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**Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers**      **Tuesday, September 20, 2005 1:16 p.m. EDT**

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### Defense Department Regular Briefing

SEC. RUMSFELD: Good afternoon, folks. As the country continues the challenging task of recovery from Hurricane Katrina, coalition forces continue to make inroads against the terrorists in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

On Sunday the people of Afghanistan voted in their second successful democratic election in less than one year. These were their provincial and parliamentary elections. Terrorists have done everything in their power to try to intimidate the millions of Afghan voters and the literally thousands, in this case of the most recent election, thousands of candidates from participating in their elections. And they failed this week, just as they failed in the successful presidential elections.

Think of it. The country that hosted Osama bin Laden, that supported training camps for al Qaeda, endured decades of civil war, Soviet occupation, drought, Taliban brutality, is now a democracy that fights terrorists instead of harboring them. The Afghan people's courage should be a stunning reminder to all of those seemingly self-confident prognosticators who foresaw an Afghan quagmire. They were not just wrong, they were harmful by making the cause seem hopeless. Let me remind you of just a few examples.

"The war effort is in deep trouble. The United States is not headed into a quagmire, it is already in one." That was The L.A. Times. That was five days before Mazar fell.

"The question was suspended like a spore in the autumn air: Are we quagmiring ourselves again?" That was The New York Times.

"Without a clear exit strategy, another generation of American servicemen may be sucked into a quagmire in a foreign land." That was, I think, the Dallas Morning News. And there were many, many others.

Thankfully, millions of Afghans were determined to prove them wrong. A determined coalition put a plan in place -- yes, there was a plan -- adjusted it as needed -- and it did need to be adjusted, as all war plans do -- and followed a steady course despite the cassettes of the West echoing the predictions of the terrorists. I mention this because many who were so quick to predict gloom on Afghanistan are today eager to toss it in on Iraq, claiming that it's hopeless. But the Iraqi people and the coalition have a plan for Iraq, just as there was a plan for Afghanistan.

Consider the following. Have the Iraqis been able to form a government that realistically incorporates the views of the various responsible factions in Iraq? Yes, they have. Have Iraqis successfully held representative elections? The answer is yes. Have they now succeeded in drafting a constitution that accords respect for individual rights? Indeed they have. Are the insurgents gaining or losing the support of the Iraqi people? President Talabani recently spoke in the United States about this. He noted that the vast majority of Iraqis, including Sunnis, want to participate in the political process and have been disgusted, and indeed, outraged by the

barbarism of the extremists. Finally, despite the critics, are the Iraqi security forces growing in size and capability and allowing the Iraqi government to secure areas with coalition support? Yes, this too is happening. Iraqi security forces now number over 190,000.

Last week, for example, the people of Tall Afar were liberated from the grip of insurgents and foreign extremists who had tried to turn the city into a base of planning operations and training. A number of insurgents were caught fleeing the city dressed in women's clothing -- hardly a sign of a confident group supported by the citizenry.

General Myers will provide some details on that operation, but I should note that this offensive featured some 5,000 Iraqi security forces in a leading role. A significant Iraqi military presence will stay on in Tall Afar with coalition assistance to support their new police force and to ensure that the terrorists do not return.

The people who know what's happening on the ground are, for the most part, Iraqi citizens and the coalition forces. They're there. And both report progress, growing confidence in the Iraqi security forces, and hope about the future.

When Abraham Lincoln delivered two minutes of remarks that he had only finished the night before, the speech was panned. When George Marshall proposed a plan to rebuild Europe after World War II, critics viewed it as "generous at best" and "wasteful at worst." When Ronald Reagan walked away from the summit with the Soviet Union "empty-handed," as they said, in the eyes of some it seemed to many that Reykjavik was a failure. The point is that history has perspective.

