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FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: DONALD RUMSFELD
Secretary of Defense

THOMAS FRIEDMAN
The New York Times

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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on the war in Iraq. After the success of the elections, the violence has continued, but the big question remains: What is the exit strategy? And how long will US troops be there? And what about Iran? These are the questions for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Tom Friedman, the foreign affairs columnist of The New York Times, joins us. And we'll get an update on the health of Pope John Paul, who just this morning addressed the crowds in Rome from his hospital room. I'll have a final word on reporters and what we do or should do. But first, Defense 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 of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, is here this morning, but before we talk to him, the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square this morning saw the pope as he spoke to them on huge television screens from his hospital room. He appears to be now recovering from the flu. He waved to the crowds and said that even from the hospital, he was continuing to serve the church and all humanity. So the pope seems to be doing better.

Well, now to the secretary of Defense.

Mr. Secretary, welcome to the broadcast. Welcome as well to Tom Friedman of The New York Times.

Mr. Secretary, by any measure, these elections went very well, and certainly it is the first step, it seems to me, on the road to democracy, but the violence continues. When can we expect it to at least level off or abate?

Secretary DONALD RUMSFELD (Defense Department): Well, there's no way to predict it. We expected that it would come up higher during the election period, and it has. They were threatening people who voted. They were threatening people who worked in the polling places. They threatened the Iraqi security forces. On the walls, it said, 'You vote, you die,' and people went right ahead and voted, millions and millions of them. You know, you've got a country of 25 million, 26 million people, and if you have thousands of people who don't like that, who want to have something other than that, they're terrorists, they want to re-establish--some others want to re-establish Saddam Hussein's rule, that type of a Ba'athist rule--if you have people that are determined to do that and they're willing to go out and chop off people's heads and kill people, why, it can go on for a while.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you say there are thousands. How many of them are there? I mean, we keep...

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't know. We don't know.

SCHIEFFER: ...nobody seems to know.

Sec. RUMSFELD: No. Until this can be...

SCHIEFFER: Well, why don't we know?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, the intelligence community isn't able to sort it out. They try. They're doing a good job, but it's difficult. Furthermore, my guess is the number changes. That is to say that if Iran and Syria are unhelpful, it can get worse. If the money flows in to Zarqawi in higher rates, he can hire more criminals, get more suicide bombers, and the violence can increase. If the governance, political process goes forward in a way that's positive, more and more people will be helpful, and the violence can go down. More intelligence information can be gained.

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sec. RUMSFELD: So there are variables that exist. And the idea that someone in the intelligence community ought to be able to give you a good number, I think, is asking a lot. It's hard.

SCHIEFFER: Well, if we don't know--if can't even estimate how many of them there are, how will we ever defeat them?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't know that that's necessary. I think in an insurgency, you have people that are functioning in an environment where a lot of people--some people are with them, some people are against them and some people are waiting to see who the winner is going to be, and some people are trying to develop conviction about what they think. And at some point there's a tipping. It either tips one way or it tips the other way. And I think the election...

SCHIEFFER: Well, has it tipped yet?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't know. I do know that the election had to be an enormously encouraging thing for people. To go out there and see who else is out there, and suddenly be reassured that 'If I want to go and vote, and I don't know whether I have the courage to do it because I might be killed, and I suddenly look and there's millions of other people out there voting,' you think, 'My goodness, I'm on the right side.' That's how I think. And the people who are over a little not sure, they more conviction, too. So people don't go from here to here. They go like that or that. And I think that the election had to have given heart and encouragement and inspiration to the Iraqi people to see millions of people have the courage to go do that.

SCHIEFFER: Tom.

Mr. THOMAS FRIEDMAN (The New York Times): Mr. Secretary, the first sign that people will be going like that would be if your intelligence improved, if somebody started calling our men on the ground and saying, 'You know that third house down the street?'

Sec. RUMSFELD: Exactly. Exactly.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Are you seeing any sign of that?

Sec. RUMSFELD: It's too soon for me to know.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Gotcha.

Sec. RUMSFELD: But you're quite right. Foreign forces are not going to get the best intelligence. The best intelligence is going to come from people who have situational awareness. They know the language. They live in the community. And either they--and someone tries to intimidate them, and they go quiet. But if they have courage, and if they're reassured, they don't go quiet. They go find a way to get word that that person is going around intimidating people or killing people. And then that intelligence is what enables you to go out and do the job.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Mr. Secretary, you mentioned Iran earlier. Would the world be a safer place, would the Middle East be a safer place, with a different regime in Teheran?

