

One hour of Iraq spending could treat 817,000 cases of malaria

*Spending so far on Iraq would pay for
3.6 million four-year college educations*

By Roger Brigham

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President Bush's request to Congress in October for an additional \$45.9 billion for the war in Iraq has brought the total federal outlay since the war began to \$196.4 billion. A Democratic report earlier this month estimated that the wars' total costs could be much higher – as much as \$3.5 trillion – if "hidden" costs such as the rising price of oil, veterans' healthcare and interest on borrowed money are included.

RAW STORY sat down with some figures and asked: If the money for war on Iraq had been spent on other programs, such as education and health, what could the money have bought?

Here's what we came up with.

- The College Board puts the average annual cost of a public college education at \$13,589. Had that \$196.4 billion been invested four years ago on education, assuming each student took four years of schooling, it could have fully funded 3.6 million college graduates during that period. If the cost reaches \$3.5 trillion, as Democrats contend, the money would fund 64 million grads – some 256 million years of schooling.

- In 2006, the Senate asked for \$230 million to buy three V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft that critics said would never be combat effective. That money could have provided health care coverage to the nearly 230,000 California children who do not have it, a cost that comes in at just under \$1,200 per year per child according to the California HealthCare Foundation.

- A far bigger killer than Saddam Hussein or al Qaeda over the past few decades has been malaria, which is on the rise in Brazil, large parts of Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, where it is the biggest barrier to economic development. While the Defense Department said in 2006 the war was costing \$100,000 a minute, the World Health Organization was estimating malaria was killing two children every minute and more than a million people every year. The annual cost in terms of lost productivity and treatment in tropical Africa alone is estimated at \$1.8 billion – about one billion more than was being lost two decades ago. At \$7.34 per treatment, one hour's worth of expenditures on Iraq could have treated 817,000 people in Africa. The

\$196.4 billion spent on the war altogether could have provided doses for all 600 million people stricken globally every year ... for 44 years.

- Experts from the U.S. Surgeon General to California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger say obesity is epidemic in the United States, almost as perilous to American health as tobacco. A six-week trip to a fat farm in the Catskills or Berkshires costs about \$5,200. The estimated \$51.8 billion spent on Iraq in 2006 could have sent the 9 million American kids aged 6 to 19 years old who need to shape up to camp for the entire summer – with car fare thrown in.

- The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) says daycare for babies and toddlers averages \$8,150 per year and about \$6,400 for preschoolers. With about 22 percent of American kids under the age of 6 living in homes below the poverty level, picking up the tab would have cost the federal government \$39 billion – less than the U.S. spends in 10 months in Iraq.

- According to PayScale, Arabic translators earn an average of \$80,000 per year. The total money allocated for Iraq so far could have paid 20,000 translators for 12 years.

Several Arabic translators with military experience have been bounced out of the service under the Armed Forces' "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, many in the months since 9/11. The General Accounting Office estimated in 2005 the military had already spent \$191 million to recruit and train replacements for gay service members it had discharged – almost twenty times the allocation of \$10 million for hate crime enforcement that the Senate tacked onto a proposed \$460 billion defense spending bill for 2008.

- ProLiteracy Worldwide says last year's \$564 million in federal spending for adult literacy and English-as-a-second-language courses helped only one-tenth of the 30 million adults in the U.S. they need to reach. The U.S. House Labor/HHS Appropriations bill for 2008 would increase that by \$25 million but would still leave 27 million adults without educational resources. They could all be enrolled in adult classes with just the \$5.3 billion the administration added to its request for Iraq in July.

- The Centers for Disease Control estimates 40,000 people in the U.S. are infected with HIV every year, and AIDS activists have said federal spending to assist indigent HIV patients with meals, assisted living and legal aid under the Ryan White Care Act needs to be doubled. The allocation has been frozen at \$2.1 billion for the past few years, while the number of cities covered has increased, and as a result, programs in areas such as New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco have been faced with budget cutbacks. The \$2.1 billion that New Jersey alone would have to contribute to just the administration's request in October for an additional \$45.9 billion would be enough to double the amount spent on the half million people eligible for the Ryan White programs.