

# The New York Times

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## Proposed Military Spending Is Highest Since WWII

By THOM SHANKER

WASHINGTON — As Congress and the public focus on more than \$600 billion already approved in supplemental budgets to pay for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for counterterrorism operations, the Bush administration has with little notice approached a landmark in military spending.

The Pentagon on Monday will unveil its proposed 2009 budget of \$515.4 billion. If it is approved in full, annual military spending, when adjusted for inflation, will have reached its highest level since World War II.

That new Defense Department budget proposal, which is to pay for the standard operations of the Pentagon and the military but does not include supplemental spending on the war efforts or on nuclear weapons, is an increase in real terms of about 5 percent over this year.

Overall since coming to office, the administration has increased baseline military spending by 30 percent, a figure sure to be noted in coming budget battles as the American economy seems headed downward and government social spending is strained, especially by health-care costs.

Still, the nation's economy has grown faster than the level of military spending, and even the current colossal Pentagon budgets for regular operations and the war efforts consume a smaller portion of gross domestic product than in previous conflicts.

About 14 percent of the national economy was spent on the military during the Korean War, and about 9 percent during the war in Vietnam. By comparison, when the current base Pentagon budget, nuclear weapons and

supplemental war costs are combined, they total just over 4 percent of the current economy, according to budget experts. The base Pentagon spending alone is about 3.4 percent of gross domestic product.

"The Bush administration's 2009 defense request follows the continuously ascending path of military outlays the president embraced at the beginning of his tenure," said Loren Thompson, a budget and procurement expert at the Lexington Institute, a policy research center. "However, the 2009 request may be the peak for defense spending."

Pentagon and military officials

### *Pentagon budgets grow, but not as much as the economy.*

acknowledge the considerable commitment of money that will be required for continuing the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as efforts to increase the size of the Army, Marine Corps and Special Operations forces, to replace weapons worn out in the desert and to assure "quality of life" for those in uniform so they will remain in the military.

Yet those demands for money do not even include the price of refocusing the military's attention beyond the current wars to prepare for other challenges.

Senior Pentagon civilians and the top generals and admirals do not deny the challenge of sustaining military spending, and they acknowledge that Congress and the American people may turn in-

ward after Iraq.

"I believe that we need to have a broad public discussion about what we should spend on defense," Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Friday.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Admiral Mullen have said military spending should not drop below 4 percent of the national economy. "I really do believe this 4 percent floor is important," Admiral Mullen said. "It's really important, given the world we're living in, given the threats that we see out there, the risks that are, in fact, global, not just in the Middle East."

Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary, said Mr. Gates and the senior Pentagon leadership were well aware that the large emergency spending bills for the war, over and above the Pentagon base budget, would at some point come to an end.

"The secretary believes that whenever we transition away from war supplementals, the Congress should dedicate 4 percent of our G.D.P. to funding national security," Mr. Morrell said. "That is what he believes to be a reasonable price to stay free and protect our interests around the world."

No weapons programs are canceled in the new Pentagon budget, officials said; in fact, steadily increasing base defense budgets and the large war-fighting supplemental spending packages have made it easier for the Pentagon to avoid some tough calls on where to trim.

"But I think it's doubtful the nation will sustain this level of defense spending," said Steven Kosiak, vice president for budget studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assess-

ments.

The 2009 military spending proposal will be the 11th year of continuous increases in the base military budget, he added.

War-fighting supplement spending measures are outside the base Pentagon budget, an issue that has angered some in Congress. Pentagon officials have proposed a \$70 billion special war budget just to carry on operations from Oct. 1, the start of the fiscal year, into the early months of the next presidency.

Another supplemental spending proposal is expected before October, but after Gen. David H. Petraeus, the senior commander in Iraq, reports to Congress on his recommendations for troop levels through the end of 2008.

