

## Film Review: Errol Morris' 'The Unknown Known' Seeks Donald Rumsfeld

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 21, 2014 - 5:38pm

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CHICAGO – The reason some people fit into government service is fairly well defined in the latest film of iconic documentary maker Errol Morris. His profile of ex-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in “The Unknown Known” is a tale of history – affected by war, death, torture and justification. The power of government men in suits and what happens when the power is realized flows through Rumsfeld like water through a faucet, and who or what shuts it off, is often determined by the title of the film.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

This documentary is different from the previous Morris exploration of decision making having to do with United States defense, “The Fog of War.” Whereas Robert McNamara – the Secretary of Defense during the Viet Nam era – gave eleven lessons of war in that film, Donald Rumsfeld goes over a history of memos during his reign of defense under Presidents Gerald Ford and George W. Bush. The absorbing portrait is really about decision making and the justifications surrounding the decisions – and how it leads down the Alice-in-Wonderland rabbit hole. For example, how legalities drawn up for “enhanced interrogation” techniques can be interpreted and misused down the chain of command. Rumsfeld is a cool cat, but that doesn’t mean his decisions don’t have implications – which is a true understatement.

Donald Henry “Rummy” Rumsfeld served as the 13th Secretary of Defense under Gerald Ford in 1975, and as the 21st Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush – making him both the youngest and oldest to have served. He was involved in the major strategies regarding the Fall of Saigon, which effectively lost the war in Viet Nam for the United States, and the post September 11th war policy in Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which drained U.S. treasury and cost lives as framed within the “war on terror.”

In a response to fruitless effort to find Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, during a press briefing in 2002, Rumsfeld said the following...”as we know, there are known knowns; there are things that we know that we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also the unknown unknowns – the ones we don’t we don’t know.” Rumsfeld later added in a memo...”There are also unknown knowns – that is to say that the things you think you know, it turns out you did not.”

*“The Unknown Known” continues its limited release in Chicago on April 18th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Errol Morris and Donald Rumsfeld. Written and directed by Errol Morris. Rated “PG-13”*



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War Years: Donald Rumsfeld Makes His Case in 'The Unknown Known'

Photo credit: RADIUS-TWC



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