GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH DONALD RUMSFELD

With Victoria Clarke, Lawrence Di Rita, Richard Myers,
and two unidentified

September 24–25, 2012
Charlottesville, Virginia

Participants

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Russell Riley: This is the Donald Rumsfeld interview as a part of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. We want to thank you for coming to Charlottesville for the occasion. We have assembled an all-star cast, at your invitation, of senior people from the Defense Department during the 43rd Presidency. We're very much looking forward to hearing from the man at the head of the table as well as the rest assembled here.

We're making a tape record of this. The discussions are conducted under a strict veil of confidentiality. That means nobody in the room is allowed to report on the outside what we talk about. The tape will be transcribed within a few months and the transcript will circulate to each of the participants. The transcript becomes the authoritative record of the interview. The primary reason we do that is to keep you from self-editing into the tape recorder, with the recognition that you can come back at some later point and decide to edit what you've said or to place a hold or stipulation on the release of the materials.

The importance of this is that you're talking not just to the people at the table. We're trying to create a historical record that people 20 or 30 or a hundred years from now can come back and understand your experience in the 43rd Presidency as you actually experienced it. So we will ask you to speak candidly to history with the recognition that you will have an opportunity to review this.

The other thing I will say before we get started is that some of you may be approached at a later date to come back and do an individual interview. There are two projects going on, corollary projects now. The Miller Center project is doing the senior officials in the Bush administration. Our colleague Jeff Engel is just standing up a corollary project at SMU [Southern Methodist University], very closely affiliated with the Bush Foundation and the Library, to talk with the people who would not be at the senior-most reaches of the administration, to get a fuller record of the administration than we would normally get as a part of the Miller Center project.

Rumsfeld: That's a good idea.

Riley: I hope that you would be amenable if there are some gaps in our discussions, particularly for those of you who can only be here for a part of the time, we'll come back to you. This is a

very freewheeling set of discussions. It's informal. We don't think it tends to be very painful, but maybe occasionally it is.

Richard Myers: Not as bad as a congressional hearing. It cannot be.

Riley: Or a deposition, which with some of our administrations has been the default setting. Let me start with a question about the period before the Bush Presidency, the 43rd Presidency. I'm interested in what might be called the [William J.] Clinton interregnum. What was going on within the Republican foreign policy–making community in the period when President Clinton was serving in office, both to get a sense about how everybody was coming to know one another and also to hear from you what you were doing on important issues like missile defense or Iraq, for example.

Rumsfeld: I don't think I knew Larry [Di Rita] or Torie [Victoria Clarke] or Dick [Myers] at all until the Bush administration.

I was in the pharmaceutical business and electronics business and was asked periodically to do things in various administrations. I served on the Debt Commission, on the General Advisory Committee on Arms Control, served as President [Ronald] Reagan's Middle East Envoy, served as his Special Envoy on the Law of the Sea, and in the '90s, '98 I think, I was asked by Congress to chair the Ballistic Missile Threat Commission, which was made up of all PhDs or generals, except me. I was neither. Paul Wolfowitz was on it and two or three retired generals and a group of scientists.

Then I chaired the Space Commission for the government. These commissions were created by Congress. The House appointed some people, the Senate appointed some, and the President appointed some members, so they were bipartisan. That's what I was doing.

Myers: I first met you when you were at the Space Commission. I think I came over and talked to you right before—

Rumsfeld: Right before the election, yes. What were you doing?

Myers: I was the Vice Chairman at the time.

Rumsfeld: Of course.

Myers: I had just come in from Space Command.

Rumsfeld: We had a good group on both commissions.

Lawrence Di Rita: You had a good group. I was on the Hill at the time. There was a robust debate going on among Republicans. Les Aspin had brought down the whole Base Force debate that had occurred in the early '90s and how large the force should be. Republicans were working very hard to create a rationale for a defense buildup, because it was seen as a significant drawdown that had gone too far.

There were concerns about the Kosovo and Bosnia operations that were revealing that some of that had gone too far, Somalia and Haiti. So there was a really robust debate on the Hill among Republicans. What can we do to bring together the counterargument to what is happening—which everybody was concerned about—and do it with a strategic rationale around transforming the force?

This whole revolution in military affairs was beginning to get a lot of traction in the '90s, which eventually became Defense Transformation, what President Bush began to really pull together in his Citadel speech in 1999. All that thinking was reflective of a lot of work that had been going on from a lot of people. Wolfowitz was very involved in that kind of stuff throughout the '90s, to create a strategic rationale for defense rearmament and transformation. So there was a lot of thinking going on on the Hill and in foreign policy circles generally among Republicans.

Rumsfeld: The drawdown had actually started. At the end of the Cold War, the last two years of the George Herbert Walker Bush administration and the eight years of the Clinton administration. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: The drawdown had started in the last two years of the Bush administration and continued through the eight Clinton years, which is what led to what Larry is talking about, the concern that the trends were not going in the right direction.

Riley: The drawdown was happening too quickly?

Rumsfeld: Too deep.

Di Rita: Too deep, and there was a lot of concern that we were spending money on all the wrong things.

Rumsfeld: Even in the intelligence community, not just the Defense Department.

Victoria Clarke: I was in a nice private sector job at the time, but I was very close to some of the people who had worked on the Bush campaign. There was a lot of chaos, obviously, and not as much time for a nice, logical, orderly transition, and there were concerns about that.

Rumsfeld: Because of the [Albert, Jr.] Gore debate going on so long.

Clarke: Josh Bolten, who eventually became the Chief of Staff—I know I was talking to him about it at the time, saying we barely could get this election won, and the first term started. At the same time people, started having conversations with me about possibly going to the Pentagon and I thought, *OK, I'd better start learning what they're focused on there*.

I went to some meetings that Dr. Wolfowitz had, and the conversations you heard from people who were going to be running the White House were very different from the conversations these folks were having. I remember being in a meeting in your conference room and you talking about the need for transformation and the concern about the drawdowns and the serious huge need to completely transform the military. I was the one sitting there saying, "OK, I know nothing about these matters, but I promise you the overwhelming majority of the people who just elected this President and are thinking about what he needs to be focused on do not feel this compelling need. They pretty much think things have been OK for the last eight, nine years and don't see the same dramatic need that you do."

I think even early on you could see where the people who were running the White House weren't as steeped in the issues that these kinds of people were focused on.

Riley: Larry, did President Bush have a presence among the community of congressional Republicans on the Hill during the interval you're talking about?

Di Rita: When he was Governor? He was Governor, and as a result focused on Texas issues, but when he decided to get into active campaign mode, he did. He and his team had a lot of relationships up there. Karl Rove was well known to most people up there, Clay Johnson, Josh Bolten. They started to build a team down in Austin and were pulling from a lot of Hill staff. There was a lot of, I wouldn't say coordination, but an awful lot of cooperation and consultation going back and forth.

Jeffrey Engel: Can I ask you to go a little deeper on this question of these trends and elements of concern within the Clinton years preceding the transition? You mentioned Kosovo being an important issue, this highlight for individual concerns about too deep of cuts, but also missile defense is a clearly different strategic issue than it had been. What were the specific concerns that the trend lines, as you said, Mr. Secretary, were going in different directions?

Rumsfeld: Paul Wolfowitz had been involved with the group that was advising Governor Bush, I was not. I did brief him on missile defense at the end of my commission work, but that was it.

[redacted]

Riley: How did it look from the inside during the few years leading up?

Myers: The primary thing I remember about the ’90s was the fact that the procurement budgets always led in any downturn in defense budget, because you can do that now. You can’t do personnel as quickly. You can’t stop training. There are a lot of things that have momentum, go on. Procurement, you just stop writing—rescind contracts, don’t write contracts, delay, push to the right—so procurement went way down. We call it the procurement bathtub.

In fact in Clinton’s last year, with Secretary [William] Cohen pushing on him, they actually bumped that budget up for the first time in a long time. I would say we’re still suffering from that budget. So the 200-ship Navy we’re going to have here in five or ten years started back then. As it went down, even though our budgets went up, 21st-century procurement never quite recovered. Now they’re going back down, so we’ll never recover—This is opinion now. But that’s what was going on. We were thinking about procurement, and I think we were more than willing to hear the issue of “Defense has to transform itself.” There wasn’t any pushback that I, or most supporters—There is always pushback, but I think a lot of the senior military leaders thought, *That’s good. If that’s the President’s priority, if that’s the Secretary’s priority, that’s good*.

How we get to that and what we do and don’t do, and how do we change a lot of debate, but the notion that we had to change was pretty clear in everybody’s mind.

Riley: Mr. Secretary, how do you fold in the missile-defense piece at the same time that there is this impulse for contraction within the political system? This is a costly enterprise, isn't it, the missile-defense piece?

Rumsfeld: No, as part of the total budget, it's not something that is really significant in those early stages. The big decision was the President's and he made it to walk away from the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] treaty. That was a difficult thing to do politically. He decided to do it and did it. At the time the Russians were reasonably not terribly uncomfortable with it. They didn't like it, but I can remember meeting with [Vladimir] Putin and I came away—I don't know what my cable said, but I came away with the impression that they didn't like it, but they weren't going to pull their hair and scream. Were you on that trip?

Clarke: Yes.

Rumsfeld: I believed we'd get through that [the withdrawal] and it would work out all right.

Second, we made a couple of changes in how we talked about missile defense. We brought it down from a national shield to putting it in place, on an experimental basis, the beginnings of those capabilities so that we could test them, try them out, see how they worked. Also, we stopped talking about "national" missile defense. I dropped the word "national." It gave the allies the impression that we were going to protect ourselves and the heck with them. You've got Japan and South Korea and the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies, and that's not really the posture we would want to be in. So I dropped that word.

Then we started out putting it [the system] in place. It has been a very good thing that we've done. We now have the ability to hit a missile with an interceptor.

Clarke: I think we provided more context. Pre-9/11 it was one of the few defense matters that broke through to the general population, and there was a fair amount of energy directed against missile defense. They called it "Star Wars" and said, "You say it is going to save the world." Where before it had been a black-or-white debate, one of the things we tried to say again and again was, "It is one part of a broader deterrent strategy." I thought that by saying "one part of a broader deterrent strategy," which it was, it took some of the emotion out of the debate, and that brought it to a different level. Rather than saying it is the be-all and end-all, we said it was one part of a broader strategy, and that seemed to have helped.

Rumsfeld: Dick would know more than I would, but anytime you want to do something new, the money has to come from somewhere. It is either going to come from the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force. Any new system tends to be resisted by the green-eyeshade folks in each of the services.

I can remember there wasn't anyone in the military defending cruise missiles back in the 1970s. They [cruise missiles] didn't exist. We had the technology. They posed complications because they could be nuclear or nonnuclear and could be launched from land, sea, or air. [Henry] Kissinger and President [Gerald] Ford were trying to negotiate a deal and the Soviets wanted to include cruise missiles. The State Department was against cruise missiles; the services were not interested in them because the money had to come from somewhere. Consider where we'd be without cruise missiles today.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: He [Kissinger] tried and we stopped it. I remember Fred [Iklé] would sit in the SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] meetings, the verification panel, and he couldn't say much. He couldn't really oppose the Secretary of State, who was simultaneously National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. We came within inches, as you know from the inside, of not having cruise missiles, of trading them away in that deal.

Unidentified: The Navy was eager to get rid of them.

Rumsfeld: The services weren't against cruise missiles; they just knew that the money was going to come from airplanes or ships or something else, which were tested and needed. It was understandable. The missile-defense treaty was something the President [George W. Bush] provided leadership on and got us out of the treaty. We couldn't do anything as long as we remained in the ABM Treaty. We couldn't experiment, we couldn't put anything in place to test it, try it, see how it worked. But today we've made good progress.

Myers: And that was important not just for ballistic missile defense, but for intercontinental missiles, but particularly for shorter-range missiles for U.S. forces. There hadn't been anything done about missile defense basically since the attacks on the barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that killed what, 13, 16 people when Saddam [Hussein] launched a Scud down that way; I think they were Scud missiles.

Unidentified: At the very end of the war?

Myers: Yes, the very end of the war. There hadn't been much progress made in theater missile defense and this was all then tied together. The military leadership would be very enthusiastic about that piece of it, probably less enthusiastic about the intercontinental piece, but as long as they're tied together that was important.

The other important thing is after 9/11 the budget started to go up. So the $10 million annually that went to missile defense, the way I put it, was tolerated because it wasn't threatening other

systems. If it hadn't been for 9/11, the debate would have been richer and Congress would do what they always do. They'd get the uniform folks over there and say, "No, you have to tell me what you think." I think it could have been messier. That never happened, to my recollection. That never happened because budgets were going up and there was this notion that if the budget was going up, this is an important capability and we need it.

Engel: I'm taken by the point you just made that missile defense is an issue that really raised up into the public consciousness before 9/11.

Clarke: It was one of the very few, yes.

Engel: But, Mr. Secretary, you point out that relations and discussions with Russia, with Putin at this time, I recall from this period that actually there was a lot of discussion of the Chinese reaction and people were trying to interpret what the administration was going to be doing vis-à-vis its Asia policy. Could you discuss for us the thinking both for missile defense and more broadly for American policy toward a rising China at this time?

Riley: This is during the election transition?

Engel: Right, during the election transition, that missile defense was a concern, not only for the Russians, but for the Chinese as well.

Rumsfeld: But the Chinese weren't part of the ABM Treaty. The only way we could do anything was to get out of the treaty.

Di Rita: That was really the point. That missile-defense debate was a proxy for the last gasp of Cold War and superpower relationships, which was treaty issues. The missile-defense treaties crystallized that whole discussion in a way that almost no other arms issue did.

Myers: START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty].

Di Rita: Yes, START, but what can we do to break free from a Cold War mentality? You've got to end this treaty relationship. Underneath that was the whole missile—

Myers: Which was frustrating our ability to defend the troops. It was ridiculous. You remember that the Russians—Our debate with them on the treaty was that we had this theater missile-defense demarcation agreement with them, where we eventually said, "We won't develop any weapon that goes faster than 3,000 meters per second" or whatever it was. Limiting the speed.

Of course, in the equation for missile defense, speed is everything. The Russians were trying to make it so it would not impact their strategic rocket forces, but in doing so it really constrained us to protect our troops. It was untenable. There was a lot of enthusiasm for moving into the 21st century, getting rid of these things that don't make a lot of sense in terms of the relationship between Russia and the United States.

Rumsfeld: One of the things I remember, [redacted] is that we received intelligence that showed three countries—the U.S., India, and Iran—had already launched ballistic missiles from ships. So a country didn't have to have the longest range

missiles; they didn't have to have an ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile]. The Iranians, as I recall, put a missile on a cargo ship, ran it down the river into the Caspian Sea, peeled the cover back, and fired off a medium- or short-range ballistic missile which carried a nuclear weapon. Nobody knew which ship it was, since the Caspian Sea is filled with similar cargo ships and they have the same radar signals. Is that roughly your recollection?

[redacted]

Myers: And that was a scenario you ran at Colorado Springs for the NATO Defense Ministers, remember that?

Rumsfeld: That is right?

Myers: You ran that same scenario because we were frustrated that NATO did not have a command-and-control system that could react in a crisis.

Rumsfeld: That's right. Interesting.

Myers: So the scenario was to bring in a cargo ship, covered stuff on the deck, revealed later that it is a missile, and while they're still dithering at NATO—Sorry, this is not anti-NATO, but that's what they do there; they were dithering. Just check the records. They dither, they talk, all 27 countries have to agree. By that time the missile is gone. That was your scenario. All the Defense Ministers were going to work on that. Now, have they taken any steps to fix it? My guess is probably not, but that's editorial.

Marc Selverstone: Could you characterize the conversations with Putin such that you figured you'd be able to get through it without a whole lot of trouble? How would you characterize the eventual fallout of the ABM decision, the relationship with the Soviets, the actual impact—Excuse me, the Russians?

Rumsfeld: I made that same verbal mistake once; it's good to see you do it.

Selverstone: We cut our teeth on the Cold War.

Myers: So did he.

Rumsfeld: No problem really. The biggest problem we had was with Representative [Ellen] Tauscher in the House and Senator [Carl] Levin in the Senate. Many Democrats were anti-Reagan, anti-missile defense today, tomorrow, and the next day. They were much more difficult on the issues than the Russians were.

Di Rita: And we got our strategic agreement with the Russians subsequent to that, which had nothing to do with the treaty. It was clear they saw that life goes on.

Myers: I think the context would be in the middle of the Clinton administration, because I was involved in this. We worked on the follow-on to START, we worked on this theater missile-defense demarcation, and we worked on NATO Russian charter. [Boris] Yeltsin was still the man and it still was the Soviet Union, but they had just been taken through that wringer.

Then you go back to work this issue, and who shows up at the table? Yeltsin is not there, but it's the same crowd. I did some more work with the same admiral; he looked like he came right out of some interrogation cell, just awful stuff. We kind of moved them one way and now we're moving them another way. This is my counterpart.

Rumsfeld: The four-star?

Myers: No, this was a Navy admiral who liked to do their strategic negotiating during the Clinton years.

Rumsfeld: He sat in a meeting, a dinner one time with us with Sergei Ivanov, an excellent Defense Minister for them, and the chief of their Armed Forces. That is [Yuri] Baluyevsky.

Di Rita: Baluyevsky, that was the guy doing all the strategic negotiations.

Rumsfeld: He was their top military man. The dinner was an informal conversation; anyone could say anything they want. Out of his mouth he said, "Lyndon LaRouche is the one who thought of missile defense." This guy actually thought Lyndon LaRouche was a factor in America. He'd run for Governor of Illinois or something, or President. I said to Sergei Ivanov afterward, "Holy mackerel, you have a problem. If your top general has such little understanding of the United States that he thinks Lyndon LaRouche is behind our missile-defense program, you have a problem."

Riley: Anything else about this interregnum period before we get to 2000?

Rumsfeld: The second time I met George W. Bush, he asked to be briefed. He was at the Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. The Governor was running for President. It was January of 2000 probably, or 1999. We'd finished our ballistic missile work and he asked to be briefed. I remember going to his hotel and spending an hour or an hour and a half briefing him.

Riley: And your sense of it? You came away with a positive assessment of this Governor of Texas?

Rumsfeld: I did. He was a serious person and asked good questions and invested the time. He had a familiarity with the subject matter, so he could engage in a thoughtful discussion. I'd seen him when he was a young fellow helping his father run campaigns, but that was decades before. I'd never known him at all.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Melvyn Leffler: The running of the NSC is a key issue, so maybe we should talk a little bit about that. Mr. Secretary, you're very critical of the NSC process in your book. What were the sources of the mismanagement of the NSC as you perceived it, and why did you not work harder than you perhaps did to get a change? And lastly, why did Bush allow it to continue as he did?

Clarke: I'd like to go back to something [redacted], going back to the environment in which these things were being considered. There's a lot of pre-9/11 and post-9/11 thinking. But when the Bush administration first came in, the media, in its overly simplistic

way—They just love to characterize people. They thought of people like Wolfowitz and Perle and Cheney and said, "These guys are hard over and this President is going to come in hard over. It is going to be very controversial with the Soviets/Russians." I think they built up expectations it was going to be a certain way.

When you were actually in the meetings or involved in the process, you realized it was far more nuanced. I used to say all the time that these guys were operating in the 21st century, and the media and people discussing it and creating the environment around it were still very 20th century in terms of their thinking and the words they used. I thought it would be fascinating to do an analysis of the actual vocabulary they used when they were talking about and covering these things. The media used Cold War terms and phrases and expressions and ways of characterizing things even though they had nothing to do with what was actually going on.

Di Rita: I would expand that. What I would say about the media on the Hill, because that's where most of the committees went—They were in a very different place. They were eager and wanted to be helpful, but didn't want to apply the time necessary to really think about what we needed to be doing. It was frustrating in the beginning.

Riley: Mel, would you mind if I interject one question?

Leffler: Go ahead, Russell.

Riley: I would like for you to discuss your putting together your team. You talked about meeting the President, but you have folks around the table—We get your team in place, then the first line of questioning, we'll go back to the national security apparatus. Can you walk us through your thinking about who you were bringing in and your rationale for the appointments you made?

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: [redacted]

In some ways I violated my principles. I have always believed that the best leaders and managers spend an enormous amount of time picking their people, and I didn't spend anywhere near enough time on civilian personnel. I spent a pile of time on military personnel. A Secretary of Defense makes recommendations to the President as to who he would consider nominating to senior military posts to the Senate for confirmation. The pattern in the building had been that the service Chiefs would send names up to the Secretary as a formality and the Secretary pretty much would send them on to the White House. The selection of military personnel for senior positions had become the preserve of the services.

One service didn't tell the other service what they should do, and they never got involved with each other's business, really. When I got in there I thought, *Boy, if the Department is going to work, it has to be joint*. The only way you're going to get that is by multiple leadership centers. You can't mandate that from the top; you've simply got to see that you pick people whose heads are screwed on the right way and are thinking joint, because you can't have the Army think it can go off and win a war, or the Air Force win a war, or the Navy win a war. The leverage that comes from their working together is just geometric in its power.

So we had the top two civilians—the Secretary and the Deputy—and we had the top two military—the Chairman and the Vice. The four of us formed a committee. We met regularly. We had a staff of one former, a retired admiral, and we spent a lot of time receiving the suggestions of the services, but we also added people to those lists, which was previously unheard of. It broke a lot of china and made a lot of people in the services not very happy about the fact that we were messing in their business. Then we would talk about the individuals suggested for these posts.

We'd have a board and we had listed the people for each job, the service Chiefs, the Vice Chiefs, the combatant commanders, the deputy commanders, and the Chairman and the Vice. We would have four, five, six names underneath on this big board. When we traveled around the world, we'd make a point of meeting them. So you didn't end up just picking people you knew in the Pentagon because they were in Washington. I think we put in place some very good people. But it caused a lot of heartburn in the services. Would you say that's fair, Dick?

Myers: I would say initially. Some services adapted better than others. Part of what we asked the services to do was to start thinking—putting the right people in the right positions. You also insisted that the job descriptions shouldn't all read alike.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Myers: You'd see a four-star job description whether it was Pacific Command or European Command or Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff; some bureaucrat had written them and used the same words. It was boilerplate: we have to do it. The Secretary is trying to say, "What kind of person do we need at PACOM [Pacific Command]?" "Well, go read the job description." He'd say, "This doesn't tell me anything." So he insisted everybody look at this from what skill sets and talents do you really need—

Rumsfeld: —for the unique challenges that that particular job is going to face.

Myers: That that job is going to have.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Myers: That was the first thing that shook people up a little bit. The services were indeed guilty of not thinking strategically about these human resource decisions. You'd get people promoted because good old John or good old Sue had served admirably, they have a couple of years left, let's put them in this *really important* job over here and that will be their reward. We were not into rewarding; we were into getting things done. This is primarily post-9/11, when it really kicked in well. But the services were challenged to come up with understanding their people so

they could talk intelligently about what people would fit where. Those services that did the best usually had no problem when they put nominees forward. The Secretary had already been briefed by, say, the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations]. CNO probably had the best—

Rumsfeld: Vern Clark was clearly the best at this.

Myers: He had done a lot of work in their personnel management area, in the senior officer management, as he should have. I think all the services—At least through my tenure, it got better and better. But the services at least initially were, "Hey, why is the Secretary in our business?" I said, "Simple. He signs the letter that goes to the President nominating people to senior positions, so he can either be in your business or he can count on you guys, and he thinks there needs to be a little more rigor in the process. That sounds fair to me."

Rumsfeld: We had lengthy discussions. Dick Myers, Pete Pace, Paul Wolfowitz, and I went over and sometimes we wouldn't agree and we'd end up going with one person's conviction. We ended up appointing some terrific people to four-star positions. I felt a real obligation. If I'm going to tell the President, "This is who I think you ought to nominate to the Senate," I really felt an obligation to put in place a system to select the right individuals.

On the civilian side, I was less attentive. I was busy; we had wars going on, and the White House personnel shop was not impressive. It was pretty good under Clay Johnson, and then it deteriorated.

Di Rita: Which explains how Torie and I got in. [*laughter*]

Rumsfeld: Eventually, you see what we've got? I've been nibbled to death by ducks.

Di Rita: I would say that process evolved because it started out a little more rigorous, and definitely over time it became too complicated and the White House got a lot more stringent, and we just became—

Rumsfeld: We rolled over. Furthermore, the White House would come in and take people. [There were 58 Presidential appointments, Senate confirmed.] We operated in the Pentagon for the six years I was there with 25 percent Senate-confirmed vacancies consistently.

Unidentified: And the first year was the worst.

Rumsfeld: The first year was *by far* the worst. I was alone.

Di Rita: There was a huge lag. [redacted]

Unidentified: It was hurt by the compressed transition time, so we didn't start until December 29 or something like that.

Rumsfeld: But I was alone, and thank God for Bill Cohen—he and Rudy De Leon and some of the people put in place by my predecessors—I had to beg them to stay on, which wasn't in their interests.

Clarke: Rudy was such a good guy. I wonder if he would be interesting to talk to in this process.

Rumsfeld: Awfully good guy, good idea. There were any number—

Myers: That was a little unusual. He was terrific, actually.

Rumsfeld: I was working with the Clinton people for literally months. And for six years the average vacancy rate, out of 58, you're 25. I can go pick up a piano, one end of it, with both hands. Then you say, "Do it with three fingers." Hell, you can't do it. The Pentagon is too big; you can't function with 25 percent vacancy.

Riley: What about the people at the table and the senior people—?

Rumsfeld: Potluck. Let him talk, you'll see what I'm telling you.

Riley: That's going to be tough for future historians to decide—

Rumsfeld: I see. I was told the President said he'd like me to interview Richard Armitage and Paul Wolfowitz for Deputy. I said, "Fine." I knew Paul; I had never met Armitage. He obviously didn't want to do it. He wanted to be Secretary, and absent that, he wanted to be Deputy at the State Department under Colin Powell. He interviewed that way, that he really wasn't—I guess he was asked to do it. Paul we already knew; we had worked together on the Ballistic Missile Commission.

Riley: But even in your book you say his appointment was a little bit unorthodox because—

Rumsfeld: Normally what you do is you would go toward a David Packard, like Mel Laird did. I figured that Paul was a heck of a lot more current than I was in policy things and that we would get service Secretaries around who could do a lot of the management stuff, because his bent was toward policy and not toward management. And I knew him and liked him. You never know. The Pentagon is big; it needs attention from a management standpoint. But I'd been managing, so I was not as worried about management.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: But I also didn't know we'd be in two wars.

Engel: Can I pursue this and tie it back to the interregnum period that we began with? Mr. Secretary, you mentioned that after 9/11 the pace and the concern with selecting military officials for specific positions increased. That presupposes that you were doing this before 9/11.

What prompted the decision to go back and review the process that had been commonplace, for the different services to put forward people and for the Secretary to put them forward? Was it your experience in management more broadly or was it something you had detected that was deficient within the previous system?

Rumsfeld: I think it was just the obligation I felt as the Secretary. If I'm going to tell the President who he ought to send someplace in the world, I ought to know why he is the best person. I ought to have some sense of what I saw as the challenges for that position and why this individual's background fit those unique challenges. It just made all the sense in the world. I don't think it had anything to do with the war, although clearly, at a certain point, you worry a lot about who is in certain key positions like CENTCOM [Central Command].

Clarke: What you're talking about is a very important process point. At the same time, I always thought of the two different conversations going on. People like this who were steeped in it and were coming in realize that because the military had this overwhelming need to transform, you needed different kinds of people. The same kind of people who had served well and ably in the years before were probably not the kind of people you needed now.

I won't be able to come up with specific examples, but both before 9/11 and even after for a while, some of the people you all were surfacing in the military were guys who had maybe colored outside the lines a little bit. Under previous administrations they would never have been pulled up. No, they didn't do everything *exactly* like everybody else. They did not dot all the i's and cross all the t's and that's exactly what you all were looking for, some people who could think outside the box, because what the military needed was outside-the-box thinking.

Rumsfeld: The best example of that is pulling a retiree who had been a Special Forces person to be Chief of Staff of the Army.

Clarke: Right.

Rumsfeld: It was unheard of to do something like that, but the Army was, without question, the most insular of the services. Wouldn't you say that's fair?

Myers: Yes, sir.

Rumsfeld: He didn't respond; I don't want him on record as having agreed with me.

Myers: Oh, no, I'd be happy to speak on that issue.

Rumsfeld: When I was Secretary the first time, the Navy had been the most insular.

Myers: I think every service gets its time in the barrel.

Rumsfeld: But, boy, Vern Clark and the Navy were just the opposite. He was the most joint without question and the Army under [Eric] Shinseki was the least.

Myers: I don't know this, [redacted] this animosity that grew between the Chief of Staff of the Army and OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense], however that got started,

which I should know, but I don't know. But there was a lot of dissatisfaction with Army leadership, which ultimately results in the Secretary of the Army being asked to retire.

Rumsfeld: He wasn't asked to retire.

Myers: Wasn't he? He elected to retire?

Rumsfeld: Sure, he served his full four years.

Myers: I'm talking about Tom White.

Rumsfeld: Oh, Secretary of the Army. Oh, hell, I sat him down and said, "Out."

Myers: No, I know the Shinseki story very well. So there was lack of confidence in Army leadership, military leadership in particular, as we went into the congressionally mandated defense review, which I think—

Rumsfeld: And the canceling of the Crusader. The Army leadership went up on the Hill and argued against the position we'd taken as a Department.

