

IT5- "SECRETARY RUMSFELD RESIGNS AFTER KAY REPORT, CITING PLEDGE TO GRANDSON JUTTING-JAW AUTHORITY FIGURE SAYS VIEWING OF "LIAR, LIAR" CATALYZED SHOCKING DECISION. ", SALON, 10/4/03

Satire

Oct. 4, 2003 | Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld resigned today, in the wake of a report by weapons inspector David Kay stating that the U.S. had found no evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The report, Rumsfeld said, "humiliated me by showing to the world that I have no regard whatsoever for the truth." To the stunned amazement of reporters at a press conference, Mr. Rumsfeld added that he had been lying consistently to the public since taking office, but that the Kay report was "the straw that broke the camel's back." Mr. Rumsfeld stated that "the Kay report shows definitively that I misled the American people when I repeatedly claimed we had evidence that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction that posed a serious enough threat to justify our invasion of Iraq."

Secretary Rumsfeld explained that his resignation was prompted by a promise to his grandson, who had just watched the movie "Liar, Liar," that he would stop lying for an entire day. "My grandson said that if Jim Carrey, an actor in a movie, could tell the truth for a whole day that I should be able to do so as secretary of defense in real life. He had tears in his eyes, and looked at me so earnestly that I agreed to his request without thinking through the consequences.

"I later realized that telling the truth in a single press conference, let alone for a full day, would mean that I would have to resign. I'll be honest and tell you that I considered breaking my pledge to my grandson. But it's funny. While I have been able to lie to the country until now, I just can't break my promise to the little guy. So here it goes. The truth."

He then read the following prepared statement:

"The truth is that I have failed our nation in regard to fighting terrorism in the wake of Sept. 11. My miscalculations have vastly increased the

probability that tens of thousands of Americans will die from terrorism in coming years. Personally, I cannot serve as secretary of defense knowing that when terrorists next kill innocent Americans that I and my administration will have some of their blood on our hands.

"Japanese leaders long regarded it as a matter of personal honor to take responsibility for mis-serving their society, as I have learned through my extensive study of Japanese history and civilization," said Mr. Rumsfeld, who reportedly regards himself as smarter than anyone else in Washington.

"Unfortunately most U.S. politicians like myself won't even admit the truth, let alone take responsibility for our mistakes. We accuse our critics of serving the enemy, present false claims of success, or engage in a wide variety of other strategems to avoid responsibility for our obvious failures. I love my country too much, and have too much self-respect, to behave in such a shameful way any longer. It is clear to me that I will be despised by history as just another arrogant, bumbling U.S. policymaker who was too egotistical to heed the opinion of others. Through this act of simply telling the truth I hope to at least redeem myself in the eyes of my grandson."

In response to reporters' questions, Mr. Rumsfeld admitted that he had disastrously mishandled America's military response to Sept. 11. He acknowledged that most of Afghanistan is being run by warlords and support for the Taliban is increasing as it had after the Russian occupation there; that the U.S. is bogged down in Iraq, with U.S. casualties expected to rise; and that the U.S. military is drastically overextended, unable to respond to far more serious threats such as North Korea or Pakistan.

Mr. Rumsfeld also admitted to massively underestimating the costs of his Iraq policy, which now exceed the total of the growing state budget deficits that have forced education and healthcare cuts affecting millions of Americans.

Mr. Rumsfeld said he most regretted that his policies have strengthened terrorist organizations that threaten the lives of

hundreds of thousands of Americans in coming years. "My single biggest mistake was devoting hundreds of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of troops, and shifting dozens of America's best experts targeting al-Qaida, to the far lesser threat posed by Saddam," he stated.

"The policies I have recommended have inflamed the entire Muslim world against us, helping al-Qaida recruit terrorists committed to killing Americans. I must agree with the al-Qaida supporter quoted on 'Nightline' who stated that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was the best thing that had ever happened to them. And my foolishness in rushing into Iraq before ensuring allied support has meant that our allies are refusing to supply soldiers, thereby disrupting the lives of the many decent Americans who thought they were joining a weekend National Guard. I have been the worst defense secretary since Robert McNamara, and cannot retain my self-respect without resigning."

Responding further to reporters' questions, Mr. Rumsfeld explained why he is more responsible than the president for the failure of U.S. anti-terrorist policy. "As a former baseball team owner and education-oriented governor, the president did not know anything about foreign policy or have the slightest idea of how to fight terrorism after Sept. 11. He relied almost entirely on the advice he received from myself and Mr. Wolfowitz on military matters, Vice President Cheney on political, business and economic affairs, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice on geopolitics, and Karl Rove on domestic politics."

Mr. Rumsfeld explained that he was also ashamed of his hypocrisy in supporting the administration leak of national security documents to reporter Bob Woodward suggesting that the president was actually in charge of our anti-terrorism policy. He said the leak not only misled the American people but violated his own call to stop leaks that he issued immediately after Sept. 11. "When Woodward made it clear that he would take our version of events at face value in return for the NSC notes and an interview with the president, I betrayed my own values," he stated. "Woodward has great credibility because of his role in Watergate, and we wanted to use him to build public support for the president and the invasion of Iraq."

Mr. Rumsfeld was asked whether he felt Messrs. Cheney, Powell and Rove were also morally obligated to resign because of their bad advice to the president. He responded coldly, "I've made my choice. Now it's up to them. They have to live with themselves, as I do with myself. I don't know how they feel about lying to their grandchildren."

Vice President Cheney's office responded to Mr. Rumsfeld's press conference with a written statement: "The vice president respects Mr. Rumsfeld's decision to tell the truth as he sees it, but does not agree with his judgments. As he explained on 'Meet the Press' on September 14, 2003, the vice president believes that every single decision he and the administration have made on Iraq has been an enormous success. He notes that Iraq is at peace, our soldiers have been welcomed by cheering crowds, we have restored electricity, water and hope to the people of Iraq, and that the Middle East is closer to peace than ever before. Accordingly, the vice president cannot agree that he is to be blamed for anything whatsoever in relation to terrorism or Iraq. On the contrary. And he feels he deserves special credit for creating jobs for Americans by ensuring that his former employer Halliburton gets the lion's share of funds for Iraqi reconstruction without competitive bidding, thus avoiding unnecessary delays."

Karl Rove responded that "it is as ridiculous to suggest that I bear responsibility for our Iraq policy as it is to imply that I approved outing Joe Wilson's wife. And, as much as I respect Secretary Rumsfeld, I must note that the only ones who will benefit from his incomprehensible decision to tell the truth will be Wesley Clark, Howard Dean and John Kerry. I urge the secretary to avoid doing anything further to help the Democrats."

Although neither President Bush nor his office have commented publicly on the matter, the president was known to have mixed feelings about the secretary's decision. A confidant of the president reported that Mr. Bush liked the idea that Mr. Rumsfeld was taking the blame for his administration's failed anti-terrorism policy.

But, his friend says, the president wishes Mr. Rumsfeld would do more. "Couldn't he also take the fall for the Joe Wilson thing? We need to put somebody out there, or this thing could drag on until the next election," the chief executive is quoted as saying. "My guys who leaked the information won't take responsibility because they're afraid to go to prison, and I understand that. But Rummie will be so popular for telling the truth that I can get away with granting him clemency.

"The problem is that Rummie has this stupid idea of 'honor.'" Imitating Secretary Rumsfeld, the president whimpered, his lips pursed in mock desperation, "Please! Don't dishonor me! Don't dishonor me!" "The president is totally focused on the next election," his associate told Salon. "He doesn't have time to worry about his honor."

About the writer

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