



Lost Opportunities

Bush Defense Spending is Misplaced

P.J. Crowley
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Amid ongoing congressional debate over President Bush's troop surge in Iraq, members of Congress and policymakers alike should pay close attention to the opportunity costs that the president's stubborn and single-minded focus on Iraq has on other dimensions of U.S. national security. The Bush administration's own budget proposals released yesterday are far and away the best place to begin.

The president's proposed budget for fiscal year 2008, beginning in October this year, and his fiscal 2007 emergency supplemental budget to pay for current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan bring into sharp focus the escalating cost of the existing strategy. What's missing from the current debate however, is an understanding of the opportunity costs, or those lost chances to invest in a sound long-term strategy to defend our country.

First, let's review some numbers. Regarding the national security components of the budget, the president yesterday requested roughly \$100 billion in emergency spending for the war on terror. Most of that money will be spent on Iraq, considerably less in Afghanistan.

Together with \$70 billion bridge funding contained in the defense appropriations bill Congress passed last fall, the war in Iraq will consume roughly \$145 billion in FY2007 beyond what would normally be spent on day-to-day military operations. The actual cost of the Iraq war is much higher when considering both direct and indirect costs. Operations in Afghanistan will cost roughly \$25 billion.

IRAQ: A COSTLY DIVERSION

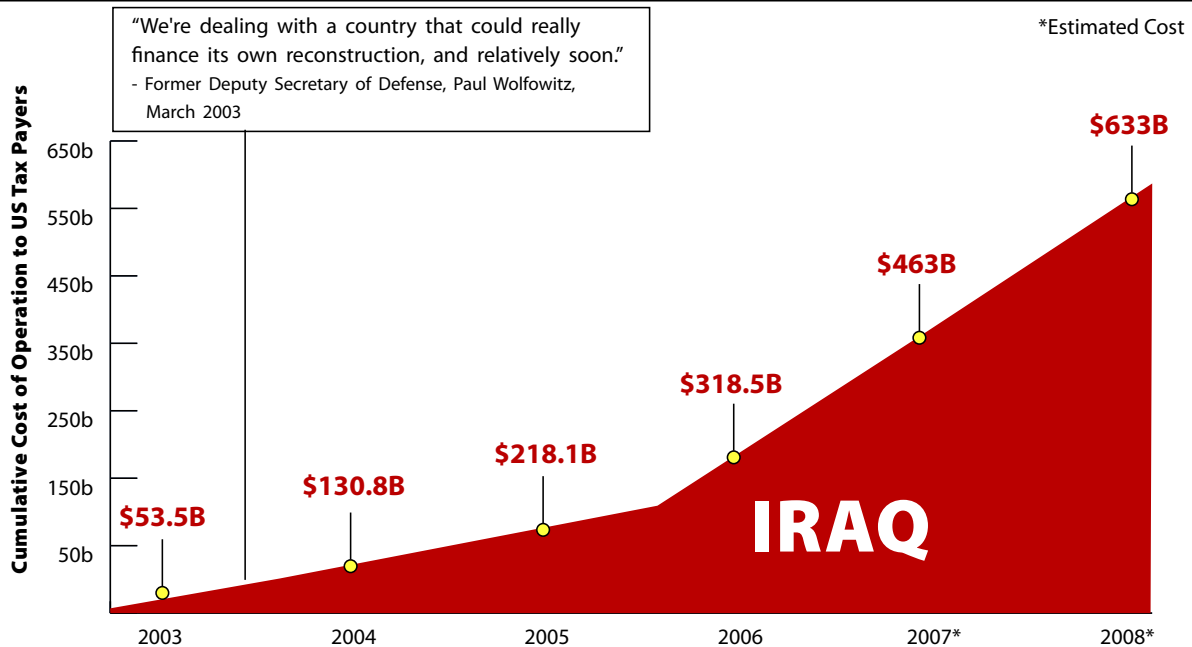


Surging Troops To The Wrong Country

To view Strategic Redeployment 2.0, [click here](#)

The Bush Administration chose to invade a country that had no connection to 9/11, diverting resources needed to secure victory in Afghanistan, where the 9/11 plot was created. Terrorism and extremism are on the rise while we are mired in Iraq with no end in sight.

