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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Peter Pace, U.S. Marine Corps, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff **March 09, 2004 1:30 PM EST**

Defense Department Operational Update Briefing

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SEC RUMSFELD: Good afternoon.

Yesterday in Baghdad the 25 members of the Iraqi Governing Council signed the transitional administrative law, or TAL, which will serve as the country's interim constitution until a permanent constitution is established some time in the future. The law had been scheduled to be signed last Friday, as you probably noted, but was delayed as the Council discussed last minute issues that had been raised by some of the members. Even the brief delay in the final signing is a sign of the remarkable progress that has taken place in Iraq.

As the Governing Council debated this weekend, the world had an opportunity to see Iraqis from a full range of ethnic and political and religious traditions settle their differences peacefully, debate, discuss and engage in a free exchange of views that are, as we all know, the hallmarks of democratic societies. These are things that we Americans after 227 years take for granted. Delays in the enactment of a new law can be an everyday occurrence in democracies. Indeed, even our Senate has a formal process, or a filibuster, by which one senator alone can stop passage of a bill by simply extending debate. But for Iraqis, who at this time last year lived under one of the world's most brutal dictatorships, the process of political debate and discussion is, in a sense, new, which is why this weekend's events are historic and important.

Iraq now has an interim constitution with a bill of rights that protects the rights of all Iraqi citizens. Iraqis are now guaranteed freedom of religion and worship, the right of free expression, the right to peacefully assemble, to organize political parties, to demonstrate, to vote, to a fair trial, equal treatment under the law, and discrimination based on gender, nationality, religion or origin is prohibited. The protections of individual liberties in this new bill of rights is unprecedented in the history of Iraq.

But just as important as the law itself is the process by which it was established, a process that required debate but also compromise. The leaders of Iraq's Governing Council have not only enacted a landmark law, they have shown the world that Iraqis are on the path and have a willingness to do the difficult work of democracies. The violence in Iraq last week is another reminder that even as the Iraqis take hold of their country the war against terrorists continues. Dangerous adversaries remain in Iraq and elsewhere in the world, whose objective is to kill innocent men, women and children. We are and we remain at war so it's important that we as a

country continue to invest in the defense capabilities that are needed to prevail in that effort. These investments are significant, to be sure, but they pale compared to the cost in lives and treasure of another attack like the one on September 11th.

This is the time to press forward with transformation of our nation's defenses. The men and women in uniform who are risking their lives in Iraq, in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the war on terror need our support and they need the tools to prevail in this war and to prevail and prepare for the next.

General Pete Pace.

GEN. PACE: Thank you, sir.

If I may, I'd like to take notice of the fact that in the back of the room there are about a dozen or so officers who are currently students at the National War College who are studying under their media elective. It's significant for a couple of reasons, not the least of which is, when I went through that school in 1986, that would have been unheard of. And for this to be happening now --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Study the media in which way? (Laughter.)

GEN. PACE: (Laughs.) Sir, how to be cooperative (in/and ?) things that lead to embedded media like we've had, I think, is very, very healthy.

And I'm glad you're all here.

Second, in Haiti the multinational forces there are doing well. The U.S. contribution is just a little bit over 1,600 right now. French, Canadians and Chileans are at about 700 and growing. And that is all proceeding apace.

Third, I just came here from a meeting with about a thousand of the leaders of the Veterans of the Foreign Wars who are here in Washington having their national conference. And it's just a good opportunity for us all to remember what wonderful, patriotic individuals are in that organization and so many others, who gave us a legacy of freedom in this country, who continue in patriotic acts and take such great care of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines when they come home.

So to them and to everyone like them around this country who makes us feel warm and welcome and at home when we do come home, thank you very much.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Charlie?