Sec. RUMSFELD: The--our goal--I mean, the president's talked about Iran and indicated that we're on a diplomatic path with them and hopeful that that will be successful. My concern in Iraq is that, to the extent a neighboring country is unhelpful, it makes our task that much more difficult.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: And is Iran unhelpful right now?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Iran's been unhelpful and so has Syria.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: So the Middle East would be safer with a different regime there?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I think I'm just so pleased with what happened last Sunday that...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: One regime at a time?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Yeah--the chance that that could have an effect on neighboring countries and on the region--I mean, if you think what's happened, the New York Times had a section that had three pictures today, and it--I think one was Ukraine, and one was the Palestinian liberation. And if you think of Afghanistan and Palestine and the Ukraine election and then the election in Iraq, the sweep of human history is for freedom. People want to be free. And that's a powerful force.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you really have not directly answered that question, if I may say so, Mr. Secretary. Is that because you don't want to inflame this situation, that you want to give...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Which is that?

SCHIEFFER: Well, is Iran being unhelpful, the question that Tom--would we better...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Would we be better off without--would we be better without the regime in Teheran?

Sec. RUMSFELD: OK. OK. OK.

SCHIEFFER: Is that because you don't want to inflame this situation? Do you want to give diplomacy a time to work? I mean, I'm just wondering why you haven't directly answered that.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, because it's the president's business and the secretary of State's business. And they've been commenting on it. And I don't know what anyone could add. If I rephrase what they've said and put a comma in a different place, someone is going to say, 'Aha! Daylight.'

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Sec. RUMSFELD: And I'm just not going to do that.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, let me ask you a little different...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Why do I need to do that?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Yeah. Secretary, we're trying to end their...

Sec. RUMSFELD: We're on a diplomatic path. That's a good thing.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: We're trying to bring an end to the Iranian nuclear program.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Mm-hmm.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Do you think this can be done through diplomatic means?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Time will tell.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Are you ready to see the United States give the kind of assurances the Iranians are looking for, it seems to me, through the Europeans?

Sec. RUMSFELD: That's not the business of the Pentagon. The president and the secretary of State are managing that issue, and God bless them.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: You're just no fun today.

SCHIEFFER: I think it is fair to say that the president wants to continue these diplomatic efforts. But I think it's also fair to say that he is very skeptical about whether they will work. I think it's fair to say that he believes that dictators and tyrants do not often give up their weapons. Do you agree with that?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I think that I certainly agree with the things the president said. You're trying to climb into his mind and see what he really thinks about something different than he may have said. My attitude is that life isn't that complicated. You have a country there that seems bent on having a nuclear weapon. And you have the rest of the world preferring that that not be the case, the bulk of the rest of the world, and concerned about destabilization in regions because of changes of that type. And so the president has said, 'Let's do what we can from a diplomatic standpoint to see that we can try to be helpful in that part of the world.'

SCHIEFFER: But do you think that diplomacy can be successful in this effort?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Only time will tell.

SCHIEFFER: I want to ask you about your now-famous quote, and I know you consider it only part of what you had to say that day, but it basically boiled down to what you said was 'We

go to war with the army that we have'--you were talking about Iraq--`not with the army we want or wish to have.'

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't agree with you. I don't think that my answer boiled down to that at all.

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sec. RUMSFELD: I answered in about five paragraphs, and it was an inclusive, thoughtful, explanation of all that was taking place...

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me...

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...all the things we were doing...

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...to try to provide improved armor, body armor, armor for the trucks.

SCHIEFFER: Let me just ask you this question, and I think this, to me, is the question that gets to it...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Frankly, I think that characterization is distinctly inaccurate.

SCHIEFFER: Should we have waited until we had the army we needed?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Well, I think the better way to look at it is that you have what you have, and if the circumstances are different than you anticipated, then you have to adjust your techniques and tactics and procedures to fit your capabilities. Now what does that mean? It means that if you end up with major combat operations over and there's no forward line of the battlefield, in fact, there's an insurgency and there are explosive devices going on, behind what would be a line of battle, then obviously you need different types of vehicles and different types of body armor because people in the front normally were fully equipped with that; people in rear areas didn't need that, so you don't have all that you might need given that different circumstance. So the thing to do, it seems to me, is to adjust your tactics and your techniques and your procedures. And that's what battlefield commanders have to do.

Then, simultaneously, they have to put a full-court press on to get what they need so that they don't have to fully adjust their techniques and tactics and procedures, and that's what we've done. I'm told by General Casey that because of the effort that's been put forward, by February 15th, there won't be a single vehicle--shouldn't be a single vehicle, US military vehicle, with military people in it, moving around in Iraq anywhere outside of a protected compound, that doesn't have appropriate armor.

