

February 20, 2008 - Murtha: Iraq War 'Eating us Alive'

Observer-Reporter

<http://www.observer-reporter.com/>

Murtha: Iraq war 'eating us alive'

By Christie Campbell

February 20, 2008

The cost of the Iraq war is seriously affecting Americans, even those without a family member in the armed services, a federal lawmaker said Tuesday.

"This war is eating us alive," said U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha, D-Johnstown, during a videoconference Tuesday that linked his Johnstown office with reporters at his offices in Washington, Uniontown and Washington, D.C.

At \$343 million a day, the war is diverting money needed to rebuild structurally deficient bridges and aging water or sewer systems, Murtha said. It has cut into Americans' pocketbooks as the cost of oil rises, contributing to increases in transportation, construction and other material goods.

With the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war just weeks away and the country's political situation still tenuous, Murtha wants the millions used to finance the war put into needs here at home.

"We have to do what's important to our national interests, not what's importation to Iraqi or Afghanistan national interests," he said.

Murtha, who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, recently addressed the Center for Strategic and International Studies on the hidden costs of the war and its long-term consequences.

Among his points were:

-

The cost of oil has risen from \$27 a barrel before the war to \$88 a barrel;

Gasoline has jumped from \$1.76 a gallon before the war to \$3.02;

The United States has lost the respect of its allies, favorability rating has dropped and NATO allies no longer support sending additional troops to Afghanistan;

The national debt is now \$2.77 trillion, and the economy appears to be in a recession;

Military equipment is wearing out or is outmoded, and money is needed to rebuild the military strength and readiness.

Murtha also charges that the Army now accepts a higher percentage of recruits who have not completed high school or have a previous criminal record, drug or alcohol or health condition.

No matter who is elected as the next president, Murtha believes there will be a troop withdrawal from Iraq. A superdelegate for Pennsylvania, he would not say whether he plans to support

Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama, but he said he believes Pennsylvania could play a big role in the Democratic presidential nomination.

"Pennsylvania could be the state as it was in the Carter election," he said.

Asked if he would run for re-election, the 75-year-old Murtha said he loves his job, and now "I'm in a position where I really think I can do some good, especially with the new administration coming in."

Murtha also touched on plans for the coming year, including development of synthetic fuels, creating a facility in Pennsylvania to provide vaccines instead of purchasing them overseas, finding money to fight the epidemic of diabetes and providing funding for No Child Left Behind.