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Presenter: Defense Department Operational Briefing

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Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Defense Department Operational Briefing

(Participating was Gen. Peter Pace, Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Photos can be viewed at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jan2004/040113-D-9880W-061.html> and <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jan2004/040113-D-9880W-046.html>.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good afternoon. Since the United States came under attack on September 11th, coalition forces have removed two terrorist regimes, hunted down Saddam Hussein and roughly two-thirds of known senior al Qaeda operatives, broken up terrorist cells on several continents, and undoubtedly prevented other terrorist attacks.

These are important achievements which demonstrate the talent and courage of our forces, the breadth of our efforts. One result has been an increased so-called operational tempo of the force. The tempo has increased significantly. We hope and believe that the current stress that is put on the force is a spike, if you will, a temporary increase, rather than a -- what would prove to be a plateau. Very simply, we just simply do not expect to have 100,000, 120,000 troops in a single country permanently deployed.

The department is taking a number of immediate actions to relieve that stress. Increasing Iraq security forces is one. The number now is approaching 200,000 -- clearly the largest security element in the country, larger than all other security forces of the coalition combined. We're increasing international military participation in Iraq, and we're dealing aggressively with those who threaten the transition to a self-reliant Iraq.

Undoubtedly, in recent months some have called -- not surprisingly, either. I would say, understandably, people have called for an increase in end strength, increase in the number of permanent people in the United States armed forces. The question really is not whether we can afford an increase in end strength; of course we can. The United States is perfectly capable of paying for additional forces, if we decide that that's desirable.

(Referring to drilling noise) Is the dentist office right -- (laughter).

Q Root canals for the press!

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's root canal for the press! Now you're talking.

We certainly can afford additional men and women in the armed forces, if it proves to be necessary. The question is whether, in the information age, measuring end strength is the only or even the best way to look at the problem, and whether permanently raising end strength would or would not be the best solution.

In the 21st century, what is critical to success in military conflict is not necessarily mass as much as capability. In Iraq, coalition forces defeated a larger adversary not with mass, but with overmatching speed, power and agility. In looking at our global posture, some observers have focused on the number of troops, tanks or ships that we might add or remove in a given part of the world, and I would submit that that's really not the right measure or the best measure.

If you have 10 of something and you -- ships, guns, tanks, planes, people, whatever -- and you reduce the number by five, you end up with 50 percent fewer of them. That's true, but if the other five have a capability that was twice or more than double of the ones you removed, then obviously, you have not reduced your capability. The same is true as we look at the overall size of the force. What is critical is not always the number of troops; rather, it's the capability of the force.

Today, the department has several dozen initiatives under way to relieve stress on the force and to increase its capability. We're investing in new information-age technologies, precision weapons, unmanned air and sea vehicles, and other less manpower-intensive platforms and technologies. We're working to increase the jointness of our forces, creating power that exceeds the sum of the individual services. We're in the process of rebalancing the active force with the Guard and Reserve, to reduce our reliance on involuntary mobilization of guard and reserve forces for a number of frequently-needed skills. And we're working to take jobs currently performed by uniformed personnel and convert them to civilian jobs, freeing military personnel for military tasks.

We have used our emergency powers to temporarily increase end strength by some 36,000 troops. That's a considerable increase. A permanent end strength increase could prove to be the slowest and most expensive option for reducing stress on the force. The costs are sizeable over a lifetime of each added service member; and because of the time it takes to recruit, train and integrate new military personnel, the benefits really cannot be felt for some time. As a result, the techniques we're using give us the end strength increase we need during this -- what we believe to be a spike period, and we are at the moment comfortable that that's the appropriate way to proceed. A permanent increase in end strength would require cuts elsewhere in the Defense budget, I should add, crowding out funding for various types of transformational capabilities that can allow us to do more with the forces that we currently have.

Nonetheless, I should end by saying that we will do whatever makes the most sense, and to the extent it involves an increase in end strength, we will propose it to the president and the president will propose it to the Congress.

General Peter Pace.

GEN. PACE: Thank you, sir.

One of the most encouraging trends since the capture of Saddam Hussein has been the increasing number of Iraqi civilians, both those who had no apparent previous affiliation with the Ba'ath Party and now some previous Ba'ath Party officials coming forward and leading us to caches, giving us information about individuals who we're looking for. In fact, just in the last week there have literally been truckloads -- truckloads -- of ammunition and explosives that have been pointed out to us.

