

THE PRICE TAG FOR WAR

Does this look like a budget request for a war that is going to end any time soon?

Gates says another \$42 billion is needed to cover additional requirements. The extra money includes:

- *\$11 billion to field another 7,000 MRAP vehicles in addition to the 8,000 already planned;*
- *\$9 billion to reconstitute equipment and technology;*
- *\$6 billion for training and equipment of troops;*
- *\$1 billion to improve U.S. facilities in the region and consolidate bases in Iraq; and*
- *\$1 billion to train and equip Iraqi security forces.*

It seems to me that "consolidating bases" is the kind of thing you do if you're planning to stick around. Ditto doubling the number of MRAP vehicles. While they should have been ordered about 4 years ago, ordering them now suggests we're going to be needing them over the next five years. And note the reference to improving "US facilities in the region." Where? Why? Do those facilities happen to facilitate bombing Iran?

This request ought to be regarded as what it is: a budget request for an imperial outpost. I'm all in favor of reconstituting the equipment and

technology that Bush's war has broken. But defunding the empire is quite different than defunding the troops.

Update: From Congress Daily, part of the funds will go to fund State Department's own private band of mercenaries:

Including the \$5.3 billion for MRAPs, Bush has already asked for \$150.5 billion in additional war-related funding. Part of that was roughly \$3.3 billion for the State Department and international aid programs, which at the time was limited to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The State Department has since submitted requests for up to \$10 billion in additional funding as part of this week's budget amendment, including added money for Baghdad embassy security, sources said, although OMB was expected to significantly shave that figure. "I'd be surprised if [State] gets 90 or even 80 percent of what they're asking for [from OMB]," said one congressional aide.

Hmm. Condi is trying to prevent Henry Waxman from exercising oversight on State's mercenaries. Yet she wants to pay them billions more?