

War criminal Donald Rumsfeld dies at 88



Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld listens to a question during a news conference at the Asia Security Summit in Singapore in 2006 [File: Tim Chong/Reuters]

Washington, July 1 (RHC)-- Former U.S. President George W Bush released a statement Wednesday, remembering his former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as a “good-humored and big-hearted” Cabinet member concerned with the wellbeing of U.S. military servicemen following news of Rumsfeld’s death at 88.

While Bush remembers Rumsfeld well, it is likely history will not look kindly on their legacy, judging from initial reactions to Rumsfeld's death.

Bush and Rumsfeld saw preliminary success after the U.S. went to war with Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks on New York City and the Pentagon. But these gave way to years of setbacks, a war with Iraq based on faulty intelligence, and international backlash over US use of torture and its military killing civilians, among other controversies.

Rumsfeld infamously said the war with Iraq, which was predicated on claims of then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein having weapons of mass destruction, would be a short war. "I can't tell you if the use of force in Iraq today would last five days or five weeks or five months, but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that," Rumsfeld said in a 2002 interview.

Oliver Willis, an editor at The American Independent, drew attention to this and another quote about Hussein's alleged nuclear weapons programme, used to justify the war.

The war lasted from March 2003 to December 2011, when then-President Barack Obama ended the conflict. However, war reignited in 2013 as spillover from Syria's civil war, and saw the U.S. heavily engaged in Iraq until 2017.

The wars in Iraq killed hundreds of thousands, including tens of thousands of US military members. The total number of Iraqi civilian deaths is unknown. The Iraq Body Count project places the number of deaths since 2003 between 185,724 and 208,831, as of June 30.

That war and the Afghan war, which continues today, saw the U.S. use torture on detained enemy combatants, a source of controversy for the Bush administration.

George Zornick, an editor at The Huffington Post, shared the memo Rumsfeld signed on December 2, 2002, which authorised 20-hour interrogations, use of phobias and stress positions. These and other techniques came to be known as "advanced interrogation" during the Bush administration. They were determined to be torture by scholars and experts.

Zornick noted Rumsfeld handwriting at the bottom that challenged a four-hour limit on standing: "However, I stand for 8-10 hours a day. Why is standing limited to 4 hours?"

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