Now how do you do that? Well, you fly people in with welding torches and steel and you take vehicles that weren't supposed to have armor and put armor on them and hope that the brakes work and the suspensions work and the hinges on the doors work, and you...

SCHIEFFER: But is that another way of saying--is that another way...

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...and you fly more things in like we did with the Berlin airlift. We flew in...

SCHIEFFER: Sure.

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...a great deal more of the materials that...

SCHIEFFER: But is that another way of saying that we weren't prepared and we didn't expect what happened there, and so, in fact, we didn't have the right configuration when we went to Iraq?

Sec. RUMSFELD: We did. What was different was the intensity of the insurgency. Now is it...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Mr. Secretary, if I could just--follow me...

Sec. RUMSFELD: You don't want me to answer his question?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Oh, sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead. Wouldn't want to interrupt.

Sec. RUMSFELD: It might have been different had we been able to bring the 4th Infantry Division in from the north. I don't know that, but it's possible. It would have done a much better job of dealing with the Ba'athists and the Saddam types in that part of the country, which is where the bulk of them were, up north of Baghdad. And it might have been a different situation. You develop plans to fit as many contingencies as you can, and excursions that you might have to deal with, and then you adapt it, because you're up against an enemy with a brain. It's not as though it's a static situation that you can predict. All you can predict is that any plan ends when you hit the battlefield.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Right. You...

Sec. RUMSFELD: At that point they're thinking and they're adapting and they're adjusting.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Mr. Secretary, you said the other day that you'd offered twice to resign to the president.

Sec. RUMSFELD: I was asked, and I answered honestly.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: What did you think you had done that was so wrong that you twice tendered your resignation?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Not the way to cast it. The consideration for me was could I be effective, and I made a judgment for myself that I thought I could be, but I wanted to watch the situation because the last thing I need is to be in a position and feel I can't be effective.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: What made you think you couldn't be effective?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I didn't say I felt I couldn't be effective. I said the consideration for me was that I did not want to serve if I did not think I could not be effective. And I made a judgment that I could be effective. It was a political campaign. Politicians say things, so the fact that people were fussing about that, it seems to me, wasn't the issue.

The second issue is, what about the president? What does he think, and does he feel that he'd be better off and the country would with someone other than the person that's there? I said,

the only fair thing for me to do is make my own decision, and I did, and then to go to him and give him the opportunity to make that decision. He did.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Does Iran have nuclear weapons?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Don't know. I don't think so, but I'm not in the intelligence business. But the intelligence I've seen suggests to me that they're on a path towards achieving a nuclear weapon, but that they've not arrived, and it could be some period of years off.

SCHIEFFER: Let's take a break right here.

Sec. RUMSFELD: But intelligence has been wrong before on things like that. That's just the best information I have.

SCHIEFFER: Let's take a break.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: We'll come back and talk about this in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back again with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

Mr. Secretary, to just get back to what Tom Friedman said, do you think that Iran at this point has nuclear weapons? There are some people who say that at this point they are convinced they could build a nuclear weapon with outside help--with no outside help from anyone within two years.

Sec. RUMSFELD: I've seen--I've not seen anyone who thinks they currently have a weapon. I've not seen anyone who thinks they don't want one. Everyone thinks they do.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think they have the capability to do it in a couple of years?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't know. I've seen speculation on the number of years, but I must say every year the numbers vary and I just simply don't know. That's a matter for the intelligence community.

SCHIEFFER: Let's get to troops. There are a lot of National Guard families out there and Reserve families that want to know how long this is going on; how long will they continue to carry the burden? People are being held beyond their enlistments, beyond what they were told they would have to serve. How long will it continue?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I think that's not a correct characterization. These are all volunteers. They've all been told the rules and the procedures and the policies.

SCHIEFFER: But--yes, sir, but they have been extended beyond the terms in the beginning they were told. I understand it's part of the deal, but...

Sec. RUMSFELD: It is. It's always been part of the deal. For unit cohesion, which everyone believes in and thinks is the right thing, you have a stop-loss. And if somebody's due to get out a month ahead and the unit's in battle, you don't start stripping that unit.

SCHIEFFER: Yes, sir.

Sec. RUMSFELD: You have a stop-loss for a period.

SCHIEFFER: But some of these people are being held beyond a month and that's a fact.