There have been a number of individual raids -- out of some 200 raids that were conducted this past week, a number of those were specifically the result of tips we had gotten from the Iraqi people. So it's very encouraging that these folks are coming forward. The results have been very positive, and we're looking forward

to being able to conduct more raids and operations based on that kind of intelligence in the future.

With that, we'll answer your questions.

Q Mr. Secretary, former secretary O'Neill [former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill] said that you called him and asked him not to write his book.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'm not sure he said that. In fact, I have not read or heard everything he has said, so I wouldn't want to challenge someone as distinguished as you are in your profession, and dean -- as the dean of the Pentagon press corps. But I would question whether he said it.

Q Did you call him, Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes, I called. And that's the question you should have asked in the first place -- (laughter) -- instead of starting out with an inaccurate quotation -- which I believe to be an inaccurate quotation, which may or may not have been an inaccurate quotation. (Laughter.)

Q Did you ask him not to write his book?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No.

Q Did you call him? And what did you ask?

SEC. RUMSFELD: First of all, I don't believe he wrote a book. (Laughter.) I believe he cooperated with a book, with an author whose name is not O'Neill; first fact. Second, I did call him. One day someone told me that he heard that Paul was going to write a -- (pause) -- a book. I almost said -- well, I won't say it. And that it was not going to be a good book. And I said I can't believe that; I have known him for 30 years. So I picked up the phone and called him and said what is this business? Someone tells me you're going to write a -- you know, one of those, what do you call them?

Q Tell-all.

Q Kiss-and-tell.

Q Exposé?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Sour grapes or -- you know, one of those insider things. And I said -- he said no, no, no. He said, I'm going to write a book about policy and substance and -- or I'm going to -- he didn't say I'm going to write it. He said I'm involved in a book. I don't know. It turns out he didn't write a book, I don't think. In any event, that's what I said to him, and I said, well, I'm relieved.

Q May I do a follow-up?

Q And what do you think --

SEC. RUMSFELD: The second question is, did I call him a second time?

(Laughter.)

Q Did you call him a second time?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Exactly. I'm going to help you along here. (Laughter.) We will get it all out.

And the truth is, I did call him a second time. Not too long ago, before -- just a day or two or three before this stuff started showing up in the press, someone said to me he went ahead and -- "You said he wasn't going to write that kind of a book, and sure enough he went ahead and participated in a book that was what we originally said." And I said, "I'll be darned. Let me give him a call." So I called him up and I said, "You didn't go and do that, did you, Paul? I can't believe that!" And he said, well, there is -- there will be people who feel that way, or something to that effect. And -- and that was the sum and total of it.

I didn't ask him not to write a book. I didn't ask him to do anything. I -- he's a person I have known since the 1960s. I'm -- I must say, I have not read the book, so I really am reluctant to comment on it, other than to say that what I have been reading about the book is so different from my experience in this administration, it is just dramatic. It's night and day. I work with the president on a daily basis almost, and I work in the administration and I see the interagency process and how it works.

And I must say that over the years, I have watched people write books -- that I have known. I have watched people write books about things that I have been intimately involved in. And I have never written a book, and one of the reasons I have never written a book is because I have read books by people who have written books -- or participated in books, as in this case -- and I have been disappointed in them because they -- what they represent is a narrow, little slice of what they saw, and not a balanced view and not a 360-degree view.

And the perspective I have of this president, who I have just enormous respect for -- his brain, his engagement, his interest, his probing questions, his constructive and positive approach to issues. I mean, you can't go through two wars and not work closely with the president if you're secretary of Defense of the United States. And I saw -- I see every day a totally different picture than the one that is being characterized in the press.

Now as I say, I haven't read the book. But -- so I'm glad I could help you out with --

Q Mr. Secretary, may I do a follow-up on that, please, because regardless of the book -- and I have a -- this is not my question -- a prelude question, when you said I have been disappointed with books written by some others. Would that include Wes Clark's book about Kosovo? That's not my question, but if you want to comment on it, you may. (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, no. I don't know Wes Clark, and I wasn't involved with Kosovo and you shouldn't have said that.

