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HEADLINE: Vice President Dick Cheney discusses the war on terrorism, the violence in the Middle East and the economy

BODY:

MR. RUSSERT: But first: He's out of his cave, I'm happy to report. Here at a disclosed location, the set of MEET THE PRESS.

Mr. Vice President, welcome back.

VICE PRES. DICK CHENEY: Good morning, Tim. It's good to be back on your 10th anniversary show.

MR. RUSSERT: Thank you, sir.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Very nice.

MR. RUSSERT: Let's go right to Afghanistan. Concerns that in Kandahar, there are some pro-Taliban elements in charge in parts of the city. Are we comfortable with the situation in Kandahar?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: It's better than it was a few days ago when the Taliban still controlled the city, clearly, but it's still in a state of flux. I mean, this is not sort of a neat, orderly process. There are a lot of negotiations that have gone on back and forth. I think there's no question, though, but what the Taliban hold on the city is history. There are still pockets of Taliban left, not only there but elsewhere around the country. But, in effect, I think the Taliban, as an effective government, has been destroyed. And it's only a matter of time until they're all shut down.

MR. RUSSERT: Are Mullah Mohammad Omar and Osama bin Laden still in

Afghanistan?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I believe so. Can't say with absolute certainty, but the reporting, of course, the volume of the reporting, has increased over time, as we've gotten more and more people into those areas that they've been active in. And I would say the preponderance of the reporting, at this point, indicates that Mullah Omar is still down in the Kandahar region someplace and that Osama bin Laden is also still in Afghanistan.

MR. RUSSERT: Up in Tora Bora?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: In that general area.

MR. RUSSERT: Both those men had a lot to say during the course of this war about destroying the infidels and destroying America. Omar said that, "Stand and fight till death. Don't run around like chickens with your head cut off." How do you compare that rhetoric with their behavior this morning?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, you know, they were eager to send young men on suicide missions, but they appear to be holding up in caves. You know, they talk a bold game when it's others they're trying to command to fight to the last drop of blood, but, of course, in the final analysis, they're running and hiding, as the president said they would.

MR. RUSSERT: Do you detect there are people on the ground who are interested in the reward and interested in helping us find them?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Absolutely. The reward is a significant incentive, obviously. But there's another element operating here, too. The people of Afghanistan feel a great sense of liberation and the people having the opportunity to get out from under the heavy hand of the Taliban. And at the same time, I think there's a real sense of outrage on the part of many Afghans about what Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden brought down on the heads of the Afghan people. The fact that they did become a sanctuary for terrorists, of course, has been devastating from the standpoint of what we've had to do to go rout them out, and they blame Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden for that. So they're eager to wrap them up.

MR. RUSSERT: If either are captured alive, will we insist that they be turned over to the American authorities?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Yes.

MR. RUSSERT: No international court?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Nope.

MR. RUSSERT: America?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: We've made it very clear that we want Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar and their senior leadership, and if they're taken alive, we expect to take custody of them.

MR. RUSSERT: And they would be the kind of people who would go before the military tribunals?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: That's a decision the president has to make, but obviously, they're exactly the kind of people the tribunals were established for.

MR. RUSSERT: The Washington Post reports today there is a new tape of Osama bin Laden where he expresses advanced knowledge of the attack on the World Trade Center and seems to even suggest responsibility. Have you seen that tape or do you know of it?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I have. I have seen it.

MR. RUSSERT: Will you release it to the public?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I've seen it. It's not for me to release, but I've seen pieces of it. I didn't see the whole thing.

MR. RUSSERT: What can you tell us about it?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, first of all, it's in Arabic so I have to rely on what somebody tells me he's saying. It shows him being interviewed or meeting with another individual, apparently a cleric, talking about the events of September 11, and it's pretty clear as it's described to me that he does, in fact, display significant knowledge of what happened, and that there's no doubt about his responsibility for the attack on September 11. Now, we've known that all along. There's been some dispute in some quarters about it, but this is one more piece of evidence confirming his responsibility for what happened on 9/11.

