

Rumsfeld faces criticism for internal memo leak

The defense secretary will keep his job even though questions have been raised about his policy problems

By Thomas M. DeFrank and Richard Sisk
New York Daily News (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld angered the White House on Wednesday with a leaked memo questioning whether the U.S. was winning the war on terror.

"This has put Rummy in a bad spot," one Bush administration source said.

"Before this he had personality and policy problems," the source said. "Now he has a credibility problem because he's acknowledged that they've all been putting on a happy face about Iraq."

It was the latest blow for the beleaguered defense secretary. Earlier this month, the White House switched responsibility for rebuilding Iraq from Rumsfeld to national security adviser Condoleezza Rice.

"The president isn't happy," but he won't fire Rumsfeld, a Bush

official said.

Officials said sacking Rumsfeld would give the appearance of admitting that Iraq is as big a mess as his critics contend.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan, traveling with Bush in Australia, quickly gave a vote of confidence to Rumsfeld. "That's exactly what a strong and capable secretary of defense like Secretary Rumsfeld should be doing," said McClellan.

The Oct. 16 Rumsfeld memo to top Pentagon aides, first disclosed by USA Today, warned of a "long, hard slog" in Iraq and Afghanistan, and openly questioned whether the military can win the global terror war.

He complained about "mixed results" on al-Qaida and fretted that terrorism was winning recruits faster than the United States could kill or capture them.

Rumsfeld also wondered if the Pentagon was capable of beating the terrorists and pressed aides to consider whether "to fashion a new institution" to take over the terror war from the military.

Bush officials told the New York Daily News the memo has further diminished Rumsfeld's standing at the White House by embarrassing Bush

when his Iraq policy is under constant attack by Democrats and even some Republicans.

While the source of the leak was a prime topic in Washington political corridors Wednesday, there was a broad consensus that the leaker was no friend of the embattled defense secretary.

"Rumsfeld has stepped on many toes at the Pentagon," a senior congressional source said, "and this was the revenge of the toes."

Rumsfeld and his top aides defended the memo as the typical internal work product of a hard-charging executive posing tough questions and pressing his staff to think aggressively and make tough choices.

Rumsfeld said he used the memo to urge his aides to "lift our eyes up and look out over the horizon. I do it periodically."

But the pessimistic tone of the memo contrasted with the drumbeat of positive statements from the White House and Pentagon on steady progress in Iraq that allegedly has been overlooked by the body-count reporting of the major media.

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Stem cell research to help inherited disease treatment

Scientists hope to use the findings to develop cures for bone-marrow diseases

By Alan Bavley
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Scientists at the Stowers Institute for Medical Research have taken important steps toward identifying where blood-forming stem cells are nurtured in bone marrow, a discovery that has eluded researchers for a quarter-century.

Their preliminary findings, and those of two other research centers, could help lead to ways to grow large numbers of these cells in the laboratory and alter them genetically to improve the odds of patients with sickle cell anemia and other diseases.

"This is basic research that you can translate into better human health," said Linheng Li, the biologist who led the research team at Stowers in Kansas City, Mo. "How stem cell numbers are regulated in the body — that was unknown."

In separate studies using genetically engineered mice, the researchers at the 3-year-old Kansas City research campus and a team of scientists from Harvard and the University of Rochester found evidence of what they believe is the "niche," or biological environment, where blood-forming stem cells reside in bone marrow.

These hematopoietic stem cells are tied closely to a certain type of bone-forming cells called osteoblasts in bone marrow, both research groups reported.

Using different techniques, the researchers were able to increase the number of osteoblasts that make up the niche areas in the mice, more than doubling the number of stem cells.

Studies by the two groups are being published Thursday in the journal *Nature*.

Stem cells have become a central

focus of biological research because they can reproduce almost indefinitely and be turned into the diverse kinds of cells that make up the body.

In embryos, stem cells develop into all the different tissues of the body. Fully grown organisms retain more specialized stem cells that replenish the blood, skin and other tissues.

Scientists hold out hopes of devising numerous applications for stem cells — from replacing the destroyed brain cells of Parkinson's disease patients to providing new insulin-producing cells to diabetics.

Doctors have long used transplants of hematopoietic stem cells to replace the blood-making system in patients with leukemia and some other cancers and blood disorders.

Most transplants have used bone marrow from donors, but in recent years doctors more frequently have used stem cells extracted from donors' blood.

Patients undergo radiation or chemotherapy to kill their own bone marrow before receiving injections of stem cells from a donor. The cells migrate to the bones and resume making blood.

There is evidence that patients are less likely to reject stem cells harvested from blood contained in discarded umbilical cords. So far, cord blood stem-cell transplants have been given to children because doctors haven't been able to extract enough stem cells to use in adults.

Growing blood-forming stem cells in the laboratory also would give scientists the opportunity to modify them genetically as potential treatments for inherited diseases.

That kind of research has been hindered because stem cells rapidly turn into blood cells once they are isolated in the laboratory.

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