

White House rejects calls for Rumsfeld's resignation

The secretary of defense draws criticism for secrecy surrounding allegations of abuse in Iraqi prisons

By David Jackson and Richard Whittle
The Dallas Morning News (KRT)

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration's secretive ways have landed a key player in political peril.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is in hot water, not because U.S. troops abused Iraqi prisoners, but because Congress learned about it the same way the rest of the world did — from news reports.

"The Congress should have been notified of this situation a long time ago," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., echoing past congressional complaints about the administration's penchant for secrecy.

Rumsfeld is sure to be peppered with criticism Friday when he goes before the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, where lawmakers are eager to hear about Defense Department investigations initiated earlier this year into prisoner abuse complaints.

As a rising chorus of Democrats called Thursday for the defense chief's resignation or dismissal and one suggested impeaching him, President Bush stood by his defense secretary — a day after the president himself complained to Rumsfeld about seeing the gruesome pictures of prisoner abuse for the first time in the news.

"I should have known about the pictures and the (Pentagon) report," Bush said.

As the defense secretary spent Thursday prepping for what could be the fiercest hearing of his long career, aides said they try to keep Congress in the loop.

"We make a very concerted and

aggressive effort to keep members of Congress informed," said Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman.

But in Congress, lawmakers from both parties said they resented being caught by surprise about military investigations that began in January.

"Congress is always going to be complaining about inadequate consultation and lack of information ... I suspect if you went back to the (George) Washington administration it would be the same."

Senior defense official

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat who is among those calling for the defense secretary's ouster, said it is unacceptable that members of Congress learned about the prison abuse by watching CBS's "60 Minutes II."

Earlier this week, Rumsfeld said the allegations that warranted a criminal investigation of the guards at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad first surfaced in January and have been under examination since then.

"I recognize the appetite of people for instant information and instant conclusions," Rumsfeld told reporters. "These things are complicated. They take some time."

Rumsfeld's own relationship with Congress is complicated, and while some of his aides dismiss the resignation demands as partisan rhetoric, lawmakers in both parties bridle at what they view as his insufficient consultation.

Members of Congress, mostly Democrats, have accused the Pentagon

of trying to hide the costs of the Iraq war.

Amid reports that the administration plans to seek another \$25 billion, Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., said Thursday that the administration is dribbling out requests for supplemental appropriations "to conceal the full costs of meeting the challenge in Iraq until after the election."

One Pentagon official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the administration believes it is better to submit a more accurate request for funds later, after the true costs of the conflict are known, rather than estimating in advance.

Pentagon officials said many of the congressional tensions are with the Bush administration itself, not the Pentagon. They also called them part of the Washington game.

"Congress is always going to be complaining about inadequate consultation and lack of information," said the senior defense official. "I suspect if you went back to the (George) Washington administration it would be the same."

As Rumsfeld prepared for his high-stakes appearances Friday, he took time for a previously scheduled breakfast Thursday with four Senate Republicans, including John Cornyn of Texas.

Cornyn dismissed the Democrats' calls for resignation as "premature."

The former Texas attorney general noted that the federal investigations into the prisoner abuse cases include grand jury proceedings that are secret by law. And Cornyn said his talk with Rumsfeld had reassured him that "this thing was responded to in a serious and appropriate way."

But the way the story came to light is a problem, Cornyn added: "The last thing any member of Congress, or the president, wants is to be surprised by something like this."

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RESIGNS

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move will be a blow to the university system because of his efforts to help it operate more effectively.

"Over the last six months, his energy and leadership have brought higher education to the forefront of public attention," he said. "He has articulated the critical importance of a first-rate system of higher education to our state's future."

Frohnmayr added that he hopes Goldschmidt will remain involved with higher education.

"We hope his voice will continue to be heard even without his official role," Frohnmayr said.

ASUO spokeswoman Taraneh Foster said it was too soon for ASUO officials to comment on Goldschmidt's resignation.

