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After Rumsfeld: Next Steps for the National Defense

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Secretary Donald Rumsfeld departs the Pentagon after a record-long service heading the Department of Defense. His tenure saw several significant advances: a clear policy to field missile defenses to protect America against ballistic missiles from rogue states; the evolution of military transformation from an unfocused effort into a platform to develop the kinds of military capabilities needed to address the challenges of the 21st century; and the deployment of the armed forces to play an important and courageous role in fighting the war on terrorism. While pundits and historians will debate the success and challenges of Rumsfeld's tenure, Washington needs to focus on the future and the critical tasks required to keep America safe, free, and prosperous.

The Pentagon's To-Do List

The new Secretary of Defense—President Bush will nominate former CIA director Robert Gates—and the new Congress will have to work together with the President to ensure that the most critical jobs get done. These include the following objectives:

- **Finish the job in Iraq and Afghanistan.** There is no simple U.S. military solution to the challenges in either country. U.S. efforts must focus on helping the governments of Iraq and Afghanistan build the capacity to take responsibility for their own security, encouraging them to address the political issues that divide their people, and assisting them in providing effective government services.
- **Deploy effective missile defenses.** There are no quick fix, short-term solutions to the nuclear proliferation challenges posed by Iran and North Korea. Developing and fielding effective missile defenses as rapidly as possible will be crucial to confronting these volatile situations and reassuring our allies. The most effective missile defenses will be deployed in space, where the missiles fly on the way to reaching their targets.
- **Get the terrorists.** The most effective ways to diminish the transnational terrorist threat are to eliminate the terrorists' leadership, break up terrorist networks, and dry up terrorists' sources of recruiting and funding. Where military force can make a constructive and effective contribution to these missions, it should be deployed.
- **Prevent a hollow force.** Ongoing operations around the world have placed great demands on U.S. military men, women, and equipment. Military budgets must be sufficiently robust to pay for current operations, to modernize the military, and to maintain a trained and ready force. This will require spending about 4 percent of the U.S. economy on defense now and for the foreseeable future.

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The challenges of wartime leadership are great. Secretary Rumsfeld tackled the job with courage and determination. The tasks will be no easier for those who follow him. To succeed, the men and women of the armed forces will need Americans' support and sound, focused leadership from Washington.

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