Q Mr. Secretary, just away from Iraqi and Haiti briefly. A new Air Force study shows reports of nearly 100 sexual assaults in the Pacific Command area over the last two years involving young Air Force personnel, and the Air Force has ordered a service-wide study of how that problem is addressed. Last month you ordered a similar study following reports of sexual assaults in Kuwait and Iraq. Sir, are you convinced or are you worried that this is a growing problem in the military?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Without -- we have a study and an analysis taking place, and the report that I requested in February is due on April 30th, as I recall. And I, needless to say, am anxious to see what it has to say and will be informed by it. One cannot read the kinds of reports you're referring to and not have a deep concern about the armed forces, because we do hold ourselves to a higher standard, but also by the society, if that type of thing is occurring. And what we need to do is to get the facts and to come to some judgments. And that is the process that we initiated when the -- we had the first clue of concerns of the type you're referring to.

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah?

Q May I go back to the interim constitution for a moment? I have three questions I'd like to ask you, but you'll probably only give me one, so I'll try and condense it.

What was the model for this constitution? Was it the U.S. Constitution? And were U.S. constitutional scholars involved in helping the 25 put it together?

SEC. RUMSFELD: There were constitutional experts from a full range of coalition countries involved. The Iraqi Governing Council, in addition, had consultants and advisers, constitutional experts of various types.

And I think to suggest that there was a model is probably not -- I wasn't close enough to it, to be perfectly honest, to be able to say that they began with a certain piece of paper -- I don't know that -- which your question suggests might have been the case.

I do know that Jerry Bremer worked hard with the Governing Council, assisting them, giving them information, suggestions, and trying to not so much guide and direct the content as to work out solutions among the parties that had differing views and opinions, to see that the process continued moving forward.

The basics that -- if there was a model, I would say it was the model that President Bush set forth when he said that Iraq should be a single country, not broken up in pieces; it should be a country that's at peace with its neighbors; it should be a country that's respectful of its -- the lives and the circumstances of all of the various people in that country, regardless of gender or religion or ethnic background.

Q That bill of rights there -- I mean, is that sort of indigenous? It's almost a copy of ours --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't think that that would be the proper phrase in Arabic. I'm sure the -- many countries in that part of the world have had constitutions. In an awful lot of the constitution of the world, people have looked at the model constitutions of other countries, including ours. But I think that phrase probably translates into something quite different in Arabic.

Q May I have a question for General Pace?

GEN. PACE: Okay.

Q Could you give us any details on the apparent additional shooting of a Haitian by the Marines last night? And also, you mentioned the 1,600-odd. Is the deployment continuing, or is that -- have you reached the end of that? And is the coalition -- (inaudible) -- 700 people enough to carry out this interim force?

GEN. PACE: From a U.S. perspective, we've said that the U.S. deployment would be in the range of 1,500 to 2,000, and it's at about 1,600 right now. And the commanders on the ground will make sure the secretary understands what they need, and I'm sure he'll provide.

But right now, we're well within the range we thought we would have on the ground. And the coalition countries that are there, that I mentioned, France, Chile and Canada, do have about 700 total there. I'll leave it up to those countries to announce how many more people they're going to have come. But we do know that there are other countries that are looking to increase -- those countries and others are looking to increase their contributions.

With regard to the actions of Marines on the ground, well within the rules of engagement, which are very,

very basically and simply an individual Marine has -- an individual service member, in this case a Marine, has the absolute right to defend himself and those around him, and when someone threatens force, as was done last night, that they get dealt with, as they were dealt with last night.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We're already working on the follow-on force that we're hopeful will come in within 90 days, the U.N. force. This is, of course, a U.N. authorized multinational force that we're leading. And the U.N. resolution talks about 90 days when there would be a U.N. follow-on multinational force, one would think sponsored by the United Nations. And what that size ought to be is something -- they're sending an assessment team down, I think, this --

GEN. PACE: That's right. A U.N. team with U.S. participation.

SEC. RUMSFELD: The U.N. is.

Q So for the time being, is 2,300 sufficient?

SEC. RUMSFELD: If it's not, certainly the commander will let us know about it.

Q Are they all Marines, General?

GEN. PACE: Mostly Marines. There's a hundred or so who are other service, but the vast majority are Marines. You've also got some Army Special Forces, and Navy and Air Force -- and Coast Guard. Excuse me. Very important.

