

HOUSE OKS EMERGENCY MILITARY SPENDING

\$82 BILLION BILL INCLUDES IMMIGRATION MEASURES

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Body

WASHINGTON -- The **House** overwhelmingly passed an **\$82 billion emergency spending bill** Thursday to pay for **military** operations and rebuilding efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as tsunami relief efforts in Asia.

The **measure**, passed 368 to 58, also **includes** provisions -- decried by immigrant and refugee advocates -- that would restrict illegal immigrants from getting driver's licenses, tighten U.S. asylum laws, and speed completion of a fence along the southwest border between the U.S. and Mexico.

The **bill** also **includes** a nearly tenfold increase in death benefits for survivors of troops killed in combat, money for more border patrol agents, and \$592 million for construction, security and maintenance of an American embassy in Iraq.

The Senate is expected to pass the **bill** next week and President Bush is expected to sign it into law.

Most of the money, nearly \$76 **billion**, will go toward the **military** operations, bringing the total amount **spent** on fighting primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan to about \$300 **billion** since 2001.

Lawmakers of both parties praised provisions of the **bill** that would increase benefits for **military** personnel.

The **measure** increases the death benefits for survivors of troops killed in combat from around \$12,000 to \$100,000 and adds a new \$100,000 insurance benefit for those who have suffered traumatic injuries, such as the loss of limbs.

While most Democrats supported the overall **bill**, many said the **immigration** and driver's license **measures** spearheaded by Republicans were "anti-immigrant" and opened the door to a national identification card.

Republicans touted the overall **spending bill** as vital to U.S. efforts to rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan and bring democracy to the Middle East. They also said the **immigration measures** will improve national security and help deter another Sept. 11-style attack.

Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter, D-N.Y., said Democrats were forced to vote for the **immigration** provisions since they were attached to the must-pass **spending bill**.

Democrats were also upset that the **bill** did not **include** the creation of a commission to investigate and monitor **military** contracts in Iraq.

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Minnesota Reps. McCollum and Oberstar voted against the bill; the others voted for it. Only Baldwin among Wisconsin's representatives voted against the bill.

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