

Bush will talk but won't buy Iraq deadline

by UPI

WASHINGTON - White House counselor Dan Bartlett says President Bush is willing to talk with Democratic leaders in the Senate and House about funding U.S. troops in Iraq. But Bartlett said the president would not accept and would veto any bill that calls for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq or sets a deadline. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., have said they would like Bush's input on a final bill on supplemental funding -- funding not included in the original budget request. "The president as well as his staff are more than willing to sit down and talk to congressional leaders," Bartlett said Sunday on "This Week with George Stephanopoulos." "But what we haven't seen from the Democratic leadership is a willingness to drop this very restrictive language that's basically substituting the judgment of politicians here in Washington with the judgment of our commanders on the ground" in Iraq. Bartlett said Bush will not be blamed for blocking funding for the troops with a veto because "the president has ... given (the request) to them with plenty of time, specific recommendations on specific accounts and what do the Democrats do? They spent week after week trying to cobble together enough votes to keep their political caucus together, whether it be funding on domestic-related items such as peanut storage ... The president's made very clear and I don't think the American people think that we ought to replace the judgment of 535 politicians in Washington (for the) the judgment of commanders on the ground."

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