in the case of Iraq is to turn that country over to the Zargawis of the world, mass murderers and beheaders and terrorists whose goal is to spread death and destruction against free people elsewhere on this globe. And while it has to be a heart-wrenching thing for each of the families involved, our task is to try to help them and the country understand the importance of the work that's being done.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, in your opening remarks you said that the Americans are a tough lot and will be able to see it through in Iraq. Yet in recent public opinion polls, Americans' support for the war is waning, and opposition to the war is growing. Can the U.S. war effort in Iraq be sustained without the overwhelming support of the American people?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think it will have the support of the American people and it will be sustained and we will be successful. And the alternative would be to turn that country and 25 million people over to terrorists and the kinds of people who have used chemicals on their own people and chemicals on their neighbors. That's not a happy prospect. That would be to turn to darkness.

Q And what do you say to Senator Chuck Hagel, a prominent Republican, Vietnam War vet, who over the weekend compared what's going on in Iraq now to the Vietnam War?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The differences are so notable that it would take too long to list them.

Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, has the United States government satisfied itself that traces of bomb-grade uranium found in Iran a couple of years ago did in fact come from Pakistan and thus are not indicative of a faster moving bomb program in Iran, and if so, does that lower the threat level that you have to worry about here at the Department of Defense?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm going to leave the judgments about that to the intelligence community and the people that are working with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] that have been engaged in the process. It's not this department that does that. Obviously, any information about Iran's interest or progress with respect to nuclear weapons is something that's of interest to the world and certainly to the EU [European Union] countries that have been in continuous negotiation with Iran attempting to dissuade them from proceeding down that path.

Yes. Jim.

Q Mr. Secretary, the Reverend Pat Robertson has suggested that the United States should -- in fact made Hugo Chavez the Venezuelan president. What were your reactions to those remarks, and has that ever been considered?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Not to my knowledge, and I would think I would have knowledge. Certainly, it's against the law. Our department doesn't do that type of thing. He's a private citizen. Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time.

Q In light of the report last month on China's military modernization, how important is it for the Taiwan legislature to push ahead and authorize the purchase of U.S. arms offered in 2001?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The -- you know, I've always believed that countries -- sovereign nations have to do what they decide to do. It's up to them to do it. We make our positions known, and our position is known with the Taiwan Relations Act. And we have an obligation under that act to work with Taiwan on fulfilling security and arms sale provisions of that act. If they decide not to or if they decide to do so, that's up to them.

Q Are they free riding on the U.S.? I mean, does their delay indicate a lack of seriousness?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think if I wanted to communicate something to the government of Taiwan, I would find a better place to do it than here.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes, sir. Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, the Army has recently decided to review the investigation of the death of PFC Patrick Tillman in Afghanistan. Does this indicate at all that the initial investigation was botched, as his parents claim?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I was not aware of that.

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: I'm not aware of it either, sir.

STAFF: I'll listen to the wire story from earlier today and try and gather some facts on it.

SEC. RUMSFELD: They're trying to gather some facts on it. I'm just not sufficiently knowledgeable to respond thoughtfully.

Yes?

Q Thank you. This morning you met with South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon. And recently the U.S. and South Korea have differed over whether North Korea should be able to retain a peaceful nuclear energy program. This is a major sticking point in the ongoing nuclear talks. I'm wondering: Did you discuss this with Minister Ban? And what's your personal opinion on this issue?

SEC. RUMSFELD: He is in town. We had a very good meeting. He is going to meet this evening, I believe, with Secretary Rice. And as you know, the Department of State has the lead on the six-party talks, and it seems to me it's best, from the standpoint of the Pentagon, for us not to get involved in the various aspects of the negotiations as they go along. But we did in fact discuss that subject, among other subjects, and had a very good meeting. And I've been impressed at how our countries, in the six-party talks -- the countries other than North Korea -- have managed to stay reasonably well knitted together as that process has gone forward.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, China and Russia are holding their first joint military exercises this week, including an amphibious assault on the Chinese mainland in the East China Sea, not all that far from Taiwan. What do you see as the impact or implications of these exercises, especially in light of the recent department report on China's military ambitions? And I wonder if the admiral has a comment on that as well, from an operational standpoint.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I guess what I would say is that nations have exercises all the time. We do with any number of countries, dozens of different countries. And we -- NATO countries do with Russia on various things, and we do with India.

