

## May 8, 2008 - House goes it's Own Way on War Supplemental's Defense Funding Priorities

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By Josh Rogin, CQ

May 8, 2008

The House version of the supplemental spending bill contains \$162.5 billion in defense funding that diverges sharply from the administration's request, according to figures from the office of John P. Murtha, D-Pa.

The \$96.6 billion fiscal 2008 military spending portion of the bill - \$3.4 billion below Bush's request - would emphasize the purchase of new equipment, improve military health care and bolster the readiness of the active military and reserves.

"We're trying to look beyond Iraq," said Murtha, who chairs the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

The fiscal 2009 "bridge fund" portion of the bill would provide \$65.9 billion for war-related military spending in fiscal 2009, but was crafted without details from the administration.

In the fiscal 2008 section, House appropriators shifted billions of dollars toward the procurement of aircraft, health care for soldiers and veterans, and equipment for the National Guard and Reserves.

Their section of the bill would add \$3.6 billion for 15 C-17 Globemaster strategic airlifters and \$2.5 billion for 34 C-130 Hercules transport planes. Money for advanced procurement of F-22 Raptor fighter jets did not make it into the bill, because of Senate opposition, Murtha said.

The subcommittee added \$573 million for the defense healthcare program; \$793 million for military medical treatment facilities; and \$68 million to help the Army implement the Wounded Warrior program, which assists soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The bill would add \$750 million for Guard and Reserve equipment and \$65.4 million to help returning National Guard and Reserve members reintegrate into civilian life. It also would provide \$3.5 billion to address the increased cost of fuel and \$102 million to equip a new brigade of soldiers with the Land Warrior equipment, a package of sophisticated networking and communications gear that soldiers carry.

Murtha criticized what he characterized as the haphazard manner in which the administration requested war funding, which included sending Congress a \$70 billion "placeholder" request for fiscal 2009 with its February budget release, in violation of the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act (PL 109-364). Because the White House waited until May 2 to send Congress the details of the request, appropriators wrote that portion of the measure without administration input, Murtha said.

"We can't stand having supplementals with no detail," he told reporters on May 6. "You come to us last-minute and want things changed. We can't do it. We can't live like that."

In an interview, Steve McMillin, deputy director of the White House's Office of Management and Budget, said that although the administration has "ongoing analysis" about what the total war costs will be in fiscal 2009, the White House has no intention of releasing that figure, as the law requires.

"It's not a number that I would want to share," McMillin said. "At whatever point it is relevant from a legislation perspective to get that full request number out there...we'll do that."