

In the Spotlight



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Secretary of Defense

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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

January

DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers

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(Also participating is Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.)

Rumsfeld: Good afternoon, and a happy New Year.

As you know, over the past several weeks Afghan forces, anti-Taliban forces, with U.S. assistance at various places in Afghanistan, including the Tora Bora area, gathering information and collecting Qaeda and Taliban terrorists. Reports about mopping up -- meaning sort of the end of the effort notwithstanding, the war on terrorism is still in a relatively early phase. There's still a good deal to do and the al Qaeda network is global in scope, it's not regional, and it extends well beyond Afghanistan.

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We, of course, will continue our efforts in Afghanistan as long as it takes to complete the mission making sure the Taliban stays out of power so it can no longer harbor terrorists. And today, of course, we're functioning as a government. The new interim government is in place and shares our determination of terrorists and to keep them out.



Second, tracking down the Taliban and al Qaeda leaders and the network there and elsewhere in some time. And third, we're interested in strengthening Afghanistan and helping the Afghan people with humanitarian assistance, which we have been engaged in from the outset. And certainly there is more to do.

We do want to capture Osama bin Laden and Omar and the al Qaeda and Taliban leadership, but even if we were to capture them tomorrow, our job would still be far from over. The network is global. We continue to get additional intelligence information, which reinforces our conviction as to the depth of that terrorist network. So we do have a good distance to go.

I should note that the president on Friday signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act provides resources that are needed by this department and our country to defend the United States around the globe and to continue the global war on terrorism. It also provides funds that will help with the transformation, which we're determined to do. [[White House news release](#)]

General Myers?

Myers: Good afternoon, and again, happy New Year to you all.

Our operations in Afghanistan, as the secretary said, continue, trying to find the al Qaeda leadership. And as we do that, as the secretary said, continue to try to gather intelligence that we have pockets, some of which, as you -- as we've already reported, has been fruitful in stopping terrorism around the world for that matter.

We're also spending time dealing with the detainees, and I'll get into the numbers here in just a r non-governmental organizations as they provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

On detainees, we currently have 248 detainees as of this morning -- 225 in Kandahar, 14 in Bag on the Bataan, one in Mazar-e Sharif.

As you know, we're still working the details of Guantanamo, as the secretary mentioned last wee

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, I think it's important to note that there are still pockets of resistance. 7 dangerous place. We remain committed to rooting out the al Qaeda leadership that remains in A Taliban leadership that remains in Afghanistan, and for that matter destroying the al Qaeda netw

And with that, we're ready to take your questions.

Rumsfeld: Charlie?

Q: Mr. Secretary, are you going to start moving these detainees to Gitmo over the next couple of made any decision on the how, when, and where of military court martials?

Rumsfeld: I spent some time over the holidays digging into those subjects, and we are going to p Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as a -- the base there -- as a location for some detainees. They are in t beginning the construction so that we'll be able to provide the kind of security that these people r hard cases for the most part. If you think what happened in Mazar-e Sharif and the uprising in th the number of Pakistani soldiers that were killed -- there have been three or four incidents where demonstrated their determination to kill themselves, kill others, and/or escape. So it is important appropriate, and as soon as they're well enough along, we'll begin that process.

Q: And -- excuse me -- and the how, when and where of military court martials?

Rumsfeld: Well, as I say, I --

Q: Might they -- (off mike) -- Gitmo?

Rumsfeld: I haven't addressed that particular question, as to where they would be located with re commission. I did spend a good deal of time studying it and visiting with people about it, and we place which, over the coming period, we'll -- I'm sure, well before anyone is assigned to be tried I we'll have completed the kinds of decisions that are -- that need to be made.

Yeah?

Q: Mr. Secretary, how do you respond to people who are saying that the fact that Omar and bin I and their whereabouts -- the United States apparently having no clue as to their whereabouts is make the United States look ineffective and at a loss?

Rumsfeld: Well, you know, something's neither good nor bad, but thinking makes it so, I suppose just don't happen to think that. I think that the goal the United States embarked on was to stop te and to stop countries that are harboring terrorists.

The Taliban rule in Afghanistan has ended. That is a good thing. It's a good thing for the people I also a good thing for the people of the world that that country is no longer harboring terrorists.