Q All right. My comment, though, my question is that former Secretary O'Neill claims that President Bush had decided to dump Saddam Hussein before 9/11. Is that true? And secondly, what he has said publicly -- and you're not privy to it all, but what you are privy to --, would you classify that as sour grapes, or is there some validity to his criticism of the president?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I certainly don't see validity to his criticism of the president at all. As I just said, my experience with the president is totally to the contrary, and I have enormous respect for President -- for President Bush. And my experience is extensive. It is in good times and difficult times. It's in times of good humor and times of great stress in a conflict, a war. And I am -- really feel fortunate to be working with a man of his character and his ability.

Q And dumping Saddam?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Pardon me?

Q Dumping Saddam, he claims the president decided to dump him before 9/11.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, I don't know what meetings he was -- could have been in. All -- I know that when we arrived, the policy of the United States government, since 1998, has been regime change in Iraq. I know that second, one of the early things that the State Department initiated, and the United States put forward, were adjustments in the sanctions with respect to the United Nations' involvement in Iraq.

I know that the United States -- nowhere in the world was the United States being shot at with impunity other than in Iraq, in Operation Northern Watch and Southern Watch. And as secretary of Defense, asking pilots to go forth in Iraq in the north, in the south on a daily basis and put their lives at risk, and the crews at risk, and have them being shot at by a country that was violating some 16 or 17 U.N. [United Nations] resolutions at that stage, is not a happy prospect. And clearly, it was something that this president had to address, did address.

And -- but the idea that he came into -- you would have to ask the president this, but the idea that he came into office with a predisposition to invade Iraq, I think is a total misunderstanding of the situation. The policy of the government was regime change. We had pilots being put at risk. And that was in January 20th of 2001, and this is -- what was -- when was it? -- March of 2003 that the president made a decision to send force in, after trying everything else in the world.

So --

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q Can you update us --

SEC. RUMSFELD: You do that so gently and pleasantly. (Laughter.)

Q Thank you. I've been working on that.

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Laughs.)

Q Could you update us on your thoughts about the nomination of Secretary Roche for Army secretary? And also, there's been a lot of consternation about his nomination. Does there come a point when you kind of have to cut your losses, leave him in the Air Force, and go ahead and get somebody in that seat in the Army if they're not willing to approve his nomination?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The answer is his nomination is still up there. I'm told that there may be some hearings later this month, towards the end. Whether there will be a hearing on Secretary Roche to become secretary of the Army or not, I don't know. I believe that the pacing item up there was to allow an inspector general's report to run its course, which it has not yet done.

Q What about --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Clearly, at some point, one has to sit down and work with the Congress. Congress has Article I of the Constitution -- they have to make a confirmation or the person doesn't go into an office. And we're going to have to work with them on that, after the IG report has been completed.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q But on the second part of my question, though, does there come a point at which you do have to cut your losses, if Congress is unwilling to budge, and get somebody else to lead the Army?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Put yourself in my position. How can one answer that without having a news story about cutting losses and all of that stuff? I thought I answered it elegantly. The -- Article I of the Constitution gives the Congress the -- for the Senate the opportunity to confirm nominations. They'll decide what they want to do, and either they will not have a hearing on Jim Roche, or they will have a hearing and vote, and the vote will be up or down. And I don't know the answer to that and I'll keep working with the Senate under their constitutional authority.

Q Mr. Secretary, Mr. Secretary, first of all, happy New Year --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Is this for Pete Pace? No.

Q No, sir.

SEC. RUMSFELD: No.

Q Happy New Year --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

Q -- to everybody, first of all.

And second, a lot has been going on, Mr. Secretary, as far as defense ties are concerned between the United States and India, including a recent announcement by the president. I need your view, sir, that as far as U. S. and India nuclear and high tech, and also space technology is concerned -- or is concerned now, that what India -- what are you expecting from India in return as far as the U.S. helping nuclear and space technology in India, and how it will affect the U.S. and Pakistani relations?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wow. We have, in my view, excellent relationships with India and with Pakistan. We have a -- your question is about India, and I don't believe that it will affect our relationships with Pakistan.

Our relationship with India is political, it's economic and it's military. And we have increased military cooperation during the past three years between the United States and India. It has been moving apace, and we feel good about it. There are a variety of technical things that they or we may be interested at any given time, and they are being worked at the appropriate levels. But I think it's a good, healthy relationship. And I should add parenthetically that the evolving relationship between India and Pakistan is a most encouraging thing.

