

# House committee approves Bush aid package

Easy passage of the bill is expected after a supportive vote from the House Appropriations Committee,

By Sumana Chatterjee  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — President Bush won a clear victory Thursday by persuading key House Republicans to support his plan to give rather than lend Iraq \$18.6 billion to rebuild its decrepit economy.

The House Appropriations Committee endorsed the administration's grant approach and voted 47-14 to give the president almost the entire \$87 billion he sought for Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill would provide \$65.3 billion for military operations in both countries, \$18.6 billion for Iraq reconstruction and \$1.2 billion for Afghanistan. The rest would cover administrative costs in Baghdad and aid to Liberia.

The key committee vote paves the way for easy passage of the spending bill next week by the full House of Representatives. Democrats may try to amend the measure to turn the reconstruction aid into a loan rather than a grant, but without

Republican support they cannot succeed.

The Senate is expected to pass a similar measure next week. Leaders in both chambers want to make sure the legislation is completed before Bush sends representatives to Madrid, Spain, on Oct. 25 to ask other nations to donate money for Iraq reconstruction.

Lawmakers from both parties had chafed at Bush's original request for \$20.3 billion to rebuild the oil-rich nation. Led by Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., they wanted half the money to be doled out as a grant immediately and the remainder to be loaned after a democratically elected government was in Baghdad. Wamp had said Iraq's oil revenue should be used to repay the United States for its loan.

Bush persuaded Wamp to drop the loan effort.

"My God, if his eyes had been lasers, mine would have been burned out," Wamp said. The president said it would "jeopardize our ultimate success in Iraq," Wamp told his committee colleagues, then withdrew his loan amendment.

The administration contends that giving only loans to Iraq would bolster the stance of international critics who charge that America invaded Iraq for its oil revenues. Also, the administra-

tion says, loans would make other nations reluctant to donate money to Iraq. The donors' conference could turn into a lenders' conference, Bush argued.

Lawmakers also rejected, 36-25 along party lines, a Democratic amendment that would have set up a trust account at the World Bank to lend \$7 billion for rebuilding Iraq. The amendment also called for paying for the \$87 billion by canceling the 2001 income tax cut for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans.

Prompted by reports that private firms Haliburton and Bechtel had won lucrative no-bid contracts to conduct reconstruction work in Iraq, lawmakers also required that the administration inform them of any contracts given without competition.

Incensed at reports that many soldiers do not have Kevlar body armor or water purification filters, lawmakers added more than \$250 million for equipment to reduce casualties and improve the quality of life in a war zone. They also added money to hire Iraqis to clear unexploded mines and to contract civilian guards to replace reservists who secure Army installations. According to the Army, hiring security guards could allow 7,000 to 10,000 reserve soldiers to go home.

Even as they approved the new spending, many lawmakers expressed dismay that they have yet to receive an accounting for the \$78.5 billion they approved for Iraq last April. They required additional reports on expenditures, saying they wanted to keep a closer eye on how the latest \$87 billion is spent.

They are also waiting for the administration to turn over a classified report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff titled "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategic Lessons Learned." In a letter to Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, several Democratic lawmakers said they could not consider the spending request without reviewing the report, which was written in March.

"Our constituents are demanding that Congress exercise its constitutional responsibility to thoroughly assess the administration's post-war policies prior to authorizing \$87 billion for military operations," according to the letter, signed by 30 Democrats led by Rep. Tom Lantos of California, the senior Democrat on the House International Relations Committee. No Republicans signed the letter.

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# Attacks leave 10 dead, 40 injured in Baghdad

Within an hour of each other, a car bomb explodes and a Spanish intelligence officer is murdered in Iraq's capital

By Christine Spolar and Deborah Horan  
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A suicide car bombing at an Iraqi police station and the slaying of a Spanish intelligence officer in an open street — assaults that occurred within an hour Thursday morning — left at least 10 victims dead and more than 40 injured.