Q General Pace, could you say how --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wait a second. The Coast Guard are not counted, I don't think, in the 1,600.

GEN. PACE: Not in the 1,600 no. But they are participating, and as you know, are doing great work in the waters around Haiti and the port area.

Q In the Haiti incident, could you say how force was threatened, exactly what happened that made, you know, the Marines feel that they needed to shoot?

GEN. PACE: First reporting -- so it could be that what I think I know and what I'll end up knowing may be different -- but what I was told this morning when I came in was that there was a vehicle that was traveling at a high rate of speed and aimed itself at the Marines; had they not fired, they would have been hit by the vehicle.

Q General, just as a follow-up on Haiti, CIA Director Tenet today, in prepared testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, had a new conclusion about Haiti along the lines of humanitarian disaster and mass migration is still possible, if order is not restored. He had some concerns about that. From your vantage point, how concerned are you about a humanitarian disaster occurring and potential mass migrations?

GEN. PACE: Well, I think anything's possible, which is why General Tom Hill has a whole series of plans that he has developed over months to be able to respond to whatever the problem might be. I'm very comfortable that the force on the ground right now is a force that General Hill needs. I'm very comfortable that the U.N. is going to do what it says it's going to do, which is to do the next assessment for the entire country, see what's needed, and muster the international force that will follow the forces being led by us right now. So I think for where we are right now we have the right-sized force.

SEC. RUMSFELD: But just to address the point, I mean, there's no indication of mass migration. Quite the contrary; it's down to zero for the last three days, as I recall, of anyone trying to leave the country. Second,

there's no indication of humanitarian disaster. There's ample food in the country from everything we're told. There may be some distribution problems, but neither of those are currently an issue.

Q Neither of those are what?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Currently an issue.

Q But you've looked ahead and planned for that day.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Of course you do. You plan for lots of things, but I wouldn't want to leave the impression that either one is considered likely at the present time. Clearly it was a concern. We've had mass migration, and an awful lot of people got killed trying to escape that country and get to a better circumstance in their lives, and that's a tragic thing. That's not happened and the Coast Guard has done a very fine job of returning those that have come out, and at the present time there is no out-migration at all.

Q Mr. Secretary, the DCI also mentioned that he did not see any direct ties between former regime leaders and the transnational terrorist groups up in Iraq. That seems to conflict somewhat with what some of the military leaders have been saying.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's a hard thing to know. I'm without an opinion. I've seen views on both sides, and I think that it will have to sort itself out. And I think frequently -- you phrased the question a certain way. Sometimes the question is is there any connection, and I don't know many people who know enough and have enough confidence in their knowledge that they would assert absolutely not. Then some people want to know if it's growing or declining. (Chuckles.) And then it gets into, well, what do you think as opposed to what do you know, and I'm not in that business. So I don't know what anyone should add.

I mean, he's the director of Defense Intelligence -- I mean, of Central Intelligence, and he has the responsibility to opine on that for the United States government, and I think you had probably better go with him; although that's not to suggest that there aren't going to be military and civilians in our country and in other countries who might not have a different view and a, you know, reasonable reason for believing something to the contrary.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q Mr. Secretary?

SEC. RUMSFELD: James?

Q The Department of Defense has transferred five British detainees from Guantanamo Bay back to the British government, and in return the British government has assured the U.S. that these detainees will not pose a threat to U.S. security or the allies of the United States. But they're going to go back now and be subject to British law, and according to all the British legal experts we talked to, there seems to be a consensus that it's highly likely they may be released. Is that going to be a problem for you since you've held these people for two years for the very reason to make sure that they didn't pose a threat?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's certainly not a problem for me; it's a question for our country, and the country -- government of the United States has addressed it. There apparently, as I recall, were nine U.K. detainees; I think five or four -- what did you say, five?

Q Well, five have been transferred.

SEC RUMSFELD: Five are being today transferred, as you indicated. Four are considered to be in a different category and they're not being transferred.

What will happen? We'll find out over time. We'll see what happens. We've transferred -- you never know for sure in life, but our government made a considered judgment that it was appropriate to transfer these individuals to the government of the United Kingdom on the basis that you've described.