MR. RUSSERT: Would it be helpful to put that out so people in the Arab world, the Muslim world can see it in his own words?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I don't know whether it would or not. Somebody who's more knowledgeable than I am would have to figure that out. And we've not been eager to give the guy any extra television time than he can obtain for himself. But I think we'd probably rely on the experts as to whether or not it'd be a good idea for us to release it.

MR. RUSSERT: If Omar and Osama bin Laden are captured, will the United States then leave Afghanistan?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Leave in terms of our military forces, certainly the military operation would be pretty well wrapped up at that point, but we've had some other missions that we wanted to accomplish. We clearly are interested in not only those two

individuals but also their senior leadership. So I would want to say that that had been dealt with. We also are aggressively searching out a number of sites where they had operations to see whether or not there's any evidence that they had obtained weapons of mass destruction. Beyond that, we feel we have a continuing obligation and responsibility to support the interim government that's now being stood up to help them with humanitarian relief, so I would expect we'll have a continuing role there, but not as an occupying military force.

MR. RUSSERT: We will not be part of a multinational peace force?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: We might provide some support for it. The president will have to make those decisions. But again, the thing to emphasize here is that we're not eager to have the United States come in and become an occupying power in Afghanistan. That's not our purpose. We're not there for that reason. At the same time, we want to see to it that what is left behind gives the Afghan people the opportunity to develop a strong representative government, a government that can guarantee that in the future, no terrorists will once again find sanctuary or safe harbor in Afghanistan.

MR. RUSSERT: It sounds like we're talking years.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, years of involvement, I think, in terms of non-governmental organizations, perhaps AID working through the United Nations, peacekeepers, perhaps for a short period of time, but that's really got to be worked out with the interim government. As soon as you've got an interim government stood up in Afghanistan, they're going to be responsible in part for deciding what kind of additional assistance they need. Do they need outside help, and if so, what might be done to provide it?

MR. RUSSERT: Attorney General John Ashcroft appeared before the Senate this week and had some interesting things to say. And let me show you and our viewers on the board: "To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty; my message is this: Your tactics only aid terrorists--for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. They give ammunition to America's enemies..." Who has been aiding terrorists or giving ammunition to the enemies?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, you'd have to direct that question specifically to Attorney General Ashcroft. The point's been made--and I think with some justification--that the response, if you will, to, for example, establishing military tribunals on time has gotten a little bit hysterical. People alleging, for example, that the military was going to be able to haul people off in the dark of night and subject them to summary executions. Now, that's never been intended. That's not in the executive order. What we're doing here has ample historical precedent, and we are, in fact, safeguarding the basic fundamental values and liberties with that establishment. So I think it would help if we get the rhetoric level down and people look at the facts and consider what's, in fact, anticipated here.

MR. RUSSERT: If someone said these were kangaroo courts or Bush's dictatorial power

or Soviet-style abomination...

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I would say that's a...

MR. RUSSERT: ...or try 'em-fry 'em, betraying our principles, is that aiding the terrorists?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, it certainly--I don't know if it's aiding the terrorists, but it's certainly misrepresenting what the administration is about here.

MR. RUSSERT: That's William Safire.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, I disagree with Bill. Bill and I have talked about his column.

MR. RUSSERT: But, in fact, aren't we in Afghanistan to protect the First Amendment?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Excuse me. We're in Afghanistan for the stated purposes, Tim, in terms of rooting out terrorism and...

MR. RUSSERT: Our way of life as well.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: But we are also involved here with respect to the establishment of these military tribunals, in trying to establish venues to bring terrorists to justice, but also to protect the United States against further attack. Now, the military tribunals is a very important proposition and say--Bill Safire's an old friend of mine and I frequently agree with him. I think he's just dead wrong in this case. If you look at what the president's ordered and directed here, he will be the one who decides whether or not anybody goes to a tribunal. He also has made it clear that they're to have a full and a fair trial. He's also made it clear they're to be represented by competent counsel, they're to be treated humanely. All of that's in the executive order.