Yes?

Q As a --

Q General Pace?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, wait a second. General Pace.

You know the formula! (Laughter.)

Q I'm a slow learner, but I try, sir. You mentioned the trend of more people coming and supplying information. I wanted to ask you about a different trend. Trends come and go in Iraq, as we have seen, and

especially the nature of the attacks against U.S. and coalition forces. Recently, there seems to be an upswing in attacks on helicopters of different type with more success. If indeed -- is that the strategy of the insurgents, as far as you can tell, to shift their attacks -- the objects they attack, and it's now helicopters? And what are you all doing to diminish the danger to helicopters now with the increased attacks against them?

GEN. PACE: Thanks. First of all, I was very careful when I picked the word "trend" when I talked about the numbers of Iraqis coming forward because in fact, as you pointed out, sine wave is not a trend, whereas in fact since Saddam's capture, the number of Iraqis coming forward to give information has increased week after week after week.

With regard to specific attacks on coalition forces, that very much is a sine wave, and therefore, I cannot tell you right now whether -- a sine wave -- we cannot tell you right now whether or not the current dip in the number of total attacks on the coalition is something that is going to remain or not.

Q Yeah, I was referring to -- not the dip, but the sine wave going up on helicopters.

GEN. PACE: Clearly, the attacks, specifically on helicopters, are of concern to us. And what we do, as any military would do, is to change our tactics, techniques, and procedures, and the defense mechanisms that we have available to us to mitigate that. I'm not going to tell you exactly what we're doing because we don't want to tell the enemy what we're doing. But we are in fact learning from each of their attacks and modifying the way we do business.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q General Pace? Sir --

SEC. RUMSFELD: That was S-I-N-E instead of S-I-G-N? (Laughter.) Is that right? The sine wave right?

GEN. PACE: Yes, I think so.

Q General Pace, do you know of any al Qaeda fighters or members that have been captured in Iraq since the war began? Now, this is specifically al Qaeda, not Ansar al-Islam. Do you know of any that have been captured since the beginning of the war?

GEN. PACE: I have not specifically looked into that, so I do not know the answer. I do know that we have been on operations where we have targeted individuals, and I do know that we have in fact captured many individuals. Once they get into the detainee program, I normally do not -- I have not been reading which column they belong in, as far as whether they are terrorists from one group or terrorists from another group. So that information may be available. It's not in my head.

Q There are commanders in the field saying that two were captured in Mosul over the past 14 days that they're calling specifically al Qaeda. Can you shed any light on that, and perhaps what they may be talking about? Is it Ansar al-Islam? What is that?

GEN. PACE: Yeah, I can be even more precise than the last two weeks. There were operations just yesterday in Mosul that specifically were the result of information provided to us by some Iraqis, that we, in fact, did go in to capture and detain. We did pick up some detainees. We do not know yet exactly who we have, and they're going through the triage process right now to determine who these individuals are.

Q And you don't know if al Qaeda has been found in Iraq, as of yet?

GEN. PACE: I do not know that.

Q General Pace?

Q Mr. Secretary, just to ask you about the progress toward the transition to returning sovereignty to the Iraqis. In light of the views expressed by Ayatollah Sistani on the question of direct elections versus caucuses, and other events in recent weeks, do you feel that the June 30th target date is in jeopardy? And if it were to move back some modest amount, would that have any effect on the military operation, U.S. military?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Are you asking Pete?

Q I'm asking either one, Mr. Secretary.

GEN. PACE: Militarily is independent of the process that's ongoing now for elections, non-elections, constitutional writing, non-constitutional writing. What we are going to do is provide, as best we can, the secure environment inside of which the Iraqi people, through their own governance, can get to their own future.

Q I guess what I was asking you was whether you feel the June 30th target date is in jeopardy at this stage.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, goodness, it's too early to tell. There are going to be ups and downs and zigs and zags in the road. We think the November 15th program is a good one. We think that the Governing Council agreed to it. And we think that trying -- we're very much in favor of elections. But the question is -- and I think most outside experts look at it and say that it would be very difficult to have broad elections between now and July 1st. And so the question is, is it more important to have elections and, in the event the experts are correct, delay the transfer of sovereignty, or to transfer sovereignty and have elections thereafter and in support of that in some way? And those are things that are going to be worked out. But my -- our position, our administration's position is very much in favor of the November 15th agreement.

