

# The Cost of War--President Bush Requests War Budget

March 25, 2003

## ***President Bush has asked Congress for nearly \$75 billion to help pay for the war in Iraq.***

Mr. Bush submitted a special **supplemental** budget Monday, which is separate from the yearly budget he proposed last month. Every year, the president sends his overall tax and spending plan to Congress, which is put into effect by other bills throughout the year.

### **What will it cover?**

The supplemental bill focuses specifically on covering the cost of war in Iraq, including: \$63 billion to fight the war; \$8 billion in foreign aid to countries helping with the war, humanitarian relief efforts and reconstruction; and \$4 billion for homeland security.

"My request to Congress will pay for the massive task of transporting a fully equipped military force, both active-duty and reserve, to a region halfway around the world," said Mr. Bush, who is pushing Congress to approve the budget by April 11.

"This money will cover the current cost of fueling our ships and aircraft and tanks, and of airlifting tons of supplies into the theater of operations."

Thus far, the government has spent \$1 billion on cruise missiles, \$380 million on chemical protective suits, and more than \$100 million on air combat missions, according to a report by a budget watchdog group called Taxpayers for Common Sense.

Mr. Bush added that the costs would cover more than the actual fighting and would assist humanitarian efforts in Iraq.

"This nation and our **coalition** partners are committed to making sure that the Iraqi citizens who have suffered under a brutal tyrant have got the food and medicine needed as soon as possible," Mr. Bush.

### **Reactions from Congress**

House Speaker Dennis Hastert said Congress would move quickly to pass the budget. "We need to make certain that our men and women in uniform have the resources necessary to get the job done in Iraq," said Hastert

However, some lawmakers said after a Monday meeting with the president that the supplemental budget didn't accurately reflect the costs of the war and its aftermath, and that the president would likely need additional funding.

"This is just the beginning. This is the first down payment, and the American people have the right to know that," Senator Robert Byrd, a Democrat from West Virginia said.

### **Cost of covering past wars**

In a recent study, Yale University professor William Nordhaus found that governments often underestimate the price of war.

In a report published the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he noted that the Civil War cost the North \$3.2 billion in current dollars, 13 times more than the original estimate by Abraham Lincoln's Treasury secretary. And in more recent times, the Vietnam War cost was 90 % higher than originally estimated--it fell in a range between \$110 and \$150 billion (today's dollar amount-\$494 billion).

The Gulf War in 1991 cost \$60 billion (\$80 billion in current dollars), though some of those costs were **subsidized** by U.S. allies, including Japan, Germany, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

Nordhaus, who served on President Jimmy Carter's Council of Economic Advisers, estimates that the current war will have a \$99 billion pricetag-- if it ends quickly. If not, he says, it could top off at \$1.9 trillion.

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### **Vocabulary**

**supplemental** - (adj.) something that completes or makes an addition 2. a part added to or issued as a continuation of a book or periodical to correct errors or make additions. (Merriam-Webster)

**coalition** - (n.) An alliance, especially a temporary one. (Merriam-Webster)

**subsidized** - (v.) to provide or aid with a subsidy, a financial grant, as that given by a government to a private undertaking or to another country. (Merriam-Webster)