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CBS News

# FACE THE NATION

Sunday, November 20, 2005

**GUESTS: DONALD RUMSFELD**  
**Secretary of Defense**

**Senator RICHARD LUGAR, (R-IN)**  
**Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee**

**Senator CHRISTOPHER DODD, (D-CT)**  
**Foreign Relations Committee**

**ELISABETH BUMILLER**  
**The New York Times**

**MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News**

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**FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS**  
**202-457-4481**

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and the debate over the war. The fight over the Iraq War has taken the partisan fight in Congress to new heights or lows. When Republican Congresswoman Jean Schmidt implied that Democrat John Murtha was a coward because he wanted to withdraw from Iraq, it touched off bedlam on the House floor.

(Excerpt from videotape)

Representative JEAN SCHMITT (Republican, Ohio): ...want the assurance from this body...

Unidentified Man: Gentlemen...

Rep. SCHMITT: ...that we will see this through.

Unidentified Man: ...the House will...

(End of excerpt)

SCHIEFFER: We will talk about these issues with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and two senators from the Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Dick Lugar and Democrat Chris Dodd. Elisabeth Bumiller of The New York Times will join in the questions. And I'll share some of our viewers' favorite cell phone stories.

But, first, Secretary Rumsfeld on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again.

The secretary is in the studio with us this morning. Joining in the questioning, Elisabeth Bumiller of The New York Times.

Mr. Secretary, let's get right to it. We know what John Murtha said. He said, 'It's time to withdraw the troops,' he said, 'within the next six months.' President Bush says that would cause terrible consequences. What do you think the terrible consequences would be? How would you see the world if we withdrew from Iraq?

Secretary DONALD RUMSFELD (Defense Department): That is an important question. In fact, it's the central question. And I think one way to answer it is by asking yourself--to try to put yourself in the shoes of other people. Think of the enemy listening to an argument that we should withdraw immediately or soon. All they would say to themselves is, 'Fair enough. All we have to do is wait them out.' And if you think about the troops that are there and how it sounds to them--these folks are out doing superb work for our country. And the idea that, notwithstanding conditions on the ground, which is the president's position, that it's condition-based, the withdrawal and the passing over of responsibility, but notwithstanding conditions, we're just going to bring them home.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what impact would that...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Put yourself in the shoes of the Iraqis, the Iraqi people, who've risked their lives to run for public office and to go out and vote to ratify a constitution and who are getting prepared to have an election in less than a month...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...under that new constitution.

SCHIEFFER: ...I take your point, but let me put myself in the shoes of the American people. Would their security be endangered?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, absolutely.

SCHIEFFER: There's be a lot of people who'd say, 'Maybe it's time to stop all these deaths among our soldiers.'

Sec. RUMSFELD: Yeah. Well, there's no doubt in my mind but that were we to pull out precipitously that the American people would be in greater danger than they are today. And I say that for this reason: Picture turning over Iraq to Zarqawi, the person who beheads people, the person who is out killing innocent men and women and--Iraqis, men, women and children--turning that country, with its oil, with its water, with its population, into a haven for terrorists. The thought of that and the risk to the other nations in the region, the risk to other free people--they've said what they want to do. They've said they want to re-establish a caliphate and they want to run countries from a handful of clerics and deny women the right to participate and to deny free people the right to get up and go where they want and say what they want and behave as they wish.

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sec. RUMSFELD: That's a dangerous thing...

SCHIEFFER: ...let me ask you...

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...and that's the alternative.