Q If released, do you believe they would pose a threat?

SEC RUMSFELD: The people who have analyzed these individuals and interrogated them and looked at it and processed them and considered this have come to a conclusion that this was the appropriate thing to do on the part of the United States, and therefore we're doing it.

Q And why did it take two years to come to that conclusion?

SEC RUMSFELD: Oh, it doesn't take two years, it takes -- that's not a good way to phrase it. It sounds as though you sat down -- you scooped them up in Afghanistan, sat down and spent two years trying to figure out what do with them. That's just not the case. The goal was to take these people off a battlefield and keep them away from killing other people. And that's been accomplished. That's a good thing for two years. That's not a bad thing.

Second, the goal was to interrogate them, find out what do they know; are there other terrorists running around that we could learn information about? Do you they know where caches of weapons are? Do they know information about techniques or approaches? So they get interrogated for a couple of years. Then at some point you say we think we got what we need out of this crowd -- five people -- and let's move them along. Let's -- we don't want to keep everybody at Guantanamo. We've moved I don't know how many -- 105 I think so far, counting these folks -- and there will be more.

Of the 105 some have been transferred -- I don't know, these five and I guess 12 others were transferred into the custody of the governments that they carry passports for, and the others were just let go; they were on their own recognizance. We do know already, I believe -- at least, let me put it this way: I've been told by senior people in this department that of the people that have been released we know of at least one who has gone back to being a terrorist. So life isn't perfect. (Laughs.) In other words, you can make mistakes in evaluating these people. Let's hope that none of these do.

Q Mr. Secretary, last week Senators Hagel and Reed again proposed a permanent increase in military end strength of some 30,000 troops. Why not take them up on that and how do you respond -- what do you say to the senators and other who believe that U.S. military forces are now being stretched too thin?

SEC RUMSFELD: Those are entirely different issues and people are making them the mistake of combining them and suggesting that they're one thing and they're not. The forces are being stretched and we're concerned about it, and we've taken some 25 or 30 steps to find ways to reduce the stress on the force. And I've mentioned, oh, probably 10 or 15 of them here. One of them is to rebalance the active component with the reserve component; another is to do a much better job of alerting people so that they know in advance and can manage their employer relationships and their family relationships; another is the new national security personnel system, where we believe we can reduce the number of military people serving in positions that don't require military people; and on and on and on. We'd be happy to give you the whole list. So that's one thing we're doing on stress on the force.

Second, full stop. The second thing we're doing to reduce stress on the force is that under the emergency authorities we have we're allowed to increase to any level we want -- and we've been doing that. The services

have been going up; tens of thousands of additional people are on active service -- not Guard and Reserve, but active service. And we've been doing that for two years. And apparently, some people didn't understand that. And they kept thinking, if the force is stressed, we ought to increase the number of people in the force. And, of course, we were already doing that for two years. And the force is less stressed because we have done that. Our concern is that you could end up down the line discovering slightly too late that the stress on the force adversely affects recruiting and retention, which is what the concern ought to be. And, in fact, we're finding thus far that that's not the case. Is it possible that in a year from now it might be? Yes. And that's why we're taking all these steps to avoid that, and to see if we can avoid it.

Next. There is a law, a statute, that specifies that each service has to have a certain number of people on a certain date, September 30th, each year. Now, that means that when there's no emergency and you're not using your emergency authorities, each service ends up, to save money and to manage money properly, they have a choice. If they need fewer than that number and the Congress leaves that number, what they do is they drop down below that number all year long, and then at the end climb back up to the number. I mean, that's just an exercise in managing a problem. The statutory limit is a problem. So they manage around it. Another service does the opposite. It needs more than the statutory limit, so it goes above it, and then at the very last day, drops down to that level. I mean, this has been going on for decades, I think, ever since this was passed.

You say why wouldn't you want an increase in end strength, end strength being the statutory number. And the reason is, we don't need it. We've got emergency powers, and this is a spike in activity. We can use the emergency powers. We have been for two years. We're doing it very successfully. And things are fine without an increase.