Today history records the brilliance of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The Marshall Plan helped Europe recover. And Ronald Reagan's tough line at Reykjavik -- according to the Soviets, anyway -- was the beginning of the end of the Cold War. In thinking about Afghanistan and Iraq, we should ask what history will say. It will not be the daily violence or short-term setbacks, nor which person won the battle for a daily headline by predicting doom and gloom over and over. Instead, it will show that the battle in Afghanistan and Iraq was tough and ugly, to be sure, but that America was on freedom's side, and it will remember the millions of people who have been freed and the hundreds of thousands of coalition forces who helped them achieve that freedom.

General Myers.

GEN. MYERS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And good afternoon.

As the secretary mentioned, we have seen successful elections in Afghanistan, demonstrating that perseverance and determination of the coalition and the Afghan government will indeed prevail. Afghan security forces have grown to more than 76,000 and continue to progress. And as you know, there are about 17,000 U.S. troops, more than 3,000 coalition forces, and more than 11,000 International Security and Assistance Forces, or the ISAF forces, presently providing security in Afghanistan.

Sunday I was at home and got a call from General Eikenberry. And he said, "I'm sorry to bother you on Sunday, but I know you get a lot of bad news from time to time; let me give you some good news." And of course it was late in the evening there in Afghanistan when he called, and he said from sunset the day before elections to the current time, sunset after elections in Afghanistan, he said there have been 40 security incidents, none of them having a major impact -- although we did have one French soldier killed in one of those incidents. But he said, more importantly, at the 6,000 polling places, things went smoothly.

And he says, let me give you one anecdote, one tiny anecdote. He said there was a small village in the northeast of Afghanistan over the Hindu Kush, and we sent a team in there, Afghan-U.S. team in there to provide the ballots so they could vote. They got to a point where they could go no longer in the mountains and they had to hike the last 20 kilometers. When they got to the village, this small village, the villagers already had heard about the fact they were coming and were lined up to vote. And in addition, they had thrown flowers in their path as they came forward to present the ballots so they could vote.

It says a lot about the Afghan people. It also says a lot about the coalition and Afghan security forces who made the effort to hike over the Hindu Kush 20 kilometers to make sure Afghan people could vote.

In Iraq we're seeing a steady progress as well, as we approach key milestones in their political process. Iraqi security forces currently have 126 battalions in the fight. Iraqi forces have 126 battalions in the fight. Last year at this time, there were five. More than 20 operational bases have been turned over to Iraqi control, and Iraqi forces now maintain order in the once-violent city of Najaf and most of Baghdad. Iraqis, the citizenry, are optimistic and hopeful about the future, confident in their armed forces and tired of the insurgency.

More than \$36 billion have been pledged by the world community to invest in Iraq. And in the span of a year, 46 nations have established or re-established diplomatic missions or embassies in Iraq.

Operation Restoring Rights. Operation Restoring Rights in Tall Afar has demonstrated the growth and capabilities that coalition and Iraqi security forces have made. The Iraqi, U.S. and coalition coordination and joint planning and execution have been quite impressive, in my view -- and this is from the federal level, from Baghdad down to the local level. The Third Armored Cavalry Regiment, along with elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and the Third Iraqi Army Division, are continuing this Operation Restoring Rights to remove terrorists and foreign fighters from the city of Tall Afar.

Tall Afar, as you know, was a major transit zone for foreign fighters coming into Iraq. At the request of the local government, coalition forces assisted in establishing permanent Iraqi security in Tall Afar, ensuring that local citizens can vote in upcoming elections. The battle for Tall Afar has been the largest operation in Iraq since Fallujah. Tall Afar is a city of about 150,000. It ranks just below Fallujah in size. Approximately 11,000 U.S., Iraqi and coalition forces are involved in this particular operation, and that includes Iraqi army and police forces. More than 600 anti-Iraqi forces have been captured or killed since this operation began on September 10th, and a vast number of weapon caches have been found and destroyed. These included AK-47s, sniper rifles, ammunition and rocket-propelled grenades.

We are now moving into the next phase for reconstruction, which will begin in a few days.