Myers: It all started before that, as far as I know, and it was not a pretty sight.

Unidentified: In some aspects it started with that stupid beret issue, if you remember.

Di Rita: It really did.

Rumsfeld: That's right.

Di Rita: It was early, and we just were digging out of a hole the rest of the time.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: [redacted] We talked to a lot of people and had a chart looking at the qualities we wanted for a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and ended up with Dick Myers.

Myers: I'll answer your question from my observation. I certainly don't know what was in his mind. I think it is a little bit between what Torie said and what the Secretary said, and that is, one is when you're Secretary of Defense and you're asked to sign this stuff for the President, you ought to have some idea what you're signing.

Rumsfeld: If you're old-fashioned.

Myers: And we have a new Secretary who is maybe not as comfortable with a lot of the processes and the people, so he is going to ask some questions. I think it was the questioning in this process that left him unfulfilled.

Rumsfeld: It was the answers, not the questions.

Myers: The questions asked that left him unfulfilled in terms of how to come up with these names. And it wasn't logical. It wasn't clear and it wasn't concise. I think warning bells went off. He said, "OK, here's another process, one of almost every process in the building that needs to be tweaked, changed, whatever." I don't think the services actually, as we got into it, had a big problem with it once they understood what was going on. At least at the senior level.

Now you'll still find gripes. I teach at one of the PME [Professional Military Education] schools at NDU [National Defense University] and you'll hear this every once in a while, that the Secretary meddled around in our personnel system. I'd say, "What do you mean by that?" They don't even know what they're saying. They just know that there is this myth out here. So you have to go through this again and say when the Secretary gets this illogical, imprecise answer to his question, what is he going to do? Just sign it over to the President and say, "It's only the President"? He'll endorse it then to the Senate, and then we could wind up with somebody who is maybe not qualified. It was pretty obvious, actually.

Rumsfeld: RAND [Corporation] did a study on it that I have—

Myers: There is a RAND study that is good actually.

Rumsfeld: They interviewed an awful lot of people.

Myers: Yes, we all—Were you interviewed?

Di Rita: Yes, as a matter of fact.

Riley: There were two other senior people on your staff that I wanted to ask about: Doug Feith and Steve Cambone, and your sense about their roles in your guidance of the Department.

Rumsfeld: Steve Cambone had been the staff director for the U.S. Ballistic Missile Commission, and we had been enormously successful. We had Democrats, Republicans, military, civilians, scientists—It would usually be impossible to get a unanimous report, and it would be impossible to get them to all agree on anything, and we did. We did it by saying we wouldn't have meetings unless they were there. We're not going to have the staff write the report; the commission would write the report. Nobody could have a difference, a minority view, unless he or she could get two other people to agree to it. We would not have any differences on fact. We could have a difference of opinion, but no differences on the facts. We would just stay in the meetings until we figured out what the facts were. We're talking about the Ballistic Missile Commission.

Unidentified: Did that immediately.

Rumsfeld: We ended up getting all of these people coming from every corner of the room right in the middle, all agreeing, and had a report that had some substance to it and some effect. Cambone was the staff director for it and did a very good job. We also used him as the staff director for the Space Commission. So I brought him in the first day as my assistant. He went up and was Doug Feith's deputy for a while in policy. Then I think he went over to—

Clarke: PA&E [Program Analysis and Evaluation].

Rumsfeld: —PA&E, the analysis shop. He is a PhD, an academic type like Wolfowitz. He is smart, has all those advanced degrees. Then he became the first person to serve as Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, which we had to create, because we had all these intelligence entities floating around in the building and no one paying attention to them in an orderly way.

You recommended Feith, I think. I didn't know him, never had met him. He came in and was very smart, still is. Very sharp guy. Why did you ask about those individuals?

Riley: I knew they were part of the senior team whose names had not come up yet. I was curious about what you were looking for them to do for you when you first came in. Basically just trying to get the players in their positions before we go to Mel's question about interagency.

Rumsfeld: Yes, Feith stayed in that job for policy for the four years and then was replaced by Eric Edelman, who is now at Johns Hopkins [University].

[redacted]

Riley: Is there anybody else we're missing?

Di Rita: The service Secretaries played a big part. We've alluded to them, but the whole theory of the case was that we were going to—As part of the transformation work we would be driven to a significant degree by industry executives who understood the Department well and shared this view of transformation.

Rumsfeld: I started to say that the White House personnel shop was unhelpful. Not only did they not recommend good people to speak of but they also stole people from the Department. You'd spend months getting some guy cleared with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and cleared with the Senate and cleared with the financial ethics people, and you'd have him for 6, 8, 10, 12 months and then they'd take him away and put him—

I remember we had Gordon England finally confirmed as Secretary of the Navy, and not long thereafter the White House had made him Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

Myers: That wasn't right.

Riley: Mel, that sounds like a perfect entrée for your question about interagency processes and the White House.

Rumsfeld: The way you posed it was harsh, and I don't think I cast it that way in the book. First of all, you had Condi Rice who was the National Security Advisor to the President. She was *very* close to the President. She was with him socially and close to the family. She had worked in the George Herbert Walker Bush White House. Second, she is an accomplished person. Everything she has done, she has done well. She is a pianist and an ice skater, a provost, and what have you. And she's a very smart human being.

When you are in a department or an agency, you have to deal with the press, the Congress, the bureaucracy—you're busy. She would call meetings *all* the time. She admitted to me one day that after she got over to the Department of State, she began to understand why I disliked so many meetings. The State Department is about five minutes away from the White House. The Pentagon is on the other side of the river. I felt like a yoyo going back and forth. I sometimes had to go back and forth two or three times a day.

Myers: Plus your driver was pretty weak as I recall. [*laughter*] Inside joke.

Rumsfeld: Dick Myers would race me over there. He was in every meeting I was in over there.

Clarke: Never would he be that inappropriate, ever.

Rumsfeld: He thinks the driver of his car was faster than the driver of my car, and the trouble with that is he was right.

Myers: I don't know; we always lost the race. Well, it wasn't a race.

Rumsfeld: But we did have to go over there an awful lot. Furthermore, an awful lot of meetings were called that were canceled. So you'd force your schedule around, schedule it, and at the last minute there would be no meeting. Third, we didn't get—as I think I said in my book—the kind of feedback afterward. There wasn't the closure of a meeting, where you said, "This was decided, here it is."

Then the paper that summarized the meeting wasn't ever circulated. It was a summary that was done there in a black box that I wouldn't see, nor would you.

Myers: No. And often the prep material wouldn't get to us.

Rumsfeld: Exactly. You'd wonder what the dickens the meeting was about, how do you prepare, and so forth.

Myers: I can remember being in your office when you'd call over and say, "Can we please get something so we'll know what we're talking about tomorrow?"

Rumsfeld: Now her problem, of course, was that the President's schedule would change. So she was working—She wasn't the principal; she was a staff person to the President and he had lots of pressures pulling on him, so he would jerk her around and she would jerk us around is what happened. It made it difficult.

The other thing I think I talked about in the book—I don't know how you say it. I believe that, [redacted] President Bush was perfectly comfortable sitting down, having a meeting, hearing different views, and making a decision. He was comfortable with himself; he could do it, he listened, he asked good questions. Dick Myers was in all those meetings with me. And yet an awful lot of the principal meetings were discussions. Nothing was resolved. My guess is what would happen is Condi Rice would formulate it in some way and try to blend positions. Sometimes positions are not blendable. Sometimes you are better picking either one.

Paul went to the deputies meetings. Dick Myers was in all of the NSC and principals meetings. You want to be fair, because she is a friend and I like her, but I think that is fairly accurate. [redacted]

[redacted]

Di Rita: I think she saw—and Doug talks a lot about this in his book as well—as much as anything, that the job of the NSC was to synthesize, as opposed to crystallize. That created a whole different dynamic than you would get if you were really trying to crystallize positions and let the President decide.

Myers: Right, give the President some options.

Clarke: I think it was also their operating style. There was a general reluctance on the part of the White House senior staff to tell people at other agencies "you must do that" or "you can't do that." From the communications perspective, we had a very close group. There was [Richard] Boucher over at State, Karen Hughes at the White House, myself at the Pentagon. Especially in the early months after 9/11, we were making very clear this was not just a military effort. It was financial, legal, economic, diplomatic, all these things. So there were often times where it was not appropriate for us to be out there saying, "This is what we're doing." For instance, "To go after al-Qaeda on financial transactions, we need Treasury out there talking about this. So you'd better lead." They were reluctant to do it. Karen Hughes was reluctant to force them to do it.

Or State would get out there on some issue when they shouldn't have been out in front on the issue. Karen and others in the White House would be reluctant to say to them, "You guys need to step down because that needs to be the military." I actually went over to see her once and said, "*You* need to be in charge of this effort. We're all on the same team here and we all have parts to play, but you need to be directing the orchestra." There was a general reluctance to do that. I don't mean that in a bad way, but there was just a general reluctance.

Rumsfeld: I think that's a very important point. I wrote a paper about our institutions and how they needed to be brought into the 21st century. We've got these committees and subcommittees in the House and in the Senate, and they have turf and jurisdiction and they've cut their positions. Yet all those threads need to come up through a needle for the President in some orderly way.

If you think of Cyrus Vance and [Zbigniew] Brzezinski and [Henry] Kissinger and [James] Schlesinger and [George] Shultz and [Caspar] Weinberger—You can go back through every administration. Is it because they're bad people that they have differences? No, it's not because they're bad people. Is it because they're egomaniacs? No. It is because of the structure. It means that there is no one problem that is purely in the State Department or purely in the Defense Department. As Torie says, if you're going to have all elements of national power focused on a problem, then the White House has to play a leadership role. It simply has to be willing to engage the Congress and the committees and not allow those turf wars to be manifested up through the departments and agencies.

An academic friend of mine told me that one of the reasons there were so many meetings in the White House is because that's what academics do. With all respect to you academics, you have

meetings and committees, and you have to. You sort things out and you take the time. But my God, if there is a war going on or if your buildings are burning, you don't have to have all those meetings. You can find a way to not have them.

The other thing that was different was that at the Department of Defense we put plans, thoughts, ideas, and actions in writing. On my website there are 4,241 documents, many of which I wrote, and then I would get three or four people in the Department and we'd talk about them and edit them and refine them. Then we'd send them to the President and the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and others, trying to focus people's attention. If you go through my archive, I don't think I've got a single memo from Colin Powell or the State Department. I know I had one piece of paper where he wrote "Fine" or "OK, Colin" or something. State didn't do that; Condi didn't do that. It wasn't the place for the Vice President to do it. The President didn't do it. We did it.

We would try to get the discussion going. You look at the documentation from my book—Besides those available to the public, I've got another 294,000 digitized documents from my life, a lot of them from this period. I've always believed that I can think better if I put it in writing. I know I can get other people's views better if I put it in writing and circulate it. I don't know how many times we went over memos with Dick and Paul and others in the Department. But the other outfits didn't. There was almost no reaction back. Very little.

Di Rita: What is really important about that, not only obviously the historical record that is rich now, but it also helped create the impression that was implied in your question, which is, how come you had such a negative view of the process? It allowed people to say that the Department of Defense was trying to take over the National Security Council. It allowed that belief or that perception to be sustained, because we had this large number of documents that went over there regularly and it created a lot of source for leaks, it created a lot of source for people to say, "Look what they're doing now." It created the impression that somehow we didn't like the process, because we were doing something that was so very different from everybody else in the process. There was a perverse kind of reaction to what happened.

Rumsfeld: It got to the point where when I wrote a memo and sent it out to the key people, the President, or just the Vice President and Colin and Condi, it would end up in the press within 48 hours, always out of the State Department. So I stopped sending memos around and I would hand deliver them. If you look at some of the memos on the website, it says, "To the President, the Vice President," and then it says "to Secretary Powell (by hand)" because I would give it to him by hand so it wouldn't get into that system and end up out in five minutes.

We were trying to get people to react and respond and they would in meetings. In other words, sometimes we'd take the memos into the meeting, like the "parade of horribles." I can remember sitting there with the President and going through the whole damn list—It was handwritten—and then taking it back to the Pentagon and giving it to you and you and other people, going around trying to refine it and then sending it around after it had been polished, hoping that the things that were not in our jurisdiction would get other people's attention. But it's funny, I have no idea why the Department of Defense was the source of so many of the documents that discussed that period and there are so few from any other source in the government.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: A lot of people don't put anything on paper at all anymore, because they don't want to be wrong.

Unidentified: Or they don't want to be in the press.

Clarke: I think there was also something else. It's related to the NSC question, even though it may not seem like it. Because of the Secretary's shall we say unique leadership style, which, all kidding aside, he demanded a lot of people around him. He said, "Bring your A game every single day, and you'd better be coming up with new programs, new processes, new ways of dealing with this unconventional world in which we find ourselves." A lot of us did. We were doing that and being very active and energetic. Then just to take an example, maybe your counterparts at State were not.

For instance, even before 9/11 and certainly afterward, the Secretary said to me, "We need to care deeply about foreign audiences. It is not just about the United States. It is not just here; we're in a global environment now." So even before 9/11, but certainly after 9/11, we spent an extraordinary amount of time doing outreach to foreign media. They were as important as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

It was maybe 18 months into the administration and the Secretary had gone to the Foreign Press Centers downtown across the river 12 or 15 times. Even though we had a very open Pentagon, even though we regularly welcomed the foreign press to come into the Pentagon and come to the press briefings, and we did dozens of interviews with them, there still was some hesitancy on the part of many to come over to our world. So we went to their world. We went again and again. You went with them, sir, and Colin Powell never went.

Myers: I was there when he—In one of his answers, he talks about "Old Europe." Then we come into the debriefing room to ask how we did, and he turns to me and says, "Myers, why did you let me say that?" [*laughter*] He was a little chagrined at that particular point, which later turned into "I'm kind of proud I coined that," because it turned out to be useful.

Rumsfeld: I'm glad you made me do it.

Myers: Of course I had nothing to do with it.

Clarke: The senior leadership in the Pentagon would spend extraordinary amounts of time dealing with the foreign media. If you think there is anything worse than dealing with the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, it is often just dealing with the foreign media, but we did it.

Myers: It is really important when you're in a global war.

Clarke: Meanwhile Secretary Powell, Dick Armitage, and others did not have time to do that. So we were filling vacuums that weren't being filled by other places. I think sometimes in the NSC process it was the same thing. There was not good, smart process coming from other parts, so the Pentagon side was filling that vacuum.

You know the greatest story about the "Old Europe" day: I was on very good terms with my counterparts in State, including Richard Boucher, who was a pro, and regularly kidded him. I would call him all the time and go, "Richard, we're heading over there again tomorrow." Secretary Rumsfeld often went over on Fridays. I'd say, "We're heading over there tomorrow." He'd say, "I know, I wish I could get him out more. I can't for these kinds of things." Finally Boucher calls me up one day and says, "Great news. Secretary Powell is going to the Foreign Press Centers downtown Wednesday." I said, "Great. Good for you guys." These two guys happened to be scheduled the day before. The day before is when he coined "Old Europe, New Europe." So Secretary Powell got to go in the next day and try to explain it.

Riley: I want to ask a question about the NSC process. Did you get similar criticism that you were voicing from any of the other principals? I'm assuming it must come not from State but from CIA or from the Vice President's Office? Did you share these thoughts with them? Did it resonate with them that they were equally frustrated with the process or is it only State?

Rumsfeld: It drove George Tenet up the wall.

Di Rita: Condi talks about it in her memoirs. She was frustrated too, as the Secretary alluded to. It depends on where you stand. By the time she became Secretary of State, she recognized that the process was not serving the President very well.

Clarke: I would hear a lot from different members of the military a level or two below. They sometimes felt that though they were being asked or encouraged to do everything in these unconventional times, they were being criticized for those things they might not do so well. But they'd say, "If the agency that is supposed to be doing that isn't doing it, of course we're going to try. We'll give it our best shot." Meanwhile the NSC process is broken. I heard it again and again.

For several years after I left, I did a lot down at Joint Forces Command for the Special Ops [Operations] community, and there would often be long conversations saying, "We're trying to play roles that the military is not supposed to be playing, because it is required in these very unconventional times. If the process were working, then these other entities in the government would be stepping up and playing the part they're supposed to be playing."

Leffler: I want to know how the weaknesses in the process as just identified affected specific decisions. Which ones would you say were affected by problems in the decision-making process or the inadequacy of paperwork? What concrete decisions were affected and how might they have been different if there had been a better process?

Myers: Can you change the word "decisions" to "outcomes"?

Leffler: Sure.

Myers: Decisions/outcomes. I'm not going to answer it, I just wanted—It depends on where the Secretary goes.

Rumsfeld: It took us three or four years to finally save $233 million for U.S. military aircraft still based in Iceland. We got resistance from the State Department; we got resistance from NATO. It took work that should have been done to help us, and when we ended up, close to a billion bucks went down the drain. All those planes did was look after Iceland or fishermen who were lost.

Di Rita: I'll give an example in that regard, and that was the creation of the CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] and the way in which decisions made around how the CPA would operate were enforced after the decisions were made. The process led to an NSPD [National Security Presidential Directive] that said, "It is going to be done this way." The lack of rigor in execution let it fall apart without anybody really saying, "Wait a minute. This is something different from what we all agreed with." By virtue of the President having published an NSPD on it—Feith goes into it in great detail in his book and how that happened. I think it was directly attributable to a process that, as we have described, lacked rigor and accountability.

[redacted]

Di Rita: The worst part about that is they actually got to the right answer in terms of creating interim authority, and all the things we said we wanted to do by virtue of Presidential decision making were completely disregarded in execution.

Rumsfeld: I'll give you a different example that is simpler. Correct me if I am wrong on this, but my recollection—This is a decade ago. My recollection is that the Department of State has the authority to train military.

Myers: Foreign military.

Rumsfeld: Not the Department of Defense. Of course the Department of State didn't have the ability to do it or the people to do it or the money to do it, and it wasn't getting done. A year's, 18 months' lag? You turn around and the Senate committee or the House committee was working with the State Department, and they refused to authorize the Pentagon to do it and get it done. So it didn't get done.

Myers: By the time the President made a decision, "Yes, let it be DoD [Department of Defense] that has responsibility," it took us a year. You all are historians; you probably understand this very well. Just because the President says to let something be, it doesn't mean it is going to be so. If it is directed to the Department of Defense, in my experience, you probably have better than a 75 percent chance that whatever he says to do you'll probably do. But the rest of the government—maybe, maybe not. Bureaucracies work slowly sometimes. This one worked a year to get it around to where we got State comfortable with this particular issue.

Rumsfeld: Then you had to get the committees.

Myers: That's potentially catastrophic. In this case, I'd say it was. Just the failure to harness all instruments of national power. We were never able to do it.

Rumsfeld: The government was not able to do it.

Myers: The government was not able to do it. You wouldn't expect the President to be the action officer for Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Global War on Terror. You would not expect him to be. Somebody had to be, and it defaulted to the Department of Defense. Everybody was happy that Secretary Rumsfeld, and occasionally I, were out there on the point at press conferences, just trying to do this when really it was the whole government. It would only work if we had the whole of government.

So here is an outcome: My last trip to Afghanistan was in 2005 and the Embassy was 40 percent manned. Forty percent. We'd been there for a while now. It is 40 percent manned and that is where all instruments of national power focused through the Ambassador and the country team, 40 percent manned. So what do you think the outcome is going to be?

Rumsfeld: The U.S. Embassy was not manned with the senior, seasoned people.

Myers: No, not really.

Rumsfeld: They were not manned with people who would stay a year. They were manned with junior people who would raise their hands—and God bless them for doing it—volunteer to go, and would stay in Afghanistan for five or six months, barely get into it, and be gone.

Myers: I talked to the drug lady—She was the one responsible for the drug program in the Embassy in Afghanistan. Wonderful young lady from State, who was supposed to have help from DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] folks, who would come on a temporary basis and help her. She had $1 billion to dispense for funding. Her tour was one year and then she was going to rotate. She had no help to get it done. You talk about the drug issue and how we were going to work that issue in Afghanistan—What you often do is—The military would be asked to do that and do other things that were not actually within our expertise.

Rumsfeld: I think Paul Wolfowitz was gone—[redacted]—We decided that the only agency of government that was deployable—people signed up, agreed that they would be deployed—was the Pentagon and the State Department. But the State Department leadership believed that they didn't have the ability to tell people they had to go. They did legally have the ability, but the Foreign Service officers association apparently didn't like people being told to go, so they were rarely told. You ended up with junior people, short tours, whereas in our Department, the military people had their hands up; they wanted to go. That's what they signed up for. It was a totally different culture. That's hard to be dealing with. For example, we had these things called Provincial Reconstruction Teams. It started out in Afghanistan. I don't know who came up with the idea, but it was a good idea. They ended up with 20 or 30 of them in places around the country, and they worked with the Governors, with the local authorities.

I'd visit them anytime I went into Afghanistan and I'd always ask—

Myers: Interagency teams. International too.

Rumsfeld: Yes, they were supposed to have people. They were supposed to have help with governance and agriculture and management and all these things. We'd ask, "Who is here from the Pentagon?" Average staffing was 98 percent DoD. You had the dickens of a time finding anybody there from another department or agency.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Riley: What would a properly functioning national security–making apparatus have looked like in this administration, and was it achievable?

Rumsfeld: Kissinger was the National Security Advisor and there were problems with State and problems with Defense. Brzezinski was National Security Advisor and there were problems. It is a tough thing, the way the government is organized. It isn't that these are bad people.

Engel: But there are examples where it works better than others.

Rumsfeld: That's true.

Engel: One of the prime examples of the system working is during the Bush 41 years. One of the things that was done was a meeting of the principals socially, once or twice a week for breakfast.

Rumsfeld: We did that. Condi and Colin and the Vice President and I had lunch once a week, and we talked on the phone every morning.

Engel: To no effect?

Rumsfeld: There was certainly an effect; it helped. But it is still tough, and it is tough because you've got a war going on and things are hard.

Di Rita: A lot of this is the impulse—It has been recorded a lot and talked about—this impulse to not crystallize choices. It really flowed across the entire process. It is a great objective to want to get a consensus, to say, "We all agree to this and the President is behind it" or "The President has decided," but sometimes that's not the way decisions are made. Most of the time that's not how they're made. A lot of tough choices have to be made and the impulse was not to do that. The impulse was to synthesize everything and come up with a least-worst, least-common-denominator policy,

Leffler: That style clearly caused everyone frustration. That's clear in all the literature. So the question is—

Rumsfeld: Wait a minute. I don't think you know that, because I don't know if it caused the President frustration.

Leffler: That's exactly my question now. That's what I'm getting to.

Rumsfeld: It is a black box if you're outside the White House, and Condi will contend that that's how the President wanted it.

Di Rita: She says that very clearly.

Riley: Right, in her book.

Rumsfeld: So you can't argue with it. He's the President. He got elected.

Leffler: So why would you suspect that that is what the President wanted?

Rumsfeld: I have no idea.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: The one thing that is kind of a side thing, and it is timely, because right now President [Barack] Obama is being criticized for not taking his morning intelligence briefings. I don't know what percent of the time I read in the paper President George W. Bush would get his morning briefing, and I would attend them if I was overseas, if we were at a NATO meeting or something, so I could see what it was like. He had briefers who were good, briefers he liked, and he liked it. He spent an enormous amount of time in there, and he'd end up—You cannot get an intelligence briefing and not end up—If you're having the meeting, the President, Vice President, Chief of Staff, National Security Advisor, and the briefer, you're going to end up talking policy, and that's where a lot of the policy discussions took place in the George W. Bush administration.

Leffler: How many of those were you actually at?

Rumsfeld: Over six years, maybe three, four.

Myers: Minuscule, because it coincided with an oversight—

Rumsfeld: We'd have to be in Prague for a ministerial meeting or something.

Myers: Head of state.

Rumsfeld: You wouldn't go to the White House for that, because you'd be there an hour in the morning and you'd have to come back five minutes later for a principals meeting and then 10 minutes later for an NSC meeting and then for a Cabinet meeting.

Leffler: So normally you weren't there.

Rumsfeld: Never there, except for three or four times in six years.

Leffler: And Secretary of State Powell was not there.

Rumsfeld: Not there. So the policy people weren't in the meeting. I remember saying, "Is that really how you want to have your policy discussions, in there with the intel people and—?"

Barbara A. Perry: You said that to whom?

Rumsfeld: The President.

Leffler: What did he say?

Rumsfeld: He'd say, "I see your point" or something and we'd talk about it. Then we'd maybe have a lunch meeting with Powell and Cheney and Rumsfeld and Condi and maybe talk about something, but every morning he was in his intel meeting and you cannot *not* talk policy if you're in an intel meeting; it is inevitable. If you have all policy-type people, the Chief of Staff and—Myers wasn't there, Rumsfeld wasn't there, Powell wasn't there. It is an interesting issue.

Myers: We would often hear about things—There would be outcomes that we'd have to deal with.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Myers: I can't remember specific ones, but on more than one occasion it would be, "Now we're going down this track?"

Clarke: Everybody has different styles.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: We talked about this once, one of the many conversations about "Boy, this process is not working." In Bush 41, I worked in the U.S. Trade Rep's office for Carla Hills. The U.S. Trade Representative's Office coordinates and develops and to a certain extent executes trade policy. When Bush 41 hired Carla Hills, who was not a universally popular choice for lots of different reasons, he said, "Let me tell you something. Your job is to make sure we know what all the key issues are, what are our objectives in terms of trade policy for this country. Your job is not to resolve all the differences between State, Agriculture, Commerce, the White House, et cetera. Your job is to make sure I know what the issues are, and I'll decide."

So she again didn't make a lot of friends doing it, but she very rigorously would force Commerce, State, all the relevant players to the table to debate and discuss the issues and then very often either in person or on paper would say to the President, "Here's the issue, here are the relevant factors, here is what State thinks." This was always sent back to the agencies. Nothing went over there that they hadn't seen. She very clearly surfaced the differences. They agreed to that. They would send it to the President or she would go to see the President and then he would decide.

Rumsfeld: Same thing with Kissinger. You go to the Kissinger archives and you'll see a memo that says, "Here are the three positions, here is who is for what, here are the arguments pro and con." Then the President would decide. [Richard] Nixon liked to do that. He was perfectly happy looking at paper. [Gerald] Ford liked to have people in the meeting and talk about it a little bit.

Clarke: It's a different style, but I also think, and I was telling Secretary Rumsfeld, I happened to be part of a Q&A [question-and-answer] session that 43 did last week, not on this specific topic, but it was about your operating style and how things changed before and after 9/11. He said, "It is hard to articulate the sense of pressure and speed."

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: A weak process isn't great at the best of times. When you've got the things bearing down on them that they had bearing down on them, a weak process is even worse. You didn't have the luxury of sitting around having weeks- and monthslong debates and discussions. You had to make decisions as best you could with the information at hand. The President clearly liked the working relationship he had with Condi Rice. That aspect of it worked for him. It wouldn't have at a different time, maybe it wouldn't have in different circumstances, but you put those factors together and I think that explains a lot.

Rumsfeld: That's important. Each President is different. They come into office with different skill sets, different backgrounds, different experiences, and they serve at different times. Whatever works for them is what they have to do. You can't expect the model that someone like the Chairman, or the Deputy, or the Secretary of State or Defense or somebody might like, or that Congress might like. They have to do it their way, and they do it their way.

Myers: I think that's true, to a point; they have to do it their way, but there have to be people around them who say, "Mr. President, your way is not successful in this area, this area, or this area." Let me give you an example. When I was Vice Chairman in the Clinton administration, they had deputies lunches and principals lunches. They were weekly affairs for the most part where the Deputies Committee or the principals of the Principals Committee would have an informal lunch, sometimes with an agenda, sometimes with no agenda. What was that good for? That was good for getting to know people, building trust, discussing things that maybe weren't on the docket or perhaps were on the docket, but were tough. It was an informal way of discussing and communicating. That was very helpful.

The first thing that happened when the Bush administration came in—They just cut the lunches off. I talked to Steve Hadley, the Deputy NSA [National Security Advisor] at the time, and said, "Steve, what's going on? I thought this was pretty useful." Other people did too. He had no success in getting that turned around. I don't know if that would have helped or not, but it was a way to communicate outside this other process that was pretty stilted actually, as I think about it.

Rumsfeld: We did it at the principal level though; we met every week for lunch.

Myers: We didn't at the deputies level.

Rumsfeld: And I had a separate lunch with Tenet.

Myers: You did, but you didn't include the military at the principal level.

Rumsfeld: No, the military came to my lunch with Tenet—

Myers: I did. That was important.

Rumsfeld: But I didn't host the lunch at the principal level; that was Condi Rice. We had a weekly lunch and the military was not included, you're right.

Myers: But you did that with Tenet for the reason I think I'm trying to articulate here. That was a good way to build this relationship, get to know one another, discuss some really tough issues.

Rumsfeld: We got many issues solved in that meeting.

Myers: We did.

Rumsfeld: Every week. We got the CIA and the Department of Defense linked from the top all the way down to the bottom, and there weren't any major issues of any kind that were not solved.

Myers: It was a working lunch and serious issues were put on the table. If you were embarrassed because the issue was there, too bad, we're going to work through it. It was great.

