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NEWS ARTICLES**Rumsfeld: U.S. Must Outdo Terrorists in Public Opinion Battle**

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 18, 2006 – The war on terror is unlike any conflict the U.S. has ever faced, and some of the most important battles are fought not on the ground, but in newsrooms around the world, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said yesterday in New York.

Never before has a war been fought in an environment as technologically advanced as today's, with scores of media and communication tools available to everyone, Rumsfeld said at the Council on Foreign Relations. Insurgents around the world have learned to use this media-rich environment to further their goals, and to successfully combat them, the U.S. government needs to adapt and use the technology that has proven to be so powerful, he said.

"We are fighting a battle where the survival of our free way of life is at stake and the center of gravity of that struggle is not simply on the battlefield overseas; it's a test of wills, and it will be won or lost with our publics, and with the publics of other nations," Rumsfeld said. "We'll need to do all we can to attract supporters to our efforts and to correct the lies that are being told, which so damage our country, and which are repeated and repeated and repeated."

Insurgent groups have their own media relations committees, which decide how best to manipulate public opinion using the media, Rumsfeld said. To combat them, the U.S. government is considering some changes to its communication strategy, he said.

An important change the government needs to make is to incorporate communications planning into every aspect of the war on terror, Rumsfeld said. The government needs to develop more rapidly deployable communications forces that are trained to use all facets of the media, he said. Waiting too long to put communications teams into place can give the enemy a foothold in public opinion, as was proven in the early days after the major conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, he said.

"Let there be no doubt, the longer it takes to put a strategic communication framework into place, the more we can be certain that the vacuum will be filled by the enemy and by news informers that most assuredly will not paint an accurate picture of what is actually taking place," he said.

Public affairs and public diplomacy forces deployed to a theater of operation need to be experienced enough to engage the full range of media that the world uses, Rumsfeld said. This will require an elevation in Internet operations, the establishment of 24-hour press operations centers, and training in other channels of communication, he said.

The U.S. government cannot rely on any other source for information, and it is bound by the truth, therefore it cannot move with the speed of the insurgents, who use lies to try to prove their ideology, Rumsfeld said. Even though the enemy is very skilled at manipulating the media, the United States

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has an advantage in its standard of truth, which will triumph in the end, he said.

"I believe with every bone in my body that free people, exposed to sufficient information, will, over time, find their way to right decisions," he said.

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