SCHIEFFER: ...this: Are we--is it a given that we would be turning it over to him or would the Iraqis--there's kind of an old rule that I had when I was growing up and it was, 'When you have to, you will.' Would the Iraqis stand up against Zarqawi? Would they be more inclined to do that if we left than if we stay?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, they're doing that today. I mean, there's 212,000 Iraqi security forces. They're out there engaged in the battle. They're getting killed. They're defending their country. The Iraqi people are running for public office. They're grabbing ahold of their country. Now you've got a good point. If there are too many US forces and if you fill too many vacuums, 'You will if you have to' is a very good message. Now I believe that General Casey and General Abizaid are correct, that this debate about how many troops should we have there--and they have constantly been given whatever they thought was necessary, but one of the reasons they're constantly holding the level down and not acquiescing in the arguments for more troops is because of the point you make. If you're too present, if you're too intrusive, it looks more like an occupation and it gives the insurgents the ability to go out and recruit people on the basis that the coalition countries are trying to take over their country.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me--I want to get to Elisabeth in just a second, but that does raise the point--are you saying we're getting ready to pull some troops out?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, no question. I mean, we went up for the referendum in October 15th and we went from 138,000 to 160,000. We're now at 159,000. We're going to stay that size, roughly, through the December 15th election. We're clearly going to go back down to 138,000 after the election, and as the president has said,

as the Ira--as we keep passing off responsibility to the Iraqi security forces, we have the prospect of bringing down the numbers of coalition forces.

SCHIEFFER: So you are counting on or planning to draw down the forces even more than 135,000 next year.

Sec. RUMSFELD: That's a decision for the president. All I'm saying...

SCHIEFFER: But that's what you sound like you're about to recommend here.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, I'll--the recommendation will come from General Casey and General Abizaid and what they will do is the--we know we're going to go back down to the 138,000 and then they will assess the conditions, and as we continue to--we've already passed off 17 bases, for example, to the Iraqis. Well, if you do that, you don't need the people guarding those bases.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Ms. ELISABETH BUMILLER (The New York Times): Let me go back to Congressman Murtha.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Yes.

Ms. BUMILLER: When he called for a withdrawal of American troops from Iraq last week, Scott McClellan, the White House press secretary, said that he was endorsing the policies of Michael Moore and the extreme liberal wing of the Democratic Party. And just a few hours ago, in Beijing, President Bush seemed to dial back a bit on that kind of criticism. And he praised Mr. Murtha as a fine man, a good man.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, he is a fine man.

Ms. BUMILLER: And so my question is: Did the administration go too far in its attacks on Mr. Murtha and the Democrats for criticizing the war?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, goodness. I've been in Australia. I have not followed the tit for tat, who said what. Murtha's a fine man, I know him personally, Jack is, and we know that. And it's perfectly proper to have a debate over these things, and have a public debate. We had debates during World War II. We had debates during the Korean War and during the Vietnam War. And we're going to have debates during this war. The important thing is to recognize that there's a--consequences for what you say, and the president of the United States has the responsibility to provide the direction and leadership. In my view, he's correct, and he's on the mark.

Ms. BUMILLER: Well, would you say that he is--he has--he went about the decision to call for the withdrawal in a careful and thoughtful way, as the president did? He seemed to be praising Mr. Murtha suddenly.

Sec. RUMSFELD: I haven't seen any of these reports. I've been on an airplane flying back from Australia. I just don't what you're referring to.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you think he deserves an apology?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Who?

SCHIEFFER: Murtha.

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't know why. I haven't heard...

SCHIEFFER: Well, he was called a coward, amongst other things in the House.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, he was not. He was not.

SCHIEFFER: Well, that was certainly the implication, Mr. Secretary.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, I don't believe he was called a coward. I'm told that the person apologized, who quoted somebody else, not even mentioning Murtha, so I think your characterization's probably—possibly unfair.

SCHIEFFER: What about when there—the White House press secretary...

Sec. RUMSFELD: He's not a coward. I'll tell you that.

SCHIEFFER: OK. Well, what about when the White House press secretary says he's aligning himself with Michael Moore, the producer of "9/11"?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, come on. I'm not going to get into all of that stuff. Whatever the president said, I—you quoted him. I agree with the president. How's that?

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Ms. BUMILLER: When is the—what is the...

Sec. RUMSFELD: But there must be more important things than this, huh? Somewhere.

SCHIEFFER: There are.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Somewhere in the world.

SCHIEFFER: And here's a list of—one of them.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Because...