Excuse me. Right in front, yeah?

Q General Pace, in the last few days, eyewitnesses and other witnesses say that several Iraqi civilians have been killed by U.S. troops.

SEC. RUMSFELD: What happened to them?

Q Several Iraqi civilians have been killed by U.S. troops, according to eyewitnesses and witnesses. Can you tell us if you know anything about these two events, today in Fallujah and last night in Baghdad; and also, how these are investigated, what kind of accounting there is, what kind of compensation there is? And do you keep track of the numbers?

GEN. PACE: I don't know anything about Fallujah. I do know about Baghdad. Yesterday in Baghdad there was a U.S. military convoy behind which was a civilian vehicle. The military convoy was attacked by an explosive device on the side of the road or in the road -- I'm not sure which. When that went off and after the event took place, they were found to be Iraqi civilians who had been killed. That much we know. We do not know how they were killed, if they were killed by the blast or by something else. That is being investigated by the command, and that will be available to you in Baghdad when the CJTF-7 has a chance to fully investigate.

And what happens on each of these is, the command will assign a team to look into the facts as best we can tell them, talk to the individual soldiers who were involved, talk to whatever civilians are available to talk to and try to piece together a picture of what really happened, and then take appropriate action. If there's something that's been done improperly by the military, then action is taken. If there's something that has to do with tactics, techniques and procedures that we could change, that would make things less unsafe for ourselves and for those

who might be near us, then we change those tactics.

Q Thus far, has anyone been compensated for a wrongful death that you know of, particularly since the end of major combat?

GEN. PACE: What we -- what the commanders in the field do, rather than try to compensate individuals, is, as part of an overall program, to do good works in the towns and the cities in which they are. So digging wells, and building roads, and finishing hospitals, and repairing schools and those kinds of things are done consistently across the board, whether or not there are -- whether or not there are injuries to civilians. But we are not in the business of specifically compensating individuals for injuries that they sustain as a part of ongoing combat operations.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The loss of -- the loss of innocent lives is always something that is a tragic and sad thing. To put it in context, however, there were tens of thousands of innocent lives being lost when Saddam Hussein was in office. There have been hundreds and hundreds of innocent lives being lost -- Iraqi lives being lost -- as the result of violence by terrorists in Iraq against Iraqi people. And I think it's important to keep those balances -- and those are not being investigated. Those are not being compensated. Those are not even being reported to any great extent.

Pam?

Q Sir, first a comment. Your complaint about the O'Neill book --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Did he write a book? (Laughter.) Why do you say that?

Q Your complaint about books like O'Neill's, that he was involved in, you said they represent a narrow, little slice of what they saw on a 360-degree view. That's like the embedding program -- (chuckles) -- in the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: It is.

Q -- Iraq war, which you seemed very pleased with.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I am.

(Scattered laughter.)

Q Here's my actual question.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I wasn't pleased with the -- (laughter) -- with the other.

Q My obligation. President Bush today apparently changed policy with regard to who can get contracts or prime contracts in Iraq, and so that Canada will be allowed to do that. Do you know, are there any other countries that are being considered for the same possibility?

SEC. RUMSFELD: There are. There are.

Q Are -- will you list them for us? Who's on that --

SEC. RUMSFELD: First of all, I don't think there was a change in policy. I think that -- I think it was an addition to policy. And let me explain the difference.

I think the policy that was announced, a lot of the press has reported it as though it were a Department of

Defense policy, which it wasn't ever. It was a fully coordinated United States government policy from day one. It had been agreed on, the T's crossed, the I's dotted. Everybody agreed on it, and it was announced here because of the CPA. It had to do with listing countries that would be eligible to bid on prime contracts. It did not address subcontracts, indicating that subcontracts could be bid on by anybody, and that's life. And it involved not the Iraqis' money or not other countries' money, but only the U.S. money -- the taxpayers' money of the United States.

The second tranche, which is coming, is going to permit some additional countries, as I understand it. And that, again, is an interagency process. And what the president announced, I believe -- I could be wrong -- but I think what he announced was -- and where's Larry? You can correct me, as you always do. I believe he announced that Canada would be in the second tranche, and in the meantime, Canada could bid on the subcontracts. So I don't think there was any change to the initial announcement.