Rumsfeld: There is an example of really solving any potentially tough issues between DoD and intel, particularly in a war time.

Myers: A good technique.

Selverstone: I'm interested in the President's appreciation of what you're characterizing as the dysfunction of the process, the extent to which he understood it to be a problem.

Rumsfeld: See, I don't call it dysfunctional. It worked. It didn't work the way I would have liked and it didn't work the way I would have done it, but it obviously worked for him, because he was there for eight years.

Leffler: But don't you define "worked" in terms of generating effective outcomes?

Rumsfeld: A lot of them were effective.

Leffler: Were they optimal?

Rumsfeld: Who knows? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Selverstone: You point out that the EP-3 episode worked generally the way it should. It wasn't necessarily the outcome that you would have preferred.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Selverstone: But the process—

Rumsfeld: In the book I did. Yes, the President listened to us, went with Colin's view. There is no question that there were dozens of differences that were solved. There is just a hell of a lot that got done very well. We rebalanced our forces all over the globe with *minimal* fussing from the countries.

Engel: This is something that you alluded to and the others, but let me give you a quotation—

Rumsfeld: Don't quote *me*.

Engel: No, from Secretary Rice's memoirs, where she recalls, and I'll read, "Don and I did tangle in front of others. After one such episode, the two of us were walking by, side by side through the Rose Garden portico. I turned to Don and asked, 'What's wrong between us?'"

Rumsfeld: Yes, I read that.

Engel: "I don't know, we always got along."

Rumsfeld: We did.

Engel: So you're suggesting and she's suggesting that the system is broken.

Rumsfeld: No. The fact that two people don't agree? I'll tell you what happened. I broke my neck to get a relationship with [Islam] Karimov in Uzbekistan. There was a prison break and we got a base. We functioned and supplied Afghanistan and it worked, and the Minister of Defense, [Kadyr] Gulamov, was terrific. It worked. All of a sudden, out of the blue, there is a prison break and the Uzbeks crack down on the people. They had the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a terrorist group.

So the State Department, Condi, announced that there should be an international investigation of them. We didn't know the facts. It was just like poking a stick in Karimov's eye. He had a press conference and decided he would throw the U.S. off the base. He announced that he'd learned who his friends were and turned back toward Putin.

My attitude in life is you want people moving in the right direction. Karimov was moving toward us. There was no question he was cooperating. It was enormously important. We knew we would have troubles in Pakistan, and we didn't have any other way to get in there. All of a sudden Condi announces this and Karimov stiffs us and it's over. I said, "Gosh dang it, that's important to our security and our ability to function in Afghanistan." She said, "Don, human rights trumps security."

Riley: Long pause.

Rumsfeld: *Whose* security? At that point Pakistan owned us. You've got a landlocked country, no alternative once you lose Uzbekistan.

Myers: Which isn't good for human rights either, by the way.

Rumsfeld: Exactly, and what does it do for human rights in Uzbekistan? It shoves them right back the wrong way. Did we disagree? You bet. Is that bad? No, it is substantive.

Unidentified: It's not dysfunctional, it is substantive.

Rumsfeld: Exactly. I said things not so much in the book but on the website. I sent her memos saying, "Good God, a nontrivial fraction of the meetings you've scheduled have not had any materials provided for them." But that's not dysfunctional. You have to look at it in a broader sense. She is a very capable person, and she did not a bad job in a damned tough situation. Could it have been better? Sure. So could the Pentagon. Anything can be better.

I felt the same way when she stood up and said, "[Pervez] Musharraf, as President, ought to not wear his uniform to the office." What business is it of ours? What did we end up with after that? Musharraf gets thrown out and you end up with a weak civilian government that is corrupt. Are

we better off today because of it? No. We would have been much better off having a general in uniform governing Pakistan who would at least try to control the ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence].

Unidentified: I may say, 10 years without being attacked again is not a terrible outcome.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: It is an important point. I'm all about context. The backdrop of some of these questions is "Oh, this is all terrible. Because the process wasn't working perfectly, this is all terrible."

Rumsfeld: It never works perfectly.

Clarke: First of all, set aside the process. I did a very interesting thing last week. The setup from the moderator was that everything going on in the Middle East right now—protests here, U.S. embassies being shut down, our Ambassador being killed, terrible things—The person speaking on behalf of the Obama administration said, "You just need to understand that it is very complex over there and really difficult things are happening. As bad as it looks in Libya, there are some really important things happening in Libya." So then they turn to me and I said, "I happen to agree completely. It is a very complex situation and, as bad as some things are, some good things are happening. But I find it interesting that in the Bush administration years when there are protests and anti-U.S. sentiment in the Middle East, it is a failure of Bush policy. But when it is the Obama administration, it is, 'Oh, you just need to understand it is complex.'"

These guys heard me say this a thousand times. One of the great difficulties of the times in which we found ourselves was people have frames of reference, and they are very powerful things. The people involved and engaged and talking about and studying what everybody was doing, the frame of reference is wars have beginnings and ends, countries have borders, things are neat and clean. When will we be done there? I don't think that is reality anymore. I don't think that is reality at all. It is very difficult for people to think in new ways.

You all said you cut your teeth on the Cold War. You have.

Myers: The media was one of the slowest groups to get there.

Clarke: I think 10 or 15 years from now people will look back at what happened between, say, 2000 and 2012, and they're going to have a very different sense of what went on in those years.

Rumsfeld: I was going through my archive and I found a handwritten note from Pete Schoomaker, the Chief of Staff of the Army. It said, "Secretary, the more I think and the more I look and the more I listen, the more I think war and peace is more like a rheostat instead of an off/on switch," which is kind of interesting.

Clarke: Right.

Myers: It is kind of how it is actually.

Rumsfeld: I saw that just this last week and I thought to myself, *Isn't that interesting* ?Hell, I was dancing with Condi at George Shultz's 90th birthday party. You don't want to draw it black and white and sharp edges like that.

Engel: No, we're just trying to find for the historical record—We understand that it takes a year to get a policy in place, and it takes a year to get a change.

Rumsfeld: Most everything takes a year or more to change in this government of ours. Did any of you read the memo I wrote on my website about the institutions and how they need to be reviewed and changed and adjusted for the information age and the 21st century? No, you didn't.

Perry: I read everything in the binder.

Rumsfeld: But you don't remember it.

Riley: Break, 10 minutes.

[BREAK]

Myers: One of the things we're talking around here that we haven't—The Secretary got close to being explicit about it—The system that we operated stems from the National Security Act of 1947, so we're perfectly organized for industrial warfare. Now that is not exactly true because it has been modified.

Rumsfeld: Not much.

Myers: But not much.

Rumsfeld: [Barry] Goldwater and [William] Nichols—

Myers: We had this terrible system and now we're in 21st-century warfare, which can be nation-state but not as much nation-state and certainly with non-nation-state actors. We have to operate within that system. There have been lots of proposals to redo it, but it has never been done. So part of the frustration you hear is the fact that we're in the first administration in the 21st century, the first military action of the 21st century, and we're dealing with this old industrial-style system, steam driven.

Rumsfeld: Which is why I sent that memo to the President and the other members of the National Security Council, suggesting that there be a [Herbert] Hoover Commission to address it.

Myers: It would have been a good and appropriate time.

Rumsfeld: We did it at that inflection point at the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, and here we're at the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the information age and we missed it.

Riley: Because the nature of warfare changes after 9/11, you've got the question of terrorism. To what extent was antiterrorism on your radar as you're coming in in 2001 and as you're preparing your forces before 9/11?

Rumsfeld: I was President Reagan's Middle East Envoy and went over there after the Marines were killed through a terrorist act at the airport in Beirut. I gave a speech to the U.S. Army association, the text of which is on my website as well, where I talk about the problem of terrorism and how it, by its very nature, is difficult to deal with. George Shultz gave a similar speech a month or two later; we'd both gone through the same experience. Bill Cohen, when we met, briefed me in a couple of meetings. I think there were 20 or 23 items on the agenda; that was certainly one of them.

Clarke: Go back to the candidate's Citadel speech, and then for months and months before 9/11. And I have documents where we were building the template for all this, in which we said, "We have to dramatically transform the military, because we find ourselves in a very different world. It is less likely we're going to face conventional armies and two-, three-year wars. It is more likely we will face asymmetrical threats of different kinds, including terrorism." That's almost verbatim what the mission was, why we needed to transform, and how we were going to do it.

Then literally the day after 9/11, people went, "Oh, *that's* what you meant." It was very hard for the general public; it was very hard for many members of Congress to understand. "What do you mean 'different kinds of threats'?" You were asked about it by the members of Congress that morning in your office on 9/11, "What are you talking about?" Very hard for people to understand what "different kinds of threats" and "asymmetrical challenges" meant.

Leffler: But in the statements that Secretary Rumsfeld made to Congress about priorities, and in the documents and memoir literature that exist, one very rarely sees Secretary Rumsfeld talking about al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. When you read Dick Clarke's memoir or George Tenet's memoir, they were in April, May, June, July of 2001 focused almost hysterically at times on a prospective attack. To what extent were you engaged in those discussions day in and day out?

Rumsfeld: Of course you're talking about books they wrote after 9/11—

Leffler: Yes, I'm talking—

Rumsfeld: Just a minute, I'm answering you. You say they were almost hysterical. I don't think I ever met Clarke in my life to this day.

Unidentified: He was on the SVTS [secure video teleconference system] with you right after the plane hit the Pentagon. Didn't you know that?

Rumsfeld: Was he?

Unidentified: That's what he says in his book.

Rumsfeld: Is that right?

Unidentified: Yes, when you were rolling stretchers.

Rumsfeld: I see. Not in person.

Unidentified: You weren't on it; he made it up, imagined it.

Leffler: I'm curious, you never met him—

Rumsfeld: I don't think I did.

Leffler: So the person on the National Security Council staff who was in charge of counterterrorism, the Secretary of Defense has never met prior to 9/11.

Rumsfeld: I can't remember. I could have met him; I don't remember ever meeting him.

Leffler: How about George Tenet? He also says in his memoirs—

Rumsfeld: I met with Tenet regularly, every week. I decided at the very beginning that the relationship between our two departments was critical. I had known him because we had our offices at CIA when we did the Ballistic Missile Threat Commission, and we dealt with him there. We stayed after the Missile Commission was done and did an intelligence analysis and briefed him and his people on it.

In my confirmation hearing, I was asked what I worried about the most, and I didn't say Korea or Iran or terrorism. I said I worried about our intelligence capabilities and the fact that there were so many things going on in the world. We had terrorist attacks, a lot of them, on our embassies. We had Beirut and came to understand how difficult it was to anticipate the threat because terrorists can attack at any time, any place, using any technique, and you can't defend everywhere all the time.

Clarke: Your confirmation hearing repeated this to the Hill. There were lots of individual visits, calls with members of Congress, them visiting down at the building, and it was again and again another version of the same thing. "We need to transform; it's a dramatically different world, with very different kinds of threats including terrorism. That's why we need to change." I'm not oversimplifying it; they would practically reach down and pat us on the head, and go, "That's nice. Now how many aircraft carriers are you going to build in my backyard?"

Di Rita: The whole discussion through that spring was, "How are you going to spend the $18 billion supplemental? We need to know that right now. The President is going to get $18 billion more. We're going to give it to you, so how are you going to spend it?" Our discussion was, "Who knows? The whole discussion has to shift to this concern about our capabilities versus threats and that's work that has to be done. We're engaged in that work and we're after it." There were real-world issues, of course, and Tenet talks about the deployment of the ships in July and all that business. But the idea that somebody said, "This will happen at this point—"

Rumsfeld: Had you met Clarke before 9/11?

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: [redacted] He was never in an NSC meeting that I recall or a principals meeting.

Clarke: There were lots of conversations about the chatter that was occurring during the summer.

Rumsfeld: Oh, yes.

Clarke: I remember once—It was probably July, late in the evening, and I see Cambone coming out of the building. It was a beautiful night and Cambone had just come from your office. Cambone looked sad and morose, even from Cambone, which is saying a lot. I said, "What's up?" He said, "Either something really bad is going to happen or our intel is really screwed up." I foolishly said, "I hope it is the latter."

Di Rita: I remember, we were on the steps of the Pentagon; it was a beautiful day. Steve is like, "This is all going to end." I said, "What the hell are you talking about?"

Leffler: So as you were hearing these things, and maybe General Myers can comment, were you taking any actions? I think General [Tommy] Franks in his memoir alludes to the fact that there had never been real discussions with Secretary Rumsfeld prior to 9/11 about taking direct action in Afghanistan, that he had never had a conversation along those lines with regard to the Taliban or anything. I think there is a comment in his memoir about that. I'm just trying to flesh out and evoke some conversation about the degree—

Rumsfeld: We had discussions about Iraq, the northern and southern no-fly zones, because our airplanes were being shot at.

Leffler: Right.

Rumsfeld: Jim Jones and [Joseph] Ralston both came up to me and said, "We're going to get a plane shot down just as sure as we're here, and someone is either going to get killed or captured. We've got to decide whether this is worth doing." That's when I wrote the memo on Iraq that I hope is in here. Is it?

Riley: I think so.

Rumsfeld: Saying, "Look, you ought to have a meeting on Iraq. We ought to figure out are we going to get somebody killed or captured or should we go meet with Saddam and see if we can sweet-talk him."

Leffler: That's a very interesting memo. What should one extrapolate from that memo in terms of—What was your position? What did you want to have happen?

Rumsfeld: I wanted the NSC and the President to know that we were putting pilots at risk, and there was going to be an event and we weren't going to like it. And we ought to decide if it's worth the risk to keep on with the southern and northern no-fly zones or should we stop enforcing them, or should we develop an alternative response—

Myers: And if we continue them, what is our response to a shoot-down?

Rumsfeld: How do we rescue them?

Di Rita: Desert Badger, was it?

Rumsfeld: Desert Badger. Then I said, "If we get someone shot down, we clearly have to try to rescue them. Do we want to just try to rescue them, or do we want to penalize them for shooting at our airplanes?" Should there be a Desert Badger Plus or do we want a Desert Badger Plus Plus, where you take out the UN [United Nations]-paid-for fiberoptic network that they had been putting in, and those kinds of things, as I recall. That was it.

Myers: Back to your original question about what was going on. I recall a couple of things. One is, of course in the Clinton administration—This was probably before Franks—there was a lot of talk about, "What can we do to go after al-Qaeda in Afghanistan?" None of the plans looked like they were applicable; they were all cumbersome. It is a landlocked country, so you need some help. They were hoping it would be something covert, surgical, and then we would leave, and that just didn't look like it was possible without staging out of Turkey or Pakistan.

Second, after the inauguration and working up to August, because we'd already had the experience of the east African bombings and the USS *Cole*, we're looking at how fast we can arm the Predator unmanned aircraft and go after [Osama] bin Laden, because by now we'd established a signature for him in Afghanistan—or at least the CIA thought they could identify when he was out and about—and if we just had something to pop him with, wouldn't that be a good thing? We were about ready to make that decision—Could we do that before the winter weather came in?—when 9/11 happened.

Leffler: As I recall, one of the things that never got settled was who would pay for it. CIA and OSD were constantly—

Rumsfeld: No, it was a joint funding to arm the drone.

Leffler: At that point, both of you were seemingly digging in your heels and not willing to say that you would own the extra commitment. That's what Tenet and Clarke say in their memoirs.

Rumsfeld: I never heard that.

Leffler: Held up that decision making.

Rumsfeld: There was an issue about who would pull the trigger.

Myers: Yes.

Rumsfeld: That is a different issue.

Leffler: Yes, that's a different issue.

Rumsfeld: But they owned all the drones that had Hellfire missiles on them. Initially the CIA was part of a Presidential finding that gave them the ability to do that.

Myers: Another thing I'd say, memoirs are fine. Having written one, I understand how brilliant they are. [*laughter*] I think for all its faults and everything else, the 9/11 Commission is probably the best source, with their analysis of the intelligence and so forth. It doesn't get into the 20-20 hindsight view that a lot of memoirs do, frankly. I would rely on that. I would not rely on Tenet's and I would not rely on Clarke's books. That would be my view.

Rumsfeld: The 9/11 Commission said they looked at every classified document. I talked to Hadley about it this week. The *New York Times* had an article, some guy claiming something. So I called Hadley and he said that the 9/11 Commission had every single piece of paper—

Myers: Yes.

Rumsfeld: And concluded there was nothing that was actionable.

Myers: He's saying, the *New York Times,* whoever did it, but—

Di Rita: It was an op-ed on 9/11.

Rumsfeld: The 9/11 bipartisan commission said that was baloney.

Leffler: Paul Pillar has written a devastating critique of the way the 9/11 Commission handled it and the information that was not dealt with adequately. He does not make the claim, of course, that there was actionable intelligence, but in terms of his illumination of the degree to which CIA was making available information to other agencies and to the NSC and the degree to which this was not acted upon nearly with the seriousness that should have been the case is his major point, not that 9/11 could have been avoided. It is a real indictment—One might agree or not agree with it—of what the 9/11 Commission writes about this.

Unidentified: This is, by the way, the man who gave us the briefing about the first World Trade Center.

Rumsfeld: I talked to him.

[redacted]

Myers: I think you can criticize any commission. It was not a friendly commission from my standpoint; it was tough to testify in front of them. I thought they were very thorough. So he can have his opinion, but that's one versus what, 10 or 12—

Clarke: What did he have access to? I'm not familiar with—

Myers: I'm not sure.

Clarke: He had access to what they didn't have access to?

Myers: I'll let the commission deal with that.

Leffler: He cites a lot of the intelligence and even summarizes some of the things that were supposedly in the PDBs [Presidential Daily Briefings].

Myers: He is an intel guy. I'm not an intel guy, but what you find with intel guys is they keep trying to make excuses for the fact they missed it. They'll do anything—sorry, my opinion—to cover up that fact. They missed it. Now, were there hints in there? Were there clues? Yes. But did anybody rush in and say—Because intelligence is intelligence; it's not fact or we wouldn't call it intelligence; we'd call it something else. They rush in with these opinions and sometimes they're good, sometimes they're not good.

Rumsfeld: I give George Tenet credit for saying something like that in his book on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Maybe it was on something else, but he said, "If we had really given credence to this, we would have run around and put it in the executive summary and everything else." There was one scrap of information that was cited repeatedly as example of the fact that they had some clue. But in his book he said, "If we had really given any credence to it, we would have hyped it, and we didn't." That's the way it is.

Clarke: But you also think about that summer—And you spent a lot of time handing out copies of the foreword to the book *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*.

Rumsfeld: Roberta Wohlstetter's book on Pearl Harbor. I passed around the foreword to everybody and said, "Look out."

Clarke: There was a lot of "Expect the unexpected. We don't know what it is going to be, but it is very likely that something that has never happened before will happen. How do we prepare for that?" A lot of the different departments in the building started putting together contingency plans. It was an interesting exercise. We don't know what it is, but if something bad happens that has never happened before, how do we deal with it?

All the chatter there was about al-Qaeda and everything else. There was lots of chatter about a zillion things going on.

Myers: I might have been a little too harsh there on the intel community, but it seems to me they worked pretty hard to try to make themselves look better in retrospect than they did trying to piece together what information they did have.

[TWO PAGES REDACTED]

Engel: I'm interested in a slightly different question, which you allude to. I think we can all stipulate that an attack on bin Laden on September 1 doesn't stop—

Unidentified: Try June 1.

Engel: Walk us through with a little bit more detail this discussion that you're describing within the Pentagon or within Washington policy-making circles about what upping the level of intensity on bin Laden would have done subsequently.

Rumsfeld: I don't think we were discussing this inside the Pentagon.

Engel: This is what I'm trying to figure—You're saying it is an act of war.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: It was discussed in the Deputies Committee, which I didn't go to.

Engel: Can you walk us through a little bit?

[redacted]

Myers: It was for the same reason that President Clinton didn't take any of the multiple options he was given to go into Afghanistan. You could never count on getting the American people to go along with it. The will of the people would not have been there. Of course ,after 9/11 you had that in spades.

Engel: But absent 9/11—

Myers: It was just you had to figure out how to do it in a landlocked—If it had been easier, if you could have put some covert forces in, my guess is President Clinton probably would have said yes. But it was never that. It was always, "Where are our forces going to come from?" We didn't have an Uzbekistan relationship or Pakistan. So how are we going to do this? Are we going to have to overfly—like they did with the cruise missiles—overfly Pakistan to get to the Taliban training camps? With all those issues, how do we do this?

Leffler: General, how much time were your planners and CENTCOM focused on addressing this issue during the first nine, ten months of 2001? Were they really focused on this in terms of thinking about what the options might be and how to implement the options—

Myers: That's a great question.

Leffler: —what types of capabilities would be necessary?

Myers: Of course, the operational planning takes place at the combatant commanders level. I have to believe that CENTCOM—That's what they live and breathe. They would be working on all sorts of things. They do two types of planning: one is crisis and one is deliberate. We found out later on we had no deliberate plan for Afghanistan. Later on, as we looked at the Iraq deliberate plan, it was wholly inadequate.

So the planning was around Desert Badger. I can't remember the exact dates. I can't tell you the planning; you'd have to ask CENTCOM to see what they were doing. I don't think there was any ongoing planning for Afghanistan.

Riley: The planning done at the level you're talking about, is that influenced at all by the change in administrations, or is this just an important internal bureaucratic process that is going to go on regardless of who is in the White House? I'm wondering what is the extent to which any momentum that might have developed in the Clinton administration might have been slowed down by virtue of the change in administration while people wait to get either staffed up or a new set of strategic direction from the highest levels. Is there any slowdown?

Myers: In terms of the planning that goes on at the combatant commanders, most of that goes on almost regardless of administrations, but there will be specific asks. Like in the Clinton administration, they asked for options to go into Afghanistan because we didn't have an armed Predator; we didn't have other ways to get to bin Laden. There were some options put on the table.

I don't know that we developed any of those prior to 9/11 after the Bush administration—I don't recall. We had lots of priorities. It is pretty much up to the administration, but a lot of that just kind of goes on. But you respond to specific requests. So if the Secretary says, "I need to see something" or if I would say it, perhaps, or the President or the National Security Council, somewhere in that chain, they would do it.

Di Rita: During the summer we had that process as a part of the QDR [Quadrennial Defense Review] 01 to review the Unified Command Plan and to pull up some of the plans for the purpose primarily of seeing how the process worked, but also it probably bolstered a lot of the initial thinking about such plans. That was going on here.

Riley: The question is that there is criticism of things not happening as quickly as in retrospect you would like for it to happen. My question is just about how much of this generically could be attributed to any change in administration—

Rumsfeld: I would say zero.

Riley: Zero, OK.

Rumsfeld: The combatant commander for CENTCOM when I was sworn in as Secretary of Defense was Franks and before that it was [Anthony] Zinni. I wasn't there; Dick was. But when I got there, I decided I'd better see the war plans. They're all on the shelf. They're contingency plans. Some of them are generic and some are specific. I told the President I was going to ask to get briefed on a couple of war plans and he ought to get briefed on one, to get a sense of them as a new President.

I think I wrote about this in the book. On a Saturday morning I had a briefing; I forget what war plan it was on, probably the Korean war plan, assuming the North Koreans attack the South, what is on the shelf? The briefer started outlining the plan. I started asking him questions about what his assumptions were. Did he have an assumption that there would be UN support, that there would be a coalition? Did he have an assumption that there would be cooperation from Japan and they'd let us use their bases?

Myers: That there would be a Reserve call-up?

Rumsfeld: Reserve call-up. A whole series of assumptions. The briefer didn't start with the assumptions; he wanted to brief the plan. I said, "How the hell can you brief the plan until you've told me what your assumptions are? Once something changes, you're going to have to change the plan and if you don't know the assumptions that the thing is rooted in—" We ended the meeting without going into the plan.

I said, "Next Saturday, I want three or four people to come in and brief not their plans but their assumptions, just their assumptions, for different plans." Then we did that. We had someone come back in and brief their plan. We allowed an hour and we never got past the assumptions.

Leffler: You write about that.

Rumsfeld: It was a lesson for the people in the combatant commands, the planners, that the assumptions were critically important and you had to know what they were and brief them, then how your plan builds off it.

Leffler: Did you have any such discussions with Franks or any of his top people—

Rumsfeld: Oh, my goodness, yes.

Leffler: Prior to 9/11? I know afterward.

Rumsfeld: Did we look at any plans? I would guess we did brief, but it wouldn't have been with Tom; it would have been down below, with his planners. Joint Chiefs had people involved in that process.

Myers: Back to your original question. I might have a slightly different answer than the Secretary on do you lose any energy in this process, is it an efficient, 100 percent transfer? I think you do lose energy in the process, clearly.

Rumsfeld: Changing Presidents.

Myers: Changing Presidents. You come in with a new administration, it takes you time to get people on the ground. They have priorities. It takes time. It is not a one-to-one conversion; you lose some energy in thermodynamics; it is not perfect. Clarke was the carryover from one National Security Council staff to another. I think that helped, although we can talk about Clarke later.

[redacted]

Myers: An irascible fellow, but he was a bulldog on the issues. So we were seized with the issue. That's why we were trying to figure out, OK, if we can't put boots on the ground, how do we get the leader of al-Qaeda and deal him some kind of blow? That was the discussion that we were having right before 9/11, actually. It wasn't like we weren't looking at it.

Rumsfeld: I don't think Condi ever had a meeting on it. At the principals level.

Myers: I don't think so either.

Rumsfeld: It may have been at the deputies—

Leffler: She never had a principals meeting, she says.

Rumsfeld: That's what I mean.

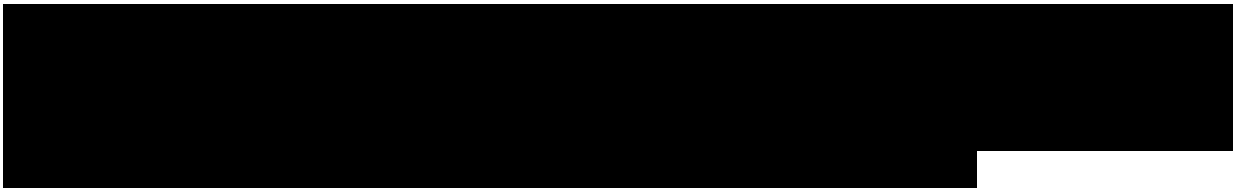
Myers: We were about ready to go—

Leffler: She says that.

Myers: This would have required Presidential authority, because there was a Taliban government in Afghanistan, and we were going to go into Afghanistan and start whaling away, perhaps. That was the theory. We would be advocates for that.

Engel: From the way that you've characterized those discussions, you were pessimistic that you were going to be able to get a change in policy in the near term.

Myers: No, not a change in policy. What I remember the long pole being, can we get the Predator modified in time, before winter. They were still going through some testing. Could we get it modified in time to get there before the winter weather set in, because when it sets in and the ceilings become too low, either you can't operate it or it is too low so it gets seen. That's my memory.



Myers: The CIA was flying the Predator out of Pakistan at the time, so this would just be a different kind of Predator.

Leffler: Secretary Rumsfeld, during this period before 9/11, did you have informal meetings where you talked to Vice President Cheney or President Bush and actually just said, "I'm really worried about this problem, about al-Qaeda"?

Rumsfeld: No. I don't recall a meeting like that.

Leffler: You don't, just even informally? It wasn't something that you—?

Rumsfeld: I can't remember. I had very few meetings with President Bush. Dick, when did you come in?

Myers: I started right after September 11; I came in the end of the month.

Rumsfeld: So you wouldn't have been in the meetings that I had, but I had very few meetings with the President. We had very few people of his administration. We had you after weeks and then one more and then one more. I wasn't meeting with him frequently that I recall. As I say, I don't think Condi had any meetings on the subject. We had meetings on everything in the world except that, it seems to me.

Di Rita: It was also not inconsequential that the QDR, while it was consistent with what everybody wanted to do, was a congressionally mandated requirement that a new administration come in and do this. That consumed an enormous amount of focus.

Myers: It really does.

Di Rita: We actually got that changed, because the cycle was too complicated.

Rumsfeld: We did. I said they shouldn't do it the first year of a new administration.

Di Rita: What it had us do by September 30 was redesign the entire Defense establishment and do it while you've got 10 percent of your people.

Myers: It adds to that inefficiency of transfer then. You can do it better when you're fully staffed a year later, which is what they worked on with Congress and got done.

Rumsfeld: Let me just finish this thought. I did of course meet regularly with Tenet. First of all, Tenet had the intelligence portfolio, and I met regularly with him and we talked about these things. I didn't brief the President on intelligence matters. Furthermore, the Pentagon, under posse comitatus, had a responsibility for outside the United States. Our radars were not focused inside the United States; they were turned outside for an external threat, not an internal threat. The FBI had the responsibility for the internal security of the United States.

We didn't have a northern command and we didn't have an Under Secretary for Intelligence and we didn't have an Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense, which I got changed after 9/11 so we would have somebody who could interact and assist with matters inside the United States. But I don't recall the President raising it with me or me raising it with him. I could be wrong, mind you, just going on memory. I could probably go back and look, but I don't have records that would show all that.

Perry: Before we leave the summer of 2001, and you raised the memo of July 27—

Rumsfeld: Which memo was that?

Perry: The Iraq memo.

Rumsfeld: Northern and southern no-fly zone. Yes, the senior military people came to me and said, "We've got a problem."

