DEFENSE FORUM FOUNDATION
Defense and Foreign Policy Forum

“Addressing America's National Security Challenges: A Conversation with Donald Rumsfeld”

Welcome and Moderator:
Suzanne Scholte
President
Defense Forum Foundation

Speaker:
The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld

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SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Good afternoon, I'm Suzanne Scholte, President of the Defense Forum Foundation and I welcome you to today's Congressional Defense and Foreign Policy Forum. First I would like to acknowledge some special guests in the audience: From the diplomatic community and I should say since we are talking about American security our "allies" from the diplomatic community, Dr. Jangwon Jo of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea; Akira Chiba of the Embassy of Japan; Ambassador Mouled Said of the Sahrawi Republic; Mohamed Banazzouz of the Embassy of Algeria; Harald Gollinger of the Embassy of Austria.

Our Special Guests: Ed Borcherdt of the Korean War Memorial Foundation and a Korean War veteran, and his daughter; Yleem Poblete, Chief of Staff for the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Mike Russell, Staff Director of the House Committee on Homeland Security; Elizabeth Hoffman, Senior Legislative Assistant, Congressman John Carter; Colonel Ray Besson of the Department of State. From Defense Forum Foundation, Ambassador Frank Ruddy, Chadwick Gore, JEB Carney.
Now, you all know that Donald Rumsfeld served as our 21st Secretary of Defense, leading the Defense Department during a critical time in our nation’s history following the terrorist attacks on September 11, so I wanted to share a few things about him that you may not know. He also served as our 13th Secretary of Defense, the youngest ever. He attended Princeton University on scholarship and graduated to serve in the U.S. Navy as an aviator and was all Navy wrestling champion and a captain in the Naval Reserve. He has served as US Ambassador to NATO, a White House Chief of Staff and the CEO of two Fortune 500 companies including G.D. Searle and Company. His successful turnaround of this international pharmaceutical company earned him awards from Wall Street Transcript and Financial World. Ambassador Middendorf reminded me that thirty years ago, he spearheaded the efforts on behalf of the Tuskegee Airmen ensuring that they would receive proper recognition.

Since leaving the Pentagon he has written a New York Times bestselling memoir, Known and Unknown, which debuted as #1 and spent 8 weeks on the bestseller list. His book has been described as the first political memoir of the information age and spans one third of the history of the United States. Written using a vast archive of documents from the letters his parents wrote back and forth during World War II to his own 20,000 “snowflakes” he dictated as Secretary of Defense, all of the proceeds from the book have gone to the Rumsfeld Foundation, which he chairs with his wife, to support military charities of which $650,000 has been donated so far. These charities range from Homes for Our Troops, which adapt homes to meet the needs of severely injured service members, to Our Military Kids, which provides grants to children of those currently deployed in the National Guard and Reserves. He specifically requested for today’s DFF Forum to be a conversation – in other words to reduce the time of his remarks in order for all of you to have more time to ask questions about the current national security challenges facing our nation. It is a very great honor to introduce Donald Rumsfeld....

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: Thank you Suzanne. Thank you very much for those kind words. She makes me sound like I can’t hold a job. It’s true that if you multiply my age, 80, times 3 and subtract it from 2012, it takes you right back to the beginning of our country. It’s amazing what a young country we have. Or what an old man I am – one of the two.

First of all, I’ve met a number of folks here, folks in the back, Marines, and others who have served in the Korean War, thank you all for your service to the country. There’s even a B-1 pilot here. I approved that plane in 1976. And it’s still going. Impressive.

I got out of the Navy in 1957, then came to Washington and served as an Administrative Assistant to a Congressman from Ohio. How many people are on Congressman’s staff here? Committee Staffs? Look at that... Terrific. Well, it was a wonderful experience for me and I came later to serve in the House, and I’ve always had a great affection for the House of Representatives, I am very pleased to be here today.

Members of the diplomatic corps, nice to see you folks.