Cumulative spending in Iraq and Afghanistan





For FY2008, the Bush administration has requested an additional \$145 billion. Given the troop surge, the pace of on-going operations and the need to repair and replace damaged equipment from both fronts, another emergency supplemental will be required a year from now as well. Based on current trends, this could add another \$55 billion or more to the equation, which would push direct costs for the Iraq war to at least \$633 billion next year.

Add the indirect costs of long-term medical care and lost economic opportunity for the tens of thousands of wounded veterans, it is clear that Iraq has become a \$1 trillion strategic mistake, with no end in sight. What's more, the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 has shifted military capabilities and funding away from operations in Afghanistan, where the 9/11 plot actually originated.

Today, we are spending more than \$5 in Iraq for every \$1 in Afghanistan, despite the fact that Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri are still functioning in a veritable safe haven along the Afghan-Pakistan border. The existing terrorism infrastructure there has been linked to major terrorism attacks in Europe in 2004 and 2005 and foiled plots against the United States.

President Bush is right about the need for a troop surge, but he picked the wrong front. More forces are needed in Afghanistan, not Iraq. As outlined in the Center's *Strategic Redeployment 2.0*, it is time to withdraw forces from Iraq, end the perception of occupation that fuels at least some of the violence there, build greater international support for its new government, and shift our focus and more resources back to Afghanistan.

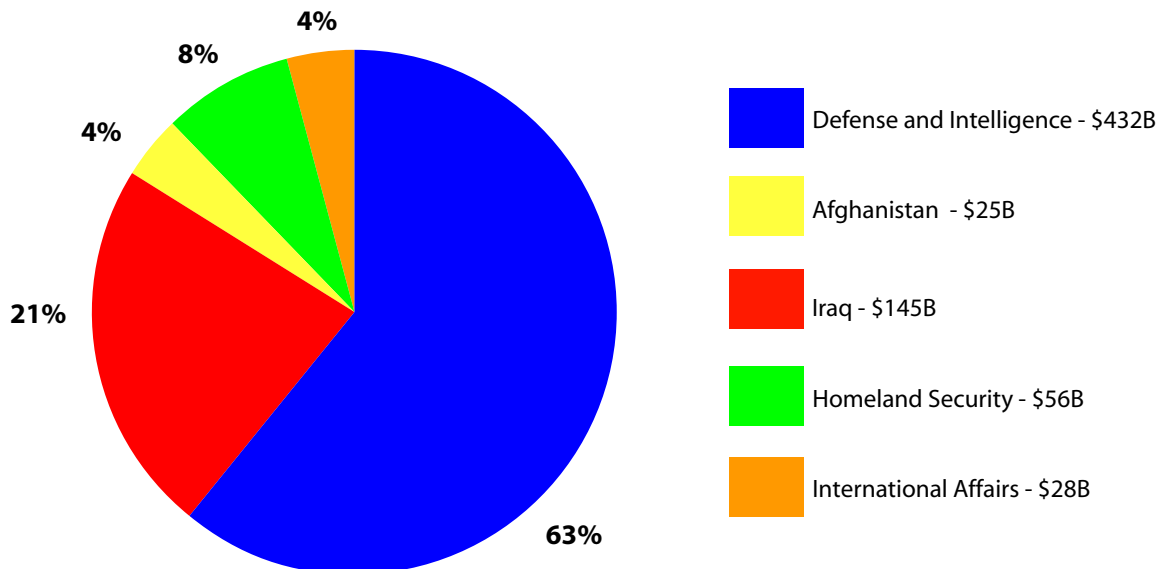
OPPORTUNITY COST OF IRAQ



Iraq Drains Resources From Other Priorities

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Estimated FY 2007 National Security Budget - \$686 Billion





Iraq now consumes almost twice as much funding as is allocated for homeland security, diplomacy and international assistance combined. There is little doubt that spending in Iraq, which now exceeds \$8.4 billion each month, could be invested in other areas, including: better intelligence gathering; improved border security; protection of critical infrastructure; and a system of national preparedness and response that failed miserably after Hurricane Katrina. A recent Center report, *Time to Act*, provides a number of recommendations and investments to strengthen homeland security.