Myers: Here is the logic for it. If you had ground troops somewhere and they were getting shot at every day, would you as a country tolerate it? The answer is no, we wouldn't. We'd take action. But we've got airmen getting shot at every day, not quite every day, but certainly every week—

Rumsfeld: Hundreds of times.

Myers: Yes, hundreds of times—and we tolerate it. We just say OK, when it could result in a shoot-down. We were indignant, I guess, as the Joint Chiefs at the time. You tolerate one situation, but you won't tolerate the other. So what's our logic here?

Perry: I'm thinking ahead to years from now, when people are going back and digging through these things, and we have the opportunity to talk about them now. The last line on page 3 says, "If Saddam's regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere," which seemed to make perfect sense. How did you come to that? What were you thinking about that?

Rumsfeld: I would get a four-star general coming in and say, "We've got a problem. Our planes are getting shot at." I sat down and wrote out a memo and said we ought to have a meeting about this. Someone is going to get shot down or killed or captured and then we're going to ask ourselves why we were doing this. What is the value of the northern and southern no-fly zone? What is the cost-benefit analysis? Is it worth the risk? If something bad happens, what ought our response be?

It is the job of the Secretary of Defense to think about these issues. Is it possible that diplomatically we could go see Saddam Hussein and have a visit with him? He has a problem with Iran and some of his neighbors. Maybe this is the moment where we could develop a relationship that would be better than the status quo.

So I list a series of options. It's a rough, imperfect memo, and I send it around to people and say, "Let's talk about this."

Di Rita: The last line is to ask people to rip it up.

Perry: Right. I love that too and I noted that. "Why don't we get some smart people to take this memo, rip it apart, and refashion it into an appropriate paper for discussion at an early Principals Committee meeting?"

Rumsfeld: That is a typical Rumsfeld approach. If I know I don't know, I sit down and I write it out, and then I ask others to read it and tell me what else should be included.

Leffler: So you did not have any policy predilections when you wrote this?

Rumsfeld: Absolutely not. Does it sound like I do?

Leffler: I think so but—

Rumsfeld: What do you think my policy predilection is?

Leffler: It sounds like you are inclining toward wanting people to think seriously about a policy of regime change. You say the risks—

Rumsfeld: No, that was the official policy of the United States government. That had been noted by the Congress—

Leffler: I know about the Iraq Liberation—

Rumsfeld: The Iraq Liberation Act had been signed by Clinton in 1998.

Leffler: The question is how one would go about implementing it.

Rumsfeld: I did have a predilection. The predilection was I wanted to stop flying the northern and southern no-fly zones unless we had a damn good reason to continue and Presidential agreement that if something happened we would not simply allow our pilots to be captured or killed and do nothing in response.

Leffler: OK.

Myers: We'd like to improve the military's balance-of-power situation by taking out their air defenses—

Rumsfeld: Exactly. That was my predilection.

Myers: Their fiber optics, their command centers.

Rumsfeld: This memo was designed to get smart people thinking about an issue that I thought was important.

Leffler: I understand that. I think that's terrific to do that.

Rumsfeld: But I did it—

Leffler: Was there any follow-up? What happened?

Rumsfeld: I don't recall ever having a meeting.

Selverstone: That's what I wanted to push on, because it didn't seem like there was a meeting. Were there ad hoc improvisatory responses or conversations that you had with the principals on that particular issue? There was no meeting, but were there conversations pursuant to your memo?

Rumsfeld: Dick, do you remember? You were at all the principals meetings.

Myers: No, I don't.

Di Rita: To put this memo into the context of the prior discussion, which is, one, this is kind of how we operated, injected into the process, we disciplined ourselves to put things in writing, get the process going. The second context being we've just come into office. There is a surfeit of people in place, but it's getting better over time and there is a whole range of priorities. It's easy to pull this out and crystallize it now. It's natural. But we were in the midst of this QDR 01; we're looking at North Korea; we're looking at the EP-3 incident, which consumed a fair amount of intellectual capital. There was a lot going on.

To pull this out and say, "Was anything done about it?" I guess you could say the same thing about a lot of other things that became less interesting than Iraq over time.

Selverstone: It is not a normative question that something should have been done about it. It's more a question out of curiosity—What did happen?

Myers: I think on this particular memo we did continue to talk about our reaction. We came up with a plan, and the President liked the plan.

Rumsfeld: I think that's right. We ended up taking a Desert Badger plan, which was a rescue plan, and developed Desert Badger Plus and Plus Plus, where we would impose a penalty on Saddam Hussein if he shot down one of our planes. It would have been more than just a rescue operation.

Myers: It was how could we denigrate his air defenses and his command centers.

Rumsfeld: So that Iraq would have a diminished ability to do it again.

Unidentified: That all happened at the same time subsequent to 9/11.

Di Rita: Other things were happening.

Leffler: But part of the interest of this memo and part of its thoughtfulness is that you have a whole category here that says "the broader context"—broader than just the issue of the planes and the no-fly zones, which you had been debating since the very first months of the administration. You say in that paragraph there, which I think is very interesting, "You can publicly acknowledge that sanctions don't work over extended periods and stop the pretense of having a policy that is keeping Saddam in the box, when we know he has crawled a good distance out of the box and is currently doing the things that will ultimately be harmful to his neighbors in the region and to U.S. interests, namely developing WMD [weapons of mass destruction] and the means to deliver them, and increasing his strength at home and in the region month by month."

This is my question: You wrote that. One of the real controversies about Iraq and Saddam during this period of time is whether he had been contained, was being contained, or whether he was not. Here you're saying he was not. In his memoir, General [Henry Hugh] Shelton categorically says Saddam was being contained. Richard Haass, the head of the Policy Planning staff in the State Department, says that Saddam was being contained. So what were you—?

Rumsfeld: The [Paul] Volcker Report afterward looked at the Oil for Food Programme for the UN and concluded that Iraq was moving oil out and bringing all kinds of supplies in.

Leffler: I personally don't think he was being contained, but I'm asking you, what was in your mind? Do you have any recollection what was in your mind when you wrote that?

Rumsfeld: I don't remember the memo very well, but I think I put in three or four different theories.

Di Rita: Yes, there are elements of—

Rumsfeld: That was one of them.

Di Rita: If you go back and read the various clauses of the Iraq Liberation Act of two years earlier, it would read a lot like that. In other words, that was the perceived wisdom at the time. None of these things were happening. If you look at the whereas, whereas that Congress passed and the President signed—

Leffler: Yes, but other policy—

Di Rita: That's what it said. It's easy to say in hindsight that people said it was being contained, but that wasn't the view of the U.S. government at the time.

Leffler: I'm just saying there were other policy makers at the time who were believing—including General Shelton, including Richard Haass, the head of the Policy Planning staff, including General Powell, who felt that Saddam was contained. I don't want to argue about it, I'm just asking a historical question and that is to say, do you know what you were thinking about when you wrote this? Here you're implying that he was not being contained.

Rumsfeld: I also implied that if we went to see Saddam Hussein, maybe we could sort this out. I put various options in the paper.

Clarke: I'll connect something you said to something Larry said. Look at this through the prism of Iraq. If you were very familiar with the process at the Pentagon on any issue, it might be, OK, we're trying to build a better rivet and there were papers and theories and proposals on how to build a better rivet. There would be very intense discussion and people at the table were expected to put forth their opinion on how we build a better rivet. It would start to go down a path and then somebody—Sometimes it was highly annoying to people—would go, "OK, what's wrong with all this? We're all going down the same path based on this information and these theories. What is wrong with it? Shouldn't we also consider this and this?" and forcing people not to just go down the logical path based on preexisting information, but find new information, new ways of illuminating discussion, and consider every possibility.

I think you could go through memo after memo, meeting after meeting, and challenge the conventional wisdom. Surfacing lots of debate and discussion was a really important part of the process. Hindsight being 20/20, if you look back at this through the narrow prism of Iraq. you can go, "Wooo."

Rumsfeld: Look at my "parade of horribles" memo, where I sat down and came up with several scenarios in which things could go wrong. The last paragraph said you can do exactly the reverse of that and say what could go wrong if the President didn't do something, and that's just stylistic, I guess.

Di Rita: As a matter of history, I think the outlying point of view in early 2001 would have been what General Shelton or Richard Haass allegedly believes was the case, because again, the Iraq Liberation Act two years earlier, which expressed the view of the Congress and therefore the view of the government assigned by the President, basically sounded more like this than like that. It wasn't an outlier point of view to have this thought. If you were generally paying attention to Iraq policy, that is what people believed.

Rumsfeld: You said that Colin Powell agreed with Haass and Shelton. Did you read his speech at the UN?

Leffler: Of course I've read his speech.

Rumsfeld: How can you say he agreed with Haass and Shelton?

[redacted]

Engel: That is one of the things we're trying to probe here, to try to understand the context of what people were thinking at the time. In particular, Mr. Secretary, you mentioned before the importance you placed on outlining the assumptions behind a policy. To my mind, there is a very important assumption that is outlined in the last paragraph on this page. Russell, if you can hand it over.

Riley: Which page is that, Jeff?

Engel: The page that we've actually been arguing about for the last 20 minutes. "If Saddam's regime were ousted, you would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere."

Rumsfeld: That's one of the option sections, paragraphs.

Engel: My question is, and this is going back to your point, clearly that is a dominant position.

Rumsfeld: No, it's not. I don't know that it is.

Engel: That's what I'm asking.

Rumsfeld: Look at the last sentence on the next page. "Why don't we get some people together, rip the thing apart." I knew I didn't know. I said, "Here, let's talk about this, refashion it into an appropriate paper for discussion at an early principals meeting."

Engel: Some assumptions are more declarative than others within the memo. Is this an operative presumption on your part at this time in 2001 before 9/11?

Rumsfeld: I'll just let the memo speak for itself. No, I did not have an operative assumption, other than it was the policy of the United States that the world would be better off if there were regime change, because a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate and a Democratic President passed it and I agreed with it. It didn't articulate how the United States would achieve it.

Engel: I understand the legislative history. Was there discussion in your mind over the long term—Were you engaging that assumption in your own mind?

Rumsfeld: No. I wasn't doing anything other than sitting down and saying, "A four-star general said to me: 'We have a problem. Our planes are getting shot at. What do we do about it?'"

If we got a plane shot down, the President would come to me and say, "What are you going to do about it?" I'd say, "I hadn't thought about it. Sorry about that, Mr. President." So I said, "Maybe I ought to think about that. These guys are smart, let's think about it. Let's sit down." I'll sit down and say, "How would you think about that?" You'd think about it by getting the National Security Council, the President, Secretary of State, Vice President to talk about it. So how do you get that going? The way you get that going is you say, "Maybe you could do this, maybe you could do that."

Perry: It is the perfect example—

Rumsfeld: I've done this on a hundred different subjects in business, I've done it in government, I've done it in politics. It's just me. If you sit there and try to read too much into it, you're wasting your time. It is what it is. It's there on paper; that's all it is.

Riley: We don't wish to waste our time, and in recognition of where we are, maybe it is appropriate for us to get to the other side of 9/11. You've got a very thorough account in your book of what happened that day.

Rumsfeld: One man's view.

Riley: Let's get into the post-9/11 environment. What is your thinking about your options and your actions at that stage after the attack, and how quickly is your thinking coalescing? I know that there is a very important meeting at Camp David.

Rumsfeld: Not very important.

Riley: Not very important? Why not?

Rumsfeld: The President had to have a meeting, and no one was ready to talk. The military people hadn't thought about it. They had nothing on the shelf that had anything to do with terrorism or Afghanistan. I told the President before the meeting, "Expect to be underwhelmed by General Shelton's presentation. He has not talked to the combatant commander to my knowledge. He has not talked to me. He is just going to come in because you've called a meeting and he is the senior general; he is the one who gives advice. I think it is perfectly proper for you to hear him. I've seen what he has proposed and I'm underwhelmed myself and I think you ought not to be critical, you just ought to listen."

[redacted]

Riley: We have two other people there. Tell us your perspectives on this.

Myers: I didn't hear what you told the President, but certainly you characterized the military options correctly. It was bomb, bomb more, and then put a few guys on the ground to blow something up.

Rumsfeld: The President had said something in his immediate remarks about, "We're not going to just pound sand." I think he said that before that meeting.

Riley: Meaning?

Rumsfeld: Meaning he was not going to do what President Clinton did and just fire off a couple of cruise missiles into the desert and go home to indict Osama bin Laden in absentia. That is why I think General Shelton had a third option, where he said something about putting boots on the ground in a totally ambiguous characterization. He didn't have a plan.

Myers: It was all very general.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Myers: One of the accounts of that meeting was in the CIA Director's book, I think. He said after the meeting, "We came out with this clear path ahead." We didn't come out of the meeting with a clear path of anything. I think what I came away from that meeting—It was a general discussion, the President sounded out the Cabinet and the military, and the President was giving some broad guidance. I don't know when all this guidance hit, either during the first few meetings that week or at Camp David, but somewhere in there he says, "This is an act of war." I don't know if that was before or after this meeting.

He said, "Whatever we do has to be quick and significant, meaningful. We have to have some impact on this adversary. Just like in war, we have an adversary we have to beat." He gave us some homework. He told us to go—I remember "fast" and "meaningful." It has to be something that is not just pounding sand, which he had said earlier.

That's how I came out of the meeting. We didn't have any specific direction. We didn't know we were going to go into Afghanistan. We didn't know what we were going to do.

I have one little anecdote. Iraq was brought up at this meeting and the President and Shelton got together—I wasn't there, but I got this recounted from Shelton. At a break, the President said to Shelton, "They're starting to talk Iraq. I thought we were talking Afghanistan here." Shelton said, "We are."

When we came back, the President made a statement. He said, "This is about Afghanistan." He might have said, "We'll talk about Iraq later" or something, but I don't remember that part. That's what I remember about the day. It was very general, actually.

Myers: Actually, because we went to war when, October 7. And this first meeting was on a Saturday, so the 15th or 16th. It was fairly quick. But that's another issue.

Unidentified: The idea of going to war 10,000 miles away in a landlocked country with no prior military plan in three weeks—

Myers: —with a collaboration between the CIA and the DoD that had never been done at that level—

Rumsfeld: That's right.

Myers: —having to decide who was in charge, which was one of the big issues you could easily dismiss, but we had to go through it. And not knowing exactly how reliable the Northern Alliance was going to be. Couldn't get in because of the weather in Hindu Kush. It was pretty interesting. That first meeting set some outlines and showed us the President's tolerance for something that was done fairly quickly, that the American people would see as meaningful and would actually have an impact on the enemy.

Rumsfeld: Dick, you probably were with me, but we took General Franks and Dell Dailey into the private quarters in the White House to brief him after—Shelton was gone; he'd retired, I think. When did he retire?

Myers: October 1, September 30.

Rumsfeld: In any event, we had a meeting in the White House. Dell Dailey was head of Special Operations, and he and General Franks had evolved in their thinking sufficiently and coordinated sufficiently with Tenet and the intel people that I wanted them to brief the President so he knew what we were thinking.

The CIA had delinked with many of their contacts in Afghanistan after the end of the Soviet withdrawal. Government is like peewee soccer. Everyone runs to the ball, and the ball was somewhere else.

Myers: The CIA people would still have some contact with the Northern Alliance. They seemed to have that, at least they said they did. I don't know how much they did.

Rumsfeld: The CIA got some folks in there with the Northern Alliance, and then we started getting our Special Operations forces in.

Clarke: This is a small thing, but I remember in those few weeks, in addition to everything else—and the public focus was obviously on the response to 9/11 and what we were going to do—you jumped on the humanitarian effort.

Rumsfeld: Oh, boy, and how. We piled a lot of stuff in.

Clarke: That was a huge part of the planning, and that took up a lot of the bandwidth as well, as they were trying to plan how to do this.

Rumsfeld: Then the CIA was the only one on the ground for a period, and then pretty soon we both had people on the ground. Then it kind of chopped over to DoD and you're quite right, the humanitarian effort was important. There was a big debate with the State Department about whether or not the Special Forces should go into Kabul, whether the Northern Alliance should go into Kabul.

Myers: On the one hand, we were worried the Northern Alliance might not fight and might not stay in. On the other hand, we were worried they might fight so well they'd get into Kabul and say, "We got it, thank you, all you Pashtuns. We got it."

Rumsfeld: The intel people—

Myers: We didn't have any control.

Rumsfeld: Yes, when the Northern Alliance had the ability to go into Kabul, they did.

Myers: On the issue of leadership, my memory is that the Secretary realized early on that whoever the combatant commander was going to be would be calling the shots in theater and ought to have some sort of relationship with the Commander in Chief, and Franks did not. They claimed to be from the same town, but there was no relationship at all.

Rumsfeld: And he had been picked by his predecessor.

Myers: He had been picked by his predecessor. So you have to brief the President on a plan, but I could do that. The thought was to bring in the combatant commander, who then can establish some trust and rapport, because there are going to be some hard decisions made way down range that the President is going to have to be comfortable with and know who is out there. That was a consistent theme.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Engel: And how many meetings would you say were necessary at that point?

Rumsfeld: There were quite a few in person and there were quite a few by secure video, but as Dick says, we made a point of making sure that the CENTCOM commander was connected to the President—

Myers: Later John Abizaid.

Rumsfeld: —rather than simply through Dick or me.

Myers: Which you could do. He's too busy; he's down there in Tampa. But we would have either John Abizaid or General Franks come in and do that sort of stuff. I think before we went into Afghanistan—I don't know if we had more than one. The President said we had to do this quickly. Quickly meant, "Get your plan together; we hope this works," and then General Franks was off to the theater trying to work it from over there.

Riley: Mr. Secretary, when I said it was an important meeting, you objected. Were there important meetings between—9/11 was Tuesday, between Tuesday and the weekend that you had with the President, where he was giving you instructions about what he wanted from you or the Defense Department?

Rumsfeld: I'd have to go back and check my records as to the meetings; I don't know it off the top of my head. It was a decade ago.

Clarke: I caution against—It sounds like a movie: it was the defining moment; it was the defining meeting. I'd caution anybody against that. It's not that simple.

Rumsfeld: That particular meeting was a meeting where the President needed to have a meeting. He had to begin getting engaged in it, but it was clearly premature. The Pentagon was being asked to make a presentation, and I had to tell him the truth. The truth was that General Shelton had not had a chance to really engage the Department. He hadn't had a chance to engage the Joint Chiefs. He hadn't engaged the combatant commander. The combatant commander was going to be the critical person in the U.S. military response to 9/11. And he hadn't engaged the civilians. Paul and I hadn't had any input into the presentation he was going to make.

But he needed to see Shelton and get a sense of what they were thinking. Shelton delivered a plain-vanilla "Here are these options," obvious kinds of options. But no decisions were made.

Leffler: Mr. Secretary, do you recall what you were thinking, other than trying to get other people to prepare more effectively? Do you remember what your own thoughts were in terms of what needed most to be done in the aftermath of 9/11?

Rumsfeld: I've written a lot of memos that are available on my website. You can look at the dates on them and get a sense of what I was thinking at the time. But I didn't have a magic formula. No one had ever done what we finally decided to do.

There were people in our government who were saying that the Northern Alliance was pitiful, that they'd been fighting for five years and hadn't gotten anywhere. There were people who were saying there were good Taliban and bad Taliban and not to worry. There were people saying, "You don't want to go too far with the Northern Alliance, because they're a bunch of warlords, and the Pashtuns in the south won't like it." You had different views within the intelligence committee; you had different views within the military.

What happened was you had enough talk and discussion with George Tenet and with me and with the intel people and with the military people, and out of it came a decision to use proxies, to use the Northern Alliance and to try to fashion some military capability of militia in the south from Pashtuns. This is where [Hamid] Karzai came in, with a relatively small capability. And then to get some folks on the ground and use the kinds of authorities that the Agency has that we don't. They have authorities and money.

They got in there and got started with a handful of people. We got our people moved in place in Uzbekistan.

Clarke: Let me add to that. Larry probably remembers the meeting on the morning of September 12 in your office, about 7:15. We all came in and you had your yellow legal pad and you said, "OK, we've got three things going here. One is making sure there are no further attacks like we just had yesterday. The second is preparing the appropriate response—as the President said, fast, meaningful. And third, how do we continue the transformation of the Department of Defense. I'm sure a lot of people between 8:30 the morning of September 11 and the next morning thought, *OK, that transformation stuff, we're putting that to the side, we'll just focus on* this." It was very clear.

Di Rita: There was a perceived wisdom to some extent in the memoirs and elsewhere that he had given a speech the day before 9/11 at the Pentagon about the bureaucracy and that that all came to a crashing halt after 9/11. In fact, the discussion very much was—We all assumed there would be further attacks; we all assumed this was not over—In six months what would we say we would have wanted to have done? That was the question he put on the table.

So while all the focus on Afghanistan response was taking place, it was keep the heat on, or what do we need to be doing now to keep the transformation going. Paul got very involved with the Hill and budgetary questions and what do we need money for right now and what do we need to start really doing.

Rumsfeld: Yes, Mike said, "When the next attack comes and a lot of people are killed, what will we wish we had done between today and the time that next attack comes?" knowing that there would be another attack. He tried to get people focused that way. The other thing I said was, "We have to transform. Rather than thinking it stops, we must use this as an impetus." It provided the urgency to get a lot of things done.

Di Rita: Pressure, Army transformation would have never happened without this—

Rumsfeld: The stuff we got done—You just never would have been able to go from the proud divisions, with flags and music and history books, to brigade combat teams. It never would have happened. It's a big accomplishment. We wouldn't be able to do today what we did then if we hadn't seized the opportunity, and if we hadn't had someone like Pete Schoomaker as Army CoS [Chief of Staff], there to do it. God knows you never would have had transformation without him.

I've had hundreds of meetings in my life, and I'll be damned if I know who thought of what when the meeting was over. But through the discussion and the back-and-forth with Tenet and the intel people and the military people and the Joint Chiefs and the combatant commanders, that plan was fashioned to go ahead and try to use the Northern Alliance. Everyone who said, "They've never gotten anywhere in all these years. It's a third-world military and they're incapable of success"—Hell, when you combine those forces with our air power, and you get a creative officer like Vern Clark sticking an aircraft carrier out there as a lily pad, and we quickly talk and gas-and-go out of Turkmenistan and gas-and-go out of Tajikistan and a base in Kyrgyzstan and a base in Uzbekistan, and cooperation from Pakistan, pretty soon it all comes together. Then you use Special Forces as the spearpoint for the first time in history.

[redacted]

Myers: What you had to know is that the plan was going to continue to evolve, too—

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Myers: —because if this did not work out, then Franks had to be thinking and working with us to figure out OK, what's plan B, C, D, and E?

Rumsfeld: But it was pickup; this stuff wasn't on the shelf. There was no guidebook; there was no roadmap to guide our response.

Unidentified: The most spectacular thing, to me at least, was the ability of these Special Forces guys on the ground to call in B-52 strikes a hundred yards from their position.

Myers: Yes, the Northern Alliance thought that was godlike.

Rumsfeld: The morale of the Taliban just plummeted when we were able to call in precision strikes, and they flew in from Missouri.

Myers: I always thought that was an impressive use of CAS [close air support].

Rumsfeld: They flew off the lily pad out in the water.

Myers: Impressive use of other body parts too, being seated that long in a bomber from the U.S., something that rhymes with gas. That's hard.

Rumsfeld: But the effect of being able to call in a precision strike and have it hit the Taliban leadership with laser-guided weapons, suddenly it was a whole new game. They got discouraged. They ran. Some would come over and switch sides, which was not unusual in that country.

Engel: If I can go back to the period immediately—I guess it is the entire 2001 period, because we began discussion today trying to understand the import of transformation and the import of you doing the Defense Department and the U.S. military posture in a transition in a post–Cold War world. I keep coming back to this memory I have of Secretary Cheney in 1991, after the Gulf War, saying on TV, "I called up my predecessor and said thank you, because these things take a long time to do."

Rumsfeld: You bet.

Engel: "So therefore the fact that I was able to put this unit in war in 1991, meant that 1987,

'86, '85—"

Rumsfeld: Every President builds on the capabilities his predecessors invested in prior.

Engel: Exactly. So here is the conundrum I'm trying to understand, which I would love for you to speak more of for the historical record. You're telling us that, as a group, there was a significant sense that change has to be made to transform into the 21st century. Yet you're also saying that eight months into the administration you're able to on the fly use an entirely new form of warfare. Now that suggests to me that a significant transformation had already been under way. So help us understand for the historical record what had you inherited and what you wanted to change.

Rumsfeld: Dick, you ought to answer this question. You were there both times.

Myers: Since I'm not going to be here tomorrow, I'll try to steer him to another question later on, where I think I can add something.

There were media reports of these Clinton generals, risk averse, all sorts of stuff, which I think probably does not do service to the military leadership. We're going to serve whatever President. We're going to do what that President says to do. I don't know that "risk averse" would be something that I would use to characterize that group of which I was part. We'd been attacked on our own soil. There was a real sense of urgency. We got real direction from the Commander in Chief that I've already gone through. We could have done it better had we been a transformed force.

If we want to send a lot of boots on the ground over there, we'd be talking about divisions, not brigade combat teams, which would be *really* inappropriate and they'd have to divide—

Rumsfeld: And would take a *long* time to deploy.

Myers: The BCT [brigade combat team] is an autonomous group for the most part. A division is not. A brigade and division may or may not have the capability to do what you want it to do, but BCTs do, for the most part. That was the power of that thought and that movement. So we didn't have any of that.

I think we had people who were willing to think. We had relationships, CENTCOM had pretty good relations with CIA anyway. We had people who were just willing to go do work. I remember we sent—I think it was a State Department person, probably somebody from policy—I can't remember who it was, [redacted]—and a guy out of my J5 shop, Kevin Chilton, an astronaut. We sent them over, saying, "Go make friends with the Pakistanis and find bases for us. When you're done there, go to Uzbekistan and do the same thing." None of those folks had ever been to any of those places. We did not have relationships. Yet they went over there and did it.

I think it was more of a mindset. Clearly the force you have is the force you have. You fight with the force you have. True statement.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: That's a catchy line.

Myers: Everybody ought to keep that in mind. You fight with the force you have, not the one you wish you had. So we had to fashion this. I think you give a lot of credit to—It wasn't done in Washington; it was done by General Franks and his folks.

Rumsfeld: And the CIA.

Myers: Yes, the Agency. Those two groups said, "This might work." We all looked at it and said, "You know, that might just work. But if it doesn't, Franks, what are you and George going to do next? What's act two?" Turns out it worked pretty well.

[redacted]

Myers: Yes, I think a lot of people were pushing it.

Rumsfeld: The Special Operations forces.

Myers: Also remember that the tasking going into Afghanistan is, "We're going to go in, we're going to go after al-Qaeda, and we're out." This was not about necessarily regime change, as I recall. It was not necessarily about any kind of nation building. In fact the President said, and I remember specifically, "We're not going to do nation building." Now that changed as Kabul fell and he said, "We just can't leave it like this." But that was not the original plan. So the plan was built around—I'm not sure what it has to do with transformation other than the military has a lot of—

Rumsfeld: We didn't use the Crusader.

Di Rita: Remember your famous HDLD, the whole idea of high-demand, low-density items. So there was a movement toward unmanned aircraft, a movement toward a lot of things like that, but there weren't enough—People were starting to realize these are really important items and we had something, we had an acronym for it—high-demand, low-density—meaning, as the Secretary used to say, we didn't buy enough.

Myers: We didn't buy enough of that stuff.

Rumsfeld: That was what it meant.

Di Rita: That stuff was coming available and certainly the notion that these things were going to be important in the future was beginning to take root, but the impetus and the mindset changed after 9/11.

Rumsfeld: We invested heavily in Special Operations forces, doubled their numbers, improved their equipment, and increased their authority. The money we stuck in unmanned aerial vehicles, the different variety of them and arming them took time. We didn't have every resource we needed. We had very limited capabilities appropriate for this new conflict in the initial phase of our response.

Di Rita: And you got on the stand out here, but in the QDR 06 or 05 we talked about the transformation of going from something to something. It wasn't as though it was untransformed by 9/11 and it became transformed after that. It was a process.

Rumsfeld: A continuum.

Di Rita: A continuum, yes.

Rumsfeld: It is more shifting your weight than—

Myers: I think a guy like General Franks was not trapped in the doctrine. It's easy for the military; we spend a lot of time on our doctrine. It is there as a guide as to how you might do things, but you can't be trapped by it, because it is never right for the problem at hand. I think you have to give the other folks working on the staff a lot of credit, and the CIA a lot of credit, for not being trapped by how we did it last time, because we hadn't done anything like this.

Clarke: To echo something you said, the whole conversation about transformation before 9/11, most of the people in the military understood and said, "Yes, we get it, but it takes time." There was a sense of urgency and expectation that really got to some people. They were trying, but they said, "This takes time."

Myers: Some people were very supportive of the whole notion. There wasn't any real issue with that.

Clarke: Then 9/11 happened and people did things that were above and beyond what they thought they were capable of. So early December was your first trip to Afghanistan and your meeting with some of the Special Forces, some of those guys who were on horseback calling in those bombers, and they're riding with the Northern Alliance.

I remember talking to some of them and I said, "OK, so you're riding horseback"—half of them had never been on horses before in their lives—"you're using the state-of-the-art technology to call in these bombers. How are you doing this?" One of these guys turns to me and says, "We're transformation, baby." And he's right. "Transformation" was not about necessarily new technologies. It was about doing things in very different ways.