I thought what I would do is make two quick comments about subjects I think are important, and then I’d be happy to respond to questions. Except from Bill Gertz. [LAUGHTER] My friend over there. I’ll have to answer his questions in private.

First subject is the way our government works. I studied government in school. I served in the legislative branch and in the executive branch, and looked at it from the business world, and I would submit that it isn’t working very well. By that I mean that if you think of the institutions that we have in the world today, most of them were fashioned at that inflection point between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. Here at home, that time was when the National Security Council came, the Department of Defense, the CIA; internationally that was when the United Nations,
NATO, the World Bank, and the IMF. All of those institutions date back to the Industrial Age. They've been in some cases adjusted and modified but not dramatically, but the world has changed. We are now in the Information Age, and those institutions really do not serve us very well.

The Department of Defense probably made the greatest progress as a result of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation by trying to achieve jointness and helping the services understand that the Army could not go out and win their war, the Navy go out and win their war, the Air Force go out and win their war, and the Marines win their war. It just does not work that way anymore. The problems that come up to a President in the White House do not come up through a needle head in a reasonably coherent way – they come up in a different way, and it requires that at the National Security Council level, try to bring those disparate threads into a reasonably coherent whole for a President to look at, to think about, and act on.

One of the problems is each of those institutions – the State Department, the Defense Department, the CIA – have different committees in the Congress, in the House and the Senate. The result of that is that the turf consciousness that exists in the Congress has the effect of making it very difficult for the departments and agencies to work together.

It seems to me that what is needed is something like the Hoover Commission. Back in the 1940’s, President (Harry) Truman asked former President Herbert Hoover to come out of retirement and chair this Commission to look at how government was working, and they made a lot of good recommendations and many of them were adopted. It strikes me that if our country’s going to be able to function effectively in the Information Age, it is time for another Hoover Commission. I am afraid he isn’t around to chair it, (laughter) but there are others who could do that, and we ought to have a serious look at it and recognize that the Congress is going to have to make judgments and decisions to adjust how they operate. Just as the Department of Defense had to make adjustments as to how they operate after the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, the Executive branch is going to have to make adjustments.

The other subject that is of interest to me, and again I’ll just make a few comments on it – came to mind when I was out signing (my) books at Fort Leavenworth. I have been to 19 military bases – I’m perfectly willing to market the book because all of my proceeds go to military charities, and so I don’t have to be shy about urging people to get out their Christmas card list and buy a book for everyone they know. When I go to military bases, I have the chance to thank people for their service and meet their spouses and children.

When I was at Leavenworth some months back, they asked me to speak to the Command College where there were about 1,402 majors, gathered in a big auditorium. I spoke, and then I started answering their questions. One of the questions was, “When you go to bed at night, what do you worry about?” The thing that first flashed through my mind was when I was asked that same question by Senator (Pat) Roberts during my confirmation hearing. You know, you immediately think of North Korea, you think of Iran, or you think of terrorism, and what I answered the Senate Committee that day, in 2001, January, I said, “What I worry about is our intelligence capability. It is a complicated world, it is a dangerous world, and weapons are increasing in lethality, and they’re increasingly available, and I worry about the difficulty of intelligence gathering from closed societies and of networks as opposed to countries.” You know, if you think about it, the Soviet Union existed for a lot of decades and even there, we watched it decade after decade, and we still made mistakes in terms of our intelligence assessments of what was taking place in that country.

So I told the Committee what I worried about when I went to bed was that. That flashed through my mind in front of these 1,400 plus majors, but I did not answer that way. I said something really quite different. What I said was, “What I worry about most today is American weakness.” The reason I say
that is, that throughout my adult life, the world has been a safer place because of the United States of America. If you believe, as I do, that weakness is provocative, that weakness invites people into making decisions they would not even think about, if in fact they realize they couldn’t do that if there was a deterrent effect, if there was something that dissuaded them, from believing they could do something, as long as the United States was there. First of all, it’s a symbol in the world, to be sure, but also as a factor in the world, as a nation that was seen as strong, and was seen as not an isolationist nation but a nation that was engaged in and interested in the world and willing to be available. The deterrent effect of that was significant.

