

OPINIONS & LETTERS

## COLUMN LEFT

### Rummy Is Crummy

By Alon Barlevy,  
Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club

**E**arlier last month, at a town hall meeting with soldiers in Kuwait, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was asked the now famous question: "Why do we soldiers have to dig through local landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromised ballistic glass to up-armor our vehicles, and why don't we have those resources readily available to us?" After stalling a little (utilizing the technique of asking to repeat the question), Rummy gave the now infamous answer, "You go to war with the Army you have ... not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time."

The problem with that answer is that it simply does not apply to the situation in Iraq. This would have been the right answer if we were attacked, and we were using the Army we have to fight in self defense. The situation in Iraq is the exact opposite. We are the ones that started this "preemptive war," as the Bush Administration likes to call it, in order to disarm Saddam of his weapons of mass destruction (where are those WMDs, by the way?). Under such circumstances, we should have waited to get all the equipment needed in order for the troops to successfully accomplish their mission. As secretary of defense who sends soldiers to risk their lives for their country, Rumsfeld must provide the troops with everything they need in order to minimize the risk, and maximize the probability of success.

The fact that our troops do not have the equipment they need to keep them safe was well known prior to that town hall meeting in Kuwait. Just prior to the November elections,

a story came out of soldiers in Iraq who refused to carry out an order because they were concerned that the vehicles provided were not safe enough to carry out the mission, making it a "suicide mission." The concerns were deemed justified, and no soldier was punished in that incident. We, as a society, should be outraged that the situation has deteriorated to a point where the issue of troop safety does not receive the proper attention until a soldier publicly asks such a question.

Since that infamous exchange, we have learned that the question was actually planted by a journalist (although the soldier who asked the question has continued to stand behind it). The reason there was a need to plant the question in the first place is that journalists were barred from asking questions at that event. While it is perfectly understandable that the secretary may want to hold different events for troops and different events for journalists, Rumsfeld (like his boss) limits the questions that can be asked at his press conferences and the journalists that are invited. This is not something that should be tolerated in a properly functioning democracy.

I'm not Rumsfeld's only critic. Republican senators John McCain (AZ), Chuck Hagel (NE), Susan Collins (ME), Trent Lott (MS) and Norman Coleman (MN) have also been critical of Rumsfeld. It is time for Rumsfeld to be held accountable, and let go.

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Community News.

We welcome opinions, viewpoints and letters to the editor.

Letters may be edited for length and grammar.

Email: [editor@cerritosnews.net](mailto:editor@cerritosnews.net)

Fax: (562) 921-1915

13047 E. Artesia Blvd., Suite C-102  
Cerritos, Ca 90703

## **Text of Article**

Rummy is Crummy  
Alon Barlevy, PhD.  
Vice President, Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club

Earlier last month, at a town hall meeting with soldiers in Kuwait, Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, was asked the now famous question "why do we soldiers have to dig through local landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromise ballistic glass to up-armor our vehicles, and why don't we have those resources readily available to us?" After stalling a little (utilizing the technique of asking to repeat the question), Rummy gave the now infamous answer "You go to war with the Army you have. .... not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time."

The problem with that answer is that it simply does not apply to the situation in Iraq. This would have been the right answer if we were attacked, and we were using the Army we have to fight in self defense. The situation in Iraq is the exact opposite. We are the ones that started this "preemptive war", as the Bush Administration likes to call it, in order to disarm Saddam of his weapons of mass destruction (where are those WMD's, by the way?) Under such circumstances, we should have waited to get all the equipment needed in order for the troops to successfully accomplish their mission. As Secretary of Defense who sends soldiers to risk their lives for their country, Rumsfeld must provide the troops with everything they need in order to minimize the risk, and maximize the probability of success.

The fact that our troops do not have the equipment they need to keep them safe was well known prior to that town hall meeting in Kuwait. Just prior to the November elections, a story came out of soldiers in Iraq who refused to carry out an order because they were concerned that the vehicles provided were not safe enough to carry out the mission, making it a "suicide mission". The concerns were deemed justified, and no soldier was punished in that incident. We as a society should be outraged that the situation has deteriorated to a point where the issue of troop safety does not receive the proper attention until a soldier publicly asks such a question.

Since that infamous exchange, we have learned that the question was actually planted by a journalist (although the soldier who asked the question has continued to stand behind it). The reason there was a need to plant the question in the first place is that journalists were barred from asking questions at that event. While it is perfectly understandable that the secretary may want to hold different events for troops and different events for journalists, Rumsfeld (like his boss) limits the questions that can be asked at his press conferences and the journalists that are invited. This is not something that should be tolerated in a properly functioning democracy.

I'm not Rumsfeld only critic. Republican Senators John McCain (AZ), Chuck Hagel (NE), Susan Collins (ME), Trent Lott (MS), and Norman Coleman (MN) have also been critical of Rumsfeld. It is time for Rumsfeld to be held accountable, and let go.