Sec. RUMSFELD: It has--I think the way to characterize it is that we have currently used about 40 percent of the Guard and Reserves thus far. So there are a lot of people who have not been activated at all since the beginning of the Afghan campaign. There is stress on the force. There's stress on particular disciplines within the force. So the Army is not organized for the 21st century as well as it should be and it--that's being--happening right now very fast. We're increasing the size of the Army. We are increasing the number of combat brigades from 33 to 43. We're rebalancing the active force with the Reserve component so that we have the skill sets we need on active duty and don't have to overuse those same skill sets from the Guard and Reserve. We're doing a whole host of things to reduce stress on the force and it's working. And for most part, recruiting and retention is soft in some areas but in--for the most part it's generally on track. And that's the test.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Mr. Secretary, would you like to see long-term US bases in Iraq?

Sec. RUMSFELD: In Iraq?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Yes.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, I have no idea. I don't want our forces anywhere in the world where they're not wanted, and that'd be a matter for the Iraqi people. And we have no plans to do that.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Do you share the attorney general's view that the Geneva Conventions are a quaint legacy from the past?

Sec. RUMSFELD: Oh, I've never heard him say that. Who said that?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, I believe he was quoted...

Sec. RUMSFELD: Who's he? Gonzales?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Gonzales. Yes, exactly, that they are...

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't--I'm not a lawyer. I've never heard that. And it's not something I would...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: That's not your view of the Geneva Conventions.

Sec. RUMSFELD: No. The Geneva Conventions have a perfectly sensible purpose. And the purpose is--and it's not very well understood, but one of the key purposes was to try to get people to fight conventionally and to wear uniforms and to carry weapons if they have weapons that are invisible and to behave according to the various rules that have been provided. And so when you're dealing with terrorists who don't do that, the idea that they should have all of the rights and privileges that accrue to someone who does do that is to demean those that do that.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: I've got just a story here from April 2003. The lead is, 'Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared yesterday that the United States would not tolerate an Iranian-style theocracy in Iraq,' this April 2003. 'If you're suggesting how we would feel about an Iranian-type government with a few clerics running everything in the country...'

Sec. RUMSFELD: Wait a second. The first part was someone's characterization of me...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Right. Exactly.

Sec. RUMSFELD: ...not a quote of mine.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: I'm just curious if you stand--you said, 'This is not going to happen.'

Sec. RUMSFELD: I don't believe it will. Yeah. Now why do I say that? Well, the president had said that what he would like to see is an Iraq that is liberated, at peace with its neighbors, respectful of all the elements within the country and not engaged in terrorist activities with lethal weapons. That's the government's position. It remains the government's position. It's certainly my position. I have believed from the beginning that Iraqi Shia are more Iraqi than they are Iranian Shia. And I may be wrong but that's what I think. I think in the last analysis, a country that sets half of its population, the women, on the side and doesn't have them participate fully in their society is not going to have much success. And I think Iraq has a wonderful opportunity here.

SCHIEFFER: Which leads me to the final...

Sec. RUMSFELD: It has water. It has oil. It has intelligent people. And I think they have a good future.

SCHIEFFER: We have 20 seconds here. Are you at this point now optimistic about the situation in Iraq?

Sec. RUMSFELD: I am consistently realistic. I do believe that the power of freedom is great, that people basically want to be free. I think the elections have to give everyone great encouragement, and I just hope and pray that they stay on a path that is constructive. It'll be a wonderful thing for the Iraqi people and a wonderful thing for the region.

SCHIEFFER: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. It's always interesting to interview you.

Sec. RUMSFELD: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Back with a final word.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, I get a lot of mail about media bias. I can't remember giving a lecture when I wasn't asked about it. If my mail is a measure, many conservatives believe that most reporters are Democrats, driven by liberal bias. Many liberals believe reporters are so cowed by the Bush administration that we go too easy on Republicans.

My standard answer is that, yes, some reporters are biased, not many, but a few. Like a draft army, the press reflects the society from which it is drawn and contains many points of view. But I argue that what drives the vast majority of reporters is not a hidden political agenda, but

simply a desire to get the story and to get it before their competitors. I never heard that better explained than last week at the opening of the Watergate papers of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, which have been placed at the University of Texas.

These notes, transcripts, the raw data compiled by these two great reporters are a trove of information for scholars. But the trip to Austin was worth it just to hear Woodward describe what motivated the two as they delved into the minor burglary that eventually brought down a president. They had no hidden agenda nor any idea how the story would end. Woodward said, 'We were just trying to find out what happened.' In those few words, he summed up journalism's whole purpose, and they should be posted above the door of every news room in America, the last thing reporters see as they head out on assignment. When we forget those words and try to overly complicate our purpose, we get into trouble. When we remember them, we can perform a valuable, even a noble service. I still believe that is what most reporters do.

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