And so I'm -- I guess I'm -- I don't find it notable. It is just a fact that countries get together and engage in various types of exercises.

The report you're referring to, of course, is a report that's required by statute. It was factual. It was analytical. It was not judgmental. It just described what was taking place in the People's Republic of China.

Q So it -- Mr. Secretary, it doesn't concern you that these two major powers with a big military relationship are now, for the first time, actually exercising together near Taiwan?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I guess I've answered the question. Yeah, I mean, countries do that. I didn't see anything in -- we are obviously observing what's taking place, but I didn't see anything there that was threatening to Taiwan or anyone else.

Q Were we invited as observers? Certainly we'd be watching it. Were we invited --

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: Not that I know of.

Q We were --

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: We are observing.

Q Obviously.

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: We obviously watch these.

Q How closely?

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: We watch them. We watch all these exercises.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Not as an official observer.

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: Right. (Laughter.)

Q Mr. Secretary --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wait. I thought I had you -- didn't you have one?

Q (Off mike.)

Q I did, but --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Why don't we let somebody else? Well, you've got a nice tie on today, and maybe -- (laughter) -- maybe we'll run a little longer and let you -- (laughter) --

Q All right.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll come back.

Yes?

Q Somewhat different subject. Is the department considering expanding the role of the Missile Defense Agency or setting up a new agency to handle cruise missile defense?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We don't have anything to announce on that. And I don't know what the status of is.

(To Adm. Giambastiani.) Do you?

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: No, sir.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We -- I talk to the Missile Defense people frequently and General Cartwright out at STRATCOM about it, but that's not something that's on my radar screen at the moment.

I'm going to come to you last, right after I do Bret, which is after I do --

Q Mr. Secretary, the U.S. casualties from IEDs [improvised explosive device] over the last four months have been -- have been at their highest levels that we've seen since the invasion. I'm wondering what you attribute that to. Do you think it's going -- we're going to see it continuing? And I mean, do you attribute it to Iran, to this increasing sophistication of IEDs? What's your --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You're talking about Iraq.

Q I'm sorry; yes.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The -- I mean, the number of incidents, you know where that is, that level. And it's been going up, as it has in every other instance prior to an event like the constitution or an election in Afghanistan and so forth. We've tended to expect that.

The number of provinces that it's occurring in Iraq are relatively few, three or four or five, not 18; relatively modest numbers in the remainder. The -- as you point out, the lethality, however, is up. Interestingly, however, of the number of incidents, the overwhelming majority are not effective at all; there are no casualties. I'm going to say like 80 percent of them --

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: Is it about -- about 75 (percent)?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah, 75 percent of them there are no casualties. So how -- I don't know quite how to characterize that except that they're hitting maybe one out of four where they're able to accomplish what they'd like. On those, the lethality has been greater, which is the point of your question.

I don't know quite what I would attribute it to other than the fact that they obviously are becoming more sophisticated in developing in large measure explosive devices which have greater lethality.

Q Mr. Secretary, there seems to be an increase in the same thing in Afghanistan, does there not?

SEC. RUMSFELD: There have been some with elections coming up September 18th. If you went back and adjusted it to the prior elections, I'm not sure I'd say it is an increase. If you're talking about a month or two ago, there has been somewhat of an increase.

Q Well, I'm just wondering, do you see any considerable operations -- technology sharing, et cetera -- between the Taliban --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm not ready to make that judgment, but it wouldn't surprise me. But with the

elections coming up September 18th, this is now the 23rd, and the registration process is taking place. There are thousands -- I think it's thousands, 2,000 or something that? -- candidates in Afghanistan?

ADM. GIAMBASTIANI: It's more than 1,000, anyway.

