

- Congress is now considering the Administration's Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Budget Request for \$481.4 billion; That's a 60% increase in defense spending since 2001...about one half of all the U.S. government's planned discretionary spending next year.
- Along with it, we have received Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Requests for Iraq and Afghanistan of \$93.4 billion for 2007, and \$141.7 billion for 2008.
- That's a total of \$235.1 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan. Add that to the \$426.8 billion plus already spent on the wars; we have now surpassed, in real terms, the entire cost of the Vietnam War.
- Please note that the two supplemental appropriations requests are called 'emergency' because that's what they're supposed to be; requests to cover unforeseen or unforeseeable events.
- However, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been funded entirely through emergency supplementals. And that is wrong.
- Why? Emergency spending bills do not count against the budget caps that Congress adopts to guide spending. That means they also aren't figured into our government's staggering annual deficits.
- And, supplemental requests have not been subjected to the same scrutiny and analysis in Congress as regular annual Defense Appropriation bills.
- For the last five years, there's been heavy pressure from the Administration and the Republican majority in Congress to approve them quickly and without any argument.
- In fact, those who have opposed or even questioned any part of them have been accused of "not supporting our troops."
- Does that mean that the supplementals contain nothing but funding to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan; that if Congress didn't pass the bill our men and women would run out of bullets in the middle of a firefight?
- Hardly. The basic equipment needs of our armed forces are fully covered in annual Defense Appropriation bills. The supplementals pay for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan — the additional costs to keep our armed forces at war. The 2007 Supplemental Request will pay for a "surge" of U.S. troops in Iraq.
- And, for the last four years, they have helped President Bush obscure the true cost of this war.

- The problem is these supplementals contain much, much more. The 2007 Supplemental Request asks for \$14 billion for Army equipment: 168 new Bradley Fighting Vehicles, 58 new M1 Abrams tanks, 111 Strykers, 121 M113 personnel carriers, 22 M88 recovery vehicles.
- This represents two brigades worth of new and upgraded vehicles.
- If these were to replace vehicles lost or worn out in combat, an emergency spending bill would be justified. But I can assure you that we have not lost 480 tracked vehicles in Iraq in the last year.
- These are routine replacement vehicles and upgrades. Yet they're funded as emergency items.
- The 2007 supplemental also calls for \$131 million for 90,880 pairs of night vision goggles. It isn't a matter of whether or not we need 90-thousand pair of night vision goggles. The question is: Are they an emergency item? Are they something that couldn't be budgeted and included in the regular annual Defense bill?
- The answer is no. Millions and millions of dollars are included in supplemental appropriations requests that should be spelled out, prioritized and justified in regular annual Defense budgets. Instead, they are hidden behind an emergency label.
- Many of the so-called emergency items won't even be produced and available until 2010 or later. We have been asked to replace two \$20-million F-16s with two \$200-million Joint Strike Fighters, which are still in development. How in the world is that an emergency replacement?
- We all know that maintaining a strong national defense does not come cheap. And we know that conducting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan does not come cheap.
- But we do not believe that these costs should be hidden, minimized or obscured.
- And we believe that every supplemental request should be "scrubbed;" that funding for anything that is not for a genuine emergency or an unforeseeable expenditure should be in the annual Defense Budget.
- The Constitution of the United States vests in Congress the responsibility to make judgments about the nation's spending priorities, and to oversee that spending.
- That responsibility can be best met when all predictable, projected, foreseeable Pentagon spending is presented in the annual Defense budget rather than tucked into emergency, must-pass, usually-rushed supplemental spending bills.

- The time of an ever-increasing Defense budget top line is over. This Armed Services Committee will have to operate with a much more disciplined approach and begin to make some tough choices.
- Our responsibility is finding the proper balance between developing and investing in future weapons systems and technology, and funding the needs of today's warfighter.
- Among the many lessons we must learn from the catastrophe in Iraq is that a nation that only prepares for one type of conflict in the world is not really prepared.
- But right now, we have 150-thousand American men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they must be our first priority.
- As Chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces, my overriding concern on every issue that comes before us is whether and how it supports our men and women in uniform.
- Every decision about equipment procurement, training, endstrength or budget authorization must meet this test: Does it support our troops?
- Both the immediate and long-term effects of the war in Iraq on our nation's military preparedness are evident and drastic. Extended deployments, premature redeployments and sustained combat under unbelievably harsh conditions have taken a terrible toll on our forces and their equipment.
- The results are an overstretched U.S. Army and Marine Corps with no fully mission-capable reserve forces, and an urgent need for billions of dollars to repair or replace worn and damaged helicopters, tanks, other armored vehicles, including up-armored Humvees, and other equipment.
- Chairman Ortiz of the Readiness Subcommittee and I returned Monday from an inspection of two of the Army's busiest repair depots; Corpus Christi, Texas, where they repair, upgrade and modernize the full range of military helicopters;
- And Anniston, Alabama, which calls itself, "Pit Crew of the American Warfighter." They maintain and repair the Army's heavy and light tracked vehicles, including the M1 Main Battle Tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle.
- What we saw were skilled, dedicated employees working feverishly to make sure that our men and women in uniform — particularly those in Iraq and Afghanistan—have every piece of equipment they need to do their jobs and keep themselves safe from harm.

- But, we saw maintenance and repair facilities that are just now beginning to cope with these demands because they did not have the support they needed to get the job done — from conversion equipment for M1 tanks to the latest up-armor kits for Humvees;
- And because they didn't get sufficient funding until three years into the war in Iraq, despite the alarms raised by Jack Murtha, David Obey, Ike Skelton and Solomon Ortiz.
- What we saw were the results of this Administration's abject failure to mobilize the country's industrial base for this war of choice; to ramp up America's manufacturing capacity to fully support our troops, at home and overseas.
- To have acted to ensure that the burden of this war would be more broadly shared, that the industrial sector would be mobilized, the military's equipment supply, maintenance and repair systems would be put on a wartime footing would have been expensive and an admission of reality, an admission this Administration has not been prepared to make.
- My immediate concern is that forces now being deployed as part of President Bush's "surge" will literally not have the equipment they need when they get there. They will have to "borrow" equipment from other units.
- My longer-term concern is that if other national security threats materialize, we are not fully prepared to respond effectively.
- The Armed Services Committee, this Congress, this government and this nation have our work cut out for us. It will not be easy, nor rapid, and it will certainly not be inexpensive.