Ms. BUMILLER: I have a question. Sixty percent of Americans now believe that the war was not worth fighting. At what point does lack of support at home affect the war itself?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, we have a president who knows that the war is worth fighting. And it is. And I think that the bulk of the Congress reflected that in the vote. You didn't see many people, Republican or Democrats...

SCHIEFFER: So you got word on that out there in Australia.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Just a minute. Yeah. You didn't see many people...

SCHIEFFER: You didn't hear the other part.

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...flocking to Jack Murtha's position. I didn't anyway. And I think...

Ms. BUMILLER: But do these polls not matter?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Of course.

Ms. BUMILLER: The majority of Americans believe this now?

Sec. RUMSFELD: If the president started chasing polls, they would get seasick because they go up and down and up and down. You know, if you think about the people, the American people, they have a very good center of gravity. And they can be swayed one way or another, but in the last analysis, on big issues, the American people find their way to right decisions. And they're going to find their way to the right decision here and they're going to be supportive. And the election is going to be a success in December, in my view. And after the election, we're going to see the circumstances in that country continue to improve. And you're going to see the Iraqi people continue to take more and more responsibility.

SCHIEFFER: So is it your feeling that we may be able to draw these troop levels down very significantly next year if things continue to go as they're going now?

Sec. RUMSFELD: As the president said, it's condition-based. And to the extent we see conditions improving--and it's pretty clear what Zarqawi's doing.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you see them improving? Is that what you're saying here?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I--well, clearly. If you go from a successful election in January to a drafting of a constitution, to a referendum on the constitution with the biggest turnout anyone could have imagined, and the Sunnis participating, and then a group of people running for office at--right now. In less than a month, there'll be an election. And then there will be a new government that will be in place for a period of time. That's progress. That's significant progress.

How do you go from zero to 212,000 Iraqi security forces? Of course, that's progress.

SCHIEFFER: But what a...

Sec. RUMSFELD: The number of countries participating in the coalition has gone up.

SCHIEFFER: But what about these explosions, these car bombs? Hundreds of people being killed...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: ...almost on a daily basis.

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...(Unintelligible).

SCHIEFFER: You can't count that as progress, can you, Mr. Secretary?

Sec. RUMSFELD: No, indeed. It's a tough part of the world. There have been people getting killed there. Saddam Hussein filled mass graves with hundreds of thousands of human beings. Think of that. And now does it take a genius to blow--strap a suicide belt on and go blow up a bunch of innocent men, women and children? No. But what's happening, Zarqawi and the terrorists and the insurgents are killing Iraqis overwhelmingly. And who are they killing? They're killing people in the Iraqi government. They're killing Iraqi citizens. That is not a popular thing to be doing. Why--it's not a surprise...

SCHIEFFER: But how is it they're able to keep doing it?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Just a minute, just a minute. It's not a surprise that the tips are going up. The number of phone calls that go into the Iraqi security forces today have gone up by multiples, and telling them 'Down the street are some of Zarqawi's people.' The people in Jordan are demonstrating against Zarqawi by the tens of thousands because of what he did in Jordan. He is not going to win a popularity contest.

SCHIEFFER: All right, Mr. Secretary, I think that's a good place to stop it. We always thank you for coming. When we ask the questions, you always give us an answer, and that...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: ...is not what always happens around here.

We'll be back in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with two key members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Dick Lugar and Democratic Senator Chris Dodd. Elisabeth, I want to give you a chance to ask a couple of questions here.

Ms. BUMILLER: Senator Dodd, Secretary Rumsfeld just said that conditions are improving in Iraq. Would you agree with that?

Senator CHRISTOPHER DODD (Democrat, Connecticut): Well, in some cases there are. But it's a little bit of happy talk, I think, listening to the secretary here. Clearly there have been some positive things that have occurred, but the number of deaths have increased dramatically not just among our own troops but also among the Iraqi citizenry themselves. Things seem to be a lot more tense. Obviously the bombings in Jordan create serious problems. The events in recent past months in London and Madrid clearly indicate we've got a broader problem here than just Iraq. So it's a mixed story.