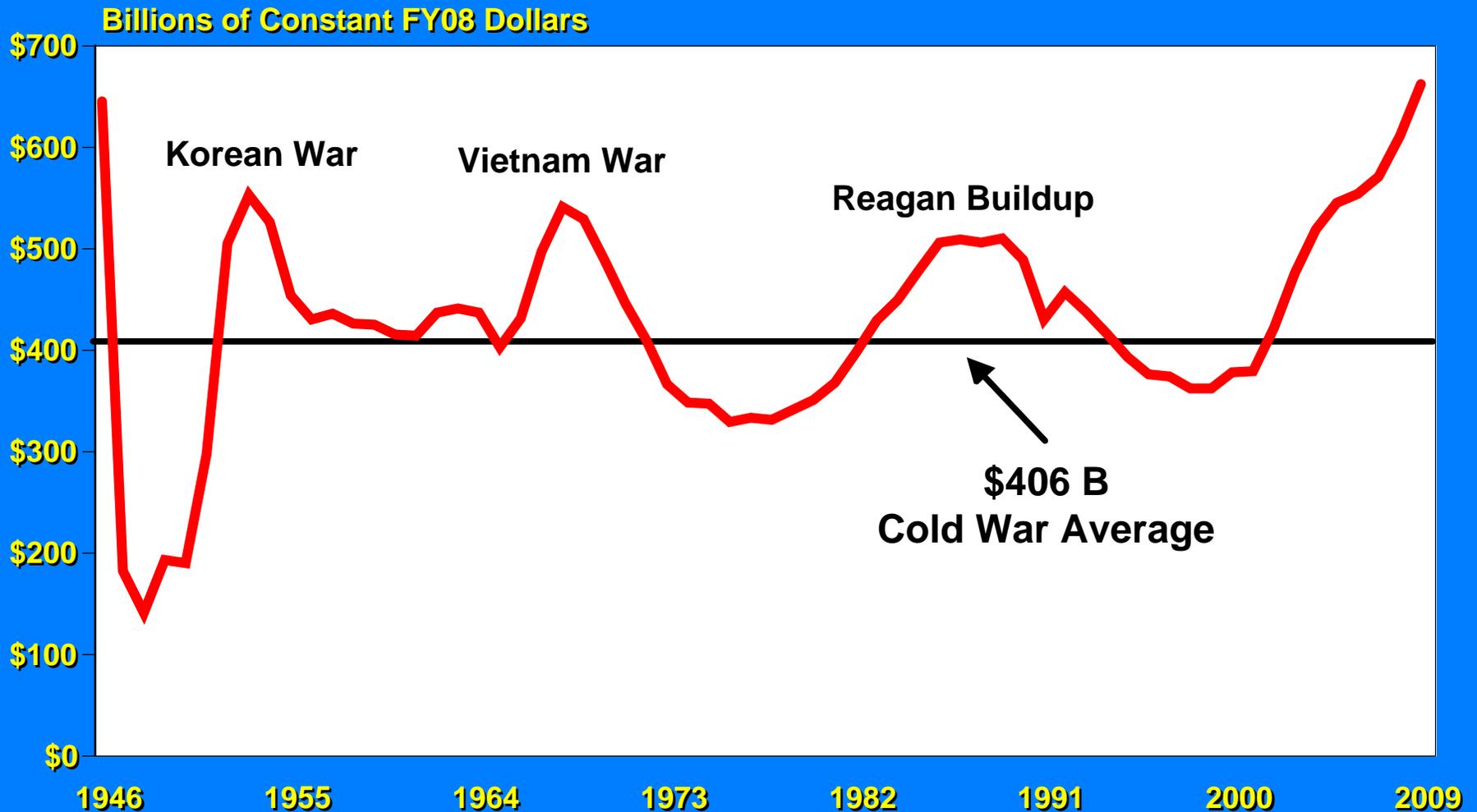
Any budget proposal is more than just a list of personnel costs and weapons to be purchased, as it lays out the building blocks of military strategy. Democrats vow to scrutinize the budget, the last by this president.

Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, who visited Iraq again last month, said that expanding the ground force as proposed in the new budget was an important step to relieve pressure on the Army and Marine Corps — one he would support even though he said it came too late.

Mr. Reed, a Democrat and a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, said demands of the counterinsurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan raised questions on whether troops were receiving sufficient training, and were instead surrendering skills across a broader range of combat missions.

"It's going to require a rebalancing," he said. "It's going to require budget decisions that'll be very difficult."

# Defense Outlays at Post-WWII Peak



# **Bush Administration Belittled Suggestions War Would Be Costly**

**STEPHANOPOULOS:** “What should the public know right now about what a war with Iraq would look like and what the cost would be?”