I look at the United States today, and I think anyone has to worry. I just flew in yesterday from the Republic of Georgia, from Tbilisi, and met with people from all over Central Asia, the Caucuses, from Afghanistan, from Mongolia. If you do that, if you travel and talk to people from other countries, you will hear what I am saying. One Asian statesman called me on the phone not too long ago and said something to the effect, we seem to be modeling our economy on Europe, a failed model, a model that isn't working very well.

To the extent that the world looks at the United States and sees that we are not managing our economy in a way that suggests that we’ll be able to continue to participate in the world in a constructive way, that is a signal of weakness. To the extent that people read in the paper that we are going to cut something like half a trillion dollars and maybe under sequester another half a trillion dollars, plus or minus, from the defense budget over the coming decade, people read that, and they think, well, which way is America going? Where is it going? What’s it going to be like? What’s the effect of that in the world? I would submit that, that is what worries me when I go to bed tonight: the idea of an America that is not seen as strong and a presence and a deterrent, a dissuader, to countries from behaving in manners that are harmful to others.

Are we perfect? No, we’re not as a nation, and we make mistakes and everyone understands that. But if you look down from Mars on the world and see the countries that are doing reasonably well for their people, they tend to be the countries with the free political systems and the free economic systems and countries that manage their affairs in a responsible way. It seems to me that it is critically important that we recognize that what we are doing has to be seen as managing our affairs in a responsible way and to the extent we are seen as something other than that, it affects us to be sure, it affects our children and our grandchildren to be sure, but it also affects the world and it makes the world a less safe and a less stable place. With that I’ll stop and respond to questions. I will answer those I know the answers to and I will respond gracefully to those I don’t.

Q (SUZANNE SCHOLTE): Ambassador Middendorf wanted to send you this message and this first question: "It was a privilege to serve under you on our first SECDEF tour. You were always farsighted in preparing us for our defense needs especially foreseeing evolving threats 10 to 12 years in the future. This is especially critical because most new weapons systems require that kind of lead time. Since our defense must be based on potential capabilities of our adversaries, not on peaceful stated intentions which can change overnight, and looking into the future, China is clearly emerging with the greatest capabilities that we must match, threatening us often in non conventional ways. Do the current administration’s defense cuts threaten our future ability to offset these capabilities, particularly in areas of EMP, cyber threats to our military communication systems, and our ability to match Chinese anti-satellite capabilities?"

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: Yes. You can tell Bill Middendorf that’s how I answered it. There is no question that if the United States decide to make a significant cut in our national security agencies – State Department, intelligence agencies, and the Pentagon – we will really be repeating basically the same thing we’ve done after every major conflict in my lifetime. At the end of World War II we plowed back and then had to ramp up for the Korean War. Then, we
pulled back again and we had to ramp up for the Vietnam War. The signal of weakness is a dangerous one. 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, they drew down on our intelligence capabilities and they drew down on our defense capabilities, and the result was, when President George W. Bush came into office, we had a lot of work to do. We had to make investments to make up for what had taken place previously.

Now, someone can hear that and say, “Okay, Rumsfeld, that’s fine, but we survived, we made it, and therefore what are you worried about? If we always do that, then we always recover.” First thing is that it is enormously inefficient to do that, and second, it takes a whale of a long time to develop capabilities. For example, to develop human capabilities in the human intelligence business takes years. You can cut your budgets in a month or two, but think how long it took us when George W. Bush came into office to increase the number of unmanned aerial vehicles; to try to beef up our special operations forces, which are thanks to the work done during that period, the finest warriors on the face of the earth, but it takes time, it takes years. They do not get good that fast. You don’t get to be a B-1 pilot in 15 minutes. So, it is a terrible mistake.