In summary, we are well on our way for Iraq to be able to vote in their constitutional referendum on October 15. And, of course, that's been the plan all along.

Let me just go through the Tall Afar operation one more time. This involved coordination at the Baghdad level with the Iraqi government, with coordination with local officials at Tall Afar level, coordination between Iraqi security forces and coalition security forces, reconstitution efforts that will begin here in a few days, bringing dollars and Iraqi government and help to the people of Tall Afar, and then a leave-behind Iraqi force that will maintain security at the request of the local Tall Afar government.

Let me switch gears and talk just a minute about military forces operating in the Southeast United States. We continue to work closely with FEMA and other local, state and federal agencies in response to Hurricane Katrina in those relief efforts and in preparing for Hurricane Rita. There are about 55,000 active duty and National Guard personnel on the ground or aboard ships supporting relief operations; 13,000 active duty troops, 42,000 National Guard, 170 helicopters and 45 fixed-wing assets, mixed between the Coast Guard active duty and National Guard forces.

In preparation for Hurricane Rita, Homestead Air Force Base and Patrick Air Force Base in Florida will be used by FEMA as mobilization centers for supplies and equipment. Eight helicopters have been staged at Patrick Air Force Base to be used in the search and rescue, evacuation and for aerial assessments, if they're needed. Emergency preparedness liaison officers are working the FEMA regional Regions' Response Headquarters in Georgia and at the Florida State Emergency Operations Center.

So, again, the Department of Defense is taking prudent planning measures, anticipating the needs the state and federal authorities -- or trying to anticipate the needs of state and federal authorities.

And with that, we'll take your questions.

Q

Mr. Secretary, I'd like to ask both of you gentlemen some spending questions that have occurred, both about sharing. Much is being made in this city now about the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: A what kind of question?

Q Spending question.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Spending question.

Q Speding question. There's much being made in the city now. Great debate already going on about the estimated \$200 billion cost of cleaning up and rebuilding after Katrina on top of the billions that are being spent on Iraq, and the president has said that prudent budget cuts are simply going to have to be made to help do all of this. Are there likely to be cuts in major arms programs at the Pentagon? Realizing you've made no decision for the current year, and the QDR isn't over, are there likely to be cuts in arms programs and defense spending to help share for this -- for these cuts and budget spending, would you expect?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I've read what you've read about what the president's decided and announced, and I have no additional information beyond that.

Q But you expect -- do either of you expect that defense would or should have to share in cuts if there are major cuts?

SEC. RUMSFELD: We have no information to that effect.

Q Mr. Secretary? Could I ask --

Q You mean, you don't expect it? I'm sorry, you say you have no information.

GEN. MYERS: It'd be pure speculation at this point because there's been no decisions --

SEC. RUMSFELD: No.

GEN. MYERS: -- and no new information's come our way.

Q Could I ask both you and General Myers a question?

Q (Off mike.)

Q Charlie, how many questions are you going to ask?

Q Well -- well, the secretary was about to answer. Sorry.

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, no, he's correct. I mean, there's no point in speculating. There's -- no decisions have been made, and no guidance has been given at the stage I'm at.

Yes?

X  
Q A question for both of you gentlemen, and if you would indulge me, sir, a brief prelude to General Myers. General, thank you for your honesty and candor and integrity over the years. You shall be missed.

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The question is -- as you've seen by published reports, apparently -- and would you bring us up to speed -- apparently, there is a draft memo making its way through the Pentagon originating somewhere in the Joint Chiefs spaces about the possible use of nuclear weapons in a preemptive strike against terrorists and nations that would use weapons of mass destruction against U.S. or its assets. Can you sort of bring us clear on all of that?