If we had an increase in end strength in the statute, which is being -- what's being proposed, what would happen? What would happen would be, we would have a requirement to have that many people at the end of the year, on one day. And therefore, everyone would have to manage around that number, and we'd have to pay for it. And it is very expensive. And what the Army proposed instead -- General Schoomaker come down here and briefed on -- what he wants to do is to use this ability to go above his statutory number during this period so that he can reconstitute his force, the United States Army, in a way that it's going to be appropriate going forward with additional brigades, and then come back down to the statutory number, which he believes he can because of the 25, 30 things we have discussed, ways of reducing stress. And he'd much rather do that and have the funds in the procurement account that he knows he needs, rather than having to be required by law to have people he does not believe he will need but doesn't know of certain knowledge yet.

That's how he's going to get from 33 to 43 or 48 brigades and increase the capability of the Army. And he'll be happy to come back and brief on it again, but the idea of changing the statutory end strength and thinking you've relieved stress on the armed forces, it seems to me, is not a full understanding of the situation.

And it is complicated. Do you want to comment on this?

GEN. PACE: Part of it's science and part of it's art. And everything that the secretary just said is very much a part of both, but a lot of the science is the math. And the math is, with 2.6 million active, Guard and Reserve, we can maintain 200,000, 300,000 folks deployed for the foreseeable future. The art part is how you do the balance and the mix that the secretary's talking about, but also understanding whether or not you're in a spike or in a new plateau.

And for those things where we're in a new plateau, like civil affairs and the like, we are, in fact, changing the mix to handle that. And the other things, where you're in a spike, like ground forces stationed in Iraq, then you don't need to adjust to that for the next two or three years.

So it's really a question of what do you get for the taxpayer dollars that are already being spent. And we all believe in uniform. We recommended to the secretary that he do exactly what he just told you he's going to do,

which is to rebalance the force internally and use the authorities he already has to take care of this temporary problem, rather than fixing a long-term problem that, to our mind, does not exist.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Let me follow up on this because this is so important, and it's important people understand it.

Think of a barrel of water, and the spigot is about a third of the way down from the top. And you open the spigot and you can only access the amount of water that's above the spigot. Now we've got, as he said, 2.4, 2.6 million men and women in uniform, or in the Reserves, Selected Reserve or in the Individual Ready Reserve. So think of that barrel with 2.6 million.

Our task is to sustain -- on a rotational basis at the moment, maybe a spike, we hope, we think -- maybe a plateau, probably not -- is to sustain what? One hundred fifteen thousand in Iraq, add another 100,000 for the sake of argument. Got different parts of the world; not true, but possible. Out of 2.6 million, we can't sustain 200,000 people? Why? Because the spigot's too high. All the 25 things we're doing is lowering the spigot so we can access the full 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 million men and women in uniform.

The idea that you need a bigger barrel, which is -- increasing end strength says you need a bigger barrel -- when you've got a spigot that's one-third of the way down, instead of down at the bottom, I don't think the taxpayers of the United States want us enlarging that barrel. I think they want us to make better use of what's in the barrel.

Q But by the same token, Mr. Secretary --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Wait. Wait a second. Wait a second.

Q Just a quick follow-up. When does the spike --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Only if it's insightful.

Q It is.

Q Mine is insightful. (Laughter.)

Q When does the spike --

Q Mine is very insightful.

Q When does the spike become a plateau?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Ah! At that moment where we call it that. (Laughter.) I mean, you know the answer to that. I don't know. It's -- what is the -- someday, maybe. Maybe not. Our goal is -- we're -- was Bosnia a spike or a plateau? Long time. Ninety-five to '04. Now it's almost down to zero. Good thing.

Was Liberia a spike or a plateau? We put forces in, and we got them out.

Is Haiti going to be a spike or a plateau? I think spike. I think the U.N.'s going to follow it, take over.

Afghanistan. Are we going to eventually be able to reduce some forces there and in Iraq over time? I think so. Time will tell.

Q (Off mike.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Are we staying -- wait a second. Here. I had one here.