Q Right. Well, but from what I understand, Canada can't bid on the first 17 contracts that have been let, as is the policy. They will be allowed to bid on the other contracts that exist under this \$18.6 billion. And then there's a reference to a second tranche of construction contracts, which I don't know anything about, and haven't been announced. So that's where I think a lot of the confusion is coming from. The first 17 are the construction?

STAFF: There's a little confusion about the tranche and the numbers, and we can provide all that.

Q Okay.

Q Mr. Secretary?

STAFF: What the secretary said is basically accurate. The second tranche is -- (off mike) --

Q Can you tell us the other nations -- the other nations that you might extend the same flexibility to?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'd rather not. There were three or four I saw on the list as the interagency was working this. And I remember one or two, but I couldn't do it completely. And Larry will get it to you after the meeting.

STAFF: We'll provide it to you.

Q And the idea behind it is that maybe they didn't qualify under the strict definitions of what the coalition is, but you want them to be able to participate because -- why?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I think the president's words were pretty good, and I'd stick with them.

Q Are France and Germany on the list?

SEC. RUMSFELD: If in doubt, go with the president.

Q Are France and Germany on the list?

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, when Saddam Hussein was captured, it was said that he was talkative, but not particularly forthcoming, and in fact, somewhat defiant. In the month since his capture, has he provided U.S. interrogators with any useful information about WMD [weapons of mass destruction], the insurgency or anything

else in regard to his regime? And what was behind the decision by the Pentagon to declare him a prisoner of war? And does that in any way tie the U.S. administration's hands in turning him over to the Iraqis eventually?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wow. First of all, I'm not going to characterize his interrogations. It seems to me that he's a very high-value person in terms of intelligence, and we've asked the Central Intelligence Agency to manage the interrogations. They're doing it. They're doing a good job. And how we characterize what he said or what he has done or what value there has been, it seems to me I have asked George to do, and he's doing it. And we'll leave it there.

The second part of your question, on the EPW [enemy prisoner of war] issue, let me -- I have commented on this a couple of times, and I think my comments will be pretty much the same, that there are technical legal issues involved here. The policy people make the decisions, and the legal interagency group has been, obviously, thinking this through.

And if you think about Saddam Hussein's circumstance, the -- he had a potential to be prosecuted for activities against the Iraqi people. He has a potential to be prosecuted for his actions against the Kuwaiti people. He has a potential for being prosecuted against the Iranian people -- for his actions against the Iranian people, where he used gas. He has -- he is, as a military person, an enemy prisoner of war for the period up to May 1st. And he has the potential for being prosecuted for activities after May 1st involving the insurgency and the killing of coalition troops.

What the announcement has been, as I understand it, by the lawyers -- or a conclusion by the lawyers -- and I do not know myself whether it has been addressed at the policy level, but the lawyers have concluded -- probably properly, I assume properly, that he should be characterized as an EPW, enemy prisoner of war. Now -- full stop.

However, his status can be reviewed at any time, more than once. And so as additional information or as decisions are made, that may be either changed or amplified. But at the moment, you know, he is, I believe, being characterized as an enemy prisoner of war.

The third part of your question is could that in any way affect the possibility of the Iraqis being involved in his trial or his prosecution, and the answer is no. I mean, the reality is that the president has said, and the decision has been made, that he believes the Iraqi people need to be involved in that process in whatever way is ultimately decided.

Q Is it the intent of the U.S. -- of the Bush administration to have a military trial, a U.S. military trial of Saddam Hussein or to turn him over to the Iraqis?

SEC. RUMSFELD: The technical phrase as to how that will be done, I think, is open. But from what I have seen thus far, my impression is that the president is leaning towards having the Iraqis play a significant role.

Q That doesn't preclude a U.S. military trial for Saddam.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It certainly would move it off into the probability range -- into the lower end of the probability range, I would think. I think that the president's pretty well clear that he wants to have the Iraqi people engaged in this. And there is a law that's been put out by the Governing Council or -- I don't know; I guess it's not a law, it's something other than a law -- but a pronouncement that sets up an arrangement. And it does offer the possibility for international involvement, as I recall. I haven't read it for some --

STAFF: That's right. That's correct.

SEC. RUMSFELD: That is correct. Thank you.

(Cross talk.)