GEN. MYERS: There has been, back in 1995 and then again in 1996, a companion piece in our joint -- what we call our joint doctrine. There is joint doctrine that considers where nuclear weapons fit in the arsenal. That is in the process of being updated. As you might imagine, the primary piece that's being updated is this notion going from a nuclear triad that we used to know of bombers, missiles and submarines to a triad of nuclear weapons, conventional weapons and infrastructure -- being Intelligence and the Department of Energy and so forth. So this new notion of a new triad that came out, I think, in 2001 or early 2002 -- bringing our doctrine up to speed with that. The fundamentals don't change, of course. The president always retains the right to use all options at his disposal, and he's the ultimate decision authority, of course, on the use of any nuclear weapons. And that -- and that hasn't changed.

The article is based on doctrine that was out for coordination at the lieutenant colonel/colonel level. It had not been to general officer/flag officer level yet. And since, whatever piece they saw, has been modified since then. I mean, that doesn't even reflect the current addition. I have not seen it, but I got updated on it, I know where we are. So it's -- it's the business we're in in trying to explain our -- our doctrine.

Q One quick follow-up. Mr. Secretary, is part and parcel of that the so-called nuclear bunker-buster that we believe you are in favor of?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I doubt it. I haven't seen the -- the --

GEN. MYERS: This doesn't go into specific weapons, and it --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Right. I don't think it does.

GEN. MYERS: And the one that -- and the -- I think the hint or allegation in the article was this somehow lowers the nuclear threshold, and that's not at all true. In fact, if anything, it emphasizes the role that conventional weapons, as they become more accurate, can play in helping with not only deterrence, but dealing with weapons of mass destruction. They're -- of course -- well. So that's -- it's a separate issue, the -- that is a separate issue.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, are current laws governing the use of the U.S. military inside the United States archaic, and should the military be able to work more autonomously and even, perhaps, to take the lead in dealing with major disasters like Katrina?

SEC. RUMSFELD: With respect to the posse comitatus statutes, it's -- it seems to me that any question like that is a question for Congress and the president, and it -- those laws were passed during a period of -- post-civil war period with concern about insurrection. And they exist today, you know, a couple of centuries later. It's for the president and the Department of Justice and the Congress to think about that. And we do those things that we're authorized to do and are instructed to do.

With respect to the president's comments the other night about the armed forces conceivably having a role, as you know, at the present time we really don't. The Department of Defense is in support, but not in the lead, with respect to any of these activities and is, as you point out also, prohibited from engaging in law enforcement activities by active forces. National Guard forces, under the control of governors, of course, can engage in various types of security and law enforcement activities.

I think the president's point is a fair point, and that was, very simply, that you can have all various sizes of disasters, and they can be natural or they can be terrorist or WMD inspired. And as you -- at the lower end of that scale, the first responders, which are the people that are relied on by FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security, the first responders have a substantial capacity in our country to deal with things. On the other hand, if the first responders are victims themselves and don't exist for the sake of a capability, an extant capability to deal with a catastrophic event, then, obviously, one looks for some substitute for the first responders. And it was that understandable comment by the president, when one looks around at institutions that have the size and the equipment and the capacity and the ability to deploy people, he made the comment that the armed forces are there, and have in the past, and can in the future be used for those types of things of a non-law enforcement nature.

Q But should you be able to do it without that request from local authorities that, General, you just mentioned you're anticipating in the new case?

SEC. RUMSFELD: If you go back to the Quadrennial Defense Review in 2001, when we first came in, the first thing we put down was homeland security. This is before 9/11. And we do have an obligation and a responsibility and a capability and a capacity in that regard.

What ought to be the trigger, the decision point that separates one type of a disaster from something that one would characterize as having overwhelmed or established the first responders as victims themselves is something that I'm sure other people will be thinking about. And we'll see what happens. I know that the White House has asked for a review of this matter. I know that the day it started, the Department of Defense, as we always do, established a lessons learned activity, which has been entrain ever since. And we'll know more as we go through the coming days and weeks.

Q Can I ask General Myers --

Q Mr. Secretary, some people in the Pentagon have expressed concern that if the military does take a leading role in some huge catastrophe, or if that becomes policy, that it might dilute the military's warfighting capability. What's your opinion on that?