Second, I think that it's -- one has to appreciate the difficulty of tracking down a single human be the difficulty the United States of America has tracking down the "10 Most Wanted" criminals. Th have been on those lists for years and years and years. It's difficult to do.

The real task is seeing that they are pursued, seeing that they're tracked down, seeing they're nc functioning effectively, in terms of conducting the network and raising money and recruiting peop which we know we've -- we've caused considerable disruption of that network.

Q: That's not sufficient, is it? Or is it, that --

Rumsfeld: I mean, obviously our goal is to find them, and we intend to keep pursuing that. But on that people are not committing terrorist acts, to the extent we can stop the recruiting, we can dry arrest enough people and gather enough intelligence that it makes it not impossible, to be sure, to prevent additional terrorist acts, but very, very difficult.

And that's our goal, and that's what we're doing. And --

Q: So if they remained at large but on the run or hiding out, then you would've accomplished you them from --

Rumsfeld: No, our goal is to find them and bring them to justice, as the president has said. But our goal. The other goal is to see that we reduce down the number of terrorist threats and terrorist attacks around the world, and I think we're -- we're having some success with respect to that.

Yes.

Q: General, you mentioned how some of the information found has been fruitful in thwarting terrorist attacks. Can you get into any more detail about that and also how this information has been used to lead to arrests?

Myers: I think that's -- some of that is still ongoing. So I -- I'm going to refrain from -- from getting

Q: The arrests or -- (off mike)?

Myers: Well, both arrests and both on thwarting other attacks.

Q: Well, can you say anything about past arrests as a result of the information?

Myers: I don't have the details on that right now, but -- but the information we have gotten has been in several cases, and we think we have thwarted attacks, and we had -- has led to, if not arrests, to surveillance of leadership. And that's been very, very useful, we think.

Q: One last thing: Mr. Secretary, if you could say anything about the senior leaders you have in mind releasing their names at any point?

Rumsfeld: We will at some point. If you take the top 10 or 15 Taliban, the top 10 or 15 al Qaeda cases, there's some that are dead -- a small number -- there are some that are captured. There are some we believe are dead and have no evidence that they're alive, but we also can't prove that they're not -- names have been in the press already, and I'm sure others will be released as we go along.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Rumsfeld: Yes, down here?

Q: Mr. Secretary, U.S. troops are dropping leaflets that show pictures of Osama bin Laden -- who look like without a beard, in Western dress. And I'm wondering if there's any concern that that kind of thing obviously is meant to get information about where he is, might not backfire, especially in the Arab world where you have already been accusing that the videotape that was found, that was shown, was doctored. You know, this is proof that America can doctor or make up things.

Rumsfeld: Interesting, yeah.

Q: Can you talk about that?

Rumsfeld: I had not thought about it, and I was not aware of that particular leaflet, although the leaflets are generally, very good and very effective, from everything we can tell.

Look, the people who are saying that -- the whole premise of bin Laden's activities in the world a

And the fact that people will say things like you just said they might say is true. That is a possibility something that's not true. There's nothing much we can do about it. We live in the world. We get go about and do our business as best we can.

Yes?

Q: Getting back to the Guantanamo location for the detainees. You talked about the need to construct facilities that are adequate to hold them. But can you discuss, please, the delicate, difficult problem of transporting detainees from Afghanistan to there, and the --

Rumsfeld: It's a long way. It's one of the disadvantages of Guantanamo Bay. But it has to be done. Every time people have messed with these folks, they've gotten in trouble. And they are very well hardened. They're willing to give up their lives, in many instances. I mean, think of what's been going down there in Kandahar. So all we can do is our best. And we plan to transport them and we place a certain amount of constraint so that those individuals do not kill Americans in transport or in Guantanamo.

Yes?

Q: If I could follow up, sir, if I could follow up the question about whether they would be accompanied by United States marshals, who have a tremendous experience in that, with the military accompanying them into that and the considerations that might affect those decisions?

Rumsfeld: I have not addressed it, but my assumption is it will be done by military personnel.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you talked about the global reach of the al Qaeda network. President Bush has said that al Qaeda is operating in some 68 countries around the world. Can you tell us what number or percentage of those countries -- let's say it's 68 -- are active host countries of al Qaeda and what number of them are active host countries?

Rumsfeld: A relatively small number are active host countries compared to the 68, so it would be a small number.

