

“What Are You Going to Do About It?”

Participant: Tommy Franks

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When al--Qaeda terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, General Tommy Franks was commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) under President George W. Bush. Franks describes his conversations with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld after the attacks happened.

Tommy Franks: When 9/11 occurred I was en route to Pakistan and stopped in Crete to get gas in the jet and to get sleep before I went into Pakistan. Somebody said, “Turn on the TV.” I did and watched as the second jet hit the second tower. I took an aluminum chair and put it up on top of a building with a satellite phone.

By this time Rumsfeld was having his own problem in the Pentagon, you’ll recall. I sat on this aluminum chair and talked to him. He said, “Where are you?” In his jovial way, because we actually did and do get along very well, he said, “Well, General, you’re in the wrong place.” I said, “You know, I figured that out, Secretary.” He said, “What do you think?” I said, “Afghanistan, al-Qaeda, Bin Laden.” He asked me the hardest question I’ve ever been asked. He didn’t say, “Now this is what we’re going to do, and that’s what we’re going to do.” That’s not what he said. He asked me a question and the question was, and I quote: “What are you going to do about it?”

End of excerpt.

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URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/tommy-franks-oral-history>