The strikes occurred in neighborhoods at opposite ends of Baghdad and, like other high-profile attacks on supporters or allies of the U.S.-led coalition that invaded Iraq, the slayings could not be linked to any one group. The car blast Thursday was the seventh major deadly bombing in Iraq since August.

The day of tumult was also marked by the death of a U.S. soldier. The soldier, whose identity was not immediately released, was traveling in a convoy that was hit by rocket-propelled grenade after mid-

night during a patrol near the town of Baqouba, about 30 miles of north-east of Baghdad.

The attacks in Baghdad, which erupted six months after the city's fall to American forces, came as the Bush administration intensified its efforts to stress positive aspects of Iraq's postwar recovery.

"We're making great progress (in Iraq). I don't care what you read about," President Bush said at a fund-raiser in Lexington, Ky.

In Baghdad, coalition administrator Paul Bremer called a news conference to highlight school openings, new jobs and increased electricity in Iraq. He played down the violence in the capital of 5.7 million people, calling the attacks "bumps in the road" for a country in pursuit of a free and democratic society.

"We have made an enormous amount of progress in six months," Bremer said. "There will be bumps in the road, bad things like today. ... I think it's important to put that in perspective. It is a lot better than what it was."

Trouble in Baghdad began Thursday about 8 a.m. in the well-to-do Mansour neighborhood when a mili-

tary aide in Spain's intelligence services, Jose Antonio Bernal Gomez, was killed by gunmen who showed up at his front door, chased him into the street and pumped bullets into him as he pleaded for his life.

At least one witness said one of the attackers wore the black turban of a Shiite Muslim cleric as an apparent disguise. That assailant knocked on Gomez's door and then, as the Spaniard ran into the street, the gunman dressed as a cleric and at least two other men in a sedan opened fire.

The Spanish diplomat "was yelling, 'No! No! No!'" said witness Ahmed Ismail Abed, an Iraqi guard at a Sudanese school across the street.

"He fell to his knees. When he tried to stand, they shot him. He fell down again." The attackers returned to their car and disappeared down a side street, Abed said.

Authorities who arrived on the scene found Gomez, 34, slumped on the side of the road about 150 feet from his front gate, witnesses said.

Spanish authorities later identified Gomez as an air force sergeant attached to the embassy in Baghdad and as an attache from Spain's Na-

tional Intelligence Center. No motive for the attack was immediately apparent, although the Spanish government strongly supported the U.S.-led war against Iraq.

Half an hour after the slaying of Gomez, violence erupted across town in Sadr City, a Shiite Muslim stronghold. A car, apparently laden with explosives, sped past armed guards at a police headquarters just as officers were lining up to receive their monthly salaries.

The suicide attack killed the bomber or bombers and at least nine other people, including two police officers and civilian construction workers who had showed up to renovate part of the station, officials said.

Hospital officials in Baghdad said as many as 45 others were injured, several seriously. Iraqi police, who examined the blackened remains of the vehicle, said they believed two men were inside the car when it exploded.

"The guard tried to stop (the suicide bombers) — he shot at the car — but the car ran down the guard," said Capt. Saad Abdul Lateef, who arrived moments after the attack.

The car exploded about 100 yards inside the yard, leaving a crater 9 feet

wide and 3 feet deep, he said.

The police headquarters, near a large market area, was quickly surrounded by U.S. armored vehicles. Soldiers cordoned off the area to guard against a large, jeering crowd of Iraqis who gathered within minutes of the attack to denounce the U.S. occupation.

Sadr City, a Shiite enclave that is overwhelmingly poor, has been a problem for U.S. troops since the war. Muqtada al-Sadr, a young and popular Shiite cleric in the district, has openly opposed U.S. occupation and the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

Some time after the blast, hundreds of Shiites mobbed the offices of the cleric, who apparently was not in at the time. The crowd turned aggressive as rumors spread that American troops would enter the offices.

At one point, an Iraqi police officer was chased by the crowd, who jeered him for working with Americans and then kicked him until he fell into the dust.

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