But certainly there's a sense that things are not going as well as they should. And that's being reported to us by senior military people on the ground in Iraq. I was there about four weeks ago—Jack Reed, my colleague in the Senate—and the sense is things are not going well in—despite some of these successes. And that's one of the reasons why Jack Murtha said what he did the other day, putting aside the specifics of his proposal, talking about the military. No one's in closer contact with senior military people, in my view, in the United States Congress than Jack Murtha is.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you agree with him when he says withdraw in six months?

Sen. DODD: I don't necessarily agree with that, but that's not—his proposal was more complicated than that. It was about a five-point proposal. It was not voted on the other night, not that it would have passed, in my view. But his primary—if you'd listen and read his remarks, they're almost all about the soldiers, almost all about the troops on the ground and what's happening to them. And again this is a 37-year veteran of the Marine Corps, a person who was obviously highly decorated from Vietnam. To go through—to listen to the smears that were used against Jack Murtha was just reprehensible in my view. You may disagree with him, argue about the policy, but attacking Jack Murtha I think was a...

SCHIEFFER: Well, it sounded this morning as if the White House has decided maybe that wasn't such a good idea.

Sen. DODD: They're backing up on it. They're moonwalking this, as we say, a little bit.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah. Senator?

Sen. DODD: But certainly initially it was pretty devastating stuff.

Ms. BUMILLER: Senator Lugar, let me ask you, the--there was the uproar on Capitol Hill this week about the war. What does this get either party to go on these kind of attacks against--for the Democrats and Republicans? Does this help the war effort, and does it help the debate in this country?

Senator RICHARD LUGAR (Republican, Indiana): No, it doesn't. Let me just say, I wrote a small book called "Letters to the Next President" in the '88 campaign, and the reason I mention it is I said it's imperative for the president to co-opt the Congress. It's equally imperative not to co-opt the public, but at least through the Congress the presidential dialogue on such things now currently as troop preparedness of the Iraqis, how the oil was flowing or is not, are lights going on--is there provincial capacity?--these are things that do not come to us in the Congress. They don't come to the public. No wonder, as you pointed out earlier, that 60 percent of the public is not really sure that it was worth the shooting to begin with. The presentation really has to start being made--and I start from this point--the debate was not helpful in that respect except maybe to clear the air--catharsis of emotion.

But we've got to have hearings in which we get witnesses before us, and they come over and they give the information and the public hears it and we react. Because in the Foreign Relations Committee, we have a bipartisan group that want to have success in Iraq. That is clear. And we're going to have success in Iraq if we get the public and the Congress and the president on the same wavelength. Now that is doable.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator, you sound like you want some situation like we had back in Vietnam where, finally, the Congress became very dissatisfied with what was happening there and we saw hearings, and those hearings turned out to be the prelude to us leaving Vietnam. Is that what you see here, that we need something from Congress like we had in those days during Vietnam?

Sen. LUGAR: Well, we've had votes this week in which we're not going to leave. Both the Senate and the House decided that was not appropriate, Democrats and Republicans. But the point is, even as we stay, there's gonna be great anxiety unless we know how we're going to succeed. Do--we need more troops rather than less, for example? Do we need certainly more supplies, arms for the Iraqis that we're claiming are trained, but frequently don't have ammunition, don't seem to have ways of getting around the country. You know, these are the questions that's got to be asked, as opposed to a lot of caterwauling, like people coming out of a baseball dugout and having at it on the field.

Ms. BUMILLER: Well, does the president need to admit that major mistakes were made in Iraq?

Sen. LUGAR: Well, I think he has, and obviously he should. We've pointed out some in the Foreign Relations Committee very frequently in terms of reconstruction monies and the lack of progress there, the lack of planning before we started. But nevertheless, that is not particularly helpful now. We, I think, made those points. We'll probably make some more. In other words, the point of oversight, like checks and balances, is that somebody at least comes forward with some better ideas. Now the president...

Sen. DODD: Now let--Dick...