Q Well, on the same issue --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Just --

Q (Inaudible) -- in your opening statement, you referred to the adversaries we still have in Iraq and elsewhere.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Sure.

Q If I can take you elsewhere, recently General Jones, his deputy and another senior European Command official have all been traveling in West Africa, and all of them have been talking about a concern about the spread of terrorism, and particularly in the Sahara. And I was wondering if you share their concern. And what kind of active measures are we taking or considering to combat it? And are we going to see a Task Force Sahara, like we have Task Force Horn of Africa?

GEN. PACE: The secretary has tasked each of his combatant commanders worldwide to have constant vigilance on their areas of responsibility, General Jones obviously included. And they all report back to the secretary two to -- at least once a month, sometimes twice a month, on the current status of terrorist activities in their areas of responsibility. And based on that input from them, then recommendations come forward to the secretary about what we should do about a particular entity at this time.

I'm not going to get into specifically what we will or won't do about terrorists in Africa, other than to say that when you lay out the mosaic, it becomes apparent those that are current threats to the U.S. and those need to do things about (sic), and then we go about giving options to the secretary to do something about it.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll take a few more, and then we'll have to start moving towards closing.

Yeah?

Q There may be an obvious answer to this question, but I actually am not aware that you've addressed the topic yet -- either of you. Of course there are a number of jurisdictions in the United States now that are performing civil union and same-sex marriages. And at least within these jurisdictions, the head of these jurisdictions believe these proceedings to be legal.

Until otherwise determined by any court, what's the Pentagon and the Defense Department's view on these types of proceedings for military members? Under the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, are civil unions and same-sex marriages permissible? And if not, why not? Will you have to reconsider the policy as these continue to happen in the United States?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's not something we've addressed -- at least I have not.

Q Is it a question you would be willing to take for the general counsel? My question boils down to: Are civil unions and same-sex marriages allowable for members of the U.S. military?

SEC. RUMSFELD: It's not something we've addressed. And the Department of Defense tends to function in the United States of America under the laws of the United States of America, in general. What that could mean in this instance, I simply don't know.

Pam?

Q You mentioned earlier about a terrorist who had gone back to being a terrorist. Could you tell us what country he's from, what organization, and what activities constitute being a terrorist?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I can't. I can't.

Q Could you at least describe the activities?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I can't --

Q Because I think we're going to go back and report this, but I'd like to have a little bit more information.

SEC. RUMSFELD: I can't give you any more information because I don't -- I've forgotten. I was told one day that this happened. And why don't you talk to Larry about it and see if we know whether it's public or not. But it has happened.

Q But he's not one of the 12 that was returned to those countries to be held, he's one of the ones who was set free --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I don't even know that. I know he was in the total of the 100-plus, 105 or whatever it is. Whether he was in the 12 or the 88, I don't know.

Q Mr. Secretary, on the intelligence issue in Iraq, obviously the Iraqi Survey Group continues its work. Today Director Tenet was asked about paying the Iraqi National Congress and some members there in their intelligence efforts postwar. It's understood that the Department of Defense is doing that allotment. Do you think it's valuable still to pay INC members for their work in sifting through documents inside Iraq?

SEC. RUMSFELD: My recollection is -- and if someone here recalls better than I do -- my recollection is that the Congress passed a law called the Iraqi Liberation Act -- I'm getting nods that that's correct --

Q So far.

SEC. RUMSFELD: So far. (Light laughter.) And that it authorized the United States government to do certain things -- among them, that was one -- and that the United States government has been doing that in a variety of ways, not simply to the organizations you may have cited, or that may have been raised in the hearing which I didn't see today, and different elements of the government are involved in it. And one would think that at least that far, in answer to your specific question as to whether it still makes sense, that the people responsible for doing that obviously still think it does make sense, or they would have stopped, or changed it, and they may have adjusted it or changed it or stopped it. I just don't know.

