

SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE

KENT CONRAD, CHAIRMAN

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PRESIDENT'S PLAN FOR 'KOREA-LIKE' PRESENCE IN IRAQ WILL COST TRILLIONS

Washington, DC – The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) today released a report, requested by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND), showing that the cost of maintaining a 'Korea-like' presence in Iraq over the next 50 years could exceed \$2 trillion. The report found that even after a significant drawdown of U.S. forces, it could cost up to \$25 billion each year – more than two-thirds of our nation's homeland security budget – to keep a military presence in Iraq similar to that now on the Korean peninsula.

“President Bush has repeatedly drawn an analogy between the Iraq and Korean wars and his administration has suggested that our ongoing presence in Korea could provide a model for Iraq,” said Conrad. “The American people deserve to know that they are going to be handed a multi-trillion dollar bill from this President to cover the cost of his misguided policy in Iraq.”

CBO has previously projected that war costs could reach \$1 trillion over the 2009-2017 period, assuming a gradual drawdown to 75,000 deployed U.S. troops. Based on CBO's new report, which projects the annual cost of permanently maintaining 55,000 U.S. troops in Iraq (roughly the equivalent of the U.S. commitment in South Korea), it could cost another \$1 trillion (in constant FY '08 dollars) for operations in Iraq over the 2018 to 2057 period. In other words, taken together, CBO's reports show that the long-term presence in Iraq envisioned by the Bush administration could cost \$2 trillion over the next 50 years. And this cost comes on top of the approximately \$567 billion already appropriated and requested for Iraq through 2008.

“The Bush administration has been trying to hide the cost of this war every step of the way,” said Conrad. “Now the President is considering a significant ongoing presence in Iraq, long after he leaves office. Yet, he gives no indication of the cost or how it should be paid for, except to throw it all on the charge card and continue to run up the nation's debt.”

CBO's projections of Iraq war costs have been consistently lower than actual amounts requested by the administration. For example, CBO previously projected that war costs could reach \$154 billion in fiscal year 2008. However, the administration has already requested \$147 billion in war funding for fiscal year 2008, and the President is reportedly planning to ask for another \$50 billion on top of that. If this trend continues, the long-term presence in Iraq envisioned by the Bush administration could cost even more than projected under CBO's figures.

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The report is on CBO's website and can be found here:

<http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/86xx/doc8641/09-20-ConradLTpresenceinIraq.pdf>