Myers: Transformation is intellectual more than it is anything else, that's what it is.

Rumsfeld: It is attitudinal.

Myers: It is, 90 percent.

Clarke: For this exercise, to your point about the military you inherit, you should get and read [Robert] Gates's remarks at your portrait ceremony, because that speaks to it better than almost anything else. He very clearly said, "You all in your years did this, this, and this, and that is why we are now able to do that, that, and that." I thought he spoke to it very articulately.

Myers: I still remember the request for western saddles and hay. The Secretary and I looked at each other—We said, "What the hell is this about?" Franks says, "They're on wooden saddles and it really hurts them, and the horses are hungry." "What horses? What saddles?" That was kind of a, "Whoa, they're riding horses." That was not part of their training. We just had to figure it out.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Di Rita: It had evolved dramatically.

Myers: That wasn't new, to have the airmen on the Special Forces team with the lasers and the communications. They had been practicing that.

Riley: We talked about Iraq and then we dropped it after your discussion of President Bush's sidebar at the Sunday meeting. Was Iraq off the agenda at this point? The impression I get from what I read is that there are some efforts to put Iraq on the agenda at this stage early, a few days or a week or so after, as a place where there is a good target.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I don't remember that. I remember my memo and the northern and southern no-fly zones, but in connection with 9/11, I don't remember it coming up in the meeting. Do you, Dick?

Myers: No.

Rumsfeld: I do remember that the President either said, or said because he read something—and I'll not say it correctly—that we were going to go after the terrorists where they are and that those who harbored terrorists would be treated as terrorists or—

Di Rita: Yes, basically a "with us or against us."

Rumsfeld: That's right, something like that. Of course, the question then was, is he going to go into Afghanistan only, or are there other locations, Sudan or elsewhere, where countries were hospitable to terrorists, and warranted a U.S. response.

Riley: Latin America, something I had read. Where in Latin America?

Di Rita: The tri-border area. Argentina, Brazil—

Rumsfeld: They have terrorist organizations that function out of that region. In north Africa there were some and the—

Myers: Yes, the Horn of Africa.

Rumsfeld: The Horn of Africa. So the question is, what does the President really want to do? If Iraq came up, my guess is it was in that context, but I don't remember it coming up in that meeting. Obviously it had come up before then, because of the southern and northern no-fly zones.

Riley: But you don't have any recollections in the immediate post-9/11 environment, two weeks, three weeks—

Rumsfeld: Except in the context that I just said, any country that was hospitable to terrorist organizations.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: The principle is, if you want to stop something, you penalize it. If you want more of it, you reward it. He had said that he had to deal with the problem of terrorism involving terrorists *and* those that are hospitable to terrorism. The question is, how do you demonstrate what you mean with respect to the countries that are hospitable to terrorism? You can't do that if you're simply looking at Afghanistan. Is there something else the United States could do? I didn't have any idea what he had in mind, and I don't know that anyone did.

Riley: The additional argument that gets floated is the "pounding sand" argument, that there was a difficulty in finding useful targets in Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld: Yes, there were very few useful strategic targets.

Myers: Not only useful targets, but those that were useful we didn't want to destroy because we'd have to rebuild them. A lot of thought was given to whether it would be appropriate tactically to take out that tunnel, but guess who is going to probably have to rebuild it. So we were very careful what we went after. There wasn't a lot to hit in the first place, but we were very cautious.

Selverstone: Can we talk about the nomenclature that is used, the threads that are connecting these various areas: the War on Terror, the War on Terrorism. You note in your book that you were uncomfortable with that term. Can you describe the conversations that took place about that?

Rumsfeld: I lost.

Selverstone: I heard that. Can you describe the champions of various terms and if you see policy implications for settling on the War on Terror?

Rumsfeld: I'm probably the wrong one to ask, but I don't know if anyone else ever raised the question. But my thought was that terrorism is a technique as opposed to an enemy. I've always thought that words are important and it is worth spending some time thinking about them and talking about them and settling on them. If you don't identify the enemy properly, you may be chasing the wrong rabbit. I kept trying to find something better, and he had already glommed onto the "War on Terror" phrase and liked it and was comfortable with it. Nobody I knew, including me, could come up with anything better. We talked about a struggle against violent extremists or Islamists. The White House was very sensitive about talking about the Muslim faith and didn't want people to assume or take away any idea that the United States of America was against a religion. Obviously the United States isn't against a religion; we're against people who go around killing other people.

I kept looking for some other way to phrase it so that there would be greater clarity. I also had a feeling there was no way we were going to prevail from the outside alone. We'd have to find ways to get the vast majority of the Muslim world that is not Islamist and not killing innocent men, women, and children to put pressure on that element within that religion. They would probably be in a better position to put pressure on them than we would. Was there some way we could talk about it that would do a better job? We never found a better way to articulate it that I know of.

Myers: The President was thoughtful when we took the idea to him. He said, "Let me think about it." Then we came back some days later, it was kind of like an, "Oh, by the way." We were meeting on something else. He said, "I thought about the idea that maybe the bumper sticker is not right." But he said, "That's the bumper sticker; everybody understands that. If we change now, even though we don't know what we're changing to—"

Leffler: This was much later, 2004 or something?

Myers: No, I don't know—

Leffler: There is a memo in here from 2004.

Myers: This is an idea that we had and took to the President on the moniker not being right. The reason it's not right, in my opinion, is, if you say it is a War on Terrorism—First of all, terrorism is a method, so that doesn't make sense; and "war" implies that the military is the primary instrument you would use against it. I objected to that.

Rumsfeld: We know that's not the case. We had to get the Treasury Department chasing their bank accounts. We had to get the State Department doing public diplomacy. We had to bring all the capabilities of the U.S. government to bear.

Myers: I don't know when we did it, but the bumper sticker was already out, everybody understood it in this country.

Di Rita: It was probably not early, that would be my guess. Was it as late as ’04? I think we were into—

Leffler: There is a very good memo right here. “Are we fighting a Global War on Terror?” June 18, 2004. It may have been raised before then, but this is when you wrote a long memo on it.

Myers: We were trying to change the name; I don’t remember a memo going with that.

Di Rita: I’m not sure, I don’t—

Myers: It wasn’t early on.

Di Rita: It wasn’t early on.

Riley: We’re going to lose two people in about 15 minutes and, General, you had pointed out that one of the questions here is “Describe the Secretary’s relationship with the uniformed services and the transition to capabilities based.”

Myers: I asked to do that because it is one of the questions where I might have an input, and I won’t be here tomorrow. That doesn’t preclude input later on. Maybe the Secretary needs to start.

Rumsfeld: The picture in the book where I’m shining Pete Pace’s shoes says it all.

Myers: One of the myths out there is that the Secretary never asked the opinions of the generals and the admirals. That’s what you hear. “He ignored their advice.” That’s just rubbish; it is certainly not true. The relationship that he had with his service Chiefs and with the combatant commanders was probably over time the best I’d seen over several Secretaries of Defense. If it is August 2001 and before, it was rocky, I would say. Here comes a new Secretary. We’re trying to change everything.

Rumsfeld: Because a new President was elected and asked us to change everything.

Myers: But then you put some groups together that didn’t have any active duty on it, so all the service Chiefs were saying, “Why is he going around us?” and that sort of stuff. It was rocky.

After 9/11, very solid, and as the personnel process plays out, now these are people he has interviewed and feels comfortable with. I was never there for an interview that I remember, but he had interviewed me, and the main interview question or questions would always revolve around, “Can you think agilely about strategic issues or are you locked into whatever uniform you wear or whatever doctrine you had learned?” That’s the sense he had to get.

Plus one other thing. These are my observations; he may not agree. You’ve got to like working with somebody. I remember him using this example. When Joe walks through the door, do I say, “Here comes Joe. Good, we’re going to get something done,” or “Gosh darn, I’ve got to put up with this guy again for half an hour.” It’s important. Think about it; it is important.

Rumsfeld: Particularly if you’re working long hours.

Myers: Which he likes to do. Nobody else did, but he likes that. He has more intellectual energy than any four of us in the room, just trust me on that. So he built this team that was the most collegial team by the time I left in 2005, and it started way before that. You can talk to the service Chiefs, you can talk to the combatant commanders, and you won't find one who would say they didn't get a fair hearing with the Secretary, that they had all the access they wanted, that he would listen and respect their opinions.

Now, would you find minions down below who never met with the Secretary or people who maybe had one meeting and would wet their pants because they weren't prepared or they would be intimidated? The Secretary has a tough—

Rumsfeld: Sweet and lovable.

Myers: He is that, but that is usually after a glass of wine. [*laughter*] He has a demanding style, which is what the American people actually should expect of their Cabinet officials. They all had demanding styles. They ought to make demands on those who are working with them and subordinate to them. So I think the relationship with the military was actually quite good.

There were some who for various reasons—I could go into all the details; I'm not going to—called for his resignation. There were four or five, some of whom hadn't met with him, some of whom had legitimate gripes that we would all complain about, but for some reason they turned it into a political statement. And some just wet their pants and couldn't deal with the stress.

Unidentified: Most of whom had failed themselves.

Myers: Yes, but there were some that were just mysteries. [John] Batiste would be a mystery.

Unidentified: He was a mystery, yes.

Myers: To me.

Unidentified: But the others were duds.

Clarke: You know what I've always resented about this myth that you're discussing so well? There is always the implication that he was really nice to the civilians. [*laughter*]

Myers: The Joint Chiefs are not a timid group, ever. They have their responsibilities. You have to assume they were all timid and that since the Secretary wasn't listening to them they would just say, "OK, I'll go do whatever they want me to do." That's clearly preposterous.

I just thought I'd start the discussion off with that. We can talk about relationship with the military, call in senior leaders and ask them. They won't all say it was easy, but they will all say it was fair and that they clearly had access both ways.

He would call them. He knew his combatant commanders better than any Secretary I've seen. I saw Cheney and I saw Colin, I saw a little bit of Aspin, and of course Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretary [William J.] Perry saw them up close and personal. Nobody had a better personal

relationship with the senior military leadership than Secretary Rumsfeld. Nobody made it as much of a priority.

Clarke: Watch the archivist myth over the years. For some years I would say, "You had to be there," "You had to understand it." But now, with some years' perspective, I go, "Are you kidding me?" People say, "It was too demanding. It was too tough. He asked too much of people." Where else would you be demanding? Where else do you want somebody to ask the most of you?

Myers: That's a bad thing for a military person to say, "He's too demanding." We don't get to pick the Secretary under our Constitution—that's not how it works—or pick the Commander in Chief for that matter. You work for whoever is elected, whoever the people select.

Clarke: And if you can't handle it, then get out of the way, because there are plenty of people who can and want to.

Myers: You bet. There are better people than you behind, so go.

Rumsfeld: I always wondered if the fact that I got so deeply involved in promotions, and some people didn't get promoted, and I wonder whether it was easier to lay it off on me than on their service chief.

Myers: I think there could be that. But you weren't down into the weeds. That list of guys we're considering for promotion, maybe one of them you had fairly routine interaction with.

Riley: But you're saying more generally it was a question that you were intruding on—

Rumsfeld: Internal promotions, which was unusual, admittedly.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: He [Shinseki] never once asked for additional ground forces for Iraq.

Myers: Same with the Joint Chiefs; he never made the case.

Clarke: There is also the huge myth that he was not reupped because—

Rumsfeld: That he was fired.

Clarke: —he publicly said that he was fired—

Rumsfeld: He was not fired.

Clarke: —because he said we needed more troops in Iraq.

Rumsfeld: There are thousands of news articles that I fired him. I probably should have.

Clarke: It was publicly reported in the *Washington Post* that he was not being reupped a year and a half before that testimony. But it is remarkable how many people repeated the mistake.

Rumsfeld: Nobody was reupped.

Clarke: Right, you know what I mean.

Rumsfeld: Except Vern Clark, for a year. But Dick Myers, you didn't stay on past four years.

Myers: You fired me.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

Riley: And yet you're here.

Di Rita: That story can finally be told. [*laughter*]

Selverstone: You note the retirement issue in your book. This is not material I am familiar with. Is it standard operating procedure for the retiree to make a specific, formal invitation to the Secretary to attend?

Rumsfeld: Yes, the person retiring manages the attendance. Isn't that right, Dick?

Myers: Yes, they put it out to the usual suspects, which would include Secretary, Deputy Secretary.

Rumsfeld: I was scheduled to be at NATO, so I was in Brussels when he scheduled it. But Keane—or maybe you, Dick—told Shinseki he should invite Paul or me.

Myers: I can't remember that I got into it. Probably it was Keane, because he would know that you weren't invited. I didn't know that; I only knew it after the fact. I said, "Why weren't they there?"

Rumsfeld: The myth in the press is that he was fired or that we refused to go to his farewell.

Unidentified: A measure of how bad it is, is that in Bush's own book—

Rumsfeld: Yes, President Bush's own book had it.

Unidentified: Bush's own book says, "Rumsfeld refused to go to Shinseki's retirement." Then there is an asterisk and a footnote that says, "I later learned that he wasn't invited, but he should have gone anyway uninvited."

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: He did not like the Special Forces and the emphasis we put on them.

Unidentified: And he didn't like the Crusader decision.

Rumsfeld: Oh, my gosh, they campaigned against me in the Congress against the Crusader decision. But I remember walking out to a press briefing and he said to me, "No Special Forces person ever pulled *me* off a battlefield." He aggressively was not pro–Special Forces, and of course that's hard because he was regular Army and we were pushing Special Forces very hard.

Unidentified: That's why he did the beret thing.

Clarke: Yes.

Rumsfeld: That's why he did the beret, because he wanted all the Army to look like the Special Operations people.

Leffler: Are you saying, General Myers, that General Shinseki never argued for more troops within the Joint Chiefs or—

Myers: Right.

Leffler: That was just a mistake that he made in his testimony?

Myers: No. If you look at the letter that he sent to the Secretary after that, which has been disclosed, he explains his rationale. What he was trying to do for the Secretary and for General Franks was to give them maximum latitude. When he was pinned into the corner by Senator Levin, he said, "I don't want to answer that; that's not my business" and it's not. His Army folks on the CENTCOM staff should argue that for him. That's where the expertise is. But he was eventually pinned in the corner and he gave a number.

Rumsfeld: First he didn't. He said, "About the same as it would take to do it." Then they said, "Well, what's that?" Of course Levin shouldn't have been asking how many troops we were going to use before a war started.

Myers: He should have said, "That's classified." There were a lot of ways he could have ducked it. But I've been there and Senator Levin is a former prosecutor; he can get to you. He knows how to get to you and not give you much wiggle room. So I'm saying that what he said there,

very quickly later on he said, “I only said that high number to give you and General Franks flexibility in case the number goes to that number.” He never argued that we were talking about the war plan in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He never argued it in front of the President.

Di Rita: Actually, in front of the President, the President gave a chance for each member—

Rumsfeld: The President went around the room twice.

Di Rita: He gave them a chance. He said, “How do you feel about the plan?”

Clarke: And actually, that meeting started a flurry of stories, and the stories coming out of that meeting in the press were that in that meeting Shinseki had told the President, “You don’t have enough troops.”

Rumsfeld: He argued “truth to power,” they said.

Clarke: He argued “truth to power” according to the reporters coming to me. I said, “That doesn’t sound right,” because I had gotten a pretty good debrief from the meeting. I went and double-checked. So then I go back to the reporters and say, “No. We’re talking to Shinseki and his people. I went to Shinseki’s office, talked to a couple of his staffers. To say their response was underwhelming, to use one of your words, is inadequate.

Then I went and found Shinseki, who was going to your office for some reason; it was at night. I’m in the outer office and I said, “General, we have a problem.” He said, “What’s that?” I laid it out for him and he says, “I never said that to the President.” I said, “I know you didn’t, but this is what the press is going to be reporting tomorrow. Your staff says they can’t knock it down.” He said, “I can’t help you.” I said, “Sir, I think *you* need to knock it down.” He said, “I can’t do that.” I said, “If it is not true, why not?” He said, “I can’t talk about any conversations with the President. That would be inappropriate.”

Rumsfeld: I called him up when I saw the newspaper and I said, “General, I read this in the newspaper today, and I don’t remember you saying anything like that to the President or to me or to the Chairman.”

Myers: He didn’t.

Rumsfeld: He said, “I didn’t. Who do you believe, me or the *Washington Post*?”

Myers: Why he wouldn’t knock it down is interesting.

Rumsfeld: Unbelievable.

Clarke: He was this far away from my face and refused to knock it down.

Myers: Actually Ric has great integrity in my view, and why he wouldn’t knock that down, why he wouldn’t see it on the flip side as opposed to the side he—

Leffler: What are your thoughts about General Powell's concerns and reservations about the number of troops? He called General Franks in September 2002 and talked to him about his concerns. Then it seems like Powell did not. So my question is simply—

Myers: Not enough troops? Are we talking about Iraq?

Leffler: Iraq, number of troops planned. Did you know about his concerns, reservations that you might not have enough troops?

Myers: I think I was sent to brief him, but I don't know if it was that early. You sent me over to brief him on the plan.

Rumsfeld: He called me and said he wanted to ask Tommy a question.

Leffler: That's what he writes about in his memoir, that he spoke to Powell and then—

Rumsfeld: Wait a second, we're talking about Powell.

Leffler: Oh. Powell called you.

Rumsfeld: Colin called and said, "I'm going to ask a question of Tommy." I said, "Fine, give him a call or raise it in the meeting. We ought to get all this stuff up fast." He didn't say precisely what the question was about to me, and he did talk to General Franks. Then this stuff started leaking out that there should be more troops. He never said it to me.

Leffler: I'm just asking the question.

Rumsfeld: I'm answering you. Then I was in a meeting with President Bush and Condi, and I said to them, "I've read some of these leaks about maybe Colin didn't agree with something. Did he ever say that to you?" The President said he did not and Condi said he did not. He never did to me. And he never did in the meeting, did he?

Myers: No, not that I remember.

Rumsfeld: You were in all the principals meetings.

Myers: You have to have a really good understanding of the war plan to understand how many troops were going to be involved, because you can't tell unless you know the war plan very well. It was very cleverly put together. And for lots of reasons.

President Bush said, "We'd like to give Saddam the impression that he has a way out, that this is not a foregone conclusion that we're going to invade his country," so we very carefully measured forces into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and afloat to give the impression that we're definitely invading. If we had 600,000 forces on the border, Saddam might think, *They're coming after me*. He was being told by the French and the Russians, "They're not coming, they're not going to do this, they would never do that."

So we were trying to balance that, meet the President's wishes, yet have enough force that we wouldn't get overwhelmed if we went in and they stood up to us.

Clarke: I always thought the obsession with the number was again the classic oversimplification—

Myers: It's the industrial warfare model again, and we were way beyond that at this point.

Clarke: The major obsession, which I heard these fellows talk about again and again, "This war plan has to be built in a way that we can scale up and scale down."

Myers: We had off ramps and on ramps.

Clarke: Right, it's not the on-and-off switch.

Myers: It was a very sophisticated war plan. And only the United States could pull it off, because only we have the logistics to do all that. We could do it. No other country in the world could have done it then.

Engel: I think one of the questions about numbers that arises is not—

Myers: With Phase III.

Engel: Exactly. It's not toppling the regime or what happens next. Could you speak to that before we lose you, on how much of that was a numbers concern?

Myers: This could take the rest of the night. I'm not going to do it.

Riley: I'm obligated to close down here soon.

Myers: I'll just say this. The environment, the post–major combat, or Phase III [later corrected to Phase IV by other interviewees], environment was not known. There were lots of opinions. Some thought we'd be greeted with rose petals and life would carry on in Iraq with the bureaucracy taking over where Saddam ruled. Others thought there would be sectarian violence so bad that the country would absolutely come apart at the seams. None of those were true. We were going into an unknown environment. But we did, as part of the planning—We're trying to give the Iraqis—This whole notion of the U.S. not being occupiers but liberators. A lot of the guidance we took in Phase IV—which was mainly from John Abizaid, the commander who replaced Franks—was less is more in this situation. That's what I subscribed to. If you put a lot of folks in there, then it is an occupation. You're going to make yourselves targets, and they're going to come after you with a vengeance, so how quickly can we transition this to an Iraqi thing, not a U.S. occupation thing?

It was trying to walk that balance. Nobody had a formula for this; there is no formula for war to speak of. Then you complicate it by the fact that we were fighting at least five different factions in Iraq. It was very difficult. But again, the ability to scale up or down was the notion there.

Di Rita: You'll get into it tomorrow, [redacted] but it does tie back to the philosophy, which was what was in the interim Iraq authority notion, that this is not going to be something we want to occupy;, we want to turn over.

Myers: That's another—[redacted] How we went very quickly from what was going to be a military CPA to a civilian CPA much faster than we anticipated. Whether that was a good idea or a bad idea, the fact was that we never really manned up the CPA to do what they were supposed to do. Then it goes on and on. But that was the notion, that we were going to try to walk this line.

I would say it had nothing to do with the Secretary; it had to do with me. One of the things that I didn't realize right away, after major combat, General Franks essentially took his pack off; he was done. He was tired. He had fought two wars; he was done. General Abizaid was his deputy. What you'd assume is maybe the deputy starts to pick up the slack. In most military cultures, but the Army in particular, number two ain't going to do nothing until number one is gone. Just not going to happen.

So General Franks probably wasn't paying as much attention as he should have. General Abizaid was paying attention, but he wasn't going to take action until we had the change of command. I should have figured this out, gone to him and said, "Make him your Special Assistant for whatever, General Franks. Put Abizaid in immediately." But that was exacerbated by conditions in Iraq in May, June, and July? Just like this room, it was calm; there was nothing happening. You got lulled into this sense of, well—

Rumsfeld: And there was no intel that suggested—

Myers: We had no intel. The intel—That's another—Don't get me started about intel. You ask them, "Who are we fighting? How many?" Man, it was worse—

Rumsfeld: They just didn't have the information.

[redacted]

Leffler: Wasn't General [Ricardo] Sanchez really pressing for more troops? He writes during these very months, in May—

Rumsfeld: I can tell you there was never a request for more troops that was not approved. Not once.

Myers: No, the answer is no. But having said that—

Rumsfeld: We surged two or three times for different reasons, elections and things like that.

Leffler: I'm talking about this immediate period.

Rumsfeld: No.

Myers: If he did, the request might have gone to Central Command. Maybe we never saw it. We were discussing things with John Abizaid daily.

Rumsfeld: But never once was there a request for more troops that wasn't approved.

Riley: As [Abraham] Lincoln said, "I am loath to close," but we have hit our appointed hour. I want to give special thanks to General Myers and to Larry because we're going to lose you, but I hope that you might be receptive to another invitation at some point. Maybe a couple of us can come see you and pick up the loose pieces. I know it's a burden on you to have to do that and we're grateful.

Di Rita: I'd like to do it if it's appropriate.

Rumsfeld: Who is going to be here tomorrow?

Riley: The rest of this group [redacted]

Myers: I apologize for not being available—

Riley: We're grateful for any time that we get.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Myers: I don't think we had any presumptions [about Iraqi roadside bombs], although we had theories. We talked to academicians to try to help us understand what we would find. They were all over the map, too.

Di Rita: That period in April, May, June we were being lectured by the British Ambassador, "You guys are too heavy; you have too much body armor. You need to get down and walk around like we're doing here. It will work if you do it." This was a highly evolutionary—

Myers: Tied to the transformation piece, and perhaps not properly equipped or organized, the Army ground force structure was that the headquarters knows best and they'll have all the intelligence and they'll give direction to the field. That's industrial warfare, basically, how that works. In this case we had companies out there with Iraqis reporting to battalions, who reported to brigades, who knew what was going on. The captains and the sergeants and the corporals knew what was going on, because they were out with the people and Iraqis every day.

Who doesn't know a thing? The folks stuck back in Baghdad or in one of the palaces somewhere. They don't know, because they're not out there with them. Yet we didn't have the secure communications to communicate between units because that was never considered a big issue. So we had to put that net in where communications could flow. That was one of the first things we did when we realized the problem.

Rumsfeld: Got it in.

Myers: That kind of idea, how you get in the transformation.

Rumsfeld: Turn off the tape recorder for a minute, do you mind? Since the meeting is over?

[BREAK]

September 25, 2012

Riley: The way we usually start the second day is by asking if anything occurred to you last night when you were brushing your teeth, or this morning when you were shaving, that you thought, *Oh, I wish we had stopped and talked about this yesterday*, or *I wish I had remembered to say this in response to a question we dealt with yesterday*.

Rumsfeld: Torie?

Clarke: Not a specific thing but I was thinking—and there is only so much time and so much capacity to understand, but if this is about archiving or whatever we're calling it, the eight years of National Security or DoD of the Bush administration, then what we covered yesterday, and I realize it is only a few hours, is such a relatively small piece of it.

Riley: Sure.

Clarke: I went back and tried to find—I meant to get [redacted] to read this for me, Secretary Gates's comments at Secretary Rumsfeld's portrait ceremony, because it was such a wonderfully concise assessment—

Rumsfeld: Capsule, yes.

Clarke: —of what went on, at least during his years. I don't know what the capacity is, but I was thinking about the kinds of things that should be covered. The kinds of people you all should interview go far beyond the handful of us.

Riley: Sure.

Clarke: Gates had gone on and talked about 9/11, obviously. He talked about getting rid of two despotic regimes, but he goes on to talk about the Navy's Fleet Response Plan—

Rumsfeld: Which is an *enormous* accomplishment.

Clarke: Nearly doubled—

Rumsfeld: The number of carrier availability for our country.

Clarke: —the changes in the Special Ops Forces, which was pretty extraordinary. The number of unmanned aerial vehicles, the Cold War basing arrangements being completely changed to reflect the threats that were out there. The transformation of the Army alone was pretty extraordinary.

That got me thinking about some other things. I will never forget my first days at the Pentagon, trying to figure out where the bathrooms were and getting briefings from different people in the building. I actually sat down with the people who do all the budget stuff because we were going to have to do the budget right away and I thought, *I should know something about this*. They were telling me how antiquated the financial management system at the Pentagon was, so antiquated they literally could not track trillions of dollars' worth of transactions.

Rumsfeld: They hadn't lost the trillions.

Clarke: They just couldn't track.

Rumsfeld: They couldn't track it. They couldn't say where it came in and where it went because of accounting procedures.

Clarke: The transformation of that system was just as important as the transformation of how the Army organized itself. People like Dov Zakheim and Tina Jonas were really important to what happened with national security. Secretary Gates—I really encourage you to read it—spoke so well to something we did talk about yesterday, which is you deal with the military you've inherited. He talked about the things he was able to do and they were able to accomplish in those years that were all a result of what happened between 2001 and 2006. So I just thought—If I was unfulfilled about anything or thought about anything, it was, *Wow, we've talked about admittedly a very important piece of what went on, but a* very *small piece of what went on*.

Riley: Sure.

Clarke: It is almost like we looked at the rind of the orange but we did not look at everything inside.

Leffler: Secretary Rumsfeld, that suggests you need to come back for another two days. We'd love to have you.

Perry: And bring Secretary Gates.

Leffler: Absolutely love to have you back.

Riley: You asked me the question last night, what is the hardest thing about doing these interviews.

Clarke: Yes.

Riley: And as usually happens, I think of the best answer driving home. It was exactly that. It is that I never feel like we cover everything that we ought to in an interview. There is always more that we could talk about, but a day and a half is a lot of time for busy people and we do the best we can with it.

Let me pose a question to you, a more reflective question about the period we were talking about yesterday. If you could think back and assess both the Defense Department and the American government writ large, its ability to transition from a peacetime setting to a wartime setting after 9/11, these are the kinds of things historians will be thinking about in future generations. How effective were we? How efficient were we? What were the successes and where were we not well prepared to make that transition after September 11?

Rumsfeld: Oh, golly, I suppose we all have our own views and perspectives on that. I would say that the Department of Defense probably did it about as well as it could be done and as fast as it could be done. And the rest of the government didn't. The other parts of the government are organized and arranged basically on a domestic basis, except for State and the Agency.

When I talk of DoD, I would include the Agency with it, in answer to the question.

Riley: OK.

Rumsfeld: On the other hand, that answers it on a relative basis. The President, if you recall, after 9/11 said something to the effect of "go shopping." That's a bumper sticker. His point was the purpose of terrorism is to terrorize, it is to alter your behavior, and we ought not to be terrorized. We ought not to allow our behavior to be altered.

On the other hand, my wife took the phrase—of course, she is my age—just the opposite. It was totally unlike World War II, where the people were able to participate in some way and you had victory gardens and you collected things; it brought the country into it. His statement, while it was right on in the sense of not allowing our behavior to be altered and for terrorists to win in that regard, it really took the country out of it, or kept them out of it, because they never got in it.

Clarke: Yes.

Rumsfeld: I should add that within a reasonably short period of time a couple of people in Treasury really got the Treasury Department going. They started tracking terrorist bank accounts and where the money was coming from, how it was transferred, and where it was going. They did quite a good job. But the rest of the government really never got involved.

The other thing I'd say is even in the Department of Defense you might have had 10, 15, 20, 30—Forget the uniformed personnel who were deployed, but on the civilian side, hundreds of thousands, you probably had 10, 15, 20, 30 percent that were on a wartime footing. An awful lot weren't. People in the budget shop and other places.

