

February 20, 2008 - Murtha: War Costing more than most Realize

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Murtha: War costing more than most realize

By DAN DiPAOLO

Daily American 30 North Chief

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JOHNSTOWN — Congressman John Murtha, D-Johnstown, addressed media members Tuesday in order to highlight what he’s calling the hidden costs of the Iraq war.

“In just a few weeks, we will mark the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq,” he said. “Five years later, the political and economic situation has changed little.

“This war is eating us alive,” he said.

“We are familiar with the visible costs associated with the war in Iraq and the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform and their families are making. We are less familiar with the hidden costs associated with the war in Iraq, and these will have long-term consequences,” he said.

According to Murtha, the war has cost more than \$535 billion in appropriations since 2002, with daily spending now exceeding \$343 million per day.

He said that the spending has curbed programs in education, health and taken a particularly high toll on military readiness and members of the Armed Forces.

While morale is generally good, soldiers are suffering because of the multiple deployments and the strain it takes on families, he said.

Additionally, time and money have been taken away from important issues like Social Security, health care and

rebuilding this nation's infrastructure, he said.

"Because of the cost of the war, we can't take care of this. We can't afford \$343 million a day," he said.

Ending the war and rebuilding the nation's economy would take a joint effort, he said.

"In all my 35 years in Congress, I have never seen a major problem or change that hasn't been solved in a bipartisan manner."

"Our next president and the American people must understand that it will require tremendous resources and strong bipartisan and international cooperation to begin to solve these challenges."

Locally, he is working to keep the economy strong by bringing new technologies and programs to the area, he said.

Bringing a vaccination manufacturing plant to western Pennsylvania is a priority of his. He said that public/private partnerships with groups like UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) could make it a reality.

"Right now, we're buying all our vaccines from overseas and having them shipped over here," he said.

Another program could bring a synthetic fuel manufacturing plant to the area, he said. The process became economically viable once oil surpassed the \$60 a barrel mark, he said. According to CNN's commodity pricing Web site, crude oil rose to \$100.01 on Tuesday.

Murtha also talked about other issues briefly, including his decision to run for a 19th term in Congress.

"I love this job. I love being in a position to influence things. As long as I'm in good health (I'll serve). I don't think Joyce (Murtha's wife) could put up with me at home. They're going to have to carry me out," said the 75-year-old.

(Dan DiPaolo can be contacted at dand@dailyamerican.com. Comment on the story at dailyamerican.com.)

What War Costs

There has been \$535 billion appropriated for the war since 2002, currently \$343 million per day.

In Pennsylvania

10 hours in Iraq: Could replace or repair both the structurally deficient Freeport and Masontown bridges (estimated \$140 million for both)

1 day in Iraq: Could provide every passenger vehicle in the state with 15 gallons of gasoline (7.7 million vehicles at \$3.02 per gallon)

3 days in Iraq: Could provide every Pitt and Penn State student with a \$10,000 tuition stipend (PSU-77,121; Pitt-22,766)

1 week in Iraq: Could provide every state household with a \$511 tax-rebate

9 days in Iraq: Could eliminate the maintenance backlog for all state-owned roads (\$3.1 billion PennDOT estimate)

12 days in Iraq: Could complete the entire Mon/Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway project (estimated \$4.2 billion cost)

4.5 weeks in Iraq: Could replace or repair all 6,000 structurally deficient bridges in the state (\$11 billion PennDOT estimate)

5.5 weeks in Iraq: Could replace aging or deficient sewer systems throughout the state (EPA estimates this cost to be \$12.7 billion over the next 20 years)