The diversion of resources to Iraq also saps the United States' ability to handle a host of international challenges, such as enhancing peacekeeping efforts elsewhere in the world, bolstering weak and failed states, eradicating pandemic flu, extending and improving counterterrorism efforts, and ending genocide in Darfur. While the administration's new budget proposal calls for the overall international affairs budget to grow—a welcome step that Congress should support—the budget only includes \$486 million for international broadcasting and educational cultural exchanges.

Winning the so-called war of ideas is integral to the global fight against terrorist networks and requires greater investment. The Pentagon spends more than that in Iraq every two days.

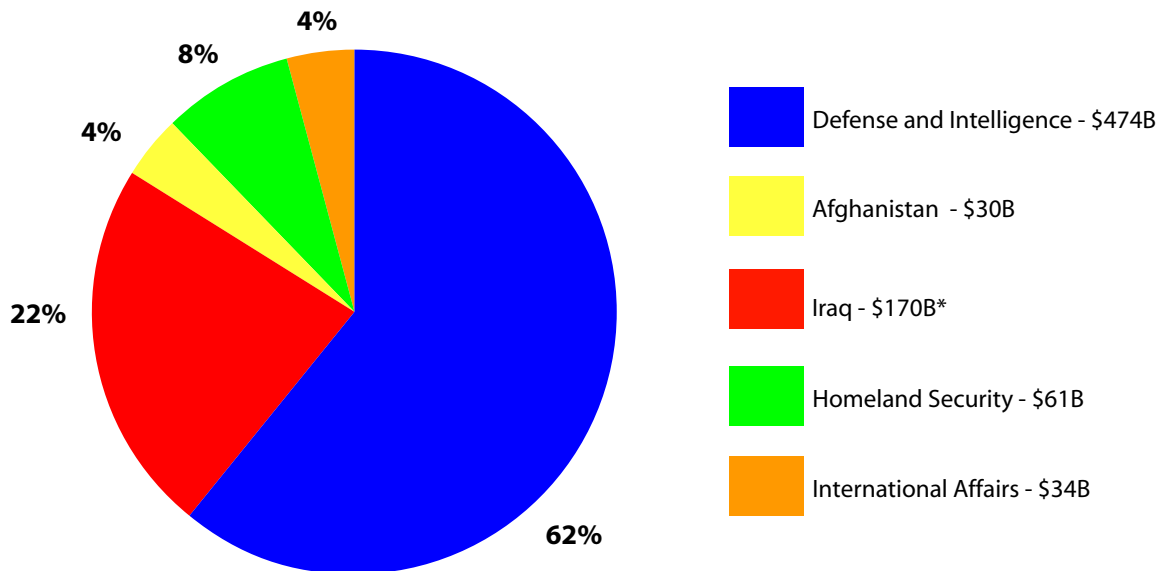
FIVE YEARS AFTER 9/11: METRICS OF FAILURE



2008 Budget Funds The Same Failed Strategy

To view Strategic Redeployment 2.0, [click here](#)

Proposed FY 2008 National Security Budget - \$769 Billion



* Assumes a minimum FY2008 supplemental of \$55 billion for troop surge, on-going operations and equipment refurbishment.



Unfortunately, President Bush continues to pursue a failed strategy that places too much emphasis on Iraq and not enough emphasis on Afghanistan and other dimensions of national security. Despite a change of rhetoric, the president's FY2008 budget is a stay-the-course national security budget that continues to fund a failed strategy that places too much emphasis on military intervention, strains the capabilities of our military forces and puts stress on their families back home.

The United States requires a more balanced approach. Congress needs to ensure the judicious use of our military by the president, better intelligence, stronger homeland security, and real diplomacy to reverse anti-Americanism around the world. Above all, we need to improve our ability to intervene before challenges become crises. That's far more likely to reduce the threat of extremism and terrorism over the long term.

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