Clarke: I'd push back a slight variation on that, which is that for a few months the entire government was on a wartime footing, and then the other agencies very quickly went back. It was partly because some people felt the best thing we could do is prove that life is going on and that our country is resilient—

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: —they didn't set us back as much as they thought, those sorts of things. The other side was—To the Secretary's point, and Mrs. [Joyce] Rumsfeld's, point—in the wake of 9/11 literally millions of people around the world wanted to be part of this effort.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: They didn't care who was in the White House, they wanted to be part of this effort. Treasury ultimately did important things with companies; we went to them early on, and it was partly because of Joyce Rumsfeld talking about things like that. We went to them early on and said, for instance, "You should do war bonds." They said, "It doesn't make any sense financially." But that's not the point.

We went back to them again. In a previous life I had worked on the 50 State Quarters Program—most successful collectible ever, as a matter of fact—and I said there should be a "War on

Terror" quarter. Set aside the fact that we didn't like the phrase, but there should be a "War on Terror" quarter, or "United in Freedom" was also a very popular expression. There should be a "United in Freedom" quarter so everybody can have it and use it as a tangible reminder every single day what we're about here. The Treasury Department said, "It doesn't make any sense from a financial perspective." A lot of people couldn't even understand the notion of uniting everybody behind this cause.

Rumsfeld: I used to save my money and buy those war bonds for $18.75. If you kept them long enough you got $25. You had coupons. You all are too young to remember that.

Clarke: For months and months the Pentagon would get letters every single day. Letters and emails and faxes every single day from people—

Rumsfeld: "What can we do?"

Clarke: —saying that they wanted to do things. There were people who would write in, call in, and say that they wanted to come and volunteer. If it was just answering the phones, they wanted to volunteer. The lawyers said, "You can't have volunteer interns."

Rumsfeld: Exactly. There were people leaning forward. A shoeshine man who spoke Arabic—He was about 80 years old—he wanted to go into Iraq and just sit on a corner. He said, "No one will even pay attention to me. I'm so old they'll never know I'm here, and I can report back." He worked in a tailor shop and told my wife this. He was just begging her to find some way he could contribute.

[redacted]

Riley: Were there discussions at the highest levels about doing more, about trying to create some avenues for the American people to feel more involved in the way you discussed?

Clarke: There were some. You'd make a run up the Hill a few times and then you'd go, "OK, I'm not succeeding at that run up the Hill, and by the way there are nine million things happening right here that are my core responsibility. I'd better get back to that."

Rumsfeld: DoD wouldn't have been the agency or department to do it—

Riley: Sure.

Rumsfeld: —so we would have a go at Karen Hughes and the President, and then you get about your own business and do what you have to do.

Clarke: Larry and I talked often about different things where we'd make a run at something or try to do something. We were always very careful how much we tried to use your capital, quite honestly. We're busy, you're incredibly busy making some pretty tough decisions under very difficult times. You try to be very careful about not imposing on your time and what you spent your capital on across the river. When I look back on these things, it sounds like a small thing, but it is not: engaging the American people in something in which they wanted to be engaged.

When I look back and say, "What would I do differently?" I would have made a harder run and a bigger ruckus and would have gotten some of those things done.

Perry: I thought about this in reference to people not feeling as much a part of this War on Terror as they wanted to be, and the distinction between World War II and the War on Terror. You mentioned in your memoir gathering scrap metal and buying war bonds. But I'm also thinking of the draft. That was a huge difference between our raising of forces during World War II and this. So just your thoughts about the all-volunteer service and not having the draft.

Rumsfeld: Sure.

Perry: Then maybe get into some issues related to calling up Reserves, activating Guard units for this new War on Terror.

Rumsfeld: I have a monumental bias on the subject. I was one of the people who, at Milton Friedman's urging, introduced legislation to create the all-volunteer military. It is so much more

effective and fairer for the country. Every once in a while someone in Congress would say, "We should go back to the draft," and I would shudder because it is so inefficient. The military sucks all these people in and then you shove them out after 18 months after you have just trained them. Further, if you're going to have that many people, you have to pay them about 50 percent of what the civilian manpower market pays. Then the Selective Service gives exemptions to teachers, married people, students, and conscientious objectors. We say we're going to take you, but everyone else doesn't have to bother, and by the way we're going to pay about 50 percent of what you could be making on the outside.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: [redacted] And we had no trouble getting people in the line volunteering to come in. But many of them were too fat, not physically fit, or not literate enough from our school systems to serve. I just think the worst thing we could do in this country would be to go back to a draft to instill civil involvement.

Clarke: I thought some of the most persuasive voices were people in uniform who knew what that had been like.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: As members of Congress, we were pushing from the Congress side, but it was President Richard Nixon who finally insisted it be done.

Perry: Could I follow up on that then in reference to calling up Reserve units. I remember in your memoir you mentioned that there was one time, as we were gearing up for Iraq, an obvious and understandable concern about calling up Reserves within a week's time just prior to Christmas.

Rumsfeld: That was just Army inefficiency. That is the only reason. It is inexcusable not to give people more notice. I served in the Reserves after I got out of the Navy for about 15 years as a Navy pilot. Heck, no one minds getting called up, but for Pete's sake, if you're in business and doing something, you at least ought to get 30 days' notice. There is no reason you can't get 30 days' notice. They just were inefficient. When I found out the Army was calling people up on a week's notice, I raised hell with them. But we had no hesitation to call people up. All of them were aware that they signed up for that and were ready to go.

My attitude was, if you don't need to call them a week before Christmas, why in the heck would you do it?

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I found out about it when I was giving a talk to a group of commanders, and some guy in the back put his hand up and said, "We're getting one week's notice." And I couldn't believe it. The only job the Army's got, the services have, is organizing, training, and equipping. They don't run wars; they don't fight battles. They organize, train, and equip, and the combatant commanders take those resources and fight battles. The Army was not doing its job well in this case.

Riley: We got you into Afghanistan yesterday, but we didn't spend very much time talking about what happens after the U.S. presence gets in. I wonder if you could reflect a little bit about what happens thereafter. What are the critical decisions you have to make about troop presence there, about the length of time that the troop presence is going to be there, the size of the troop presence, and things of that nature?

Rumsfeld: As historians know, war is, if anything, uncertain and the enemy has a brain and there are always surprises. You plan carefully and you recognize that you're going to have to alter your plans and adapt because the enemy is going to make adjustments and do things, and things are going to happen that aren't expected.

I don't remember the details, to be honest, but I can give you a couple of paragraphs. My view was that we did not want a large Soviet Union–type occupation force, that we wanted to use essentially Special Operations forces and some Marines and keep a relatively light footprint. We did not want the Afghans to believe that we were coming in like occupying powers in the past, planning to take over and occupy their land. The Afghans had to know that we wanted to rid them of terrorists and we wanted to rid them of people who were hospitable to terrorists and then we wanted to leave.

I don't recall anyone suggesting that we put in anything like the large force that President Obama did. I don't know what the largest force we ever had in there was. [redacted]

Unidentified: For the longest period of time, you kept under 10,000 troops.

Clarke: I was going to say, because I remember the 2002 Olympics people asked why Secretary Rumsfeld was going to the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, and I said, "Because there are more troops in Salt Lake City than there are troops in Afghanistan."

Rumsfeld: Than in Afghanistan, interesting.

Clarke: I thought it was important that we pay our respects to our troops in the United States.

Unidentified: I'd have to go back and check the numbers, but I think the largest number of U.S. troops that were in Afghanistan was in the mid-20,000s while you were Secretary of Defense.

Rumsfeld: It's a big country. Our people didn't know the languages. The men and women of the Armed Forces were not trained to nation-build. I decided that it would be a good thing for NATO to become involved in something outside the NATO treaty area. We urged NATO to create a NATO Response Force, which it had never had. NATO of course was organized to deal with things within the NATO treaty area. Afghanistan wasn't within the NATO treaty area. But realistically very few of the problems that NATO countries face today are within the NATO treaty area: piracy, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drugs. All these other things are outside the NATO treaty area, and it's going to take cooperation among them to deal with them.

I did urge NATO to get involved also because I thought it would be (a) good for NATO, but (b) also enable us to have a still lighter footprint in terms of U.S. forces.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Tina Jonas did the calculation. It was something like you could train and equip and sustain something like 15 or 18 Afghan soldiers for the cost of one U.S. soldier. So the economics of it argued for doing it, doing it well, doing it fast. Part of the origin of the problem [redacted] is the Bonn process, which was a good one, basically that the State Department ran, came out with a solution. The solution was that the Brits would handle the drug problem in Afghanistan; the Germans would handle the border patrol and the police; and the Italians would handle the criminal justice system. Remember that?

Unidentified: You are correct.

Rumsfeld: And we would do the counterterrorism; and there was some other country—But the other countries didn't do what they said they'd do.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I remember President Bush just ragging the State Department because the circumferential road was not getting built, which was critical to Afghans' ability to—

Unidentified: It was like electricity in Iraq.

Rumsfeld: Yes, and Japan had a certain piece of it and some other country had another piece of it. The State Department was doing it and he would go after Powell and Armitage. "How many more miles have been built?" There was always a reason that there were problems. There were security problems that made it difficult for the contractors and so forth. It was tough.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Leffler: Dov Zakheim writes in his memoir and Under Secretary of the Treasury [John] Taylor writes in his memoir—

Rumsfeld: He was very helpful.

Leffler: And he was very focused on Afghanistan, and then of course in Iraq as well.

Rumsfeld: You bet.

Leffler: Both of them are very critical of the inadequate allocation of funding in 2002 and ’03 and ’04 for the initiatives that they were proposing and thought were imperative.

Rumsfeld: Dov would have known a lot about it.

Leffler: He says, and I’m asking you this, that you were not supportive of this because you felt that we should draw down troops and devolve responsibility to others. Do you remember making decisions on this in any way?

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: There were two times I had questions about our approach in my mind, and I asked Marin Strmecki, an Afghanistan expert. He went into Afghanistan and came back and said we needed to get more money. I had him then brief the White House and the NSC and the people in the Pentagon.

The other thing I did was, Petraeus was the guy in charge of organizing and training and equipping the Iraqi military. When he was completing that assignment, I sent him into Afghanistan to take a look at how well we were doing on that in there. He came back and reported on it.

You know the old rule: you never give an order outside the chain of command, and you never expect to learn anything up the chain of command. You send people in who have knowledge and competence. Strmecki and Petraeus both came back with ideas and thoughts that were helpful

and not necessarily what was being recommended from below and not necessarily what was intuitive, which we then implemented.

Engel: Could I get all of you to elaborate on this point, because, [redacted] you said the situation in Afghanistan started deteriorating after 2005. What do you attribute the deterioration to? And, looking back now, with your answer to that question, what might have been done from 2001 to 2005 to ameliorate the deterioration?

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: [redacted] The short tenure of Ambassadors there and the experience and backgrounds of the Ambassadors varied widely. We had a couple who were

terrific—Zal [Zalmay Khalilzad] and Crocker—and then we had others who really probably didn't want to be there and didn't have the focus.

I should say the same thing is true on the military side; we were quite uneven there. I don't like to use names, but Barno, [redacted] was of one stripe—But we kept moving new people in and out.

Engel: Could you explain that a little bit, largely for the record. Yesterday we had a lengthy and fruitful discussion about the degree to which your office paid attention to selection of military commanders.

Rumsfeld: Promotions, three stars to four stars.

Engel: This is a war zone. This is clearly a critical area, perhaps arguably one of the most critical areas in the world. How do you explain the selection of commanding officers who—not to put words in your mouth—are not up to the caliber of some?

Clarke: Think of the timing. The process they started, digging down and looking at the two-stars, the three-stars, and four-stars, started in 2001. It was not a simple thing, and it was not without creating a fair amount of turbulence. It had not been done for a long time. Anything with personnel in the military takes an extraordinarily long time. All of a sudden you're in the fall of 2001, 2002. The change in the system has just started. There are only so many of those really talented—I call them "innovative" ones—that you could pull up at any given time. I remember the complaints all the time about these guys being moved around, but part of the thinking was, *Wow, we're already creating turbulence in the system by pulling up some people who might not otherwise have been pulled up by getting involved in it. Now we're going to start messing with this notion of 12 months or 18 months.* You get a guy in, he figures his way around, and then by 12 months you're figuring out where he goes next.

It sounds silly. You think, "Oh, my God, that doesn't make any sense from a personnel standpoint. We should keep our best people in there." But the system is so complex that if you didn't let that guy move, then that is going to gum up the works down layers and layers. I always thought there is only so much turbulence the system could sustain.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I'll tell you how it happened. His roommate at West Point was Abizaid, the CENTCOM commander. I don't mean that as friendship; he knew him. It is a big advantage if the CENTCOM commander has a lot of confidence in the guy who is in the war zone, because he is over them. When he knows this guy and swears by him—

Clarke: And Abizaid was a good guy.

Rumsfeld: Abizaid was a capable fellow. He comes to you and says, "This is the guy and he can do it." And you do it. It turns out—

Unidentified: It didn't work.

Riley: To what extent, when you put these two people in the field, is it possible to manage that relationship from Washington?

Rumsfeld: Very little.

Unidentified: Doesn't happen.

Rumsfeld: Remember when you were a kid and you used to go down the Pennsylvania Turnpike and they had those glass boxes with prizes inside? You worked these levers and you had to try to squeeze and grab and pull up something and get it out? You're four layers down. You just can't do it. You've got the President, you've got the National Security Council, you've got the

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, you've got the deputies in this, and then you've got the combatant commander. And then under the combatant commander, you have the deputy combatant commander and the fellow in the country plus the Ambassador.

Riley: So everything hinges on the quality of the people in the field and their ability to work with the other people.

Rumsfeld: That's probably true at this university too.

Engel: I think this will be a useful question to historians and dissertation writers 30 years from now, because I want to get back into this time period of the discussion that we had at the beginning of today of trying to understand the mentality of the American people, the mentality of the political process, and also the mentality of the people within your organization after 9/11 and as it moves on.

We began this morning with the statement, generally agreed to by the group, that this was not a war that was embraced by the American people as World War II was, because the political leadership did not ask them to do so.

Rumsfeld: Not just that. There wasn't a mechanism in place for the President to figure out how to mobilize the country.

Engel: Yes, but the question I want to ask is, within the military, you say straight away, the military went to war and the nation did not to the same extent. But at the same time you say you've got a problem in that you have military commanders who are rotating out after a year or 18 months, which is as they've traditionally done it. When [Dwight] Eisenhower signed up in 1941, pulled up from the bottom of the ranks, he was in for the duration. Is there a discussion within the Pentagon of having commanders stay three or four years? Let's not give them a departure date because this is a wartime footing. Is that discussion going on? If so, what was that discussion like, and if not, why not?

Clarke: My recollection is there was certainly reflection about it, frustration sometimes, and efforts to try to do something about it, but also a very clear realization—I use *turbulence*, I don't mean it as a bad word—there was a lot of turbulence in the system. You think about what the military was doing on September 10, and then what they were doing by October. They were doing extraordinary things they had never done before. We were already creating turbulence in personnel in certain ways. There was only so much more that you can inject in that and not bring everything to a screeching halt. We were waging the first 21st-century war, the most unconventional war ever. There is only so much you can stop all that to focus on this very important piece.

Rumsfeld: During World War II, Eisenhower was in London, at Grosvenor Square in a beautiful place with a driver. There is no leading edge of the battlefield today. In this conflict there was no line where behind it you were safe and secure and could move about and do your thing. This was a totally different environment.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: We couldn't even get the Marines and the Army and the Air Force to have the same tour length. The Air Force was using three-month rotations, 90 days; the Marines were using six months; and the Army was using a year. I would have meetings with them and say, "Please explain to me why it is so different." It really had nothing to do with what was going on on the ground. It had to do with the way the services were organized historically.

So their rhythm in terms of training and what they were doing in the field was quite different service to service.

Unidentified: The Marines, was it six months or seven? At any rate it seemed short.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Clarke: I think perspective on this is important. It makes sense. You're hearing about this issue, and it's a problem that clearly had impacts on the ability to get the job done. For example, think about the logistics that went into putting on this meeting. You look at it and Katrina [Kuhn], God bless her, looks at it as though it is extraordinary parts and pieces and resources and changes of schedules. Think how challenging that was. With all due respect, that is a nanospeck on the backside of an hour of the Pentagon on any given day.

Is it an issue? Did it have an impact on things? Yes. But there were nine million other things going on that also were priorities and had to be dealt with.

Selverstone: Was there a lessons-learned exercise or reflection on this to try to make sure that processes were improved going forward?

Rumsfeld: One aspect that the military does well; it is recognizing lessons learned. One would think that you wouldn't like having someone looking over your shoulder, kind of flyspecking you, watching what you're doing. For some reason, General Franks had Gary Luck.

Clarke: Yes.

Unidentified: Gary Luck. Retired four-star general.

Rumsfeld: Ed [Edmund Giambastiani] ran the Joint Forces Command, which monitored and organized and directed the lessons-learned process, not during that period, but later. They do it darn well. Franks was perfectly comfortable having Luck there. Indeed, at the end of the day he'd sometimes talk to Luck and say, "What did you see today?" because he was a fly on the wall. He had no responsibility, very smart guy, and at the end Luck comes out with this "lessons learned" and worked with Joint Forces Command.

Unidentified: Brigadier General Bob Cone was the active-duty officer.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

[TWO PAGES REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: A graphic example: I was the one who approved the M1A1 tank in 1976 that was used so effectively in Desert Storm and in the Iraq War. I was the one who approved the B-1 [bomber]. I approved these weapons systems in 1976. These are planes we had fly across the ocean to drop precision weapons on targets thousands of miles away. Every President and every Secretary of Defense stands on the shoulders of those who went before. It's just the way it is with the lead time.

The bathtub effect that Dick Myers described for the decade after the end of the Cold War left President George W. Bush in a position that we were lacking some capabilities.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: And Pete Schoomaker was a terrific Chief of Staff of the Army. He had brains and courage and skills.

Clarke: Yes.

Rumsfeld: And he didn't make a lot of noise; he just went about it.

Clarke: I just remembered something. You're talking about where things are now. Everyone today is familiar with the drones, what an important part of the U.S. military that is. It's not just the technology, it's the people who fly them. The early days of Afghanistan, I remember Jim Roche coming into your office to discuss the drone jockeys sitting in weird little rooms and cubbies flying these things remotely.

Rumsfeld: Trailers in the parking lot.

Clarke: Yes. I'm only familiar with the Air Force, but the Air Force had very strict rules about flying time in the cockpit of an airplane if you wanted to keep moving up, and sitting in a trailer in a parking lot did not count as flying time in a cockpit. So these incredible young people who were learning these skills and getting better and better at it said, "This is a dead-end job." They weren't getting the best and they weren't getting the brightest and they didn't get people who wanted to stay in it.

Roche came into your office and said, "This is a problem." Again, fixing anything in personnel is very difficult. You guys fixed it on the spot. That small thing, which was transformational, the process and system and promotions, all those requirements that worked in years past are not working now because we have a different kind of thing going on. They changed it and it made a significant difference. Now, in a very romantic but important sense, being a drone jockey is a huge thing.

[redacted]

Riley: Got you. Let me shift gears.

Rumsfeld: I remember getting a briefing from the Chief of Naval Operations. He had a map of the world. A carrier battle group is a big deal. It is a lot of ships. It is expensive. We had 12 at that time. He had what looked like hockey pucks showing where they were at any given time. There would be four carrier battle groups on each coast of the U.S. and one or two out and one or two in transit. So here we had this *enormously* expensive set of assets, and at any given moment many were not in use. These assets did not create a presence and did not have a deterrent value.

What would happen is, the ships would get into home port and they'd be totally taken apart and everyone would go on leave. Anyone who has been in business knows how much it costs to build a factory. Then if you use it eight hours a day, five days a week instead of 12 hours a day, seven

days a week or 24 hours a day, the leverage lost is enormous. It was just embarrassing. We talked about it.

Vern Clark came back with a proposal where they started doing some of the work overseas. They started crew swaps. So they left the asset deployed and swapped out crews. It went from—I'm going to guess, I'm going to be wrong, but that's close enough for government work—from three or four carrier battle groups in use at any given time to something like six with an ability to surge. We had maybe six or seven deployed all the time and the ability to surge another two or three because of the way the Navy managed the process. It just took someone like Vern Clark as CNO to decide that it wasn't smart. It was an enormous waste of the taxpayers' money.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: We very much appreciate having that piece of it on the record, because it's the kind of thing people would routinely overlook. What they will not routinely overlook is what I'm shifting into now, and that is getting us back to Iraq.

At what point does the possibility of enhanced military action in Iraq begin to show up on your radar? When are serious discussions emerging after 9/11 about doing something in Iraq?

Rumsfeld: I don't remember the dates, but as I wrote in the book, at some point the President came to me and said, "Do you have a war plan for Iraq?" Because he knew we had war plans for Korea and contingency plans for all of these different parts of the world.

I told him that I was unimpressed with the existing war plans I had been reviewing and was concerned that they were stale and not necessarily rooted in realistic assumptions fitting the times. [redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: This is the fall of 2001?

Rumsfeld: When I got to the Pentagon I started looking at war plans, just because that's what Secretaries are supposed to do.

Riley: Sure.

Clarke: You not only looked at specific war plans, you also challenged your senior team—and I think we all failed miserably—to say, "Should we look at entirely new ways of building war plans?" That made a few heads explode.

Rumsfeld: I wrote in the book that the President took me aside after an NSC meeting and said, "What about the Iraq war plan?" I said, "It's stale and not ready for prime time." He said, "Get into it." I remember asking—The plan is kind of based on intelligence—I said, "Can I talk to Tenet?" He said, "I'd rather you wouldn't right now. Just work with your CENTCOM people." So you were working with me then.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: So I made General Franks aware that the President would want to review the Iraq war plan at some point to begin that process.

[redacted]

Leffler: Did you say there were 68 war plans?

Rumsfeld: No, he said there were 68 plans.

Unidentified: There were 68 plans, there were not 68 war plans.

Rumsfeld: Some of them were contingencies, such as nonessential evacuations. And none of them would you ever implement.

Leffler: I understand that.

Rumsfeld: You then take a plan and adapt it to whatever the circumstances happen to be in the real world. But at least you had something to go on.

Riley: But then the President asked you to do this. You say it's stale. Track us from that point.

Rumsfeld: I think I wrote about it in the book; I'd rather we stick with that. My recollection is I went to General Myers and said, "The President wants to review the Iraq war plan."

Leffler: You wrote a memo sometime in the fall of 2001 to President Bush that said something to the effect that as we enjoy success now in Afghanistan we need to keep a focus on additional initiatives to make sure we project our power, influence allies, and essentially intimidate prospective adversaries.

Rumsfeld: That memo was focused on the countries that were hospitable to terrorism.

Leffler: That's exactly right. You didn't, if I recall, in that memo, specifically identify Iraq. Iraq was among others. The President told you to look over the war plan for Iraq. Did you personally think, *Iraq should be our next objective; we should focus there*?

Rumsfeld: No.

Leffler: You didn't necessarily—?

Rumsfeld: Not until he raised it and asked to have a war plan.

Leffler: What were you thinking?

Rumsfeld: I was thinking the Department of Defense had its hands full with Afghanistan.

Leffler: But you explicitly wrote, "We need to do more."

Rumsfeld: I agree.

Leffler: "We need to be on a dynamic—"

Rumsfeld: We need to make everything that terrorists do more difficult: more difficult to communicate with each other, more difficult to move around, more difficult to raise money, more difficult to recruit, and more difficult to find safe havens in countries that are hospitable to them. Therefore it seemed to me that at some point—We never did it, really—It would be useful if somewhere in North Africa or Latin America or Sudan or some other place, where a country was being hospitable to terrorists, we needed to take some action that would exhibit to people who were contemplating whether or not their country should be hospitable to terrorists—

Leffler: But among these many things on a menu, what were your predilections?

Rumsfeld: Never had one in that regard. In fact, we never even found anything that was logical, did we? [redacted]

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: [redacted] I remember now that I wrote a memo to the military and I said, "We're getting ideas out of here and we're a dry hold." [redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Is that around here? I know it's on the website.

Leffler: It's not in that memo.

Rumsfeld: But that was the concept, "Come up with some ideas."

Leffler: You definitely remonstrated about the absence of ideas in other memos.

Rumsfeld: I remember now that you mention that.

Leffler: But I'm just trying to elicit, Secretary Rumsfeld, your views on this. I take it that it was President Bush's leadership—He wanted you and CENTCOM to establish planning options for war in Iraq and you went ahead to begin to—

Rumsfeld: Exactly. I didn't raise it; he raised it.

Leffler: I'm just curious though, as that unfolded over the next many months—We didn't start deploying troops in a big way until the summer or fall of 2002. Along the road toward the deployment, as the plans were unfolding, did you ever have personal doubts about whether it was a good idea to actually go to war? President Bush and Secretary Rice really emphasize—I hadn't really realized this until I reread their memoirs—that they thought they were practicing coercive diplomacy. Condi Rice sort of says, "I introduced that term to the President and he just loved that term, 'coercive diplomacy,' which he had not heard about previously." He said, "That's exactly what I'm trying to do."

Rumsfeld: That is what he wanted done and that is what we did. There is no question about it. The hope was that Saddam Hussein would change his approach and agree to recognize the 17 UN resolutions and cooperate with them; even up to the last minute, that he would maybe leave the country. There was a strategy called the TPFD [time-phased force deployment]. It goes back to this comment I made about Pete Schoomaker saying, "War is not on or off, it is a rheostat." The United States Department of Defense is on or off, it is not a rheostat. It had these plans, they were time-phased—

Unidentified: Time-phased force deployment.

Rumsfeld: Franks walks in to me and says, "Today we've got the mother of all deployment plans." I looked at it and thought, *Holy mackerel, that's not what the President wants. He wants to do things in a way that maybe will persuade Saddam Hussein to behave himself*. I don't remember the phrase "coercive diplomacy," but there is no question that that is exactly what he

wanted done and that's exactly what we did. As a result, we had to disaggregate the TPFD and create a rheostatlike strategy for Iraq.

Leffler: So along the way then, if you're practicing coercive diplomacy, when did you really begin to think that this was not just coercive diplomacy; you were really going to have to practice coercion, to implement this? Do you remember your—?

Rumsfeld: Last minute.

Leffler: Not till the very end?

Rumsfeld: You don't want to go to war. It is just a God-awful, ugly thing.

Clarke: Do you remember the night the President did the speech, the last ultimatum to Saddam Hussein? Three days before?

Rumsfeld: Asking him to get the hell out of there?

Clarke: Right.

Rumsfeld: I remember talking to him and urging him to do it.

Clarke: And he did it. We're sitting in your office and it was you [redacted], I believe, and Larry Di Rita, and me. We're watching the President and he was saying this is it. I said, "Do you think there is any chance that this might work?" The Secretary said, "It would be a wonderful thing if it did." That was three days before—

Unidentified: Time, phase, force, deployment, data.

Rumsfeld: Then there was the last step, which was the attack at Dora Farms in an attempt to take him out.

Leffler: Built into Franks's plans as a result of your prodding. Early on it started with two assumptions about goals, and Dick Cheney also pressed Franks about stating what the goals were. Franks built two goals into the plan. One was to bring about regime change, the other was to make sure Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction. Those were built into the war plans. One might extrapolate from that and say, therefore, coercive diplomacy was aimed at those two goals. Regime change, which of course had theoretically been American policy since 1998 and—

Rumsfeld: Coercive diplomacy could be aimed at altering behavior as opposed to regime change.

Leffler: This is what I'm asking you. Exactly right. Among these two objectives, regime change or, alternatively, making sure Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction, which goes back to the end of the first Persian Gulf War, which they were promised, was there a priority in people's minds among these two? When you just interjected and said, "change of behavior," that suggests that you could have lived without regime change.

Rumsfeld: Oh, my goodness, yes. If Saddam Hussein had, out of the blue, decided that he was going to let the UN come in and actually comply with all the UN requests, I doubt that President Bush would have done anything. Do you agree with that?

Leffler: I don't think Paul Wolfowitz would have been satisfied with that, but maybe that would have been the policy of the U.S. government to live with Saddam in power. But my sense is—

[redacted]

Leffler: My sense is that it led to some—[redacted]—technical discussions about exactly what Saddam would need to do to make inspections effective. There was this discussion about "our aim is not inspections, our aim is to make sure that Saddam has no weapons of mass destruction," and both Condi Rice and Vice President Cheney said that very clearly. "Our aim is not inspections; our aim is to make sure that Saddam has no WMD."

Rumsfeld: I don't remember that.

Leffler: These are actually in public statements.

Rumsfeld: I don't doubt it; I just don't personally remember that statement you're asking me.

Leffler: The question was always, how do you ultimately implement inspections to guarantee there are no WMD when of course we subsequently found out there were no WMD? So how were you thinking about getting the information that would satisfy you through an inspection process that is being set up starting from August until December? What could have been done? Did you have feelings about that?