Q A lot of people have been criticizing the intelligence that has been coming from the INC both pre-war and post-the regime fall. How do you characterize the intelligence that you've seen from the Iraqi National Congress or from Ahmed Chalabi?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah, I wouldn't have the -- any way in the world to do that. I look at all-source information that's been managed and processed by the Defense Intelligence -- by the Central Intelligence Agency, and not -- I should say, by the intelligence community. And it all is brought together, and the only time I know what any of the various elements think, have said, or had any reason to believe it, that you could trace it back as to who said what, is if there's a footnote objecting to something. And that happens from time to time, that they'll say one agency or another disagrees with this, or has a slightly different view. But I just don't have any idea. I -- I don't look at the intelligence that way.

Q Mr. Secretary, could I borrow your --

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll make you the next-to-last question.

Q -- if I could borrow your barrel analogy for a few moments --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, good! It's actually Pete Schoomaker's. I fell in love with it. I think it's a perfect analogy.

Q -- the department has a rather large barrel of money --

SEC. RUMSFELD: What does?

Q The department has a rather large barrel of money. And there are some in the Congress who want to shrink that barrel, or give you a smaller one. Can you talk to us a little bit about --

SEC. RUMSFELD: There always have been and always will be some.

Q Particularly right now there's a budget resolution on the Senate floor that cuts you by \$7 billion. Can you talk to us a little bit about what the department will do, what contingency plans you're developing for cuts in programs if there is a budget resolution that cuts you?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No. I not only can't, I wouldn't. It would be like teeing up a list of -- that someone ought to go after to take away because it's not terribly important. I mean, obviously we spent a lot of time on that budget, and the people in this building worked their hearts out on that budget. And we wrestled it through OMB and with the president, and they made a -- the president sent his budget up. And he wants the budget passed. And he wants it -- wants it passed the way he sent it up. Now the debate begins and we'll see. The president proposes, the Congress disposes.

Q But if you've been informed of all that, why wouldn't you tell us what you would lose if you have to cut that budget?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We would lose everything in it, down to the point that the number ended up. And the House is talking about 2 billion (dollars). The Senate's talking about 7 billion (dollars). It's perfectly possible to go into a conference on something like that and end up with no cut. I've seen that happen. In fact, we might even see that happen this time.

Q General Pace?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Ap ap ap ap ap ap. The last question. Who said General Pace?

Q General Pace, right here. (Laughter.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yeah, here, here. (Laughter.)

Q That's my life, back and forth.

Q General, there was another U.S. fatality in Iraq today north of Baghdad, I believe an IED. That was the first in a week, and the statistics would seem to indicate it's coming down from that tragic spike we had in November. Is this reflective of anything yet? Can you comment on that? Might it be tactics that the coalition is using, or is it the enemy sitting softer targets? Does this tell you anything yet, the statistics?

GEN. PACE: It's very difficult to take a statistic -- a snapshot in time and make any kind of post or prejudgment about what that specifically means. Clearly today, like yesterday, every death of a U.S. service member, whether it's one in a week or one in a day or one in a month, is tragic for all of us and especially their families. So talking about numbers really makes me uneasy in the first place.

We have been doing things differently tactics-, techniques- and procedures-wise. We have had a lot of success on the intel side of the house, collecting up some of the perpetrators. We have had a large increase in the number of Iraqis who are involved in their own security. And as you look at the Iraqi numbers of those in the five branches of their police, armed forces, et cetera, some 200,000 of them, they have lost lives in defense of their country.

So it's not good or productive right now, I think, to focus in on a number that reflects a week or a month. What is important is that the total number of security forces -- U.S. staying stable, coalition staying stable, and Iraqis growing very quickly and very substantially -- to me is what the real story is. And over time, as they get more training and they become more capable and competent, they will be able to take on more and more of their own security, and it will be that force that will provide the security for the government that takes effect on 30 June and the government that follows after that.

So I prefer to focus in on atmosphere and security situation and not on individual numbers because that can change tomorrow, it can change while we're speaking here right now. So it's not a good thing to focus on.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Now a thought for each of you in the front few rows. You could go back and introduce yourself to the folks in the back who are studying the media so that they can study you! (Laughter, cross talk.)

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