

U.S. aiding anti-Taliban rebels in Kabul

BY ROBERT BURNS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — American special forces slipped into the Afghan capital to offer "advice and counsel" to triumphant opposition forces, and small numbers of U.S. troops are operating against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Tuesday.

Rumsfeld cautioned against concluding that the Taliban's retreat from the north means the hunt for Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network is almost over. He said U.S. officials don't know where bin Laden is hiding.

"It's a difficult country," he said. "There are lots of caves. There are lots of tunnels, lots of mountains. It is not an easy task. We said that at the outset."

When asked whether he feared Osama bin Laden would launch a new terrorist attack out of desperation, Rumsfeld said: "The idea that we could appease them by stopping doing what we're doing, or some implication that ... we're inciting them to attack us is just utter nonsense. It's kind of like feed-

ing an alligator, hoping it eats you last."

U.S. bombs fell in Afghanistan for a 38th day, and Rumsfeld said that in the aftermath of the Taliban's collapse in the north, the United States has two short-term goals besides hunting down the terrorists. They are opening a "land bridge" to Uzbekistan in the north and repairing airports near Mazar-e-Sharif and north of Kabul so that more humanitarian aid can be brought in.

Rumsfeld raised the possibility that leaders of the Taliban or the al-Qaida terrorist network might flee across the Afghan border into Iran to the west or Pakistan to the south and east.

He cited three possibilities, any of which he said would lead to the eventual demise of both groups:

"They can flee and reorganize in the south. They can flee and melt into the countryside, or they can defect. If they reorganize in the south, we're going to go get them. If they go to ground, we will, as the president said, root them out. And if they decide to flee, I doubt that they'll find peace wherever they select."

Rumsfeld said a "very small number" of U.S. forces are in Kabul, not enough to keep a careful eye on the opposition forces that entered the capital Monday after the Taliban fled.

He said U.S. special operations troops are in southern Afghanistan, but unlike the arrangement in the north that helped trigger the retreat of the Taliban, U.S. troops in the south are working independently of opposition forces, Rumsfeld said. He was vague about their mission.

"They are doing things that are helpful to our side and unhelpful to the other side," he said.

With the capture of Kabul and other northern cities comes the potential for gaining information on the movements of bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaida and the Taliban, U.S. officials said.

U.S. forces accompanying northern alliance commanders are searching for Taliban items like computer disks, maps and documents that might contain useful intelligence, one official said. They probably also are interviewing Taliban prisoners and commanders who defected to the alliance.

Rumsfeld expressed hope that the military successes in northern Afghanistan would create new opportunities in the south.

"One of the encouraging things is of course that as movement occurs in the north, that some of the tribes in the south will decide to become more active" in providing U.S. forces with information about the whereabouts of leaders of both the Taliban and the al-Qaida network, he said.

In the Pashtun-dominated south, which includes the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, resistance to the Taliban has been fragmented. Unlike in the north, there is little organized military opposition in the south.

A CIA effort to create an uprising in the south could focus primarily on arming Pashtun tribal leaders and commanders persuaded or bribed to fight the Taliban.

Rumsfeld seemed to refer to this possibility when he said, "It may very well be that money talks, at some point."

Exiled supporters of King Mohammad Zahir Shah aren't viewed as a likely avenue to oppose the Taliban in the south.

Tuition

Palms says USC is still a bargain

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Pruitt said the university has raised tuition every year for the past 25 years.

"We have to generally raise it 3 percent each year at least to cover inflation," he said. Inflation is gauged by the Higher Education Price Index, which Pruitt called the "standard."

"We've been averaging to about 3 to 3 and a half percent a year," he said.

Despite the rising costs of tuition at USC, President John Palms said, "For many people, this is a bargain."

"The cost of private higher education is skyrocketing," he said. "You go to a private college or university, and it's about \$35,000 a year. This is not anywhere near that."

Palms said he expects enrollment to remain strong because of the falling economy. "We have students less likely to drop out after one semester because there are not many jobs out there like there used to be," he said. "Now, at the same time, we have to get ready for another possible cut,

"If the tuition goes up a lot more, I'll have to start getting student loans and taking care of it myself. That's kind of tough because it hurts a lot of students who are already here if they got halfway through the semester and they have to charge more."

CHRIS BARKER
THIRD-YEAR FINANCE STUDENT

and we'll just have to handle that, and the ... SDIC is going to help us decide where the priorities ought to be and where we might make cuts if we get cut again."

Student body President Corey Ford said he "wasn't too happy" with the tuition increases and said Student Government is working with Clemson and College of Charleston on joint lobbying projects for when the Legislature reconvenes in January. Ford wouldn't give details about these projects.

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