

Gates asks Congress for Iraq War funds

by UPI

WASHINGTON - U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates Thursday urged Congress to pass an emergency Iraq funding bill the president would sign to prevent layoffs and closings. Gates, during a news briefing, said he wanted to dispel "a serious misconception" that the Defense Department can continue funding field forces indefinitely through accounting maneuvers. The U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill Wednesday that would appropriate \$50 billion for the Iraq War -- less than the \$200 billion sought by President George W. Bush -- and would outline U.S. combat troop withdrawal time lines. Bush said he would veto the bill if it reaches it desk. Restrictions on the department's budget mean it can transfer only \$3.7 billion, Gates said, leaving the department with no alternative to furloughs and closures to continue operations. "The military would cease operations at all Army bases by mid-February next year," Gates said. "This would result in the furloughing of about 100,000 government employees and a like number of contractor employees at Army bases." Gates said he will submit to Congress an urgent reprogramming request for funds while directing the Army and Marine Corps to develop contingency plans.

Â© 2007 United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Gates asks Congress for Iraq War funds by UPI