Sen. LUGAR: Yeah.



Sen. DODD: Dick's had 31 hearings on Iraq, to his great credit. The problem is, and I think what the chairman is saying, is we waited—from January, we waited almost nine months for the secretary of State to be willing to come before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Here it is a conflict that has cost the lives of more than 2,000 of our citizens, 15,000 wounded, and the secretary of State has made 14 appearances on Sunday talk shows and not one appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, despite the chairman asking her to come many times.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Dodd, let me ask you this.

Sen. DODD: That's just not right.

SCHIEFFER: Last week on FACE THE NATION, Governor Warner of Virginia said that he thought it was time for Democrats to stop arguing about how we got into Iraq and face up to the real problem, and that is: What do we do now? What do you think we should do now?

Sen. DODD: Well, I think what we need to do is, first of all, not insist that the Iraqi forces look like the 82nd Airborne or—they're not gonna face the Israeli army or the Iranian army. I think they're well prepared, in many cases, to take on significant responsibilities. We were—I was told four weeks ago by a senior military official in Iraq that they could handle Baghdad, all of the Baghdad area by March, and I think that creates a basis for starting to talk about significant redeployment. I think you heard a bit of that from the secretary, your questions this morning—begin a significant redeployment. Then secondly—and it could keep some of them in the region. Secondly, you've got to get more of the regional governments involved, it seems to me, if you're gonna have some success in Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: But how?

Sen. DODD: Well, I think after the bombing in Jordan, they may be getting—their lights may be going to go on a little bit more, recognizing they're on the front lines here and they've got to do more about it. I think getting NATO and the UN more involved. I was encouraged to see Kofi Annan was in Iraq the other day. That may be a precursor to their willingness to step up and take on more of that responsibility, it seems.

Ms. BUMILLER: Where do you see the troop levels in a year? What will...

Sen. DODD: Well, again, that's—I leave that for the commanders on the ground. I can tell you this much: The fault lines between the uniformed military and the civilian control in the Pentagon is huge, and anybody who's been to Iraq and has had candid conversations with senior military people would tell you that, not just from me.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think there's any chance, as Senator Dodd is saying, of getting troops from other countries to come in there and help out on this because the last time I looked everybody said...

Sen. LUGAR: No, not at the moment.

SCHIEFFER: ...they'd be happy for us to do it...

Sen. LUGAR: No.

SCHIEFFER: ...and they wouldn't?

Sen. LUGAR: Not at the moment. I was at NATO headquarters last weekend, had good talks with firm reps of the other countries. They are willing to do more in training. They are doing more. They understand we

have to be successful now but they are not to a point of political commitment of putting soldiers on the ground there. That is a step further, but, nevertheless, the atmosphere is different in Brussels, a whole lot different, than it was six months ago.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, gentlemen, I want to thank both of you for a very spirited and informative discussion.

Sen. DODD: Thanks.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, I promised no more cell phone stories for a while, but after my rant last week on cell phone bad manners, so many of you wrote in with your own horror stories that I want to share a few of them. Would you believe a driving school instructor taking on—talking on a phone while giving a lesson to a student driver? A viewer named Clyde saw it. Jean from California saw a woman talking on a cell phone at a funeral. Debbie swears a woman at her church took Communion while talking on a cell phone. Maybe she was talking to the Lord.

On a visit to Washington, Brent and his wife saw a beggar. As they approached, the beggar took a cell phone from his ear and asked if they could spare some change. And at the Coliseum in Rome, Kirk and his wife saw a man dressed in the authentic costume of a Roman centurion talking on a cell phone. Et tu, Verizon?

To say the least, there were a lot of stories involving cell phone multitasking in rest rooms. My favorite came from Charles who heard someone in the next stall say, 'Hello.' Startled, he responded, 'Hi,' which prompted the voice to say, 'Any plans for tonight?' That brought a quick, 'Sorry, I'm busy,' to which the voice next door responded, 'I'll just have to call you back. Every time I ask you a question, the idiot in the next stall answers.'

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.