The other part of the answer to, “Well so what, we’ve always survived,” is this: in earlier periods we were dealing with weapons of considerably less lethality. We were dealing in periods where their availability and the technologies needed to utilize them were not as readily available as they are today. I don’t know if anyone of you have read this Dark Winter study that was done at Johns Hopkins by some former official back in the late 1990’s. It was available and circulating about the time of 9/11, and it theorized smallpox in three locations in America with the result being that the contagious effect of smallpox killed up to a million people within a year. So, people may think of nuclear weapons, but they don’t think of chemical weapons, they don’t think as much about biological weapons, something that is contagious. Bill Middendorf mentioned cyber attacks and electromagnetic pulses. The reality is that we’ve thrown away the shoeboxes with the 3 by 5 cards that we used to have and the old IBM punch cards. Some of you are old enough to remember those, they had these little punches through these cards, and then they’d run them through something but, they’re gone! The most vulnerable nations on earth are the most advanced nations on earth to cyberattacks. Let there be no question, our electric grid, our communication systems, all of these things have a degree of vulnerability because the technologies that we’ve developed have those vulnerabilities. The techniques to disrupt them don’t have to be developed from zero by somebody up to the high level of technological capability, they can be bought off the shelf, and there are plenty of ways to cause those kinds of damages.

I’ll never forget Katrina, where people were trying to move around and they couldn’t get gas out of the gas pumps because the electricity was out. So, we forget in so many different ways, our dependence on the power grid. So, tell Bill, “I said yes, and then I elaborated.” Yes sir.

Q: My question for you is about Russia, there’s been some controversy recently with Mitt Romney saying it’s our number one opponent, with former Secretary Powell disputing that; I’ve heard generals talk about the northern route into Afghanistan and in fact that we have flyover agreements in place with the Russians, and we wouldn’t be able to supply our forces in Afghanistan right now without the cooperation of the Russians in those two places. So what’s your assessment of where we are with Russia in terms of some of the things they are doing and it seems Putin doesn’t seem to be someone who is a friend.

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: Well, I don’t want to answer in a way that comments on what Powell or Governor Romney said because I didn’t read the text, but clearly, the reset button didn’t work. Or else we hit the wrong button. The relationship with Russia is difficult.
On the other hand, how do you put this – their economy is, I suppose their GDP per capita is less than Portugal; it’s probably one of the first industrialized countries on the face of the earth in this history of mankind where the average life expectancy of males is declining. It’s got trouble with alcoholism; it’s got trouble with the outflow of technical people.

If you look around at who are its close friends, it’s Castro, Chavez, Assad, the Iranians, that’s their group of friends. They’ve now invaded the Republic of Georgia- they’ve got their military forces in a base within a matter of what, 20, 30, 40 miles from the capitol of Georgia, Tbilisi.

It’s a mixed relationship. I wouldn’t use the word enemy, and I wouldn’t use the word ally. It is what it is. The new president, Mr. Putin, has said recently that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest catastrophe of the 20th century. That is probably an imperfect quote, but it is close enough for government work. It wasn’t the biggest catastrophe, it was a wonderful thing. If you think of it, the people are now free and (these countries are ) where the economies are moving from command economies to freer economies throughout Central Asia and the Eastern Bloc and the Warsaw Pact countries.... And so he’s off in a direction that’s certainly not anything that can be considered an ally of the United States.

He and his associates are attempting to assert pressure on what they call the near abroad, the countries that used to be a part of the Soviet Union, and those countries, some of them in Central Asia, are buried between Russia and China, they’re in a tough spot. But I think that energy gives them leverage and clout, there’s no question they’ve developed a lot of influence with Germany because of the dependency the German economy has on Russian energy, and that gets mixed up with the common market decisions and the relationships even in NATO with respect to some of the former Soviet Republics.

I think that it is important that we address that relationship and try to keep it in check and improve it and see what can be done. I don’t think that people that are there currently in power will be there forever, and we’ve seen protests in the streets in Moscow particularly, but in other parts of the country recently. So, Putin is going to have to manage his affairs in a way that recognizes what happened in the so-called Arab Spring and summer and fall and winter, as something he has to avoid in his country. I think that will have an effect on him. I don’t know if that answers your question but I wasn’t in a position to comment on what either Powell or Governor Romney said. Yes sir.