Yes?

Q: Do those host countries then consider themselves possible potential next targets in our efforts?

Rumsfeld: One of the problems with that is some countries have been relatively hospitable to the al Qaeda, others -- of those, I think that in some cases they have become less hospitable. I decided, after what's happened in recent months, that it's not their first choice to be thought of as hospitable to the al Qaeda.

Q: Have they become our allies, would you say, in some cases?

Rumsfeld: That would be a stretch. (Laughter.)

Yes?

Q: Sir, just a quick housekeeping question about what the Congress has been doing lately. You've talked about the goal of turning waste here at DoD into weapons, into programs that can help you prosecute transformation. One of the things that you've asked Congress to do for you is to provide relief from these reporting requirements that DoD must provide on an annual basis.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Q: It doesn't look like you're going to get that, and so which reporting requirements that remain in place are helping you achieve that \$5 billion savings that you want to put back into transformation and budget reduction?

Rumsfeld: Well, the reports are just a portion of the \$5 billion in savings. That includes base structure of things that -- we pulled that number out of something less than mathematical precision, a point that when you have a department this large and you have that many things going on that a reasonable person from a company or another organization would say, my goodness, there's no way that we can save roughly that amount if we were given the freedom to do it.

I think we'll end up getting flexibility from the Congress. I think the members of Congress I've talked the issue. They're -- each one looks at it a little differently, needless to say, but I think that there's a Congress that it's not right to be wasting taxpayers' money.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Yes, General Myers, could you please detail for us movement of and placement of American troops in Afghanistan in the last 24 hours? How many elements of the 101st have gone to Kandahar? How many strikes? If so, where? Are there any -- anything different about the movement or number of troops while I'm at it --

Rumsfeld: Eight-part question. (Laughter.)

Myers: I'm up to the task, sir. I can -- (laughter) -- I'm going to give her -- can I --

Q: (Inaudible) -- going out on any other intelligence?

Myers: Can I give her a two-part answer to the eight-part question? (Laughter.)

I mean, I think it's well-known that the 101st is in there to replace the Marines, eventually, that was Rhino, where the Marines initially went into, that forward operating base in southern Afghanistan region; that elements of the 101st are, as I said, are in there. There are more to follow. They're not the Marines are not coming out yet. And so in terms of future operations and when and where, I'll talk about that.

In terms of Tora Bora, operations there remain like they have been in the past. We're still searching approximately the same number of folks that we started with.

And in terms of strikes, for the last several days we've had no strikes. This morning -- I think it's already -- we conducted strikes between 10:00 and 11:00 our time in Afghanistan on a leadership fairly extensive compound. It had a base camp, a training facility, and some cave pieces to that. Pakistan border, as a matter of fact, and that was the last strike in the last several days it was carried out by Navy F-18 aircraft, and AC-130 gunships.

Q: Is that in the Tora Bora region?

Myers: That's in the -- it's in the Khowst region, which is south of the Tora Bora region.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Q: Is that that Osama bin Laden compound that was struck in 1998?

Myers: It was struck by cruise missiles in 1998, and it has been a place where the al Qaeda goes.

Rumsfeld: I think we even hit it earlier this year.

Myers: We may have. Okay.

Q: Were they regrouping there? Is that --

Q: There was lots of activity?

Myers: Well, there was activity that wanted to be hit.

Q: Mr. Secretary, could you characterize what al Qaeda has now in terms of a military capability Afghanistan? Do they actually have training camps somewhere? Do they have organized military what is their military capability outside Afghanistan?

Rumsfeld: Well, I don't know that the word "military" is the right word. It is a terrorist network.

And they do have training camps around the world. Sometimes they're active and sometimes the seen training camps in Afghanistan go from active to inactive for periods and then come back ac

They have -- if you had activities in whatever the number -- 40, 50, 60 countries -- as has been s bank accounts to the extent that they have, and if you have recruited relatively successfully over and if you had the kind of money and the kind of fake passports and the kind of organization that September 11th, one has to know that there are al Qaeda-related people with that kind of trainin money, with those kinds of false passports, with those kinds of intentions, that are spread in multi

Q: And where do you -- for example, the training camps -- where do you see the highest profile c

Rumsfeld: I don't know that I want to get into that, because it -- as I say, they go up and down in levels of --

Q: General Myers, General Myers --

Q: Mr. Secretary, what is the state of play in the reported talks over surrender of Mullah Omar? I intelligence or information on his whereabouts?