Now, there are ample reasons to go this route. For example, when we go into the normal criminal court proceedings and have intelligence information that we might want to use in trying to obtain a conviction, that information becomes public. And what's happened in the past, unfortunately, is that terrorists have gone to school on us, they've watched the trials, for example, from earlier terrorist activities, and learned how to operate to make it tougher for us to be able to find out what they're doing. There are serious security problems involved. The judge who handled the first World Trade Center bombing case is still under 24-hour-a-day security some eight years after the attack. So all of those problems can be avoided with the military tribunal. It'll be used only for people who are suspected of being foreign terrorists. No American citizen's going to be subjected to that. And as I say, we will safeguard, within reason, the rights of the accused.

MR. RUSSERT: But you can oppose that concept without being disloyal or unpatriotic?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Oh, I think so. I would not suggest otherwise.

MR. RUSSERT: John Walker, a young American who was found with an AK-47 in Afghanistan--and let me go through some of the comments that have been made about him and himself as well. This was first put out by Robert Young Pelton, a author who found him: "John Walker, 20 years old, a member of Ansar, or the helpers, the Arab-speaking fighters funded and supported by Osama bin Laden." Then this from Newsweek: "Walker described himself as a 'jihadi,' a fighter of holy wars, and said that he had received combat training at a camp in Afghanistan where Osama bin Laden appeared several times." And then this, his own words: "I came into contact with many people who were connected with the Taliban. ...my heart became attached to them."

And this: "When the U.S.S. Cole was bombed ...John seemed to have a more casual view and he suggested that the U.S. ship should never have been there in the first place, and that by docking in an Islamic country, had committed an 'act of war.' The bombing, John implied, was a justified response." And this, coming up from our next one we can show, please. U.S. News: "In the back courtyard, some were being interrogated by two American CIA agents. One of the Americans, known as Mike, asked a captive why he came to Afghanistan. The answer was short and direct: 'We are here to kill you!' With that, the prisoner leapt at his questioner, kicked, and bit him to death. That sparked an all-out revolt. For three days, some 500 imprisoned Talibs," including Walker, "bent on fighting to the death, barricaded themselves inside the September 11 fortress and battled it out." And Walker went on to say that he supported the attack of September 11 on the United States. Based on that, is he a traitor?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, Tim, you're asking me to pass judgment on a particular individual here based on these press accounts. I have trouble, I think like many Americans do, understanding why somebody who grew up in this country would ultimately find themselves in Afghanistan fighting with the Taliban and the al-Qaeda. But I don't know all the facts. We don't know all the facts, as the government. He has been held in military custody in Afghanistan. Once, I think, we're through debriefing him, he will be turned over to civilian authorities, and as an American citizen, he's entitled to certain rights and he'll be handled accordingly. Somebody will have to make a decision as to whether or not he needs to be brought to trial, what the charge might be, what the evidence supports.

MR. RUSSERT: Who makes that decision?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, I think eventually it'll probably be made by the Justice Department. But I'm not an attorney, and let me reserve judgment on that until the lawyers have had a chance to look at it.

MR. RUSSERT: There are reports that he's at Camp Rhino in the custody of the United States Marines, in effect, a prisoner of war. Is that fair?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, he is, clearly in custody. The Marines have him at this

point. He is being accorded all of the rights of the Geneva Convention, but, as I say, he's an American citizen. He, I expect, will, in fact, be turned over to the civilian authorities.

MR. RUSSERT: They say he is providing some information that may be helpful. If he, in fact, does that--Is he doing that?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Some of the information he has provided, I'm told, has been useful.

MR. RUSSERT: If he does more of that, will that be taken into consideration in terms of leniency?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: It's not a judgment for me to make.

MR. RUSSERT: How could someone 20 years old from America infiltrate al-Qaeda, be in the presence of Osama bin Laden, so successfully, and our CIA couldn't?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, I'm not sure. Needless to say, I'm surprised to find an American in that setting, especially a 20-year-old who's gone off and joined the Taliban, but I don't know all the specifics of how he got included within the organization or what he had to do to be accepted. Those are matters that, you know, are yet to be investigated.

MR. RUSSERT: Are there any other Americans over there?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: There have been reports that there were two other Taliban fighters who claimed U.S. citizenship. At this point, I can't confirm that. Just reports that, supposedly the Northern Alliance had captured two additional individuals who claimed citizenship. Now, it might well be, for example, that they were born here but grew up in a different part of the world. We simply don't know.

