

**House Report 109-504 - DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2007**

ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF HON. DAVID OBEY

I. THE TRUE COST OF THE WAR

Congress appropriates funding for the Iraq war much like the Administration prosecutes it: recklessly, and without being honest with the American people.

Once again, funding for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars--\$50 billion in this case--are provided as an 'emergency supplemental' in this bill. All told, Congress will have provided the Defense Department with \$450 billion of emergency funding for this war.

To treat funding for the Iraq war as an unexpected emergency is a perversion of the term. By way of comparison, the Vietnam War required only a single supplemental, after which it was financed through the regular budget process.

While not an emergency, this funding is provided as such because it is politically expedient. It allows the Administration and the Congress to avoid the budgetary tradeoffs and to hide the full cost of the war. It is part of the Administration's strategy of providing the facts about Iraq on the installment plan.

In April of 2003, the President signed the first Iraq supplemental providing \$62.6 billion for the Defense Department. This was after the President's budget director told the New York Times that the war would cost between \$50 and \$60 billion.

In November of 2003, when the President signed a second supplemental providing \$64.9 billion for the Defense Department, the White House termed it a 'one-time, wartime supplemental.' Nine months later Congress provided \$25 billion of additional emergency funding.

In May of 2005, the President signed a third supplemental providing \$75.7 billion for the Defense Department and told us that democracy was taking root in Iraq. Seven months later, as civil war rocked Iraq, Congress provided an additional \$50 billion of emergency funding.

This week, Congress passed another \$65.8 billion supplemental. The same day, in a surprise visit to Iraq, the President once again linked the Iraq war and the attacks of September 11th--an assertion that is patently false and that only he and the Vice President appear to still believe.

In this bill, the House will approve another \$50 billion more in emergency funding for Iraq to cover operations through the spring of 2007. As was the case with previous Iraq supplementals, these costs will be tacked on to this President's greatest legacy--a massive \$300 billion plus deficit. The result is that future generations will be forced to pay the financial costs of the President's failed Iraq policy.

For several years, I have asked the Administration to come forward with 5-year estimates of the war costs so that Congress could get a better sense of how to balance the books. The FY 2005 Defense Appropriations Conference Report included a general provision requiring the Administration to do just that. No such report was ever provided. The President chose to waive the requirement by certifying in writing that providing these cost estimates would harm national security.

The only harm that would come from providing estimates of future war costs would be to the political fortunes of those who insist on funding this war through emergency supplementals instead of being honest with the public about the war's real cost. More than three years into this war it is clear that honesty is too much to expect from this Administration.

II. PERMANENT BASES IN IRAQ

The Committee bill includes a provision that prohibits the use of funds to enter into military basing rights agreements between the United States and Iraq. In effect, this provision bars the establishment of permanent U.S. bases in that country. This provision is meant to send a clear, unequivocal message to the Iraqi people and to the world that the United States will not indefinitely occupy Iraq.

Congress missed the opportunity to signal its opposition to permanent bases in the recently approved FY 2006 Iraq supplement emergency supplemental. Despite both the House and the Senate including a ban on permanent basing in their respective bills, the conference committee just two weeks ago jettisoned the provision. Let us hope that the prohibition inserted in this bill will last longer than it did in the FY 2006 supplemental. After all:

President George W. Bush said on April 13, 2004, that 'as a proud and independent people, Iraqis do not support and indefinite occupation and neither does America.'

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 17, 2005 said, 'We have no intention, at the present time, of putting permanent bases in Iraq.'

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, declared recently that the U.S. Government does not want permanent military bases in Iraq.

General George Casey--our commander on the ground in Iraq--has said that we should gradually reduce the visibility of coalition forces across Iraq because that would take away one of the elements that fuels the insurgency.

But those words have been greeted with skepticism.

This demonstrates the need to take the target off of our soldiers' backs by making it clear that we do not intend to be long-term occupiers. That action could take away a propaganda tool that the insurgents are using to justify their attacks on U.S. forces.

DAVID OBEY.

