

## June 26, 2008 - Military facing \$100 billion in equipment repairs

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WASHINGTON &mdash; The Pentagon faces a more than \$100 billion bill to repair and replace worn out or destroyed equipment, vehicles and weapons, officials and members of Congress say, but paying for it may endanger plans to boost the size of the military.

The military is scrambling to re-equip because the Pentagon failed to plan for the long and expensive war in Iraq, said Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., who chairs the House panel that oversees military spending.

That failure, Murtha said, makes the Pentagon's plan to add 92,000 new soldiers and Marines unrealistic. Although new troops would help reduce repeated, lengthy deployments, there are other more pressing demands, Murtha said.

"It's going to come from personnel cuts," Murtha said. "That's where it's going to come from. They know it."

Pentagon leaders realize they face a choice between a larger military and improved equipment, said Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"We must reset, reconstitute and revitalize our ground forces," Mullen told a Senate panel in May. However, the costs "will force us to a smaller military or force us away from any kind of modernization or programs that we need for the future."

More than five years of

simultaneous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have ground down military equipment. Humvees, for example, travel as much as 100,000 miles a year in Iraq, five times the peacetime rate. Heavy armor strains engines and axles. Military operations have cost \$572 billion since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Pentagon records show.

Cost estimates for the various services include:

- The Army wants \$17 billion a year, for as many as three years after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan end, to re-equip itself. Since December, the Army has issued repair contracts worth more than \$1 billion for armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

- The Marine Corps estimates it will cost \$15.6 billion to replace its damaged or destroyed equipment, including light armored vehicles "lost in combat."

- The Air Force puts its costs at \$10 billion. Sue Payton, assistant secretary of the Air Force, told Congress that the wars' demands have "taken a toll on our airlift and air-refueling aircraft."

Murtha said the Pentagon will need much more. He put the cost at more than \$100 billion. "We went unprepared. And we're paying a heavy price for it."

Repairs have skyrocketed in recent years. The Army repaired 6,000 rifles and handguns per year before the Iraq war. This year, that number jumped to 200,000, said James Dwyer, with the Army Materiel Command.

Just how high the bill will go depends on when U.S. troops leave Iraq and how much equipment is upgraded rather than repaired, said Andrew Krepinevich, executive director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.