**RUMSFELD:** “...The Office of Management and Budget estimated it would be something under \$50 billion.”

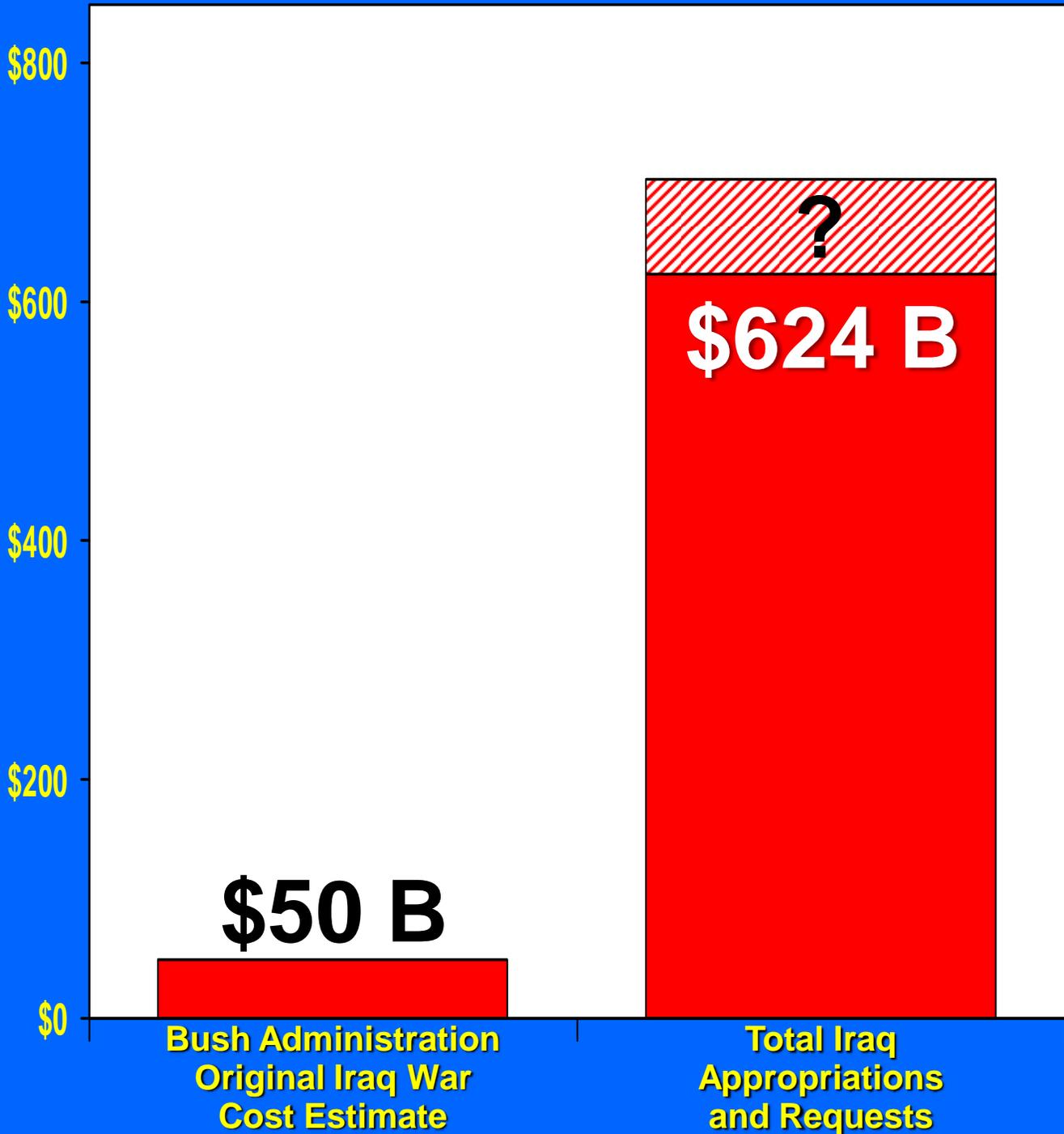
**STEPHANOPOULOS:** “Outside estimates say up to \$300 billion.”

**RUMSFELD:** “Baloney.”

— **Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld  
Interview on ABC’s “This Week with  
George Stephanopoulos”  
January 19, 2003**

# Iraq War Costs Dwarf Original Estimates

(\$ in billions)



Source: OMB, CBO, and SBC

Note: Hatched area represents projected additional Iraq war costs for FY 2009 if total war funding request is \$170 B.

