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Americans Support Military in Myriad Ways, Rumsfeld Says

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WASHINGTON, March 29, 2005 – Americans nationwide continue to support U.S. servicemembers' efforts in helping countries like Afghanistan and Iraq establish free and democratic societies, the Defense Department's top civilian said here today.

These, and other, recent world events show "that when given a chance, people choose to be free," Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told reporters at a Pentagon news conference. And "those who want to be free have a patient friend in the United States," Rumsfeld said. "The great sweep of history is for freedom."

The American people, the secretary said, "can be proud of the example they have set and the assistance they've provided" in helping to spread freedom across the globe.

Rumsfeld praised U.S. servicemembers' "countless unheralded acts of valor and compassion" as part of efforts to help "millions of liberated people build societies free of tyranny and terrorism."

Back home, Americans of all ages are providing an "outpouring of support" for U.S. military efforts in the war against global terrorism, Rumsfeld pointed out.

For example, the secretary noted, high school students in Dale City, Va., held a spaghetti dinner to raise money for wounded U.S. troops. In Nashville, Tenn., he continued, the Grand Ole Opry, the world's longest-running live country music radio program, "made itself available to troops overseas through Armed Forces Radio." And the Freedom Calls Foundation, he noted, is using video teleconferencing to connect deployed servicemembers with loved ones back home.

Ski resorts in Vail, Colo., Rumsfeld continued, made available 2,000 cost-free rooms for returning servicemembers as part of Operation Freedom Lodging.

Also, "there are hundreds, if not thousands, of other moving acts" of troop support undertaken by citizens in communities across the nation, Rumsfeld said.

To highlight these initiatives and to create a forum to foster additional participation and support, Rumsfeld said, DoD recently launched the “America Supports You” Web site. On this site, Rumsfeld said, “folks can send ‘thank you’ cards to troops, find groups that provide comfort and companionship to military personnel and their families, and even ‘adopt’ a serviceman (or servicewoman) or an entire platoon.”

And on March 31, he noted, Enid, Okla., will become the first U.S. city to adopt an Army brigade and an Air Force squadron as part of the America Supports You program.

“These are but a few examples of the creativity, the resourcefulness and the compassion of the American people,” Rumsfeld noted.

The secretary also cited hundreds of servicemembers’ messages of thanks posted on the America Supports You site. He noted one from Army Staff Sgt. Lomax Roberson Jr. in Camp Casey, South Korea, and from District Heights, Md.

“To all the loyal and thankful people out there, we feel your love and it makes us stronger and more focused on the heavy missions placed in our hands,” Roberson wrote. “Thanks for taking care of the soldiers’ families assigned under my position while I was deployed in Baghdad, Iraq. If this was a gift from me and my troops, that gift would be ‘God Bless You All.’”

Biography:

[Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld](#)

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