MR. RUSSERT: There is no way that John Walker is an agent for us?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I have not heard that.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me turn to Iraq. When you were last on this program, September 16, five days after the attack on our country, I asked you whether there was any evidence that Iraq was involved in the attack and you said no. Since that time, a couple articles have appeared which I want to get you to react to. The first: "The Czech interior minister said today that an Iraqi intelligence officer met with Mohammed Atta, one of the ringleaders of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, just five months before the synchronized hijackings and mass killings were carried out."

And this from James Woolsey, former CIA director: "We know that at Salman Pak, on the southern edge of Baghdad, five different eyewitnesses--three Iraqi defectors and two American U.N. Inspectors--have said--and now there are aerial photographs to show it--a Boeing 707 that was used for training of hijackers, including non-Iraqi hijackers trained

very secretly to take over airplanes with knives." And we have photographs. As you can see that little white speck--and there it is, the plane on the ground in Iraq used to train non-Iraqi hijackers. Do you still believe there's no evidence that Iraq was involved in September 11?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, what we now have that's developed since you and I last talked, Tim, of course, was that report that--it's been pretty well confirmed that he did go to Prague and he did meet with a senior official of the Iraqi intelligence service in Czechoslovakia last April, several months before the attack. Now, what the purpose of that was, what transpired between them, we simply don't know at this point, but that's clearly an avenue that we want to pursue.

MR. RUSSERT: What we do know is they--Iraq is harboring terrorists.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Correct.

MR. RUSSERT: This was from Jim Hoagland of The Washington Post: "George Bush said that Abdul Rahman, who helped bomb the WTC back in 1993, according to Louis Free, was 'hiding in his native Iraq.'" And we'll show that right there on the screen as an exact quote.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Right.

MR. RUSSERT: If they're harboring terrorists, why not go in and get them?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, the evidence is pretty conclusive that the Iraqis have, indeed, harbored terrorists. That wasn't the question you asked me last time we met. You asked about evidence...

MR. RUSSERT: Correct.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: ...in involvement in September 11. Over the years, for example, they've provided safe harbor for Abu Nidal, worked out of Baghdad for a long time. The situation, I think, that leads a lot of people to be concerned about Iraq has to do not just with their past activity of harboring terrorists, but also with Saddam Hussein's behavior over the years and with his aggressive pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

If we go back and we look in 1981, he was pursuing nukes. The Israelis pre-empted when they hit the Osryic reactor and shut down the program. In 1991, 10 years later, when we went in, we found evidence of a very aggressive nuclear program. For the last three years, there have been no inspectors in Iraq, and he has aggressively pursued the development of additional weapons of mass destruction. He's had significant sums of money from smuggling oil that are outside the oil-for-food program that are available to him to undertake these activities. And we know, as well, he's had a robust biological weapons and chemical weapons program, and unlike just about anybody else in the world, he's used them. He used those weapons against the Kurds in Iraq and against the Iranians in

the Iran-Iraq war.

MR. RUSSERT: You were very critical of the Clinton administration for not inspecting for two years. It's been a full year since you've been in office. Why hasn't the Bush administration demanded and gotten inspections?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: The president's made it clear and did the other day in connection with a question he was asked that he believes that the inspectors ought to go back into Iraq. Of course, Saddam Hussein has subsequently rejected that option. We've not yet made a decision about how best to proceed, but clearly, given the events of September 11, given the vulnerability of the United States that's now been demonstrated, given the increasing linkage, if you will, between terrorists and weapons of mass destruction, we have to be very deliberate in terms of how we proceed to make certain that the United States is not vulnerable to that kind of an attack. And so all of those considerations will, I'm sure, influence the president's decision. But he'll ultimately have to make the decision about what kind of policy we'd best want to pursue with respect to Iraq.

MR. RUSSERT: John McCain, Jesse Helms, Trent Lott and others have said that they have authorized and appropriated money to fund the Iraqi opposition. While--when will the administration allow that money to be spent?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Some money has already been spent, and I'm sure more will.

MR. RUSSERT: Soon?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, I would expect so.