Q: While we’re here at home, with regards to how our government’s not working so well – we have one chamber that is pretty unified here in the House, we have another chamber that’s pretty unified in the Senate, which hasn’t passed a budget in three years. Basically they’re at loggerheads, there’s intransigence on both sides, in both chambers, and how do you see that evolving, what approaches you can take, what kind of solutions are needed to get through this, what has to be done?

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: I’ve been married to my wife Joyce for 58 years. And she came here in ’57 when I did, and she was recently in the Lincoln Museum in southern Illinois, and she looked at the cartoons of Abraham Lincoln as a gorilla and an ape and a dunce and a horrible person, and the viciousness in the country during that period. She lived here when Martin Luther King was assassinated and the city blew up, the whole northeastern part of the city was in flames. There were National Guardsmen on every bridge, and you could not get in to cross the bridge from Virginia from the airport into DC, unless you could prove you lived there. Lyndon Johnson was president, there put small revetments around the White House to keep the protesters from storming the place and finally they put buses around there, to try to keep people out.

The idea that today is the worst anyone’s ever seen is nonsense. We’ve had tough times in this country, we’ve had disagreements between people, we fought a god-awful civil war with hundreds of
thousands of Americans dead, and, I’ll admit it, when I was here, in the Congress in the 1960’s, there wasn’t television in the Congress, I think I raised and spent $12,000 which was more than had ever been spent in my Congressional district, the last time I ran.  $12,000, imagine!

Today, what money’s done, what television’s done?  It’s a different environment.  I’ve had as many friends who were Democrats as I did who were Republicans during that period.  And so is it different?  Yeah, it is different from the ‘60’s, but is it different from the ‘70’s?  No, the ‘70’s were worse.  And I don’t know what the answer is, so I’m wandering around, giving you a history lesson.  There are some things that – if you honestly believe deeply for example that the way for people to have jobs in this country is to have the economy grow, and if you honestly believe that higher taxes will inhibit that kind of growth, then where do you compromise?

Go back to the Civil War.  What should Abraham Lincoln have done?  How should he compromise?  You could have five slaves but not ten?  That’s no compromise.  What do you do about this fundamental question about the direction of the country from an economic standpoint?  I think that people who say: what’s the answer, shouldn’t there be compromise?  Well, I don’t see how you compromise on that fundamental issue of either you’re going to get the economy to grow and create an environment that’s hospitable to investment and risk-taking or you’re going to spend more from government.  It’s just two fundamentally different approaches and the idea of meeting in the middle on that doesn’t work.

I think the American people ultimately are going to have to sort it out and we have that opportunity every two years, and every four years for president, and I think at some point, I’ve always kind of observed that the pendulum gets shoved too far one way, and people look at it and say well, I’m not really sure what I think about that.  And then it goes a little farther, and at some point they say, I don’t think that’s good, I think it’s too far, let’s shove that pendulum back a little bit.  They get out of their chairs, they change their priorities, and they get involved, and do things, and try to make it right for the country because every one of us has an obligation to help guide and direct the course of this country.  It’s the net effect of all of that that makes the difference.

So the fact that there’s a quote – ‘deadlock’ – I don’t think the answer is to cut it in the middle.  I think you have to get the American people to say well, that’s one direction and this is one direction, which one do we want?  I hope we don’t end up with divided government.  At least, if you’ve got the ability to go one way or the other, people can then decide how they feel about that, and nod and say that’s a good direction, or, that was a mistake, we better correct it and put somebody else in there and do it differently.  Yes sir.

Q: One of the main ways the United States and China have been directly competitive has been through direct foreign investments in Latin America, in Africa; how do you see that relationship developing and playing into the United States’ and China’s overall relationship, particularly with regards to foreign policy and policy in Africa?

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: Well, like the other question, I guess I don’t know the answer.  I’m not a big fan of development aid.  If you look at Haiti, we’ve probably got hundreds and hundreds of NGOs in there, shoveling all kinds of money in there, and the progress is nonexistent, so there must be a better way.  There must be a better way.

