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POLICY COMMITTEE

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Consequences of Failure to Timely Enact a War Supplemental

Media reports cite Senator Reid as stating that Congress has some time to complete a war supplemental without endangering the national security of the United States.¹ This is in direct contradiction to the position of the Secretary of Defense and military commanders. Secretary Gates and General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have both testified before Congress on these points, and Secretary Gates provided greater fidelity to their testimony in a letter to Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Byrd on April 11, 2007, concluding that:

- “It is a simple fact of life that if the . . . [supplemental] is not enacted soon, the Army faces a real and serious funding problem that will require increasingly disruptive and costly measures to be initiated—measures that will, inevitably, negatively impact readiness and Army personnel and their families.”

Disruption to Military is Already Taking Place

As military leaders have explained, the failure to deliver money to the troops has already resulted in disruptions to the Army’s work.

Lack of funding hinders training Iraqi units.

Democrats repeat their mantra that the United States should focus its efforts in Iraq on training Iraqi security forces, asserting that this will be the most expeditious way to bring U.S. troops out of Iraq—as if this is not what the United States is doing already in Iraq. However, the failure to provide a war supplemental bill that the President can sign in a timely manner has disrupted the ability of the United States to train Iraqi troops. As Major General William Caldwell, chief spokesman for Multinational Force-Iraq, said:

- “At the current moment, because of this lack of funding, MNSTC-I [Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq] is unable to continue at the pace [it had in developing] . . . Iraqi

¹ Associated Press, “Congress Clears Iraq Bill, Veto Awaits,” Apr. 27, 2007 (reporting that “Reid said Democrats hoped to have a follow-up war-funding bill ready for the president’s signature by June 1, . . . [which] was soon enough to prevent serious disruption in military operations”).

security forces. . . . [This lack of funding] is starting to have some impact today, and will only have more of an impact over time.”²

Additional funds for MRAP, the best defense against IEDs, are unavailable.

The President requested \$1.83 billion for procurement and outfitting of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAP), which the Senate Appropriations Committee fully funded. Senator Biden then took to the floor to provide an additional \$1.5 billion to the Procurement chapter of the supplemental bill for the procurement of MRAPs, because, citing military commanders, “MRAP could reduce the casualties in vehicles due to IED [Improvised Explosive Device] attack by as much as 80 percent.”³ The Amendment was approved by a vote of 98-0.⁴

Now, the failure to provide a war supplemental in a timely manner means that neither funds in the President’s request, nor the plus-up provided by amendment, is currently available for a vehicle pointed out to be “the best available vehicle for force protection.”⁵

There are disruptions to basic Army training and repair of equipment.

In the April 11 letter, Secretary Gates outlined actions the Army will need to take due to the supplemental being delayed:

- “reducing Army quality of life initiatives, including the routine upgrade of barracks and other facilities;”
- “reducing the repair and maintenance of equipment necessary for deployment training;”
- “curtailing the training of Army Guard and Reserve units within the United States, reducing their readiness levels.”

Additional disruptions are on the horizon.

In the April 11 letter, Secretary Gates stated that if supplemental funding is not received by mid-May, the Army will have to consider the following actions:

- “reducing the pace of equipment overhaul work at Army depots, which will likely exacerbate the equipment availability problems facing stateside units;”
- “curtailing training rotations for Brigade Combat Teams currently scheduled for overseas deployment;”
 - “Such a step would likely require the further extension of currently deployed forces until their replacements were judged ready for deployment.” (emphasis added)
- “delaying acceleration of additional modularized Army brigades necessary to expand the Army unit rotational pool and reduce the stress on existing units.”

² American Forces Press Service, “Iraqi Forces’ Efforts Improve Security in Baghdad, Official Says,” Apr. 5, 2007, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=32703> (quoting Major General William Caldwell, chief spokesman for Multinational Force-Iraq).

³ 153 Cong. Rec. S4033 (daily ed. March 28, 2007) (statement of Senator Biden).

⁴ Roll Call Vote No. 124, 110th Cong., 1st Sess. (March 29, 2007).

⁵ Biden.

General Peter Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff, stated that:

- The Army “will be forced to take increasingly draconian measures which will impact Army readiness and impose hardships on our Soldiers and their families.”⁶

Reprogramming to Mitigate Disruptive Effects is Inefficient & Problematic

In the meantime, without a war funding bill, the Department will have to rely on its reprogramming authorities to string together a budget plan to fund the Iraq war until such emergency funds are received. This is problematic for multiple reasons.

First and foremost, reprogramming requests are generally inefficient and certainly much less optimal than actually receiving the funds up-front. In a letter signed by the Chief of Staff of each of the Services, the Generals noted that “reprogramming is a short-term, cost-inefficient solution that wastes our limited resources.”⁷

Next, reprogramming is itself not without cost. Since reprogramming is essentially robbing Peter to pay Paul, when the Department takes funds to support one program over another, that action must come at the expense of the program from which the funds are taken. As General Schoomaker notes, “These [reprogramming] actions can disrupt and desynchronize our next-to-deploy units as they prepare for war, possibly compromising future readiness and strategic depth.”⁸

Finally, as Secretary Gates noted in his April 11 letter, given that any one of the four congressional defense committees can effectively block a proposed reprogramming, there is no certainty that the reprogramming authorities will even be available.

In conclusion, Secretary Gates noted in his April 11 letter:

- “While some have suggested that the Army can operate this year until July with existing resources and authorities, in reality there are significant limits, costs and disruptions associated with budgetary maneuvers necessary to continue Army operations, as we saw last year. *The technical and limited ability of the Department to transfer funds should not create a sense of complacency regarding the pressing need for the supplemental.*” (emphasis added).

⁶ Letter of General Peter J. Schoomaker (Army Chief of Staff) and Pete Green (Acting Secretary of the Army) to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell dated March 28, 2007.

⁷ Letter from General Peter J. Schoomaker (Army Chief of Staff), Admiral Michael G. Mullen (Chief of Naval Operations), General T. Michael Moseley (Air Force Chief of Staff), and General James T. Conway (Commandant of the Marine Corps) to Representative David Obey, Chairman House Appropriations Committee, dated April 2, 2007.

⁸ Schoomaker and Green.

Conclusion

The Senate Majority Leader has asserted that Congress has some time to complete an emergency supplemental appropriations bill without serious consequences to military operations in Iraq. In point of fact, this failure to provide a bill the President can sign in a timely manner has already resulted in serious disruptions to the capabilities of U.S. troops to execute their mission in Iraq. Moreover, military leaders have cautioned against the dangers of relying upon transfer authorities in the meantime. Continued delay in completing an emergency supplemental would only exacerbate the difficulties the troops and their families are suffering as a direct result of the failure to provide money for the troops.