

Congress Approves \$636.3 Billion for Defense in Fiscal 2010

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Congress sent President Barack Obama a \$636.3 billion spending measure for defense, including \$128.3 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Senate passed the bill 88-10 today in an unusual weekend morning session after the House approved it 395-34 on Dec. 16.

About \$65 billion of the war funding for the current fiscal year is for operations in Afghanistan. The Obama administration says it will need about \$30 billion more to finance the surge of 30,000 more troops there that begins this month. That request is likely to come with the fiscal 2011 budget to be submitted in February.

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The defense bill is the last of 12 annual spending bills to be sent to the president....

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The defense spending would bring to more than \$1 trillion the money spent since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks for the wars, veterans' care, embassy protection and enhanced domestic security, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan

That includes \$748 billion for spending related to the war in Iraq and \$300 billion for Afghanistan, the research service said in a Sept. 28 report.

The spending plan includes \$2.5 billion to buy 10 additional Boeing Co. C-17 transports that weren't requested by the Pentagon. Chicago-based Boeing also would benefit from \$1.5 billion for 18 F/A-E/F Super Hornet fighters, nine more than the administration requested.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates recommended April 6 that the C-17 program be terminated once Boeing delivers the last of 205 C-17s in late 2010. Boeing, the second-largest defense contractor, has said its plant in Long Beach, California, will shut down in 2011 without more orders.

The budget also includes \$465 million for the backup engine of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. The engine is built by Fairfield, Connecticut-based General Electric Co. and London-based Rolls Royce Plc. The administration earlier threatened to veto the entire defense bill if it contained any money for the engine.

30 More Planes

For the overall Lockheed Martin Corp. F-35 program, the measure fully funds the Pentagon's \$6.2 billion request for 30 additional aircraft, including 16 for the Marine Corps.

In a victory for the Obama administration, the legislation doesn't require the Pentagon to continue the canceled Lockheed VH-71 presidential helicopter, which the White House and Pentagon have sought to terminate.

The bill continues buying V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft built by Textron Inc. and Boeing, providing \$2.7 billion for 35 aircraft as the Pentagon requested.

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