Rumsfeld: No, I had no opinion. I wasn't involved. The CIA would have been.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: U.S. personnel put on protective suits every day.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: My only recollection of all that you're talking about is I can remember going to the President and saying I did not think the Pentagon ought to be in a decision-making position with respect to the Iraq Survey Group. DoD would supply the muscle and the support and do whatever we needed to do, but I thought they ought to put the CIA in charge, since the CIA said they knew where these suspect sites were and they would be the ones who could make the decisions about the people. I said, "Our people in the military are doing other things," so it was totally within Tenet's area of responsibility that he agreed. You and I talked about this, as I recall.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Clarke: You know what always surprised me in the before and after? In the before, in the debate and discussion leading up to it, not that it wasn't controversial, the thought of doing a preemptive action of this size and scope, but there was very little debate about whether or not the Iraqis had weapons of mass destruction. Of the 17 UN resolutions—I used to carry them around with me—the whereas always stated, "Knowing the dangers that the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction pose to the region of the world, we therefore resolve, et cetera." Remember the French in late 2002, first quarter of 2003, sent a message to Saddam Hussein saying, "Whatever you do, don't use WMD now because you'll really wreck the antiwar effort."

Everybody, even those who opposed us going in, didn't argue whether or not they had this stuff. It was where was it—

Leffler: With all due respect—

Clarke: No, let me finish. The overwhelming debate was not on whether or not they had the stuff. The debate was what to do about it or how much longer do we give the inspection process. What you really had was a huge intel failure. To me there never seemed to be the shock, the outrage, the "Oh, my gosh, we, the civilized nations of the world, who may have disagreed about what to do about this, need to get our intel operation in order." If we were that wrong about it, why are we not fixing that system? For lots of different reasons. The military is so real, it's so tangible. There are assets you can see and feel and touch, and there's hardware. People focus on that piece of it. But people did not focus on what led us to that place. They really didn't.

Leffler: Actually, there is a huge amount of literature on the intel failure. There is a great focus on that. But in response to what you just said and what is really pertinent to some of the decision making is that both [Mohamed] ElBaradei and Hans Blix at the very end were saying—Blix's second report—In the first report he said that Saddam was not putting up all the information, that was in December.

When he reported again in February he said, "There is a lot more here. We still need to figure some more things out; we need more time." ElBaradei actually said that Saddam did not have nuclear weapons. So the idea that no one was saying that—

Clarke: I didn't say no one. Listen.

Leffler: Two of the most important people in the world were suggesting that.

Clarke: You clearly have some points you want to make today, which is fine, this is your table, but you need to listen to what people say. What I said was the overwhelming bulk of discussion was, "The Iraqi regime has weapons of mass destruction." I'm not saying there weren't individual statements. My recollection of that was that those guys were all over the map over a period of time. But the overwhelming agreement was weapons of mass destruction, what to do about them.

Those countries that opposed us going in didn't say, "He doesn't have it." The French were sending him messages saying, "Don't use them." They clearly thought that they had them.

Rumsfeld: I was told by [Hosni] Mubarak, by the Jordanians, by the Saudis—

Clarke: I was going to say, that last trip you made through the region—

Rumsfeld: Oh, my God, I was told by those in the region that you get anywhere near Baghdad and be ready for chemical weapons.

Selverstone: What did they base those conclusions on?

Rumsfeld: They knew him. They knew he'd used them against the Kurds; they knew he'd used them against the Iranians.

Clarke: Why wouldn't he?

Rumsfeld: Why wouldn't he use them?

[redacted]

Engel: Let me follow up on this line of questioning with two additional specific questions, not about the question of whether or not he had them, but the strategic conclusion that follows from accepting that premise.

Rumsfeld: I'm sorry. I hate to interrupt, but before I lose the thought, you say, "Where did they get that?" I have no idea. Foreign intelligence agencies cooperated with Tenet and our intelligence agencies. They had intimate relationships. But what was going on back and forth among intelligence services, I have no idea.

Engel: To return to the strategic question, accepting the premise for a moment that the American government and all of its allies and all of the countries that you're discussing with believe that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction. Two questions follow from that. The first is, as you pointed out just a moment ago, other countries in the world, including France, are telling Saddam Hussein very clearly in 2002, "Do not use these, especially in a post-9/11 environment. If a weapon of mass destruction goes off, you're going to be blamed."

Clarke: My recollection of one of the messages was specifically, "Don't do it now because you'll wreck the antiwar movement." That's my recollection, which may be wrong.

Engel: But in 1991, at the eleventh hour before the Gulf War begins, before the first bombing, Jim Baker meets with Tariq Aziz in Geneva, has a seven-hour, ridiculously long conversation and says very clearly, hands him a letter signed by President [George H. W.] Bush saying, "If weapons of mass destruction go off, if the United States is attacked, we are going to hold you ultimately responsible and use—" I forget the exact phrase, but use all means necessary to respond. The implication being very clear: we will respond in kind.

And of course, weapons of mass destruction were not used in that conflict. Why was the decision made within the upper levels of the [George W.] Bush administration that Saddam, even if he had WMD in 2002, 2003, could no longer be deterred from using them?

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: Two things haven't been mentioned. One was the Dark Winter study on smallpox—

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: It was before 9/11, the Johns Hopkins piece, and the other thing is Khurmal.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Dick Myers is not here, but Dick and I were reading in the intel about what was going on in Khurmal. It looked like they had an underground facility, and it looked like they had reasonably large numbers of people. It also looked like there was some connection with [Abu Musab al-] Zarqawi. What was it called? Ansar al-Islam?

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Dick and I thought it made sense to get the Kurds and put special operators there before the war and nail down precisely what was going on in that facility. We went to the President and the National Security Council two or three times trying to get the President to agree. Others on the National Security Council didn't want to do it. I forget why. I think maybe partly because we still hoped there wouldn't be a war.

Leffler: This is mostly in August and September, and it was exactly the time when the administration was gravitating toward going to the UN.

Rumsfeld: Exactly, the UN was the complicating factor. In any event, we didn't, and as soon as the war started, folks went in fast, but it was too late. They did find chemical precursors. They found Arabic documents about how you make chemical and biological weapons, and they found the remnants. But the people were all gone. They didn't catch a single soul.

Clarke: But also I think your question is a little bit about them using one approach in '91, why not the same approach in 2002? I used to have very interesting conversations with people like [redacted] Pete Pace and Dick Myers. If you think about the United States, you think about our military. For a long time the posture was, "You hit us, we'll respond. We're not going to go out and punch you in the nose unnecessarily, and we're not going to go out and invade for the sake of invading. But if you punch us, we'll sustain the blow, and then we will come up with the appropriate response." For a long time that worked just fine.

Over the years, as you started to learn more and more about these sorts of things and biological weapons, and you saw what they did with a relatively simple, relatively crude device in 2001. Can we sustain 3,000 people being killed? Yes. Terrible, but we sustained it and we responded. Can we sustain 300,000 people being killed? Probably not.

Rumsfeld: One estimate was a million within a year.

Clarke: So if you can't, what do you do? Then you start to have a completely different posture, and that is why you don't necessarily use the same approach that you used 10 years before.

Rumsfeld: That's useful.

Engel: Actually that was very useful. Mr. Secretary, you mentioned the Dora Farms attack. I'd like to have you walk us through that if you could because I think it is a fascinating—

Riley: Can I pose one preliminary question? One of the problems that we outsiders have in tracking the decision-making process in going to war is that there is not a clean document or memo or a transparent set of processes that led up to the decision to go to war.

Rumsfeld: I would think there is. Condi Rice was the National Security Advisor throughout the entire period. The only person who can decide to go to war is the President of the United States. She was with him morning, noon, and night. She had records; she kept notes. I wasn't there. I was all over the world. But she must have all those records; they have to exist.

Riley: At the risk of reopening something that we talked about yesterday, was it your impression that the interagency process leading up to the decision to go to war actually functioned well?

Rumsfeld: I don't have anything to compare it with. I certainly would not say the opposite. The President is the President. He is the only one who can decide anything like that. [Bob] Woodward or some of these people who weren't there write books and say, "He never asked Colin Powell or Don Rumsfeld or Dick Myers whether or not he should go to war." He didn't, as fate would have it, that I recall. I don't remember him asking me if we should go to war. Did he ever ask you?

Leffler: President Bush writes in his memoirs that he never asked you, but he knew what you thought.

Rumsfeld: Sure, because he was in these meetings and we would have said, "Wait a minute, please don't do that; that's wrong. You're making a mistake; there's something you don't know." Colin didn't say that; Condi didn't say that; I didn't say that; and Dick Myers didn't say that.

[redacted]

Unidentified: Silence was assent. There is no question about it.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Interesting, because I was in the meetings with the President with the Chiefs when he'd go around the room and there wasn't anyone who said anything, that he shouldn't do something or that they didn't have enough forces or that they didn't like any aspect. And he asked each one of the Chiefs personally, to my certain knowledge, on at least two occasions.

Riley: One other corollary question: Did you ever sense in this decision-making process that there were people advising the President who were getting too far ahead of the curve in terms of pushing him down the road to make a decision that you thought was ill advised?

Rumsfeld: I never heard it either way. To my knowledge, there was no one pushing him to go to war and I never heard anyone—And I specifically asked the President in Condi's presence if she or Colin had ever suggested he do something different. He said no and she said no—so this is the three of us standing in the Oval Office, because I kept reading things in the paper that Colin was not happy or thought we shouldn't do this or there should have been more troops or something. The President said, "Never once." What do I know? I wasn't with the President and I wasn't with Colin and I wasn't with Condi. My meetings with him were almost always with a lot of people.

Clarke: I think visually, and I remember as the weeks and months went on, thinking of—You all were together so often as a group, whereas right after 9/11 and Afghanistan there was more of a one-on-one—You as a group were not together as much as you were in the months leading up to Iraq. There were a lot of meetings, a lot of calls in which there were a lot of people, a lot of the principals.

Rumsfeld: A lot of secure video conferences, those kinds of things. We had General Franks on them and you would be in them.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Andy Card was in some meetings.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: What we're hearing from you is that there was no significant internal dissent about the decisions that led up to the point of going to war.

Rumsfeld: First of all, I didn't use the word "significant." I *heard* no dissent. I was not there, although I was in meeting after meeting with the Chiefs, the Chairman, the Vice, the combatant commanders, the service Chiefs. I was in meeting after meeting with the combatant commander and the deputy, as I recall, and I was in meetings in the National Security Council, which was the President, the Vice President, Colin Powell, Condi Rice, George Tenet, Dick Myers, and me, and some straphangers. There would be deputies in the back, intel specialists of some kind, and others. You or Doug Feith were generally in those.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I never heard anybody say to the President, "Whoa, don't do this." And I didn't. Because of the press reports I was reading, I asked about the Shinseki and the Jim [James L.] Jones piece in the one paper, and both of them denied it to me on the phone. Then because of the press on Colin, I was alone—It was none of my business, but I was kind of curious and I asked the President in Condi's presence and they both said, "Absolutely not." So what do I know? I wasn't there.

Riley: Had you taken a position on whether the administration ought to go back for a second UN resolution or was that somebody else?

Rumsfeld: I don't remember. I remember the idea being discussed in my presence. Colin argued for it as I recall, and it was based in large measure not on Colin's view or the President's, but it had to do with Tony Blair.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Tony Blair felt that an additional resolution was necessary for him to have the kind of support he needed in the UK [United Kingdom]; he was an enormous part of it. I don't remember anyone on our side arguing that for the sake of doing it, and I also don't remember anyone arguing against it particularly. Although I remember the discussion was obviously everyone would prefer not to have to go through that process again, talking about the Vice President or me

or the President or anyone else, but Colin was persuasive that Tony Blair felt he did need it, in which case the President said we'd do it.

[redacted]

Leffler: Mr. Secretary, how should one understand what Doug Feith calls the "list of horribles," all the negative things? When you presented that, was it just a memo to say, "Mr. President and colleagues, these are all the bad things that could happen, please be aware of them"?

Rumsfeld: No, let me walk you through it. I don't know why my mind works the way it works but I do like to—

Clarke: And generations have tried to figure that out.

Rumsfeld: I do try to look around corners and think, "Good God, what can go wrong?" So I sat down and on a piece of paper I wrote down 12 or 15 things—

Unidentified: Even more.

Rumsfeld: I'm getting to that—just off the top of my head. I was going over to an NSC meeting and I said, "We'd all better think through these things. What I'll do is I'll get back to you with a more refined list, because I think these are things that we all ought to have in our minds." Some of them were not the kinds of things that the DoD would deal with; they were the kinds of things the President ought to think about and the State Department and the CIA ought to think about.

Then I went back to the office and dictated my list on a little old Dictaphone, which is my bent, and then I would go to you and Dick Myers—

Clarke: People would come into your office and you would be at the stand-up desk and you'd say, "Look at this."

Rumsfeld: "What's missing? What did we forget?" Maybe three or four people would have—
[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Three or four or five people would look at it. Then they'd take it and polish it and edit it and send it back to me. Then I'd play with it. At the bottom I said, "You could come up with a similar list of 'what if you didn't.'"

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I dictated the thing and everyone polished it and added things, and then I edited it.

Clarke: Changed the order. You got into the psychology of the order of them.

Rumsfeld: Right, and then I sent it out. Now why did I do it? I did it because I believe that's what Secretaries of Defense ought to do: think about things that might become problems, what could happen. I wanted not just people in the Pentagon to do it, the combatant commander to think about it and the intelligence people, but I wanted our National Security Council people to think about it, because some concerns were State Department issues, some were intel, some of it the President ought to say, "Oh, my."

For example, I don't know how many times—and I don't know where it came from, but I'll bet you Andy Card or Condi Rice asked us to come over and brief on the Fortress Baghdad scenario. They wanted us to brief on that four times.

Unidentified: At least.

Rumsfeld: They had a fixation that you'd end up with a battle in a city, a Stalingrad, where civilians were being killed and it would go on for weeks, and you would be restrained from using force. I had a *lot* of things like that that I was worried about, not just that one. But why did I do it? Because I think I had an obligation to see that other people in the government thought about those things that related to them and that the combatant commander was thinking about those things.

Leffler: It is my impression from reading the materials that that list of horribles was never systematically discussed at a principals meeting or at an NSC meeting. Is that correct?

Rumsfeld: Pieces were.

Leffler: People acknowledged, "OK, he has sort of circulated this," but there was no careful discussion as I understand it. But please correct me; I'm trying to get the facts.

Rumsfeld: Clearly they were discussed in detail in the Department of Defense by the combatant command and the intel people. I think you're probably right, although Condi had a staff under her and they had a team of people that was interagency that did take those things and talk about them. But if you're asking do I recall an NSC meeting where we took that paper and went through it systematically and she assigned this Department to do that or that, not to my recollection, but I could be wrong.

Leffler: I'm just curious about your own feelings about it. You had this list that you compiled, a very thoughtful list in my opinion. Where did it lead you? I know you're saying here you wanted to get people to think, but what it did lead you to think? Did you read through that list and say, "Oh, my God, maybe we shouldn't do this" or did you say—

Rumsfeld: Oh, my God, every day you thought maybe you shouldn't do it. It is such a crummy way to live your life, to be in a war. It is just horrible.

Leffler: But that's what you thought internally; you didn't really discuss that.

Rumsfeld: No, you weigh that against the President's arguments pro and con, and he's the President. I never concluded that he was making a mistake.

Leffler: I know.

Clarke: There was a constant weighing of—There was lots of discussion in the building, the risks of action versus inaction.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: On every one of those pieces there were different risks of action versus inaction.

Leffler: That's very interesting, because people who criticize the decision-making process, when they say there was no real discussion at a principals meeting or an NSC meeting, they are saying, "We never had a discussion where we discussed" exactly what you just said, the pros and cons. "We never had a discussion of the pros and cons." Tenet is critical of this very point in his memoirs.

Rumsfeld: Is he?

Leffler: I'm just interested factually. What you said, Torie, is very interesting, that within the building you actually did systematically discuss pros and cons. But my sense is, and my question is, at a principals meeting, at a deputies meeting—

Rumsfeld: What about a deputies meeting? Did they?

Leffler: There was no such discussion, was there?

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I never heard anyone in the Pentagon argue that you should install Chalabi. There was this funny attitude in the CIA and State that the Pentagon was sponsoring Chalabi. I'd met him once in my life maybe, I think in Salt Lake City or someplace. I had no preference one way or another. And I didn't know Allawi.

[redacted]

Leffler: It's interesting because if there is one thing that *permeates* the literature and all the memoirs—Rice says it—it's that the folks in OSD really wanted Chalabi. I know from my discussions that that is actually not true. So the interesting point is why has that become so widespread a notion. It is almost "accepted truth."

Rumsfeld: Interesting. I'll tell you what I remember about it. There was a fellow named Blackwill—

Leffler: Yes, Bob Blackwill.

Rumsfeld: A big, tall guy. He had been in India, and Condi brought him back and he became her Iraq person. Is that right?

Unidentified: Yes.

Rumsfeld: He said to a big group one day, "Chalabi is the Michael Jordan of Iraq." It registered. Of course, I'm from Chicago and Michael Jordan, number 23, is a very big deal. I can remember him saying that.

Clarke: Played you like a fiddle he did.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Of Iraqi politics. He's the Michael Jordan of Iraq, and why not go with the best?

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: What were your assumptions about what would happen after liberation?

Clarke: Let me say one thing before these smart guys start to answer the question. On this particular piece of it, there was an enormous amount of attention paid in the Pentagon. Whatever happens in terms of standing up any kind of government in Iraq after the invasion, it has to have an Iraqi face. In my goings on, there was never any mention of a particular person. But we needed to have Iraqis running Iraq, not Americans.

When the Chalabi thing first got a dustup in the press, I was in the Secretary's office, trying to give him a quick debrief on things that were going on that hopefully would never get to his level. And I said, "Oh, they're just saying that supposedly Chalabi is your guy." He said, "Who?" I said, "Chalabi is your guy." You should never say something to the Secretary when you don't really know what you're talking about, which I often did. He said, "Who's Chalabi?" I said I had no idea. Then I had to go back and find out who he was. You had never met him, didn't know who he was.

Rumsfeld: I met him one time I'm told. I was somewhere out West at a conference, and he was at the conference and someone had him with six or eight people at lunch.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: What happened, just the long and the short, has been written about in books. If we asked Jay Garner, who had been active in the First Gulf War and was very well thought of by the Kurds—

Unidentified: They loved him, still do.

Rumsfeld: —to help organize the thing in the beginning, and knowing that at some point you would end up with a State Department person taking the lead—He had a very strong view that it had to be an Iraqi face and that power should be transferred incrementally. Then George Shultz recommended Jerry Bremer. I didn't know him, but we talked to the State Department and the White House. Condi was pressing to get someone in besides Jay who would be a State Department type. He had a very different view of the whole thing. He got in there and decided that he wanted—He wrote in his book that he was just floored when Garner was talking about transferring some responsibilities. Is that right?

Riley: That is correct.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Begin the process where you begin to give some authority to Iraqis and get an Iraqi face on it.

Clarke: There were little things in the beginning. We were strongly recommending from the Pentagon and from CENTCOM that anytime anybody did anything with the media, we would prefer to have Iraqis out front doing it. But if you feel that you, Bremer, need to be there, then have an Iraqi with you. At least have the Iraqis there with you saying, "We're in this together moving forward." It was *actively* resisted. I never got a real answer why. Was it just that he wanted the limelight? Was it because it was difficult? It's hard enough to brief alone, much less brief with someone else, much less brief with somebody from Iraq.

But I thought symbolically—You think about the first images in the weeks and months afterward, there was this American face.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Leffler: But Bremer says in his memoir that once he asserted his views, and starting in May before he goes out there, once he had met with the President and the President took him into—

Rumsfeld: Met with the President alone. I wasn't there.

Leffler: —in the NSC meeting—

Rumsfeld: Then he had lunch with him.

Leffler: First they had lunch, then he went into the NSC meeting, and it was like, "Bremer is my man." Bremer writes in his memoir—and this is genuinely confusing to those of us who study this—that you then deferred to the fact that Bremer was the President's man. He would basically report to the President, although Bremer claims that he always spoke to you and that you very quickly signed on to what he was doing.

Can I just read to you—?

Rumsfeld: What are you reading from?

Leffler: I'm reading from the *Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 2011, a year ago, right after your memoir appeared. It was a critical review of your memoir by two of your subordinates I guess, Dan Senor and Roman Martinez. Do you know them well?

Rumsfeld: I've met Senor and I've seen him on television. I've never heard of Martinez.

Leffler: They refer—I'm not sure I've seen this document myself, but they say, and this is my question to you, is this true or not true? "Rumsfeld's own contemporaneous memos undermine the notion that [you] disapproved of what Bremer was doing." They write, "The 26 'Principles for Iraq—Policy Guidelines'"—That is apparently a document—"'Principles for Iraq—Policy Guidelines' that Rumsfeld gave Bremer in May 2003 said nothing about handing real power to Iraqis. To the contrary, Rumsfeld's instructions endorsed the top-down approach his book"—your book—"condemns. The CPA should 'assert authority over the country,' Rumsfeld wrote, and should not accept or tolerate self-appointed Iraqi leaders."

So I'm asking the question: This apparently is a document, "Principles for Iraq—Policy Guidelines" in which allegedly you supported this approach of Bremer's.

Rumsfeld: The man who was doing a lot of the good work during that period was Peter Rodman with Doug Feith, and I presume you—I would have to go look at it.

Leffler: But you don't remember endorsing Bremer's—?

Rumsfeld: No. I remember that it got very confused because the President, for whatever reason, decided he was going to deal directly with Bremer without me, and Condi began daily phone calls with Bremer. Bremer was a career Foreign Service officer, and most of his staff were State

Department people. So he was linked up. I personally thought, *That's probably a good thing, because this is complicated stuff*. In retrospect, I think it is probably not a good thing that he didn't have a single boss, because the President behaved like his boss but then didn't pay attention.

Leffler: Bremer has said that when he went to Iraq in May he spoke to you, initially, for the first two or three months, almost every day. Is that true or not true?

Rumsfeld: I'd have to check the records.

Leffler: Do you remember speaking to him very frequently?

Rumsfeld: I don't know. I think—

[redacted]

Leffler: Because that's his claim. That's how he builds his claim.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Clarke: On an administrative point, I'm not sure who the other guy is. Dan Senor was Bremer's press secretary and Bremer had brought him in. Dan was in the private sector somewhere. There were some pretty talented people on the ground there, including some pretty talented people in the military who really were into the notion of working with the Iraqis on the communications aspect of this, and Bremer brought Dan in. Dan was no more helpful on putting an Iraqi face on it than Bremer was.

Riley: Bremer issued two orders when he first went over there. You referred to one of them, which was the disbanding of the military. The other was de-Ba'athification. Those weren't Defense Department policies.

Unidentified: They're in two opposite boxes. The consensus decision in Washington—

Rumsfeld: The NSC staff had been studying both of those options.

Unidentified: That's right, and the decision had been we were going to keep the Iraqi Army.

Riley: Decision had been taken to keep the Iraqi Army.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Yes.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Bremer, meaning the man on the ground—And confession is good for the soul. I can remember saying on a number of occasions, "Look, you've got to cut the guy some slack. He's on the ground; he has to be able to make some decisions. We can't micromanage it from here."

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Maybe Chalabi wasn't the right guy.

[redacted]

Riley: Bremer had been selected in April and was there in May, and the mystery is, if this wasn't signed off on Defense Department policy—

Unidentified: Which one do you mean?

Riley: Orders 1 and 2—disbanding the military.

[redacted]

Riley: The question is, where does Bremer get this?

Rumsfeld: He is, as I say, working directly with the President. He was talking to Condi every day and he had a State Department staff and was interacting with Colin, who was delighted he was selected, because he is a State Department person. Paul and Doug Feith were involved and Peter Rodman, who was a very thoughtful guy, prepared some materials on the subject. There had been an NSC working group under Condi that had worked on all of these issues. And you had a Secretary of Defense who was doing 85 other things and personally had the impression that Bremer was a capable guy and that you couldn't micromanage the process from Washington.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: There were hundreds of Sunni generals and a bunch of conscripts who didn't want to be there and were scared to death when our forces came in, and they just disappeared. So the idea of disbanding the Army is—

Riley: Mel, you're going to have to leave us. Have you got a question or two—?

Leffler: No, this is fine, I'm learning a lot.

[FOUR PAGES REDACTED]

Clarke: I so seldom get to point out when I was spectacularly right about something. So Bremer gets appointed. He comes over to see you. For some reason, I came in at the tail end of the meeting, maybe because, it was true, information communications was such a huge part of this effort. We chat for a few minutes and then he heads off and I head back down to my office and there is George Rhynedance, my military assistant, great Army helicopter guy. He says, "What do you think?" because it was a big deal that Bremer had just been named.

I said, "Mark my words, we are going to deeply regret that that SOB got the job." Rhynedance reminds me of it about once a year.

Rumsfeld: Yes.

[redacted]

Clarke: He didn't know him at all. He asked me.

[redacted]

Clarke: I knew—

Rumsfeld: Glandular.

Clarke: A lot of it was glandular; a lot of it was people we respected who had been in the State Department apparatus for years. Essentially their assessment was "all show and no pony." I listened to him for 10 minutes and was—

Leffler: How should people think about the fact that this guy got appointed? Shultz recommended him—

Rumsfeld: To me.

Leffler: —to you. You did not really know him, you interviewed him once.

Rumsfeld: Didn't know him, and I suggested that people take a look at two or three people. He kept coming up fine. He had been in the State Department. Colin Powell was ecstatic, I'm told.

Clarke: I remember as a process point in the DoD world, we were pleased that a State Department guy had been put forward for the job, because we knew anybody who was perceived as coming as a DoD recommendation wouldn't work.

Rumsfeld: Exactly.

Clarke: So we were like, "Thank God, State found somebody they're happy with and that will work."

Rumsfeld: I'll tell you something—It's a little off the subject. They kept reporting things as to what was working and what wasn't working in the postinvasion phase. One of the things was electricity. [redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: The reports on electricity were that they had these big hundred-million-dollar—Tell me if I'm wrong—generators.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: And it took a $150 bomb to blow up a hundred-million-dollar generator. Saddam had paid off tribal leaders and local leaders to protect things, infrastructure. So we kept getting these reports on electricity not functioning very well, and you fly over it and the place was just lit up. And it was all small generators. People figured out a way around the whole thing.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: They've got lunch waiting for us. We'll come back and I'll have a question or two about that.

[BREAK]

Riley: We've got about an hour and a half before we break up. We were talking about Bremer and relationships with Bremer. Let me go back and ask the broad question and see if you want to deal with this. That is just about the general preparation for postwar planning. What was being done in the Defense Department in anticipation of a successful liberation? How much of your time were you able to spend on this in recognition of the fact that a successful military operation has to precede anything that could be considered postwar or Phase IV?

Rumsfeld: There was on the National Security Council staff; Condi set up committees. A man named Frank who was on her staff—

Unidentified: Frank Miller.

Rumsfeld: Good. [Franklin C.] Frank Miller worked on some of them. They had many meetings and talked about everything and analyzed all these issues. It went on for a year. The State Department had done some studies. They were never postwar planning, but there were studies as I recall. They became part of the mix. The Department of Defense had the Joint Staff and the combatant commander—I think you or Myers yesterday called it Phase III. I thought it was Phase IV.

Clarke: I thought it was Phase IV too.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: So we can clean up that record. I think it was Dick who called it Phase III.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: How does it go? Preparation, Major Combat Operations, something—?

Unidentified: Let me go over this. You have a Phase Zero, which is plans and all the rest of it, then I, II, III, and IV. I don't remember the exact titles of each one.

Rumsfeld: But IV was the postwar. The combatant command and the Joint Staff have that as part of their normal work. Simultaneously, the policy shop, particularly under Peter Rodman if I'm not mistaken, [redacted] did a lot of work.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: All of those meshed together. There was a mythology that the State Department's work was a postwar plan, but it wasn't implemented.

Unidentified: That we ignored them and just imposed—

Selverstone: The Future of Iraq.

Rumsfeld: That's what it was, the Future of Iraq Project. It turns out it was never really a postwar plan, and it was used and a lot of the people in Garner's group were State Department people and they had all of that. I think it was Crocker who announced that anyone who runs around and thinks that that was a postwar plan was wrong. He was part of it, he understood it, it never was, and not only was it never a postwar plan, it was a series of studies. It was used by all the people involved.

It was used by the combatant commanders, by the White House, by the policy shop, and by the group that went in there, to the extent it was usable. It was a series of studies.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Riley: In the prewar phase, was there a general understanding that the Pentagon would have the action on Phase IV, or was it an interagency situation that would be sorted out after liberation?

Rumsfeld: Clearly under the war-planning process, the combatant command would have all the people there, and they would have a big responsibility. But Condi got into it immediately and was involved and was having deputies meetings and subdeputies meetings and engaged in the decision making. I think everyone agreed that it would migrate from the Pentagon to the State Department, and the only question was when and how.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Clarke: Russell, your question about Phase IV implies—I don't know if you meant to, but I've heard discussion and debate over this so often. People think it is this very neat and clean, hard-edged system and process. "State Department will handle this; Treasury will handle that; DoD will handle that," and it will change on week two and then week four. It's not that neat and clean; it is just not. There are often, and should be, overlapping areas of responsibility.

What I found at my level, from the communications and information perspective, is there often was agreement on what should be done, and then people who were best suited to do certain things. For instance at the State Department, we had a big effort on outreach to Arab youth. We were talking about this a little bit at lunchtime. The State Department should have done it. They said, "Yes, we need to do a better job of reaching Arab youth." They did nothing.