And the same question to General Myers.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, when you begin a question by saying "some people in the Pentagon" -- how many are here?

GEN. MYERS: About 25,000.

SEC. RUMSFELD: You can always find "some people in the Pentagon" who have any view known to man or woman.

Q Well let me rephrase the question, sir. Do you fear that giving the military a leading role in some future catastrophes could dilute its warfighting capabilities?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I'll answer it this way. The Department of Defense has a process in place where we continuously review our capabilities and test them against the kinds of things that we as a department might be asked to assist in. And that includes homeland defense as part of our assigned responsibilities in our minds that we could conceivably be called upon to do something.

And the short answer to your question is, we have the capability in the department to do the things that we're likely to be asked to do, including homeland defense, as we -- what was the number -- 70,000 troops, National Guard and active duty forces, were in the Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi area within a matter of days; 21 ships, I believe; 375 helicopters or something like that -- large numbers of capabilities. And General Blum was asked, well, does that stretch you, is that it? And he said, no, we've got a couple hundred thousand more Guardsmen we could bring down there and still other assets.

So, obviously you can't do everything in the world, but you can do the things that we've organized, trained and equipped to do.

Q A follow-up on that, please?

GEN. MYERS: And it may be in the Quadrennial Defense Review that's going on right now, as we think about this and as the lessons-learned process goes on, that we learn more about potential roles and the need to look at the active component and the Reserve component and decide if there are different ways to organize, train and equip that would enable us to do that task better. So that's part of what's being thought about right now.

Q Can I follow that up, please, Mr. Secretary? The 70,000 troops you talked about, the National Guard, while --

SEC. RUMSFELD: That was Guard and active.

Q Okay. Well, all those numbers were Guard and active.

SEC. RUMSFELD: In any event --

Q But in any event, a large number of National Guard troops are being used. And the question is, even if there are more now that could be available in the event of a crisis elsewhere, isn't this going to put a strain, a limited number of National Guard troops available for future rotations in Iraq?

SEC. RUMSFELD: No, not really. I mean, we're redeploying already. We're down from 70,000 to -- what did you say, 50,000?

GEN. MYERS: Fifty-five (thousand), I believe it is.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Fifty-five thousand at the present time, and the ships are down from 21 down to 15 or something, and the helicopters are down, from 375 down to two hundred and whatever you said. No, they're --

GEN. MYERS: Fifty-five thousand now and --

SEC. RUMSFELD: They're being redeployed as we go along, within a matter of a week or two, three.

Q So you see no effect at all on the Iraq rotations?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, these folks did a terrific job down there. And no, I don't see an effect on the Iraq rotations.

Yes?

Q A related question on the Guard. Obviously, Hurricane Katrina was not a foreseen operation. I think the number you said was 42,000 Guard are there. While there certainly are more National Guard troops to pull from, there has been some comments by General Blum as well that there are equipment shortages in the Guard; that because of the rotations in Iraq, some of the best equipment, obviously, gets deployed overseas; the troops at home maybe aren't as well equipped. Communications is one thing that he mentioned, I think, to USA Today as being a shortage.

Do you have any new plans or any new efforts under way to see what needs to be done to sort of right-size the Guard, as people will say, that it's overstretched because of missions overseas? Now it has domestic missions. I mean, these are the state militias.

SEC. RUMSFELD: They've always had domestic missions.

Q Right. But I'm saying it's doing a lot all at one time. Estimates are it needs billions of dollars or more in equipment and training. Is there any particular focus on that in the wake of Katrina?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I met with the secretary of the Army today and his folks, and -- just one of my regular, periodic meetings with them where we review a series of issues that I think are important -- and one of the things we discussed was the -- which I've explained here many times -- the rebalancing that's taking place between the active component and the Reserve component, and the rebalancing that's taking place within the Guard and Reserve and within the active force. And, for example, they're in the process of reducing the number of tank units and artillery units within the Guard, which are obviously of less use in the event of a domestic issue than they -- some of -- alternatives like civil affairs, or engineers, or Seabees, or the various kinds of things that they might be called on to do domestically. So it's the kind of thing that's been reviewed and -- over a continuing time.