Rumsfeld: You know, the last person anyone should ask about the whereabouts of any of the se Taliban is Don Rumsfeld. To the extent I had any knowledge, it would be self-defeating for our c efforts for me to even utter any thought about that, because it would be a clear indication that the stop being where they're being. So it would be mindless for me to answer a question like that, ar question like that.

Q: General, could I follow up?

Q: Do you think those reports are credible?

Rumsfeld: I'm coming to that. I'm coming to that -- the negotiation question, right? Yes.

So I have not in the past and I will not in the future answer those questions about their location. / answer those questions probably either does not know what they're talking about, or if they do, a criminal law by providing intelligence information that is against the law to provide to people who intelligence information. So I really -- we are looking for them. We intend to find them. And we in them. And that's the best we can do.

As to the negotiation issue: Truth has a certain virtue, and I don't know, precisely, what's going o think that the word that's carried in the press may or may not be right on the mark. I think that w/ Afghanistan is something like this, and I'm not going to suggest that it necessarily is in this case, several other cases.

And it's a situation where someone has -- they have multiple relationships over a period of three each other. They've been on this side. They've been on that side. And at a certain moment, ever looking for Omar or we're looking for some senior Taliban leader. And somebody thinks they kno they think they may know how many people are with them, guarding them or hiding out with them may be. And they come, and they say, "Gee, I think I could talk somebody into doing this if we w people go, or if we would stop long enough for me to get in there so I don't get killed trying to talk up with all of this taking place with multiple parties.

You -- there are -- the people on the ground -- the Afghans on the ground have an interim govern people -- governors of provinces. They have people that are anti-Taliban forces that are helping these kinds of discussions. And to -- we are not authorizing, if anyone wonders, pauses or negot result in freeing of people that ought not to be free; freeing of people who kill other people as ter who have been -- have a record of harboring terrorists and of killing people.

We are not in the business of authorizing any kind of negotiation which would let people like that

Now, do we control every -- manage every single aspect of who talks to whom with respect to th discussions? Of course we don't. We give our advice. We give our counsel. I know that the interi on the same sheet of music with us with respect to this. They want the Taliban caught. They agr the al Qaeda the dickens out of their country, and -- but you're going to find, I'm afraid, as we prc trying to find these 10, 12, 15, 20 people from each of those two organizations and the rest of the going to hear lots of those things, and I don't know that there's any way that I can explain it any t that's what's taking place on the ground.

Q: General Myers?

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: General Myers, just a minute ago, I thought I heard you say that the Marines have not yet pul Can you clarify then what it was that the Marine helicopters that were seen taking off from Kand loaded in combat gear -- were those Marines part of that New Year's Day operation?

Myers: Again, Marines are still conducting operations inside Afghanistan, and will for a little bit of more speculation on that, on what they were doing, I'm not going to get into.

Q: Sir?

Q: The reason that I ask is because when photographers saw those pictures, they then asked U. in fact something -- some operation was underway. Central Command very clearly said no, there there is nothing planned. And then it seemed like just 12 or 14 hours later, that in fact an operati about by Central Command, and I'm just wondering how that comports with the secretary's state war that the Pentagon would never lie, because that was the impression that some people might

Myers: What operation are you referring to, because you've --

Q: The New Year's Day operation where the Marines went northwest of Kandahar and retrieved some intelligence information.

Q: I believe that Central Command said no Marines had left the base. Were those Army Special somehow were mistaken for Marines by photographers?

Q: And I don't know --

Myers: I don't know. I don't know the details that -- I mean, I'm sure there is some confusion over

Rumsfeld: The only thing I recall -- I was on vacation. I haven't been chasing each one of these I recollection was that at one point there were some evidence gatherers from the Army, and some provide force protection for them. But does anyone know the facts? I don't --

Clarke: There's some confusion. (Laughter.)

Rumsfeld: Is there? Yeah.

Myers: And there may still be confusion. And maybe --

Rumsfeld: But any suggestion that it's intentional I think would be improper.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Rumsfeld: Yes?