I look at what China’s doing, and it’s pretty smart, politically.  They throw their weight around.  You drive down the street in Ulan Bator in Mongolia and there is a new soccer stadium or something and you say, well how did that happen?  Well, the Chinese stopped by and gave us a soccer stadium.  Then you ask, are there any McDonald’s in Mongolia?  No.  Well why not?  Because of the Chinese.  McDonald’s is opening up one McDonald’s store in China every 15 minutes and the Chinese allowed
us how they preferred there not be McDonald’s in Mongolia. They drop off a yacht or a presidential palace on some island in the Pacific or in Latin America and they make friends!

Now, are they doing that pretty effectively? I think so; I think they’re making some friends. Where are they going to end up? I don’t know. But they’ve got problems. They have a big disparity between the economic wealth along the coast and the inland. They still have a lot of those great big government corporations that are going to have to pull apart, and they’re going to be thousands, tens of thousands of people out of work. They worry about protests, and they’re going to have to manage street protests. The one baby policy is a problem for them. They’re going to have 25 million men with no women of marrying age. They’ve got troubles with borders. They’ve got 12 or 14 countries that border China, and they’ve got troubles with India, they’ve got troubles with Vietnam, they’ve got troubles with other countries; their economy’s been growing well and they’ve been investing heavily in their defense capability.

On the other hand, one of the reason’s their economy’s growing well is because they’ve kind of opened it up I guess under Deng Xiaoping originally. They’ve got a lot of people running around with cell phones and pagers and computers and that’s hard, for them to manage. How do you keep a reasonably authoritarian regime if you’ve got a bunch of characters running around with iPads? Hard. And Facebook and Twitter and all that stuff, that I don’t quite understand.

So I think China is going to have tension between their desire to continue to grow their economy rapidly, and their ability or desire to maintain an authoritarian, communist regime.

Bill Gertz is an expert on China, and I know I don’t know what the relationship between the PLA, the People’s Liberation Army and the government is, but I know when the EP-3 was brought down, I think Jiang Zemin, the political leader was in South America. In any event, the handling by the Chinese government of that was terrible. It was just terrible. Whether that was what would have happened if he’d been home, I don’t know, but my sense is that the PLA was in charge of it. I think China is on a upward path, I think they’re going to see a lot of bumps in the road and it’s important for the United States of America to recognize that cutting our defense capabilities by half a trillion in the first tranche and prospectively another half trillion is a signal that’s not a good signal for the world, and it’s not a good responsible behavior by the United States.

I have no idea where the path’s going to go, but clearly we have a lot of interest in the Pacific. We have a lot of countries we have close relationships with as we should, with South Korea, with Japan, Singapore, Australia. I think that what the United States ought to do is to recognize what our capabilities need to be. The goal is not to fight a war – the goal is not to win a war; because you don’t want to fight one in the first place. The goal is to do what Eisenhower said, and it’s peace through strength, it’s to have those capabilities that create the kind of deterrent and defense and dissuading effect in the world that enable us to make a contribution to peace and stability.

If we see a country investing significantly as the Chinese are, then we ought to nod and say, fair enough, you’re a sovereign country, they can do what they want, but we can’t ignore it. We have to recognize that, not that they’re an enemy, but you can be darn sure they don’t get up every morning and ask what they can do to make life better for the United States. You can be absolutely certain of that. And we have to recognize that it’s our job to look out for our interests, and it’s a perfectly reasonable thing for us to do, and we are perfectly capable of it as long as we have the brains and the energy and the perseverance to do it. Yes sir.

Q: Mr. Secretary, thank you for your service. I’d like to build on the assistance question; over the last ten years or so, we’ve spent over 20 billion dollars on Pakistan, yet there’s increased concern regarding their partnership with us with regards to Afghanistan, particularly their tribal areas, for
example in northern Afghanistan; we’ve cut funding in half and we know what happened with the doctor that helped us get Osama bin Laden and the Pakistani government’s reaction to us getting him in general. What should U.S. strategy be towards Pakistan – should it be status quo, do we go in unilaterally to these tribal areas to go after the sanctuaries regardless of what Pakistan thinks? Do we continue foreign assistance to Pakistan? I’d like to hear your thoughts, thank you.