Do you want to --

GEN. MYERS: Let me just set -- just a kind of a little context here. This period in Iraq -- and it's starting to change a little bit now, but in the past year we've had seven brigade combat teams from the National Guard involved in combat in Iraq. They have done a terrific job. We were heavy on the Guard because we were transforming the Army. So the next rotation you'll see will be less reliant on the Guard, more reliant on active duty, because we're going to build some new -- some new brigades in the Army. So you just need to know that was going on.

And the same time, during Katrina, the Guard deployed I think over 50,000 men and women to help with that. And, as you heard from the director of the Guard Bureau, General Blum, there were hundreds of thousands that could have been called to that. And just one more factor, just to make sure the context is right: and the reenlistment in the National Guard is at an all-time high.

Q General Myers --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Just a minute. Just a minute.

GEN. MYERS: So -- so -- so, we have a force, we have a National Guard force -- and I could talk about the Reserves in the same light, we have a Guard force that has never been more ready to support whatever mission this country calls upon; never been more ready. And you can talk to any Guard leader and say, Are you more ready today than you were four years ago, and they would say, Yes, we are. And you'd also find morale is extremely high because this has been a very effective force, they like to be called upon. Yes, you can overuse them; yes, there's some equipment issues that have to be dealt with, as there are for the active component as well because of the way we're trying to husband resources inside Iraq and not move a lot of equipment back and forth.

So there are those issues. Absolutely. But a lot of that stems from prior decisions a long time ago, and not current decisions, I can tell you that.

Q About the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Gene.

Q Mr. Secretary, if I can just follow up on the equipment issues you talked about, I mean, one of the things that seems to be clear -- and I know, Mr. Secretary, you'll correct me if I'm rushing to judgment here. But it seems to be clear that communications was one of the big problems and challenges in the response to Katrina. And what we're hearing is that many of the National Guard troops in particular didn't have enough satellite phones and state-of-the-art radios. What provisions are being made in order to perhaps fast-track getting some of that crucial communications equipment to the troops who might need it for the next disaster that might come along?

GEN. MYERS: I think that would be one of the things that would come out of the lessons-learned process, because, you know, as we rebalance the Guard, we have a lot of -- for instance, we've used this a lot. But it's a pretty -- it's pretty illustrative. We need less National Guard artillery units than we do, say, National Guard military police units.

In the security environment we think we're going into, military police will have a different set of communications than, perhaps, an artillery unit. They'll be different requirements there. So I think what General Blum was talking about, looking into the future, we need to have a certain capability. I think we do as a nation, not just in the military. But other federal response systems, probably state and local responders, need better communications. If the towers are going to go down that control your cell phones and the rest of it, you need to have a better way to communicate. I think that's what General Blum --

Q Right. The question here is what's being done about that?

GEN. MYERS: What's being done is let the lessons learned capture the lessons, and then if we need to fast-track it, I'm sure we can fast-track it. We do that right now for Iraq and we can do it for this kind of --

Q Why do you need lessons learned, because you just articulated -- I mean, to know what the problem was, was they didn't have enough of the right kind of gear.

GEN. MYERS: Well, and maybe -- and maybe somebody knows the answer. You know, we can take a few weeks to sort this out. And we're going to have the first interim report on the lessons learned, at least at our level, in the Department of Defense, I think, to the secretary here in a week or so. And at that time, that would -- obviously, command and control and communications would be a heavy piece of that. And if there are things we need to do and be ready for the next man-made or natural disaster, then we'll probably take -- we'll take them.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll take a couple of more questions.

Yes?

Q Sir, in 2001, the Space Commission came out with its recommendations. You headed up that commission until you were nominated for your current post. A lot of the transformational programs that you're pitching rely on space in the future --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Pitching?