# **Budgeting for the War Already Required by Law**

## **SEC. 1008. BUDGETING FOR ONGOING MILITARY OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.**

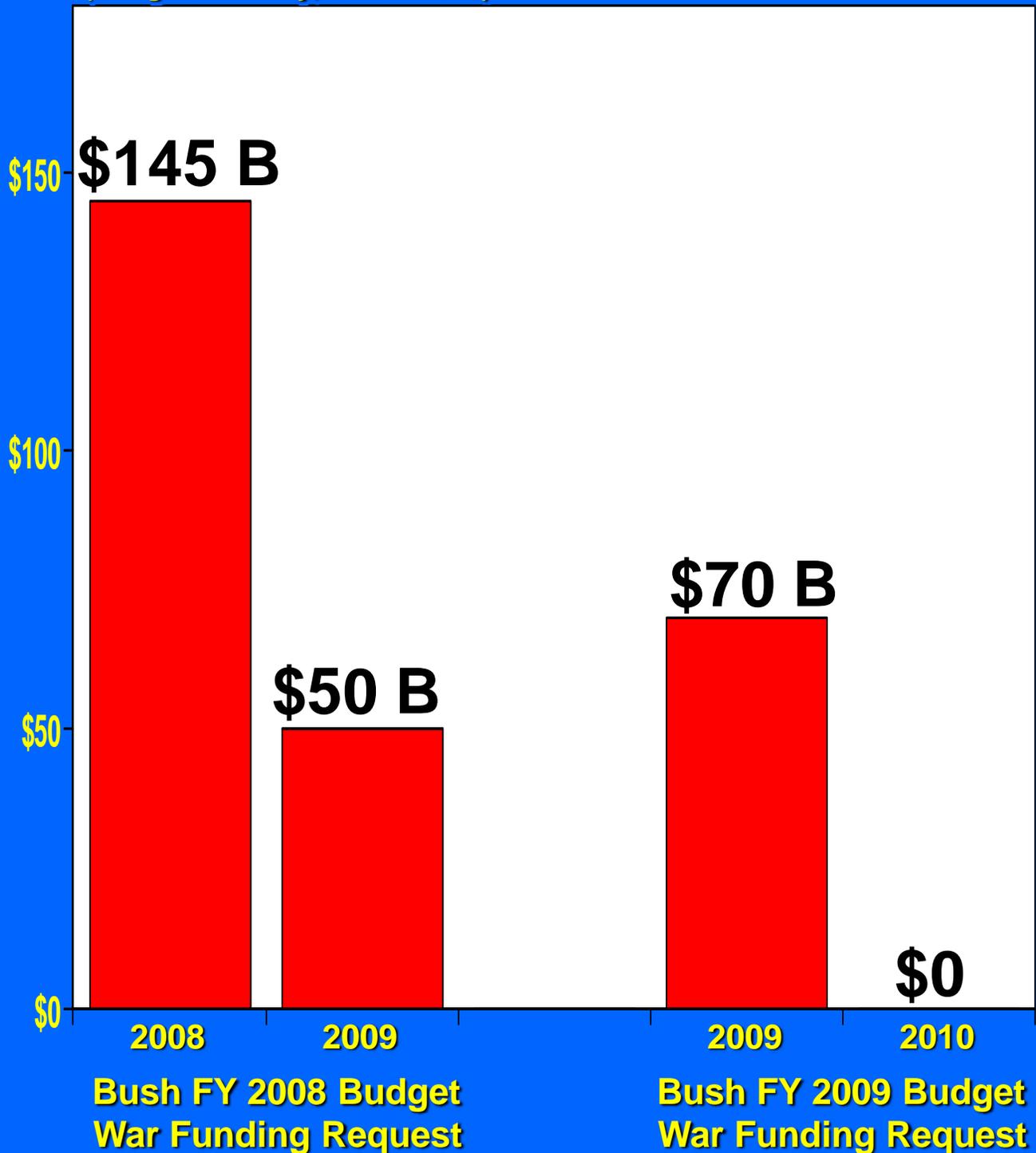
The President's budget submitted to Congress pursuant to section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, for each fiscal year after fiscal year 2007 shall include—

- (1) a request for the appropriation of funds for such fiscal year for ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq;
- (2) an estimate of all funds expected to be required in that fiscal year for such operations; and
- (3) a detailed justification of the funds requested.

**– National Defense Authorization Act  
for Fiscal Year 2007 (PL 109-364)**

# Bush Understating Likely Ongoing War Costs

(Budget authority; \$ in billions)



Source: OMB

# **Military Readiness is in Crisis**

**“...[T]enuous, too, sir, [are] the long-term risks we are taking to our security commitments elsewhere in the world if we do not address the toll that ongoing combat operations are taking on our forces, our gear, our people and their families. The well is deep, but it is not infinite. We must get Army deployments down to 12 months as soon as possible. People are tired.”**

**– ADM Michael Mullen, Chairman of the  
Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Testimony to the Senate Armed Services  
Committee  
February 8, 2008**