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Record \$622 Billion Budget Requested for the Pentagon

By [DAVID S. CLOUD](#)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 — The Bush administration is seeking a record military budget of \$622 billion for the 2008 fiscal year, Pentagon officials have said. The sum includes more than \$140 billion for war-related costs.

The administration is also seeking \$93 billion in the current fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30, to pay for military operations in [Iraq](#), [Afghanistan](#) and elsewhere, the officials said.

The requests are part of the annual budget request to Congress for all federal spending programs. The budget is to be made public on Monday, and Congress will revise it in the coming months.

Together with money for combat operations this year already approved by Congress, the new request would push spending related to Iraq and Afghanistan to \$163 billion.

“It is the highest level of spending since the height of the Korean War,” said Steven Kosiak, a military budget expert with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a policy analysis organization here.

Mr. Kosiak said that in 1952 the United States spent the equivalent of \$645 billion in today’s dollars, factoring in inflation, and that in the Korean War military spending exceeded 13 percent of the gross national product. The figure is now 4 percent.

With Democrats in control of Congress and opposition to the Iraq war running strong, the administration’s request may face even greater scrutiny than it has in recent years. But few if any budget experts expect significant cuts in military spending while large numbers of troops are in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a statement, the Senate majority leader, [Harry Reid](#) of Nevada, said: “Democrats pledge that our troops will receive everything they need to do their jobs. We will also subject this supplemental to the tough and serious oversight that Congress has ignored for four years.”

The regular Pentagon budget request for 2008, which excludes war-related costs but covers Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine costs as well as other spending, will be \$481 billion, a Pentagon official said. That would be an increase of \$49 billion over what Congress provided this year, Mr. Kosiak said.

“As long as we’re engaged in major military operations, you are probably not going to see decreases in the baseline budget,” he said.

The Pentagon is seeking \$128.6 billion for the Army, \$110.7 billion for the Air Force and \$140 billion for the Navy, department officials said. Background briefings for members of Congress and their staffs have begun. As details leaked out, Pentagon officials agreed to provide an outline of the request. The officials said the budget included no cancellations of major weapons systems, despite delays and escalating costs in procurement accounts in all the services.

The \$141 billion request for war-related costs in 2008 represents the first time the administration has tried at the beginning of the budget cycle to provide a total estimate for how much the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other military operations will cost a year in advance.

Congress has been pressing the administration for several years to provide such estimates. Even as they comply, Pentagon officials emphasized that actual costs could be far different, depending on the course of the wars.

The budget request, which takes many months to prepare, is being released as the administration is sending an additional 21,500 troops to Iraq.

A spokesman for the Pentagon, Bryan Whitman, said Friday that the [Office of Management and Budget](#) had estimated that the additional forces would cost \$5.6 billion in the current fiscal year, which ends in September.

On Thursday, the [Congressional Budget Office](#) released its estimate, which said the costs could run much higher.

Defense Secretary [Robert M. Gates](#), at a Pentagon news conference, disputed the office's estimate, saying it greatly overstated the number of support troops that would be necessary to go along with the 21,500 increase in combat forces.

Mr. Gates also said he had recommended that President Bush nominate Adm. Timothy J. Keating of the Navy, now commander of Norad, as commander of the United States Pacific Command, making him the top commander in the Pacific, and Lt. Gen. Gene Reunart of the Air Force to head the Northern Command, which is responsible for defending the continental United States.

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