MR. RUSSERT: The Middle East--Yasser Arafat said this morning that the United States should pressure Israel not to use American-provided military equipment to attack Palestinians. What's your response to Mr. Arafat?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, the problem we have with Mr. Arafat, the process of negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians began with the commitment by Yasser Arafat and the PLO to renounce violence and to recognize the right of Israel to exist. What we've seen now in recent months after the breakdown in the Camp David talks last year and after the rejection by Arafat of what most people thought was a very generous offer from Prime Minister Barak, has been a resumption of a great deal of violence, most of it perpetrated by suicidal attackers operating out of Palestinian-controlled territory against Israeli civilians. So we've seen an attack on a disco, we've seen an attack on a pizza parlor full of women and children; most recently, of course, in a shopping mall.

The fact of the matter is, until Arafat demonstrates that he's serious about controlling suicide attackers from Palestinian territory against the Israelis, there's not going to be any progress. The people are suffering, most, of course, I think, are, in fact, the Palestinians, the Palestinian people, who are led by someone in this particular case who is either

unwilling or unable to deal with the homegrown terrorists that operate from there.

MR. RUSSERT: Are his days numbered?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: That's not for me to say. Obviously, the Palestinian people are responsible for deciding who's going to be their leader and who represents them. But Hamas, the terrorist organization--the president took steps this week to clamp down on their funding and financing--has taken credit for having killed 25 Israeli civilians and wounded over 200 more in the past. It's not surprising, given that level of violence and those repeated attacks, that the Israelis take steps to defend themselves. They have every right to do so.

MR. RUSSERT: His behavior has pushed back the possibility of a Palestinian state?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I think there's no question about that.

MR. RUSSERT: Will the president bring Arafat and Sharon to Washington and put them together in one room?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: We've made it clear that until Mr. Arafat lives up to his commitments, which he is not doing, until he demonstrates that he is prepared to, in fact, stop the violence that originates in Palestinian-controlled territory, there won't be a meeting.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me move to the home front. Since you were elected in November, 2.5 million Americans have joined the unemployment lines. There are now eight million Americans out of work. Also, the \$5 trillion surplus has shrunk to \$2 trillion, which is supposed to be used for Social Security. In light of all that, will you support a postponement or delay of the president's tax cut in order to provide funding for unemployment compensation for those millions of Americans who are out of work?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: The fact is, Tim, we don't have to postpone the tax reduction in order to provide for those who are out of work. We're prepared to do that anyway. We are moving forward. The president's called for an increase in the number of weeks of eligibility for unemployment insurance, for providing help for the unemployed with respect to health insurance, etc. That's going forward. The tax package we put in place early this year is absolutely essential to the recovery of the economy. Raising taxes in the midst of a recession is probably one of the worst ideas in terms of economic policy. It makes no sense at all.

What we really need now is an additional stimulus package. We need to accelerate those tax cuts, not postpone them. The president's called for accelerating the tax cuts, called for accelerated depreciation to encourage business to invest and create jobs, called for additional rebates, for example, for taxpayers who didn't get one earlier this year. But moving the tax cuts forward and making them deeper, if you will, is an integral part of getting this economy going again. There's no question that we're in a recession. It started

in the middle of 2000. I was on this show with you about a year ago and I said, "We might be on the front edge of a recession," and there was a lot of criticism on my comments, but it turned out to be accurate.

MR. RUSSERT: How long's this recession going to last?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: It depends on whether or not we get our friends on the other side of the aisle, the Democrats in Congress, frankly, to move it. If we move a stimulus bill now before the end of the year, I think we can expect recovery next year. The quicker we get started, the better. The quicker we get started, the fewer people are going to lose their jobs, and the faster we're going to be able to create the kind of economic growth and prosperity that will guarantee jobs for all Americans.

But Tom Daschle, unfortunately, has decided, I think in this case, to be more of an obstructionist. He's insisted that no bill can move forward unless two-thirds of the Senate Democrats support it. That's an artificially high barrier. What we need, last time I checked to pass something to the Senate, was 51 votes. And that ought to be the test, and it ought to be a bipartisan bill. We're prepared to negotiate and reach an agreement, but so far, he's been unable to get anything through the U.S. Senate, and at this stage, as I say, he's set an artificially high barrier that may, in fact, delay action on a stimulus bill until it's too late.