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: Thank you. We’ll go back a little bit. When 9/11 occurred and we needed help from Pakistan, Musharraf was president. He wore a uniform, he was a military man. He stepped up, courageously in my view; terrorists have tried to kill him two or three times. He said he’d help, and he did. The Pakistani government was terrific in scooping up people in the urban areas and turning them over to us, putting them in jail themselves; they didn’t do well in the federally administered tribal area along the Afghan border, it’s an ungoverned area. They’ve never governed it, they’ve sent their people up there and got over 200 killed as I recall.

The United States government made a big mistake some years ago when the Pakistanis exploded a nuclear weapon. We said: oh my goodness, you shouldn’t do that, therefore we’re going to cut off our nose to spite our face, and we’re going to go ahead and stop military to military relationship with Pakistan. Well, that did us fat lot of good. What did it do? It meant the whole generation of Pakistani military grew up and a whole generation of our military grew up not knowing each other, not interacting. I think that one of the most positive and constructive thing we could do is have the United States military deal with the militaries of other nations. It’s an enormous advantage to them, and it’s an enormous advantage to us. Yet, we cut them off, and not withstanding that, Musharraf stepped up.

Then, the State Department decided that Musharraf shouldn’t go to work in his uniform. So we started fussing at him and telling him he should get out of his uniform. So, he got out of his uniform, and he got thrown out, and we ended up with a government that was not strongly connected to the military, not as effective. Now, what do you have? You’ve got a country that has its own interests that are different from ours, it has a lot of nuclear weapons, and it has a lot of terrorists, and it’s a large Muslim country.

Can we even begin to expect that they’re going to get up every morning and behave exactly the way we behave? No! No way! We have to say to ourselves, they’re different. They live in a different neighborhood; they’ve got different problems, and the last thing we need is to decide that if they don’t behave exactly like we want, that we’re going to cut off relationships. It would harm us – if anyone thinks that having a failed state in Pakistan is a good idea, I’d sure like to hear why.

So my inclination is to say: we weren’t always like we are today – we had slaves, up until the 1800’s, women didn’t vote until the 1900’s, but we are what we are today, recognizing that we evolved. Other countries evolve. They’re going to be different than we are, and we’re going to expect that they’re going to be different. And my interest is, which way are they leaning? Are they moving towards freer political systems, of free economic systems? And more opportunities for their people? Or are they moving away from it all. Are they helpful to us? We’ve got political interests, we’ve got economic interests, and we’ve got security interests. There are very few countries where all three of those interests coincide with ours. Maybe a handful. There are other countries where we have security interests in common, and by golly, Pakistan has been an enormous help to us in that part of the world.

I don’t have the vaguest idea if one or two or twenty Pakistanis knew where Osama bin Laden was. There are people running around saying: oh my goodness they had to know, he’s right there near their military base. I say well, you know, I was in the Pentagon for the last six years, you go up the Potomac River, all those great big estates, with the walls and the trees, I don’t know what’s going on in there! I don’t have any idea what’s going on in there! I’ll tell you if I were Osama bin Laden I wouldn’t have
told one Pakistani where I was. Everyone in the world’s looking for him. So I think pointing your finger with certainty, in saying they had to know, I don’t know that they had to know. They might have known. Someone might have known. Maybe it wasn’t even the government. Maybe it was just the intelligence agencies. I don’t know. But I know I don’t know.

We did the same thing in Indonesia years ago. Some of their police did something that we wouldn’t do, so what did we do? We cut off military to military relationships with Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, I guess. Really dumb. Made us feel good. I’ve got no problems with members of Congress yelling and screaming in our Congress and saying they’re bad, they should do better, they should be nice to us, they should be more like we are. I have no problem with Pakistani legislators yelling and saying the United States shouldn’t be shooting people in our country, they shouldn’t be engaging in cross border raids, and they shouldn’t send their drones over and blow up our cities. That is okay.