At the Pentagon, we were calling in people like Miles Copeland [III]. Miles Copeland's father helped create the OSS [Office of Strategic Services]. Miles Copeland was the biggest developer and distributor of Arab music in the Western world. He knew more about Arab youth than anybody else we could find. He came in and spent days with us, saying, "What if you tried this?

Why don't you do this?" Brilliant stuff. I called up my counterparts at State and said, "You really ought to have him come in and talk to you." They didn't have time.

Everybody knew that one of the things we put into place was almost a rapid-response effort. If and when the Iraqi regime and others started a massive disinformation campaign, which we fully expected, we were going to have a rapid-response mechanism to shoot down any and all disinformation. There are only so many of us; we needed everybody around the world in these jobs of communications to be staffed up and ready to do this.

When things would happen in different places and we'd say, "OK, this story is running, but nobody in the Embassy there is shooting it down. Why not?" we would get the answer back, "They don't want to get into a confrontation with anybody."

[redacted]

Clarke: [redacted] I don't think they were that good at communicating down. I just found this passiveness and this, "Oh, we'd rather do nothing than possibly do something not—"

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: When you said we achieved surprise, not strategic surprise but tactical, because of the way that Franks—I had nothing to do with this. Everyone in Saddam's group expected there

would be a lot of bombing for a long period. Instead, he put people in before the bombing even started and used Special Forces early.

[redacted]

Engel: I wanted to ask both about Dora Farms and about this question of the size of the footprint if anybody has a preference of which one they want to talk about. Let's stay with that since we're there. Putting on your 20/20 hindsight glasses, clearly I think you made the case that Phase I was a remarkable success. Would a larger footprint, in your opinion, have altered things so that Phase IV, which is a messy transition process, would have ultimately been different, more successful or less successful? As we have talked about, the insurgency does not appear overnight; it takes time. There is the difficulty of getting an Iraqi face on the image of the government. Would a different footprint have made a difference ultimately in Phase IV? A larger footprint, in hindsight?

Rumsfeld: If you go back in history and read about Germany, with a very large footprint—

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: The destruction and the acts of violence around Bremen and other places, it was just widespread disorder. Anytime you go from one order to a new order, you're going to have a period that is going to be somewhat untidy. I don't know that such a transition has ever happened in any other way. I can't answer your question; I don't have any idea. But Iraq is an enormous country. Before he fell from power, Saddam Hussein let out something in the neighborhood of 100,000 prisoners.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Bad guys.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: So you had that problem with a bunch of bad guys milling around; you had the absence of authority; and you had the police that were basically not good. These were people who would grab people—The sides of their patrol cars didn't say "Serve and Protect." These were tough apples. Then you had the insurgents that began this process. I've forgotten the name of the Iraqi leader, the Party of Return he formed.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Yes, that they started rather quickly. Then you had this disadvantage where Tom Franks had intended to bring the 4th Infantry Division from the north, which is the heavier Sunni area. He couldn't get them through because we lost by one vote in the Turkish Parliament, because we didn't—We thought we had the vote and we didn't pay enough attention and senior people didn't do enough.

Riley: Our U.S. senior people didn't do enough?

Rumsfeld: Yes, the State Department didn't do anything, and the White House didn't do anything, and I didn't go. There was no red flag going up. You went, I think.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: But you had to have a majority of the whole Parliament, not a majority of those that were there.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Tommy lost that, so then he had to bring them in from the south. They never were really—Fought against the Sunni part—and you ended up leaving intact an awful lot of Sunnis up in that part of the country that one would have not intended had we been able to get in from the north.

A larger footprint? I don't know. How much larger? What do I know? Hell, I don't know anything. Franks and the Joint Chiefs come in and say, "Here's what we need," and we say fine and that's what they got.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Engel: I appreciate that lesson. It dovetails very nicely with the conversation that we had yesterday, which I'm actually going to come back to for a moment, because it underlies the importance, Mr. Secretary, of what you've said time and again, that you want to question the assumptions.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: My recollection is, in the First Gulf War it would take 10 planes to knock out a single target. In 2003 we had the ability, because of precision—

Unidentified: The number you're looking for is that during World War II it took 200 dumb bombs to take out a target, and now we could do it with one.

Rumsfeld: One plane.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: But the change I was thinking back to was the advance just between 1990 and 2003; it was *dramatic* in terms of the precision.

Unidentified: You're correct.

Clarke: Who was it in uniform who had the great graphic? I can see it. He would talk about in the old days you didn't have much information, you didn't have much intel, and you didn't have much to inform your battle planning, so you needed enormous numbers of people or enormous amounts of equipment. Now, because you had better information and better intel and better planning, you needed fewer people and less equipment.

[TWO PAGES REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: Let me go to your question. There was a narrative out there. You're asking questions off the narrative, and Michael Gordon or whoever these people are who weren't there write books and didn't document their books.

The revolution in military affairs occurred after I was in private business. It was a lot of people and they were interested in it. I never knew them; I never was involved in it. I didn't have any preconceptions. It is just nonsense—

Riley: It's nonsense that you—?

Rumsfeld: —that I had some theory. I just didn't. I dealt with the military commanders, as [redacted] Dick Myers can tell you.

Riley: You just stopped yourself and the comment wouldn't have read the way you intended if you stopped. Forgive me for interrupting.

Rumsfeld: What do you mean?

Riley: You had said that that was nonsense.

Rumsfeld: The revolution in military affairs wasn't nonsense; I just happened not to be involved in it.

Riley: That was what I interpreted.

Rumsfeld: It was nonsense to suggest that I had a theory. I didn't. I dealt with the military commanders and we went through, [redacted] an iterative process where commanders would talk and then they'd go through the Chiefs. They'd meet with the policy people. They'd meet with the President and the National Security Council, and we'd go back and forth and discuss. Tommy Franks gave a briefing on it before he left and described it as an iterative process. But certainly I never once said, "You should have this number and no more" or "You should have more, not less" or "You should have less, not more." That simply was not a role—I was not involved in it then.

Clarke: But in terms of process, there was obsessive attention, as there should have been. Be prepared to scale up, scale down.

Rumsfeld: We had off ramps and on ramps.

Clarke: You cannot have a giant on/off switch, but you have to be able—

Rumsfeld: Exactly. "We can put in as many as you want or we can take out as many as you want. You've got the call," and the commanders did. Then he would come back to the Chiefs and me and we'd talk about it in the policy shop.

Next, the surge. We surged several times for various reasons, elections, one thing and another, concern by somebody. So we'd add 15 or 20,000 and then they'd draw down again after. It did not have any dramatic effect, although it was helpful. Why did the surge toward the end work?

[redacted] I think number one, by then we had more Iraqi security forces trained, in 2006, compared to 2003 or 2004 or 2005 when we had these minisurges. A *big* deal. Second, [Nouri al-] Maliki's government was a lot more mature. They had been in office longer. He had actually screwed up his team. And they had gone down south.

Unidentified: That was the decisive moment, actually. Against our advice he went south.

Rumsfeld: Is that right?

Unidentified: Yes.

Rumsfeld: Went down south and actually went after some folks and showed that they had some steel. Third, the Sunnis decided that the al-Qaeda they were working with were raping their ladies and taking their businesses, and they were sick of it and they were sorry they hadn't participated in the elections early on. You had convergence of these various realities that changed the dynamic. To his credit, the President surged again, only it had a distinctly different effect than it would have in '03 or '04 or '05 because of these various factors that came together and had that effect. The only thing I would say about the narrative out there—I would make a case that there is a distinction between people who weren't there and who talked to people who had an axe to grind or a preconceived theory or a narrow perspective, compared to someone who writes a book and then puts 4,000 documents on a website to support the book. There is a big difference.

If you put them on a scale and weigh them, anyone with an ounce of sense has to say one ought to weigh more than the other.

Clarke: I would add to that, the current narrative, or those who in hindsight say, "You needed a much bigger footprint"—They refer to the surge as doubling down. It was nowhere near that, the surge was what, 30,000 more?

Unidentified: Thirty thousand on top of 140,000, I think, 20 percent.

Clarke: They not only weren't there, weren't informed, they willingly disregard—

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I wasn't there.

[redacted]

Engel: That's why we're asking, because this is—I appreciate the spirited critique of the narrative, which I was not offering. It was very nicely done. But the question I have goes back to

the ultimate strategy of the war, because I think that you've all explained very well and to my satisfaction the design of the size of the footprint for the combat operations.

Here is a question I genuinely don't understand. If we go back to the document that we spent some time on yesterday, the document of July 27, 2001—before 9/11, before so much has happened, before Afghanistan, before everything else.

Rumsfeld: On Iraq? That memo? Where I said, "Why don't we have a meeting and get this straightened out"?

Engel: You explained very well for the record yesterday what you were thinking when you wrote this document. What I have been impressed by in reading your book and in the discussions we've had is the emphasis you place on thoughtful questioning of assumptions, within war plans, within budgetary plans, within strategic thinking more generally. On the bottom of page three of this document—and I asked this yesterday, but I think I probably asked it wrong, so let me try to ask it again—there is a declarative statement, that is an assumption, but it seems like a very confidently stated one to my mind: "If Saddam's regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere." Yet, at the same time, in the sense of before the war, you compose the list of horribles, as we discussed. You said just a moment ago one of the things we know about war, and you made a Clausewitzian point yourself, is that bad things will happen no matter what they are, so we have to be extra prepared for that.

I'm trying to understand how I can square the circle of a strategic thinker as yourself, who is always questioning assumptions and always asking what bad thing is going to happen, that we don't anticipate being willing to say, "If Saddam Hussein leaves, it is a net good." He's a bad guy, I'm not saying—

Rumsfeld: The butcher of Baghdad? You think it's good if he stays?

Engel: That's what I want you expand for the record, because rattling the Middle East, nobody knows what is going to come out.

Rumsfeld: That's right. Look at that today for sure.

Engel: That's what I want to explain; I'm not on a pro-Saddam lobby here.

Rumsfeld: You're not pulling a Wolfowitz and calling me an appeaser? [*laughter*]

Selverstone: Also, you had indicated if we could be sure that there were no WMD, then perhaps there was some way for him remaining.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Engel: This is my question. How was it that you and others around the table came to the conclusion that as a net good, with all the unknowns that could happen, removing Saddam Hussein post-9/11, an era when weapons of mass destruction are apparently within his grasp or within his control already, that that would not lead to greater chaos and greater tumult than we would gain by removing him?

Rumsfeld: This is like how many fairies can dance on the head of a pin. I sat down and off the top of my head dictated a three-and-a-half-page memo. I probably did not go back over it and flyspeck it and say, "In 12 years could some historian look at that one sentence at the bottom of page three and try to make something out of it?"

Engel: Let's—

Rumsfeld: Wait a minute— "try to make something out of it that I didn't." It sure as hell never crossed my mind. Now let me read you the paragraph—not the whole memo, just the paragraph. Here we say, "There ought to be a way for the U.S. to not be at loggerheads with both of the two most powerful nations in the Gulf, Iran and Iraq, when the two of them do not like each other, are firing at each other, and have groups in their respective countries that are hostile to the other side. The particularly unfortunate circumstance of Iraq being governed by Saddam and Iran being governed by clerics, kind of even handed, has suspended the standard rule that my enemy's enemy is my friend."

In other words, how can the United States end up—And you've got to remember, the problem was not Iraq on a relative basis. Iran was the country that had captured our Embassy officials and staff and held them prisoner and was led by ayatollahs who were radical and uttering, "the great Satan the United States," and eliminating Israel and pushing it into the sea. So I say, "has suspended the standard rule that my enemy's enemy is my friend." It's the other way I guess, "The friend of my enemy is my enemy."

Then I say if Saddam's regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere. Then closing thoughts, two problems coming down the road. It seems to me that I don't know that I can answer any better what was in my mind except that in the old days when newspapers were flourishing, this would be called a thumb sucker if you were a journalist. You sit down and you say, "I have a minute. Why don't I put down some thoughts that are bothering me?" And there they are. I can't take a sentence out and give it the weight that you're giving it.

Selverstone: Can I ask a question about the communication strategy? You had brought up Vietnam a bit earlier, speaking about the Abrams approach—smaller teams, more focus on Vietnamization. The Vietnam analogy begins to loom large in this conflict. I'm wondering at what point you collectively or individually saw this as a particular challenge, the discussions that you had to try to address that, and how effective you felt that you were in navigating all the problems that the Vietnam analogy presented.

Clarke: The Vietnam analogy almost became a joke. I think you said it, Mr. Secretary. It was the third week of October 2001, I think, and Johnny [R. W.] Apple, God rest his soul, was referring to Afghanistan as a "Vietnam-like quagmire." It became a joke.

Rumsfeld: Above the fold, page one of the *New York Times.*

Clarke: Not that we noticed.

Riley: Or remembered.

Clarke: And the only people who seemed to be using it were people—supporters, critics—who everybody knew had not spent much time focusing on what was really going on. Anybody who had half an ounce of knowledge about what was going on in Iraq, whether they agreed or disagreed with what we were trying to do, just rolled their eyes and said, "OK, we get it. They have to do it." But they usually were not the heavyweights. It was not the smart, informed people who used that analogy.

Was it hard? Was it difficult? Was support wavering at different times? Absolutely.

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Rumsfeld: One other thought that floats in my mind [redacted] is that this fellow Baram Salih, the Kurd, was saying repeatedly throughout this period, "Keep your numbers down and keep your people out of the cities." Now why was he saying that? [redacted] He's a smart guy; he knew we didn't have staying power. If we got a lot of people killed and we had too many people milling around, we were too visible, it wasn't good for the government, it wasn't good for our people getting killed, it would weaken our staying power over time. He was Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq at the time, is that right?

Unidentified: Yes.

Clarke: And thinking of something else [redacted], I remember the last trip through the Middle East before what became the start of the Iraq War. You met with a variety of your counterparts in a variety of countries and some heads of state, including Mubarak. Those meetings often had a kind of set pattern to them, were pretty predictable what each of you was going to talk about. It would often go down a different path. Without fail, in *every single meeting*, the person with whom you were meeting would lean forward and say, "This time, if you do it, you finish the job." *Every single one of them.*

Rumsfeld: They said two things. They said, "By God, do not leave him standing; finish the job." Also they said, "Do it fast." They were worried about the "Arab street."

Clarke: Right.

Rumsfeld: Every single one of them said, "Get in there and get out of there, but by God do not leave that guy standing." Now the fact that every Arab leader said that doesn't mean that's what you should do, but it conformed to the Franks plan.

Clarke: Clearly, their memories—

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Qaboos [bin Said].

Clarke: Have you ever been so hot in your life?

[redacted]

Clarke: It was hot.

Rumsfeld: He was impressive. We got there right after 9/11 and he said, "This is a hard thing to say," but something to the effect that this may be a blessing in disguise. You have 3,000 people dead, and he said, "This may be the wake-up call that will alert our part of the world and your part of the world, and you'll do something before not 3,000 people but 300,000 or 3,000,000 people get killed by weapons of mass destruction." Here is this fellow sitting in a tent.

Clarke: It's not just a tent. We fly to Oman to meet with him. It's during his summer, and during the summer he goes on a listening tour through the country. So they say, "We're going to chopper you out to where he is." I'm thinking town hall, right? Going to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] hall. We come in from the coast and we fly over this desert, and it was like a mirage rising with all the tents. It looked like Cirque de Soleil tents. The most brilliant, sparkling tents. They would have camel races to entertain the people. We land in the choppers and there are row after row of state-of-the-art shiny Land Rovers. They race us over to these tents. It had to be 190 degrees if it was one.

Rumsfeld: We went through three layers of clothes in—

Clarke: And he was not—not a drop on him.

Rumsfeld: He wasn't even sweating.

Clarke: He had blue eyes.

Rumsfeld: Smart guy.

Riley: Let me ask the question again. We've come at it a couple of different ways, but he says, "Get in and get out; do it quickly."

Rumsfeld: All the neighbors said that.

Riley: Is it your theory that you can get in and out quickly? And, if so, what was the basic premise of the Phase IV planning? What were you expecting to do after liberation? Big footprint, small footprint, get out?

Clarke: The DoD website has transcripts of this. There was briefing after briefing in the press room. There was meeting after meeting on the Hill for small groups, large groups, members,

staff, you name it. They would always ask, “How long is this going to take? What will happen? How much will it cost?” And we’d say, “Honestly, we don’t know.”

Rumsfeld: “How many people will be killed?”

Clarke: Might be this, might be that. But we’re not sure. That’s why we built the system; we build the process. We can scale up, scale down, and adjust. It became these endless repetitions of the same thing. I’ll never forget doing one of the briefings for staffers on the Hill. They got enormously frustrated, “Why can’t you tell us this?” Because you don’t know. You prepare for the unexpected.

Rumsfeld: Anyone who can tell you how long it is going to last or how many people are going to get killed or what it is going to cost is nuts. You just don’t know.

Clarke: If anybody had the stomach for it, DoD keeps all the transcripts of all the interviews, of all the briefings, and it’s on there.

Rumsfeld: When I go back to Vietnam, I can remember I was a Navy pilot, then I was a flight instructor. Then I taught other Navy aviators how to become flight instructors. I remember going to Vietnam and I’d been instructing in a thing called a T-28, which was a single-engine propeller plane. They used it for close air support in Vietnam.

I got over to Vietnam and I looked and here were our pilots training Vietnamese how to fly T-28s. I came back and said, “Golly, we don’t want to be training the Vietnamese pilots to fly T-28s. We want to be training Vietnamese aviators to train Vietnamese students how to fly T-28s. We want to train the instructors, because otherwise we’ll never get out of here.”

I felt the same way about—There’s no question I was affected by Vietnam, but not to the point that I would decide I knew better than somebody else. It was a process where we had the Chairman, the Vice Chairman of the Chiefs, and the four service Chiefs, and they were a legitimate part of the process. And we had a combatant commander with an enormous staff and a lot of smart people. His job was to wash his proposals through the Chiefs and then to bring them to me and the policy shop and then to go to the NSC and the President. That’s the process we used. It isn’t complicated. There wasn’t any person in that process who was determinative other than the combatant commander, because he was the guy charged with the task of doing it.

The President would ask questions and make suggestions; I would ask questions and make suggestions. The Chiefs, despite Tommy’s railing against the fact that the Chiefs’ effort—You ought to whisper to somebody what he actually had on the T-shirt.

[redacted]

Riley: We’ll have to edit it in later.

Rumsfeld: It was derogatory of the Chiefs, I’m sure.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: We've only got about another half an hour. Let me draw you forward, because we spent a fair amount of time talking about Bremer already. Do things get better after Bremer leaves and there is at least the early stages of some kind of political identity, constitutional identity?

Rumsfeld: In my view, the longer the Iraqis had the baton, the more responsibility they would take on, as the Maliki government became more mature and more capable in implementing their policies, and the better off they were. I did not want us to be doing that. I wanted the Iraqis to be doing it. I always felt that Allawi would be an effective leader. He was a Ba'athist, he was closer to the Sunnis, he probably had less of a linkage to Iran. He was probably more secular.

[redacted]

Riley: One of the big trouble spots we haven't talked about is Abu Ghraib.

Rumsfeld: Good God. I wrote all over the place. I testified before Congress. Nothing else I can say.

Riley: I do wonder—

Rumsfeld: You can say something about it. He showed me a picture yesterday; oh, my God, is it horrible.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: But there was a serious detention issue. My question relates again to manpower. One of the issues related to manpower there was that there were insufficient people to do the work of managing the detention facilities. I'm trying to square that with the claims made earlier that we had enough people to do the job.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Sanchez did, God dang it. He said, "I need people." It went to the Joint Staff and it went to the Army and the Army was slow in acting and didn't supply the people. The Joint Staff didn't make the Army do it and the Joint Staff didn't come to me and say there was something. I found out by accident that they only staffed him up to 50, 60, 70 percent of what he needed.

[redacted]

Riley: I was asking that, but it was in the context of the larger troop strength issue.

Rumsfeld: No, that's—

Riley: We pose the question because we're getting conflicting information out of our interviews, and I'm not at liberty to divulge the names of the people we talk with, but there are people who would say we made requests for additional troops.

Rumsfeld: I don't doubt that some colonel down the line might have. Who knows? I wouldn't have any idea. But I can tell you there never was a single request for additional troops—

Clarke: To your desk.

Rumsfeld: —that got to me that we didn't say yes. If some five-layers-down major says, "Gee, I think I could use more people here," it's the job of the guy in the field to move them around and get them where they want them.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Because the person above them doesn't agree with their request. Or the guy above him solves it, not by adding more troops but by moving them from one place to another. I want to correct myself. There was one instance where I did it, and we talked about it earlier. It was when they said they wanted to send some troops over right before Christmas and gave them five days' notice. I said, "That's the dumbest thing in the world. You don't need to do that," so they withdrew it.

Clarke: I think a couple of these pieces on Abu Ghraib are very important. I spend a lot of time in crisis management in the information space, if you will. Normally when something like this would happen—Something bad would happen. First of all, it was a tragedy for many reasons, not the least of which was there were these sick bastards working there who did really horrible, disgusting things. They were truly the exception. This was not something that you saw going on by U.S. military around the world. They did a horrible disservice to U.S. military. Full stop.

Normally when something like this happens, the person in charge says, “This has been brought to our attention; it’s terrible, it’s awful, mistakes were made. We’re going to hold the people accountable responsible. We’re going to make sure they’re punished.” You get all the information up on the table. You don’t wait for reporters and others to dribble out the information. You get everything out at once; you pull the Band-Aid off big time. You say, “We’re going to hold the people accountable responsible. We’re going to put things in place to make sure this never happens again.”

Two things that were *huge* in this—I was out by then, but I was talking to a lot of people who were involved in it—Two things happened. You would have loved to have brought all those photographs out right away. As awful as they were, bring them all out at once so we can deal with it all at once. There were people like Dick Myers looking, Secretary Wolfowitz, Secretary Rumsfeld, saying, “Please do not do that because every time one of those photos is out, it further inflames the anti-U.S. sentiment. It puts more lives at risk.”

For me, never having been in combat, that’s pretty persuasive stuff. When guys in uniform, who have been in combat, say, “More people will die if more photos come out,” then you go, “OK, maybe I won’t do what you normally would do in a situation like this, and let’s try to keep these photos tamped down.” And that started a whole other line of criticism of the Pentagon, “Oh, they’re trying to withhold it now.” They were doing what the military was asking them to do.

When you’re in charge and something like that happens, you want to hold the people accountable responsible and you want to do it quickly. There were very smart, established, seasoned lawyers in the military saying, “You can’t do that. You cannot say those things. You can’t do it because you’re going to”—What was the expression?

Rumsfeld: “Command influence.”

Clarke: “Command influence.” If we want to investigate and prosecute and convict these people who have done these terrible things, then you cannot say anything, or you’re going to influence the process and skew the results.

Rumsfeld: And then they’ll have to let the guy go—they won’t be able to punish him—if we jump in and say that he’s guilty or he shouldn’t have done it.

Clarke: So two of the most important things you would like to do in a crisis like this, you absolutely could not do. It’s ironic for all the obvious reasons, and it also allowed these other lines of attack to start, which were completely ludicrous.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: Then he [Casey] did something even more difficult. He said, "We've got this striker unit from Alaska, which has already started out, and I want to stop them and send them into Baghdad, because I need the extra force." I said fine. And he did. They had welcome home signs already on the street in Alaska, and the lead units were already back there ready to receive the equipment and the people.

I said to the military, "Have you guys talked to the people up there?" They said, "Yes, we've talked to them." I was going to Alaska and I said, "Maybe I'll talk to the families." I get in there and it turns out when they said they talked to them, they had gathered the spouses of some of the senior officers into a video, and the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army had said, "We're very sorry, but we're going to keep this unit there for a while and extend them." By then I had agreed to speak to all the spouses. There were hundreds in this *giant* auditorium. I walked in there and they *hadn't* been talked to. No one had explained what was going on.

The Army said they had solved the problem when they talked to the spouses of four or five senior officers. I was so damn mad. I got in front of this audience and I started explaining what had happened and talking about it. Then I answered questions.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I said these people really were jerked around. It was one of those things that happens.

Perry: How did they respond to you?

Rumsfeld: They were pretty good, but hurt. And I think frightened. I'm standing there and I stepped back from the microphone and anyone who wanted to come up and shake hands I would shake hands. One after another they would come up and tell me some story or want to say something. All of a sudden I heard whispering in my ear and I looked around and here's a tall dark-haired woman. She whispered in my ear, "You have to have big brass ones to come in here and talk to all of these people. Good for you." I turned around and she was disappearing.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: I wish I knew who she was. She was very funny. A cute smile on her face.

Perry: Maybe she'll read this oral history and she'll be in touch.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: No. I'll say it one more time and then I'll shut up, and it's almost time to leave. That book is documented; the others aren't. You can have lots of people come in and have memories of this and could have had and all that stuff. But you better stick it on a scale and weigh it and check it. There's an awful lot of difference between people who put it down in writing and then are willing to expose it and say, "Here it is," and not go back and edit it and refine it for history.

Engel: You're in a room with people who like footnotes, so let me ask you this in that vein. In comparing this book and in your subsequent writings, are there documents you wish you had been able to use that you were not able to, to make a point that has not yet been made?

Rumsfeld: Yes. And it's not because they're classified. I asked to have declassified everything I could. They gave me what they could, and I haven't gone back to see what's there.

I have spent four years and $400,000 digitizing 295,000 documents. Not pages, documents. I had time to go through as many as I could, and we ended up finding 4,241 or something that we would stick on, that related particularly to things that were quoted in the book, so that someone could see the whole document and see the context.

I now am writing another book on Rumsfeld's Rules, if I can ever find the time. I started going through some more documents that aren't on any website at the moment. I have a private website and I have a public one. I'm trying to go through paper that I still haven't gone through or digitized and decide what should I do with it. Shred it, throw it away, save it for the Library of Congress, keep it here, put it on the public website, put it on the private website so I can digitize and have it. I've been doing this maybe three hours a day for the last three or four weeks.

I've got it in my mind that it would not be a bad idea to do another document dump into Rumsfeld.com.

Riley: We'd appreciate it. It is very helpful to have this material.

Rumsfeld: I can believe it. It is expensive and time consuming.

Riley: Exactly, and there is no public source for this kind of information and it's a godsend for us trying to put these books together to know what kinds of questions to ask people. So by all means, we encourage it. We're oral historians, but as my colleagues from history departments will tell you, there is no substitute for a contemporaneous written record. Do you have any help on this?

Rumsfeld: I have five or six people working in my office in Washington.

Riley: We've got 10 minutes. What are we missing? [redacted]

[TWO PAGES REDACTED]

Unidentified: We haven't talked Dora Farms.

Rumsfeld: Oh, yes, very quickly. I'm in my office; Tenet calls. We think we've got a bead on Saddam and I've got to come over. He came to my office. I said, "Fascinating, let's pick up the phone and tell the President we're en route." We went over to the White House, walked into the Oval Office.

Clarke: This is a matter of a few hours; this is all happening—

Rumsfeld: Few minutes. He was in my office, felt like a minute. We were over at the White House in probably less than 40. We got over there and Tenet—I had heard a quick version of it, but he—What was the name of that sect that the CIA—

Unidentified: Sufis.

Rumsfeld: —were so close to? They had a group of Iraqis; I think you'd call them a sect.

[redacted]

Rumsfeld: They were working very closely with them [Sufis] against Saddam. George had a man on the ground from that sect who said, "Saddam is here, at Dora Farms, underground in a bunker." This is an opportunity. So Condi was called in. I suppose the Chief of Staff was probably there and Dick Myers I'm sure was with me. Tenet briefed the President. Then Tenet would periodically go into the National Security Advisor's private office off to the side and talk to the CIA folks on the ground. The President went around the room, "What do you think?" Everyone said, "Let's do it." It was before the deadline, which was a little uncomfortable, but if you could decapitate and regime change that way, given where you were at that point: you were very close to going in and committing a lot of U.S. lives. It was a three-minute decision.

I then waited, and he would talk and come back in and report. I had no role. The planes came in and unloaded, and the people were still on the ground. They then reported that they saw a stretcher come out with Saddam in it. They still believed they'd gotten him. It turned out the intelligence was all wrong. Now, did he have body doubles? Yes.

Unidentified: There wasn't even a bunker there when we got to Baghdad.

Riley: Is that right?

Rumsfeld: What do you mean? It had been destroyed?

[ONE PAGE REDACTED]

Engel: Go up 60,000 feet, strategic view: If the Dora Farms operation is successful, if Saddam is killed before major combat operations begin, what happens then?

Rumsfeld: First of all, I don't know.

Engel: Just your speculation.

Rumsfeld: Any number of things. One of his sons could try to take over. Tariq Aziz could. That fellow Douri could. He ended up doing it and leading a group, or people could just pull apart, get disorderly and you'd actually end up with a disorderly house and have people fleeing.

Engel: That's my question. Was this discussed in the Oval Office, or was it discussed ahead of time, that if we had an opportunity such as this we would immediately try to take it? What was the strategic thought process during and before?

Rumsfeld: Everything that I described took place probably within an hour and it was not discussed in that hour, at least with me. I didn't have time to write a memo for you.

Riley: Since there are planes to catch, a short benediction. We're very grateful for your doing this. Thanks for coming down. It has been an enormously illuminating experience for us and a lot of fun, as they always are. Thanks to all of you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]