Q Mr. Secretary, I'd just like to ask you about an Army -- a report published by the Army War College last month and just to stipulate at the outset that the report reflects only the views of its author, not the Army War College itself.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah.

Q But nevertheless, it's gained some currency because of the reputation of the author, Jeffrey Record. And he says, just very briefly, that the global war -- that it was a strategic error to link the war against al Qaeda with Saddam Hussein's Iraq; that the war against Iraq was not integral to the war on terror, but rather a detour from it; and that the overall war against terror is strategically unfocused, promises more than it can deliver and threatens to dissipate scarce U.S. military resources over too many ends.

Could I just get your general reaction to that criticism, which reflects the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Take a wild, flying guess! (Laughter.) I mean, really, Jamie!

You're quite right. A person wrote an article, like an op-ed piece, and it's out there. And everyone's free to say whatever they think. That is the position of some people in the United States and in the world -- what he repeated -- and that's fine. It obviously is inaccurate. (Scattered laughter.)

(Chuckles.)

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q A point of --

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Besides that ?) -- (chuckles) --

Q A point of clarification on this idea that the administration was predisposed to go to war with Iraq before September 11th. A number of press accounts now, drawing from statements that Paul O'Neill said, have characterized you personally as pushing for regime change in Iraq in the early spring of 2001, as a way to stabilize the Middle East, in Cabinet meetings; that you were personally pushing for that. Can you just set the record straight on what your position was then?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, in the early spring of '01 -- (pauses) -- I was not, to my knowledge, to my recollection, pushing for much of anything, except transforming the department. We had a -- very few political appointees were here. Paul Wolfowitz came in, and I looked at it the other day, and it was like, you know, three or four or five people were here as February and March and April came along.

And we were all working very hard doing an awful lot of things that the president had directed us to do. Some of the issues involved Iraq, as I indicated earlier. Clearly, I was deeply concerned about the fact that our airplanes were being shot at on a continuing, almost daily basis. And -- but I think that characterization is certainly not a characterization that I would use.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah?

Q You had said earlier that you do not expect 100,000 troops to be deployed permanently in any

country. And I wondered whether -- with the continuing helicopter attacks on U.S. forces and the problems now with Sistani objecting to the U.S. plan for the government there, whether it looks like there will be 100,000 U.S. troops in Iraq for a considerable period.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't know what "a considerable period" is. Obviously, we are there with 123,000 or 124,000 troops. We are adding international troops. We're adding Iraqi forces. Our hope and expectation is that we'll be able to draw down our forces over some reasonable period of time.

And my statement stands -- that I think that we're currently in a spike period in terms of the use of U.S. military forces in a conflict. And I don't anticipate that the United States would permanently be in a conflict, whether in Iraq or some other country, with those kinds of numbers of troops over a sustained period of time. And it seems to me that the emergency authority we have is appropriate to allow us to relieve stress on the force by increasing, as I indicated, I believe, some 36,000 troops over our statutory end strength.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes?

Q I had a question on a transformational program. You've mentioned a couple times the need to transform --

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll make this the last question.

Q The Joint Strike Fighter, the biggest Pentagon weapons program ever, is running into some early cost problems in development. You're well aware of that. How concerned are you, A, about the problem, and B, what metrics or which sign would you like to see in the next three or four months to give you assurance that this is not going to run away and become a huge budget-buster?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, well, let me put it this way. I have -- we have watched -- all of us have watched weapons programs, and they tend to have their good days and their bad days; and they tend to be -- have technical problems that they have to work out and they work them out; and things tend to slide to the right somewhat from time to time. I have not particularly focused on this particular blip in the evolution of that weapons system. I think that time will tell, and we have got a lot of fine people who are working on the program. And we have -- gosh -- I don't know how many countries.

Q Quite a few.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Big, large number of countries that are participating in it, in a whole host of different ways. And I think -- I think it's probably, you know, not an unusual phase for a weapon program of that type.

Q You're not unduly alarmed at this point, then?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Not at this point. Not at this point, no.

Q Okay.

Q Are you going to serve French wine on Thursday, Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: What's happening Thursday?

Q To your French counterpart who is coming over?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We're going to meet in the middle of the day. I don't have wine in the middle of -- (laughter) --

Q In Europe, not in the United States!

Q Not on my watch! (Laughter.) #####

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