But it’s when the governments do that, that’s harmful. You need private diplomacy. Not public diplomacy; the idea that we should run around, our State Department people, our Defense Department or White House people doing a lot of fussing in public, it seems to me is unprofessional.

With respect to the doctor, I don’t know anything about it, but by golly, the leaks coming out of this government are harmful. If you’re in another country and our country comes to you and says give us a hand, we need some help on intelligence or we need some cooperation on this or that, and they see how we put at risk the lives of people who cooperate with us, I think you have to assume that people are going to be less willing to be helpful. That’s a long answer to a short question. The answer is, I don’t know the answer as to how we ought to deal with Pakistan, but I think cutting off aid to make ourselves feel better is going to be harmful and damage our relationship with Pakistan. We’ve got to understand that it’s complicated, it’s not one dimensional, it’s multi-dimensional, and what we really care about is having that country be leaning in the right direction rather than leaning in the wrong direction.

We ought to manage our affairs with them in a way that has them coming towards freer political and economic systems, assisting us in our security relationships and being not perfectly cooperative because their interests are different, their neighbors are different, their cultures are different, their history’s different, but at least being more helpful rather than less helpful. Yes.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I digress for a moment because all this conversation today reminds me of my first opportunity in private foreign diplomacy. In early April 1980, I was in mainland China having tea in the state guest house with President Zia of Pakistan the day our planes went down in that unsuccessful attempt to try to rescue our hostages. You know well my mother Wendy Borcherdt, she sat there and lectured, very politely, as a Junior League woman would, the president on how Ronald Reagan would become president of the United States and face the world with change. So, I find today’s conversation with China and Pakistan and all our little intricacies there very engaging. But my latest interest is in Turkey, and watching what is going on now in their border and seeing our disputes with them over airspace at certain crucial times and yet I wonder if they feel strongly about joining the European Union, and what’s happening with NATO, and I would just like to hear your comments on how you see Turkey and our defense.

THE HONORABLE DONALD RUMSFELD: Well we’ve had of course a close military to military relationship with Turkey for years, given our joint involvement in NATO. When I was ambassador to NATO in the early 70’s, it was always a task to make sure those relationships with Turkey stayed strong, because we have a strong Greek community in the United States and the Greek-Turkey relationship is a very strong and difficult one for each of those countries. The pressures in the United States often in the eyes of the Turks, tended to favor the Greeks.
Now, we’ve got a problem; Turkey is a sovereign country, it’s got leadership that’s been in there quite a while, they have arrested and thrown into the slammer an awful lot of military personnel — and, I shouldn’t say that I don’t know quite why they’re doing it -- but an awful lot of them had very strong NATO relations. They’re now in jail, and that, at least, puts a caution flag up. What’s going on? Now, is the political government in Turkey concerned about the possibility of a military coup? Is that what’s worrying them? Do they have a feeling that the balance of power between the military side and the political side needed to be redressed for some reason? All I know is that an awful lot of very fine officers have been arrested and put in jail, and for a NATO ally, to watch that process, is worrisome.

I don’t know where it will lead. Turkey under Ataturk, looked to the West and that has changed; it is less so at the present time. Erdogan came in making noises about joining the European Union, but I think everyone thinks at this stage, that chances that that’ll happen are pretty low. I would guess that he and some of the other people in Turkey are looking at the way the EU is behaving are going to be asking themselves, how hard do they want to push?

It’s a rocky road over there right now and Turkey’s a big country. It’s geographically important, it’s one of the few countries in NATO that has a defense budget over 2 percent, so it’s an important ally for the United States.

I have a feeling that I’m getting the hook.

[Applause]

SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Thank you sir, thank you so much, thank you all for joining us today. I know a couple of you brought some of his books to sign, Mr. Rumsfeld said he has a few minutes to sign books before he heads off. Thank you all for being here. Thank you.

(END)