Q: I wanted just to refocus you a second on the negotiations question. There is a report out of K& Taliban leaders, Abdul Ahad (sp), I think his name is, that he would turn over Omar and 1,500 T; agreed to stop bombing. Is that a fair offer at this point, or just an offer you wouldn't accept or ev

Rumsfeld: It hasn't been made. And I've already said what we would accept. We will accept surr have killed a lot of people. They deserve to be out of there. They deserve to be punished. And th to do.

Q: General Myers, can I ask you a quick one? What is the status of the friendly fire investigation episode that killed three Americans and wounded 19 others? We haven't heard anything about it two or three weeks.

Myers: That report has been, I think, forwarded up here, and I think the -- I'll have to check on th; investigation is complete.

Q: Can you give us a sense --

Myers: I can't give it to you now, but we'll check on that.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Q: Mr. Secretary, the United Nations said today --

Q: Mr. Secretary, this is your first briefing in the new year, and I wondered if you could -- you me more beyond Afghanistan. I wonder if you could, just very general, give the American people an in this new year, particularly looking, say, at Somalia. Do you -- (inaudible) -- just give a general ahead in this new year.

Rumsfeld: Well, I think that I could summarize what's ahead this way:

We've got a lot left to do in Afghanistan.

Second, the intelligence-gathering process is proceeding apace. Indeed, we are increasing our r gathering and national intelligence gathering, for the purpose of attempting to strengthen the knc where the potential threats can come from and what we can do about stopping them before they

The law enforcement process is continuing apace. People are being arrested. They're being inte appropriate, they're being released. And when appropriate, they're being kept and held, and the have is proving to be useful, as General Myers said.

We're still in the process of freezing bank accounts.

In addition, we are dealing with all the countries that have signed on to be helpful in the coalition encouraging them to take steps internally. And steps are being taken internally; things have been variety of countries that have been very helpful. And I suspect that what will take place in the per countries will be visited with about the kinds of things we feel they could do to be helpful, and the be helpful, and I would suspect that most countries will be cooperative in trying to be helpful.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Rumsfeld: To the extent countries are harboring terrorists and not being helpful, obviously, then, cooperative, and we'll have to find different ways of dealing with them.

Barbara?

Q: Can you touch on Somalia or Yemen or anything?

Rumsfeld: It doesn't do any good at all for me to be speculating about different countries and why because I think they'll draw questions for the future.

Yeah?

Q: Could you just go back on a couple of -- (inaudible) -- you've alluded here several times today that your intelligence gathering has increased your conviction about the breadth and the scope of the network. And I'm wondering if you can somehow quantify that. In other words, the material you've been surprised? If you can't be specific, have you learned new things? Is it bigger than you thought you thought? What have you really learned about it from this intelligence-gathering effort?

And then the quick follow-up I have is: On Guantanamo Bay, is that the only place, the only military administration is now looking at holding current or future detainees? Or is the administration considering any other military bases for holding detainees, even future ones that you may get?

Rumsfeld: We'll have to start backwards.

We do not have a good fix on what the total number of detainees will be. Needless to say, our declassification is not what we're about -- gathering up maximum numbers. We would like to make sure that they ought to be secured so they don't go out and kill more people, are, in fact, secured, and ones that and that, in every event, the maximum amount of intelligence is extracted from them first.

In the event that Guantanamo proves to be inadequate from a size standpoint, there are other places we considered, and while Guantanamo was the "least worst," there are others on the list that are worse."

Q: Do these include already considering military bases inside the United States as possible hold

Rumsfeld: Certainly for certain types of detainees, yes.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Q: Excuse me; I'm not done.

Can I ask you to articulate what kinds -- are these people that could possibly provoke an attack, a very, very secure facility?

Are you constructing any facilities at military bases right now?

Rumsfeld: I don't think we'll need to. I don't think we'll have to do that. I think we've got some facilities at the present time that have vacancies, and -- (laughter) -- and we're looking -- we'll take those.

Yes?

Q: You know, an interesting follow up on that might be, is the U.S. military prepared to carry out the executions of those who could be convicted by a military tribunal?

Rumsfeld: Not an issue we've addressed.

Q: Is that a possibility, however? Would that be carried out by the Justice Department or would that be the military?

Rumsfeld: This is not an issue I've addressed.

