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# House panel approves \$50B more for wars

By LIZ SIDOTI, Associated Press Writer *Wed Jun 7, 12:15 PM ET*

WASHINGTON -

**President Bush** would get \$50 billion for military operations in **Iraq** and **Afghanistan** for the first few months of next year, under a House bill a subcommittee approved Wednesday.

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On a voice vote, the House defense appropriations subcommittee passed a \$427 billion measure for the

**Pentagon** budget year that begins Oct. 1, including operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Senate has not yet completed its version of the annual bill.

House lawmakers sliced about \$4 billion from the president's spending request for the Pentagon because of what they said were other priorities within the budget and a soaring federal deficit.

"We did the best we could with the money we had to work with," said Rep. John Murtha ([news](#), [bio](#), [voting record](#)) of Pennsylvania, the top Democrat on the subcommittee. He provided some details of the bill after the panel approved it in a session that was closed to the public.

Overall, Murtha said, the subcommittee went to great lengths to support the National Guard. The bill, he said, provides \$500 million for the Guard to replace equipment tattered in war zones. And it states that the Pentagon plan to drop the number of Guard combat brigades from 34 to 28 is unacceptable, he said.

House lawmakers consider the \$50 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan the first installment of what they expect will be continued war costs through 2007, although no one would predict how much more money would be needed.

"I don't think anybody can see without a crystal ball about next year," said Rep. Bill Young, R-Fla., the subcommittee chairman.

If approved, the House bill would push total war-related dollars since 2001 toward a staggering half-trillion dollars.

The Congressional Research Service, a nonpartisan agency that writes reports for lawmakers, says that since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, lawmakers already have provided \$368 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and other costs associated with the war on terrorism.

Additionally, a bill making its way through Congress now to pay for the rest of this year's war costs includes another \$65.7 billion for the Pentagon, much of which will be used to pay for military operations, maintenance and personnel costs in the two war zones.

Lawmakers say the Pentagon is spending about \$8 billion a month in Iraq and \$1 billion a month in Afghanistan.

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