SEC. RUMSFELD: More than 1,000. And it's for provincial as well as parliamentary offices. And that's a big task for the U.N. and for NATO. And we, of course, in each instance have increased the number of forces that we have in country in Afghanistan and Iraq in anticipation of elections, and we very likely will be announcing a temporary increase in forces in Iraq in anticipation of the October 15th. So at some point we'll be notifying people and taking that forward.

Q How big an increase?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I don't know, a thousand, 2,000, something in that neighborhood.

AMB. GIAMBASTIANI: A couple of battalions.

SEC. RUMSFELD: And of course, NATO is going to be increasing in Afghanistan as well during that period. I was referring to Iraq in that case.

AMB. GIAMBASTIANI: And we have already increased in Afghanistan in July one battalion.

Q Are you saying, then, that there are, in effect, more targets for these roadside bombs?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. I was just commenting that we're doing what we've done in the past in both countries, and that is to increase somewhat.

Bret?

Q If the Iraqis push through a constitution over the objections of the Sunnis, do you believe that that will adversely affect the insurgency -- I mean increase the insurgency, if it's pushed through as is while these objections of the Sunni bloc --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't do those hypotheticals, Brett. Why should I -- what if this, what if that, what if this, what if that. Why should I do that? We're going to know. We're going to know precisely what's going to happen.

And we know that for confidence in the part of the Kurds, the Sunnis and the Shi'a, they're going to have to see a piece of paper that they can look at and have reasonable confidence that it will protect them from the others. That is a big deal. That is tough stuff. That is hard work. That is a leap of faith. And anyone knows that the constitution would be defeated if it stifled any one of those three units -- elements, ethnic groups.

Therefore the constitution, to be successful, has to take into account the legitimate interests and fashion a balance in the federalism aspect of it and in the other key things that they're worried about so that they'll all nod and say, "Well, I really don't like it, it's not perfect, but it's good enough, and by golly, if we have to amend it, lots of other countries have amended their constitution. If there's something we made a mistake on, we'll just have to fix it later, or let the parliament do it in January with a new parliament after we have elections under that new constitution. This is not easy stuff.

Is this really your last press briefing in the Department of Defense during the current iteration in your career?

Q It seems so, yes.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, my golly, we wish you well.

Q Well, thank you.

SEC. RUMSFELD: And who knows? You could come back in 25 years, just like I did. (Laughter.)

Q Or like I did. (Laughter.)

Q Well, thank you. I --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You could just get up and give a testimonial -- (laughter) -- to how much you've enjoyed working here and how much you respect all the people that you've had the privilege to meet. But that isn't likely.

Q I expect him to say it at the end of the night. (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: All right.

Q Well, I did want to ask more about Venezuela, and that is, what -- I guess, could you characterize what problems or what threat, even, may they present to the security of the Western Hemisphere? And what's the best way to deal with it, for the United States to deal with it?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Sure. Well, I don't know that they -- I think -- anyone who travels through Latin America and talks to countries, as we do, will find that a number of the countries are concerned about the activities of Venezuela in South America and in Central America. And their concern is that they want to be able to -- each country wishes to be able to sort out its political situation in a peaceful and democratic way. And to the extent they have concerns that there are influences from outside their country, they express that concern to others.

Now what's the best way to deal with it? Countries in the hemisphere have adopted different approaches. Some have been quite standoffish with Venezuela. Still others have said, "Well, let's engage and talk to them and see if we can't find a way to moderate and to create an environment that's hospitable to democratic processes."

And it is clear that the United States favors peaceful, democratic relationships between the nations in this hemisphere. It is also clear that we favor each country working out its own solutions politically, free of external influence. And I don't know how to characterize what's the best way to deal with it, but I suppose it's that. It's to express that hope.

Thank you, folks. Good to be with you.

Q And Able Danger? You wouldn't care to just deal with that, would you?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I tell you, the leading experts on that --

Q Are not you. (Laughter, cross talk.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: -- are clearly not me.

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