Q: Can you go back and talk about --

Q: Can you go back to the other part about how deep al Qaeda is, what you've learned about al Qaeda follow on to that, how really -- if you'll elaborate on how disrupted it is. There's another terror alert organization that had very rudimentary communications to begin with, developed these plans in Iraq, are they, and what did you learn about them?

Rumsfeld: It's very difficult to answer a question like that. It's like, how high is high?

The fact is that al Qaeda is in dozens and dozens of countries. That tells us something. There are organizations that are in dozens and dozens and dozens of countries, that are criminals, that are suppose you could make a case that there are loose linkages in narcotics organizations that might be in dozens of countries, but I just don't know enough about that to be able to answer it. But it is a well-organized and effective recruiting mechanism and training mechanism that operated with freedom in an awful lot of places for a lot of years.

Now, that's where we found them. How disrupted are they? I think they're very disrupted. Does there aren't sleeper cells out there that could be doing something untoward at this very moment? Of course we know there are. And we know they planned well ahead. But it has -- it takes them longer and it's more dangerous for them to raise money today than it was three months ago. Their communications that were relatively easy, and they're much more difficult today because there's an awful lot more people and their ability to move freely around the world was much easier three months ago than it is today. The training was disrupted a number -- any number of training camps, and it does take training to become a professional murderer, mass murderer.

You don't walk out of grade school with that kind of knowledge. You need to practice and be taught. I don't know if that answers your question to your satisfaction, but that is the best I can do. This is a large organization, and it's only one of many.

Q: Are there also training camps in Somalia?

Rumsfeld: Well, you'd have to go look today because, as I say, they go in and out. We know there are camps there and that they have been active over the years and that they, like most of them, go in and get attentive to them.

Yes? I'm sorry, I've been neglectful. Back here.

Q: Thank you. Can you please confirm that the Indian defense minister, Mr. George Fernandes, is coming on your invitation? And also, what is the reason at this time, because India and Pakistan are on the border of war and the military is on the border. And last week, Pakistan's General Musharraf --

Rumsfeld: Now, wait a second. Let me answer one of those, to start out with. You're correct, the Indian minister I invited when I visited there last year at some point, and he is coming. At least he's scheduled forward to receiving him.

You're quite right there's a tense situation between India and Pakistan, and the president and the secretary of defense have been on the phone with participants on both sides of that, and we're hopeful and encourage them to work through these issues in a peaceful way.

Q: Sir, just to follow, last week General Musharraf was in China shopping, a military shopping spree. He has been going in war in Afghanistan, and he was in China shopping for military equipment and aircraft -- at least 46 fighters. So, where do these two countries stand now, because Indian defense minister and Pakistan president was in China shopping for military? And what is the future of these two countries? (inaudible)?

Rumsfeld: What is the --

Q: (Off mike.)

Rumsfeld: What is the future? I don't know they're going to go to war. I think they're going to sort these

the president's anxious to see that happen. I know that Prime Minister Blair is working towards the both sides, President Musharraf and the prime minister of India, as well as their cabinet officers, phone repeatedly with us and with other countries. And I am hopeful that they will move through unquestionably a tense period, in a way that is respectful of the risks to each side and the power each side has. And I personally have a good deal of confidence that that will be the case.

I think that each -- they're demonstrating -- in each case we've seen things that have led to some hand, we've seen some steps that have reduced that tension, and I'm hopeful that we'll see more former.

Q: Sir --

Rumsfeld: Yes? (Cross talk.) No, no, no. Two, three -- (off mike). (Light laughter.)

Q: Last week you announced that the Nuclear Posture Review would be released this week. Can you update on that?

Rumsfeld: You know, I probably shouldn't have used the word. It's correct, we're releasing it to the public. And when I got -- went upstairs after I said that last week, and I thought the implication was meaning "to the public." And I apologize for that.

I have asked our folks to see if we can take that classified version and declassify it, find a way to do it so that it's available, because I think it's an important document. It is a significant change in our nuclear weapon approach, and it is a different strategy, as well as the deep reductions that are part of it because of its importance and because of the new direction it takes, I think it belongs in the public domain. We're working on that.