Q -- Yes, to Congress. -- rely on space to do their job. What is being done to shore up management of space control -- or space programs as they are kind of going out of control cost-wise and schedule-wise? And what can we see on the horizon as the NRO has been spliced off as the secretary of the Air Force's job?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Well, I'll start and then let the former head of the Space Command comment.

Dick and I have been meeting with Ambassador Negroponte and with Mr. Kerr at the NRO and with the Air Force officials, and made the decision that we thought

it would be -- the NRO was a big enough task that separating it from the undersecretary of the Air Force made sense, and we decided to do that. And we now have an undersecretary of the Air Force, and we now have a head of the NRO, and I think that's a good formula.

What we're trying to do at the present time, however, is to make sure we stay linked well. And we're trying to fashion a way that we can assure that the National Reconnaissance Office and the Air Force, which do a lot of things together and separately, make sure that they're still very closely connected.

Well, I'll let you comment on the other piece of it, if you want.

GEN. MYERS: Okay. And the secretary is exactly right. So that relationship between the NRO and the Air Force is being -- the new relationship is being defined and will -- within the next -- in very short order, will go in front of the secretary for his decision and the decision of the director of National Intelligence as well.

There are other pieces being looked at as you look at space, and that's the relationship and the responsibilities under the new intelligence law that says the milestone decision authority for space intelligence systems specifically, will be shared between the Department of Defense and the director of National Intelligence. And that -- is being worked, as well, and you'll probably see some things come out.

Q But does that take care of these problems like --

GEN. MYERS: Well, the problems you talked about -- there are problems with several space systems that there's a lot of -- as they say, there's a lot of blame to go around there. And we do, we have some space systems that are not in good shape right now. And it's -- you know, the department is a piece of that, industry's a piece of that, the Congress is a piece of that. And what I just talked about is not going to cure that. You've asked several questions here; in that three or four lines, you asked about five questions. I'm trying to address the ones that are -- that's a longer-term issue.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Last two questions. Those two. Go.

Q Mr. Secretary, in advance of Hurricane Rita, what's being done to clear up the kind of misunderstanding and confusion that existed during Katrina over command of the military forces, both active and Guard? Will -- will those forces be put under a single commander in the event that they'd be needed for Hurricane Rita?

SEC. RUMSFELD: A single commander with the ones involved with Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama?

Q Right. Well, during Katrina there appeared to be some confusion between the state and federal officials about the --

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh. Those are issues between the White House and the governor. There was no confusion about the military chain of command.

Q I understand, but will --

SEC. RUMSFELD: None. Zero.

Q Will the Reserve and active forces -- should they be needed for Hurricane Rita -- would they be put under a single commander? The National Guard -- I'm sorry -- National Guard and active duty?

SEC. RUMSFELD: As I just explained, that's an issue that is -- under our law, under our Constitution, we have a federal system. We have statutes, and a decision would be made by the president and the governors, and in some cases, mayors, as I understand it, as to who would have responsibility for what, and they work that out. And that's what happened in Katrina; they were discussing at various times -- you've read all this, just like everybody else.

We will have a single military commander for active duty forces. We know that. And to the extent that it is decided that National Guard forces would become a part of that, that would be up to the president and the governor.

Q But the hurricane's about to make landfall in a couple of days. Wouldn't it make sense to have that all worked out in advance and avoid the kind of confusion that existed during Katrina? And I'm just wondering if that, in fact, is being worked out in advance of Rita.

SEC. RUMSFELD: We'll leave that to the president and the governors. We don't even know where Rita's going to hit. You don't know what state it's going to go to. We do know --

Q Are you cut out of those considerations, just --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I've not been cut out of anything. The way that our government is -- the federal system and the Constitution are written, people are -- they took the power and they separated it and assigned portions of it to the local governments and the state governments and the federal government. And under the federal system, some of it was apportioned to the departments here, or the departments there, or to this department. That happens to be a subject that was never assigned to this department; it's a matter between the president and the governors. You know that.

