White House wants $50 billion more for Iraq war

Bill Van Auken
30 August 2007

The Bush White House is preparing to ask Congress to approve another $50 billion to continue funding the escalation of the war against the people of Iraq well into 2008, according to a report published Wednesday in the *Washington Post*.

The request for the additional funding will be timed to coincide with the "progress report" on the "surge" that has sent some 30,000 additional American troops into the occupied country. That presentation will be delivered to Congress by the senior US military commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus, and the US ambassador in Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, in barely two weeks.

The administration—and its ostensible political opposition in the Democratic Party—have both invested this upcoming testimony with immense political significance. The congressional Democratic leadership mandated the reports as part of its cave-in to the Bush White House on its request for war funding last May, and, together with the Bush administration, has essentially suspended any debate on the Iraq war until the general speaks.

Given the back-to-back speeches delivered by President Bush to the Veteran of Foreign Wars and the American Legion over the past week, the content of the Petraeus-Crocker report is a foregone conclusion. "There are unmistakable signs that our strategy is achieving the objectives we set out," Bush told the latter veterans' group Tuesday. "The momentum is now on our side." In reality, the report will be issued over Bush's signature, with the general and ambassador merely providing advice.

In public, Petraeus and Crocker will dutifully echo Bush's claim, affirming that the "surge," which has brought US troop levels up to 160,000, has achieved progress in bringing greater security to Iraq and therefore must continue. This claim will be made despite the fact that every significant measure of the situation confronting the Iraqi people—a doubling of the number of people killed each day as well as a doubling of the number of internally displaced Iraqis driven from their homes—indicates that the escalation of the US military intervention has only spelled a sharp increase in the death and destruction inflicted upon the ravaged country.

With the cowardly record of the Democratic-led Congress as his guide, Bush is confident that the Congress will bow to the authority of General Petraeus—whom the Democratic-led Senate confirmed without a single dissenting vote—and provide the necessary votes to pay for the continued escalation of the war.

As the *Post* reported, citing the view of an unnamed congressional aide: "The request is being prepared now in the belief that Congress will be unlikely to balk so soon after hearing the two officials argue that there are promising developments in Iraq but that they need more time to solidify the progress they have made."

A White House official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, told the paper that "this is pretty much a done deal."

The $50 billion figure appears to be based on the assumption that the increased military deployment in Iraq will be maintained at least until the spring of 2008.

This additional money comes on top of the $611 billion that the Congressional Research Service recently gave as the total amount already approved by Congress for the so-called war on terror (74 percent of it going to pay for the killing in Iraq, 21 percent for Afghanistan and 5 percent for embassy security) from September 11, 2001, up to and including its vote last May 25 to give Bush another $100 billion in war

© World Socialist Web Site

funding.

It is also in addition to another $147 billion that the administration has already requested for war funding for fiscal 2008. It will probably be bundled together with this request, with Congress asked to approve a total supplemental funding request of about $200 billion.

If approved, it is estimated that Iraq war spending would rise to more than $3 billion a week, with the total spent surpassing the costs of all previous wars save World War II.

This massive amount of military spending may well serve as the stepping-stone to the preparation of an even larger war against Iran, a prospect that Bush himself openly alluded to with the remark in his Tuesday speech that he had "authorized our military commanders in Iraq to confront Tehran's murderous activities."

Reaction of the Democratic congressional leadership was tepid at best to the report of the planned request for tens of billions of dollars more to fund the war. Neither Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid nor House Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued a statement in response.

A spokesman for Reid, Jim Manley, told the *Post*, "We haven't seen the details, but we'll give it the scrutiny it deserves. It's long past time for giving blank checks to the administration."

In other words, the American public can expect to be subjected once again this September to the distasteful spectacle of the Democratic congressional leadership going through the motions of pretending to oppose the war, while in the end voting to approve the money needed to fight it.

There is no reason to believe that this leadership will be any more inclined this fall than it was last spring to employ the only means at its disposal to alter the course of the Iraq war: utilizing the "power of the purse" to cut off funding and initiating impeachment proceedings against Bush for carrying out a criminal war of aggression.

However, the attempts to posture for the benefit of the overwhelming majority of the American people who oppose the war, while rounding up sufficient votes to sustain the military campaign aimed at securing US control of Iraq's oil wealth and the strategic Persian Gulf—a predatory goal that the Democratic leadership, like the White House and the decisive sections of America's ruling elite, all support—have become increasingly difficult.

The immense anger building up not only against the Bush administration, but against its accomplices in the Democratic Party, found public expression recently in the form of an explosive confrontation between one Democratic congressman who voted for the war-funding measure last May and his constituents.

According to the August 28 issue of the *Oregonian*, "Hundreds at a raucous and hostile town hall Monday night let US Rep. Brian Baird know that they disapprove of his support for the troop surge in Iraq. Many suggested the Vancouver Democrat is not representing the will of his district."

Baird, who was first elected in 1998, attempted to defend his support for funding the war, but was repeatedly shouted down by a capacity crowd of some 600 people. "We don't care what your convictions are," one member of the audience told him. "You're here to represent us."

"Six hundred people—from veterans to teachers, from a Columbia River boat captain to a lady who plays bagpipes at soldier funerals—spent nearly four hours castigating Baird," reported Danny Westneat, a columnist for the *Seattle Times*. "He was called a sellout, Bush's lap dog, a neocon pet. Some scoffed at anything he said. Some told him to resign."

"There's an epic quality to how mad folks are," he commented. "It feels like an anger that may last well after the war is gone."

The attempts by the various liberal pressure and protest outfits to promote illusions in the Democratic Party notwithstanding, the political trajectory that this party has pursued since being placed in control of Congress by the massive outpouring of antiwar sentiment in the 2006 midterm elections has made it increasingly difficult to mask its role as a direct collaborator and enabler in the crimes carried out by the Bush administration.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site