Goldschmidt is a Eugene native and former vice president of Nike and president of Nike Canada. He also served as the U.S. Secretary of Transportation for President Jimmy Carter from 1979 to 1981.

ASUO President-elect Adam Petkun said Goldschmidt's resignation will be a loss because the board had been moving forward with re-vamping the higher education system under his tutelage.

"It is sad to be losing him right now," Petkun said. "His leadership will be missed."

Oregon Student Association

Executive Director John Wykoff said Goldschmidt's role as president affected higher education.

"I can say that they're tough shoes to fill," Wykoff said. "He brought a lot of energy to the cause of higher education that will be hard to replace."


"Over the last six months, his energy and leadership have brought higher education to the forefront of public attention ... He has articulated the critical importance of a first-rate system of higher education to our state's future."

Dave Frohnmayr
University of Oregon
President

Wykoff added that Goldschmidt kept an open mind about differences between the opinions of University officials and students, a vital ability.

"Goldschmidt was able to come to it with an open mind," Wykoff said.

Contact the city/state politics reporter at parkerhowell@dailyemerald.com.

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Friday

- University Libraries Journal Sale, Browsing Room, Knight Library, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Each item is priced at 25 cents.
- Mother's Day Loving Kindness Meditation, EMU Rogue Room, noon-1 p.m.
- Humanities Work-in-Progress Talk by Evlyn Gould, Romance Languages, entitled "Turning Around the Dreyfus Affair: Maurice Barres and the Problem with Cultural Identity," Room 159, Prince Lucien Campbell Hall, noon-1 p.m.
- PERS Update, EMU Fir Room, 1 p.m.-3 p.m. All employees are welcome.
- "A Natural History of Destruction," discussion by Bianca Theisen from Johns Hopkins University, EMU Owyhee Room, 3:30 p.m.
- Philosophy Lecture by Christopher Preston from the University of South Carolina, EMU Rogue Room, 4-6 p.m.
- Belluschi Lecture by architect and educator Jo Noero entitled "The Certainty of Context," Room 177, Lawrence Hall, 5:30 p.m.
- Oregon Ballroom Dance, Room 220, Gerlinger Hall, 7:30-11:30 p.m.

Saturday

- Natural History Identification Day, Glenn Starlin Courtyard, Museum of Natural History, 1-4 p.m. Bring an item you wish to learn more about.
- Museum of Art Open House, Museum of Art, 1-4 p.m.
- Philosophy Alumni Colloquium entitled "Activism and Theory: Making an Impact on Today's Environmental Policy," EMU Walnut Room, 2-8 p.m.
- Journalist Amy Goodman "The Exception to the Rule" Speaking Tour, Room 150, Columbia Hall, 7 p.m.

Sunday

- The Gang of Four Multi-Piano Jazz Recital, Beall Concert Hall, 4 p.m.

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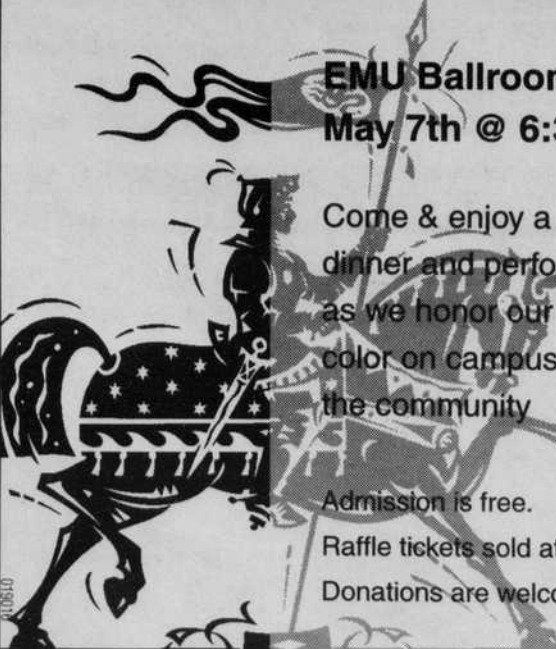


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