GEN. MYERS: And in Katrina, Jim, while we didn't have unity of command as we think about it in the military, we did have unity of effort, because one of the things that General Russ Honore was tasked with was to work very closely with General Landreneau in Louisiana, General Cross in Mississippi, and to ensure that the National Guard, which came under those two gentlemen, and the active forces, which General Honore commanded, were synchronized. And we did have unity of effort. And I think -- we had that from day one. Now, there are other -- there are other ways to put it together, but that's the way we put it together in that --

SEC. RUMSFELD: And anyone who's been down there knows that the relationships between the TAGs, the adjutant generals, and General Honore, the Reserve component and Guard, and the active forces was superb. It worked very, very well.

We're -- last question.

Q Mr. Secretary, there have been increased tensions in Basra in Iraq. Are you seeing increased evidence that Iran is more active in southern Iraq today?

SEC. RUMSFELD: That's a question that goes to relativity. Iran has been busy in southern Iraq for years, and years, and years. They send pilgrims back and forth across that border into those Shi'a holy sites on a regular basis. Their borders are porous. Is it greater today than yesterday? I don't know. But you can be sure that the playing field's not even there. They're interested, they're involved, and they're active. And it's not helpful. And my guess is, in the last analysis the overwhelming majority of the Iraqis, including the Iraqi Shi'a, are more Iraqi than they are Shi'a. And -- or Iranian Shi'a. They're more Iraqi Shi'a than they are Iranian Shi'a. And that, you know, you can overplay your hand.

Q Just a quick follow-up. The British Defense minister defended the actions of British troops today, breaking two commandos out of an Iraqi jail. What are your comments of those actions down there in Basra?

SEC. RUMSFELD: I haven't had a chance to study the details of what took place. And that's up to the Brits. That's their sector, and they've done generally a very good job over time.

GEN. MYERS: A great job.

SEC. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

Q Afghanistan question? You want to take an Afghanistan question?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Oh, no! You'd break the mold. You --

Q Come on! There's a lot of -- (inaudible) --

SEC. RUMSFELD: (Off mike) -- something that -- Afghanistan is enormous, what's taken place in that --

Q The last six months have been the most --

SEC. RUMSFELD: That is a big thing that's happened in the world.

Q The last six months have been the most American deaths of any six-month period of time.

SEC. RUMSFELD: It is a --

Q How does that square with the success that you outlined, and why -- are you concerned about the lethality of the Taliban or al Qaeda in Afghanistan?

Q Can you go to the microphone?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Should I go to the microphone? (Laughter.)

Q And President Karzai -- and President Karzai held a press conference today in which he said the need for military action in Afghanistan has --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I thought we called on you first, Charlie. (Laughter.) Maybe I was mistaken.

Q This is in conjunction with that. President Karzai said --

SEC. RUMSFELD: I must have been mistaken.

Q -- the need for military action has gone down.

Q (Off mikes) -- said airstrikes are -- (off mike) -- in Afghanistan.

Q He said it's gone down, the need for military --

SEC. RUMSFELD: This is -- this is turning into a disorderly house, as they say.

GEN. MYERS: (Laughs.)

SEC. RUMSFELD: What -- what took -- what has taken place in the last four years in Afghanistan is an historic achievement. And the people who have been involved in it can be enormously proud. And history will look back on it as having been an amazing accomplishment.

Now, are there still people being killed? Sure. Is there lethality? Yes. Do we coordinate closely with the Afghan security forces and with the Afghan government in terms of the counterterrorism activities? You bet. And obviously, airstrikes -- and when you don't have a masked army on the ground or large puddles of enemies -- then airstrikes are less effective than when you do have that type of a situation. That's absolutely correct.

But the -- to ignore what took place in Afghanistan would be a terrible mistake. And if one counted up the column inches and the minutes on television about Afghanistan and the accomplishment that just took place there with this second election, I mean, it fits in a thimble compared to all the other obviously more important things I should add as I leave.

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