MR. RUSSERT: David Broder reports in this morning's Washington Post that Governor Jeb Bush of Florida, confronted with a deficit, delayed his tax cut as being fiscally responsible. Will George W. Bush follow the lead of his brother?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I think those are different circumstances, Tim. I think if you think about it, you know, what a state does is much more fiscal management, whereas what we're talking about at the federal level is what really governs the overall shape and direction of our economy. They're just on a different scale and a different set of problems that a governor has to deal with vs. the president.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me show you an ad in South Dakota, and you mentioned Senator Tom Daschle, and this was paid for by the Family Research Council out there. Saddam Hussein and Tom Daschle juxtaposed. That's a little over the line, isn't it?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, I'm not responsible for the ad, and you flashed it so fast I didn't have a chance to read the copy. But there is a disagreement with respect to Senator Daschle on energy. The House of Representatives has moved and passed an energy bill last summer. The Senate has not acted. Tom pulled it out of the Energy Committee, so they're not even considering in committee an energy bill at this point. The House has passed a stimulus package. The Senate has yet to act. The House just passed trade promotion authority. The Senate has yet to act. In the energy area, it's extraordinarily important that we move for energy security, energy independence. We're never going to get all the way over to energy independence, but given the volatility of the Middle East and our increasing dependence on that part of the world for oil, it's important we go

forward, for example, with things like ANWR.

MR. RUSSERT: But it's OK if you have philosophical differences between Democrats and Republicans.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Philosophical differences are fine. What we're seeing, though, unfortunately, is that efforts are being made here to artificially erect barriers to Senate action. We saw it in the two-thirds hurdle requirement that's been established on tax stimulus. We see it on judicial nominations. The Senate Judiciary Committee has simply refused to move forward with a number of confirmations that would let us fill the vacant slots.

MR. RUSSERT: Pat Leahy says they've confirmed more than the Republicans confirmed with President Clinton.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: That's not true. And if you look at the numbers and the actual number of vacancies in the court today, our total federal court system, are greater than they were at the beginning of the year. They're not even keeping pace with retirements and deaths.

MR. RUSSERT: Before you go, a lot of e-mail to me: "Where's Dick Cheney been? What does he do all day?" Answer?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I work hard. I'm--frequently when the president's in the White House, I'm elsewhere. But wherever I go, I have my secure videoconferencing capabilities, and so I'm plugged in to the regular meetings at the White House and the NSC meetings.

MR. RUSSERT: And advising him on a regular basis.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: On a regular basis, yes.

MR. RUSSERT: This is how "Saturday Night Live" portrayed Vice President Dick Cheney. Let's watch:

(Videotape, "Saturday Night Live"):

MR. DON PARDO: And now from a secret location, here is the vice president of the United States.

MR. DARRELL HAMMOND: Hello, America. I'm Dick Cheney. As you know, for the past few weeks I have been off in an "undisclosed" location. Well, I'm here tonight to disclose that location: Kandahar, Afghanistan.

I'm a one-man Afghani wrecking crew. That Northern Alliance, they've been talking about pretty much just me.

Check it out, suckers. I got me a bionic ticker. This thing regulates my heartbeat, gives me night vision and renders me completely invisible to radar. Check this out. I brew my own Sanka.

You can run, but you can't hide. Thanks to this baby, I can achieve a top speed of up to 70 miles an hour. And when I find you, you got something coming to you, Mr. bin Laden. The beard's going.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: And?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, Tim, if you have another successful 10 years on MEET THE PRESS, maybe you'll get your own skit on "Saturday Night Live."

MR. RUSSERT: I've been there, unfortunately. It hurts.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: All right. OK.

MR. RUSSERT: Would you like to be on the ticket in 2004?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: If the president wants me and everything else makes sense, sure.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Vice President, we thank you very much for joining us.

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Thank you.

MR. RUSSERT: Coming next: the former first lady, now the United States senator from the state of New York, Hillary Rodham Clinton, coming up next right here on MEET THE PRESS.

(Announcements)

MR. RUSSERT: Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton of New York after this station break.

(Announcements)

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