Q: Mr. Secretary, could you and the general explain the seeming dichotomy of having the Army just over the border in -- from Afghanistan, and the Marines being the service of choice to do the job, given the warning that former Deputy Secretary Hamre used to make that if the Army didn't change, it would be irrelevant, or was it just a question if you didn't have airlift for the 10th Mountain Division or a facility were not set up correctly? Is there some lesson out of this that we're not seeing, that the 10th Mountain Division was not engaged in a major way, whereas the Marines were? What was the reason for that choice?

Rumsfeld: I'll give you the short answer. The combatant commander, Tom Franks, made a judgment.

(To General Myers.) Do you want to give him a better answer? (Light laughter.)

Myers: Well, I think I would ask General Franks that, because the secretary's absolutely right; he decided on the forces he used, and I think it had a lot to do with proximity at the time we wanted to see that change over time. You're seeing that change right now.

So I don't think there's -- don't -- I would discourage you from trying to draw other lessons from that. There are any lessons in there. I think that was the combatant commander's call. He made it, and you'll see that change over time.

Rumsfeld: Last question.

Q: Mr. Secretary, thank you. I want to raise again the issue of civilian casualties.

Apparently a representative of the United Nations over in the region today had some critical things to say about continued bombing and the resulting casualties. Do you have any response to that?

Rumsfeld: Well, I'll make a brief comment about it. There are several attacks in the last half of December -- where questions have been raised. In the case of one in late December, December 20th, the CINC had, and the United States intelligence community had multiple intelligence -- pieced together information that qualified that as an appropriate target.

On a later one, December 26th, we believe that Ahmadullah, the Taliban intel chief, was in that category along with a number of other Taliban. And we have no evidence that he's alive, to reverse the phrase, which is

well have been in that compound, along with a number of his associates.

On the 28th of December attack, the reality is that there were multiple intelligence sources that q there were multiple secondary explosions out of that target. That is to say, significant explosions location as a result of the attack, which would tend to persuade one that it was a military target.

Q: Do you think it's time to consider, at this stage of the offensive there, to begin making bombin

Rumsfeld: Well, if you look at the amount of bombing we've been doing in the recent week and a that that is not your first choice. They don't have targets that are necessarily appropriate for bom It's rare. It's unusual. And clearly the AC-130, which does not drop bombs but unloads an enorm ordnance, is often a more appropriate weapon for precision targeting.

And you know, if you take this subject generally, there are certain things that have to be said. Nu wants to see a single civilian death. There's never been a conflict where there have not been civ

If one were to take this activity in Afghanistan and rank it as to the number of civilian deaths and attentiveness that has gone in to try to have the right weapon and the most precise method of dc imagine there's been a conflict in history where there has been less collateral damage, less unin

With respect to the problem, clearly we want to try to get to the -- we want to try to know what th extent there are facts that suggest there were civilian casualties that might have been avoided, tl ways to avoid them in the future.

But if one took all of the allegations that have been made about civilian casualties and analyzed last nit, you would find that there have been conscious, repeated lies on this subject since the be campaign. We know that -- of certain knowledge. We also know that there have been some civili regret that.

Q: Could I try to ask a question about the saving of lives by humanitarian operations, just in that number of NGOs -- could I get General Myers just for a second? A number of NGOs, when this t making some very dire predictions about starvation because of the drought and so on.

Rumsfeld: Yeah.

Q: And then when the military operations began, they said, "Oh, that's just going to make it even wonder whether General Myers or you, Mr. Secretary, could address the role that -- now the NG everything's going to be okay" -- the role that U.S. military operations had in facilitating that. I me thinking of balancing the two things was (sic) during the operation?

Rumsfeld: The -- well, I'll just say this:

If you think about the numbers of people that were killed by the Taliban and the number of peopl and think of the amount of food and the amount of winter gear and the amount of medical assista provided to this country by the United States and by coalition countries and by other countries, th lives of the people of Afghanistan today are so vastly better off than they were three months ago And we need to keep that in balance.

Myers: The only thing I would add to that is that the current effort, I think, focuses mainly around airports are opened back up and can accept flights.

And that's where a lot of the effort is going right now, and that will have -- is having, I think, an ef report that they're able to get in the tonnage now they need to sustain the population through the good news.

Rumsfeld: There is still the problem -- while the total tonnage is very high and well above the lev I'm about three days out of date, but last time I looked, it's well above the level to prevent starvat problem of distribution still remains an issue because it is difficult to move things out into certain

Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you.

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