

House, Senate OK Iraq funding, no timeline

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate Thursday authorized \$100 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan through September.

The legislation does not include a timetable for withdrawing forces from Iraq, but it requires the Iraqi government to meet several benchmarks as a condition for receiving future U.S. aid for reconstruction, The New York Times reported.

The measure calls on President George W. Bush to report in July and September on progress of his Iraq strategy, and requires independent assessments of the Iraqi government and military forces.

Bush welcomed the legislation at a news conference earlier in the day.

"As it provides vital funds for our troops, this bill also reflects a consensus that the Iraqi government needs to show real progress in return for America's continued support and sacrifice," Bush said.

The legislation posed a political problem for Democratic House leaders, who were under pressure from war opponents to continue trying to force a withdrawal timeline on the White House. House Democrats voted 140-86 against the measure, but the overall House vote was 280-142 in favor, the Times reported.

The Senate voted 80-14 in favor of the funding bill.

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