

War Effort Impedes Security at Home

By Joe Moore, Alderman, City of Chicago, Illinois | July 16, 2003

Under the pretense of safeguarding our nation's security, President George W. Bush waged an unprovoked, pre-emptive military invasion of the nation of Iraq. Whether that war has made our nation and world more secure is certainly open to challenge. What is not open to challenge is the staggering financial cost of the war—\$79 billion for just the first phase alone.

While the President and Congress have not hesitated to spend whatever they deemed necessary on the Iraqi war effort, America's cities have received only a relative pittance to fund their new homeland security duties. This despite the fact that America's cities are now on the front lines in responding to any terrorist attacks, as the events of September 11th so tragically demonstrated. The threat of domestic terrorism has greatly expanded the duties and responsibilities of our local police, fire, and emergency workers.

The Bush administration initially promised \$3.5 billion in new funding for cities and towns to support upgraded security measures, a mere fraction of what was spent on the war effort in Iraq. Yet in the wake of preparations for the Iraqi invasion, only \$1 billion was appropriated this fiscal year. And because Congress combined new homeland security funds with existing federal funds for crime prevention, public safety, and emergency preparedness, America's cities and towns actually experienced a *net loss* in federal support.

The President's proposed 2004 budget continues this trend. While Bechtel is on track to control as much as \$100 billion in spending to reconstruct Iraq, the President has proposed *cutting* \$2 billion from crime prevention and public safety programs, such as the COPS, Local Law Enforcement Grant, and Byrne Grant programs.

The absence of federal support has been felt in my hometown, Chicago, Illinois. According to the National Priorities Project, the Iraq War cost the taxpayers of the city of Chicago close to \$800 million. Yet my city has received only \$3 million in federal grant funding for various security initiatives. Over

\$10.1 million in homeland security needs remain unmet in Chicago.

What does Chicago need? One of the many tragic occurrences of September 11th that led to an even greater loss of life was the inability of the New York Police and Fire Departments to communicate with one another by radio. Chicago is designing a field communications vehicle that would allow voice communications from any radio frequency on any band to any other frequency on any other band. This would allow all private and public agencies to communicate with each other at any time during an emergency, thus greatly improving the ability of the city respond instantaneously to a terrorist attack and save lives. If the federal government fails to provide additional homeland security funding to Chicago, the city will be required to fund the \$1.7 million cost for this vehicle by cuts in other city services and programs.

Similarly, Chicago has yet to receive federal support for emergency responder training and equipment. Proper training and equipment for Chicago's police and fire personnel is absolutely essential if the city is to respond effectively to an armed terrorist attack or a hazardous and/or biological incident. The \$7.1 million necessary to provide such training and equipment is another cost that will have to be borne by the city absent any federal support. Again, other city services and programs will need to be cut in order to cover the cost of this critical security need.

Finally, Chicago has designed an innovative system that would enable the city to send its residents, via telephone, a prerecorded message that can notify them of any impending emergency or health hazard.



Foreign Policy In Focus (FPiF)

www.fpi.org
A Think Tank Without Walls

The city needs \$1.3 million to implement this life-saving technology.

According to statistics compiled by the World Policy Institute, the cost of fighting 15 minutes of war in Iraq would have paid for all \$10.1 million of Chicago's homeland security needs. And the cost of six days of war in Iraq would have financed the estimated \$6 billion in homeland security costs for every city, town and village in America.

In addition to draining the resources we need to protect our citizens, the war is also depriving us of some of the people we have hired to do the job. The U.S. military urgently needs personnel with policing and firefighting skills for the mission in Iraq, so reservists with these skills are in hot demand. At the height of the war, the Reserves took 123 police and 17 firefighters off the streets of Chicago. Now, 75 of our police and 10 of our firefighters are still in Iraq. This story is being repeated in cities and towns across America.

The Bush administration's entire rationale for waging war on Iraq was to make our nation more secure. Has this massive diversion of resources and personnel to wage war made our nation any safer? As recent terrorist actions throughout the world have demonstrated, our unilateral military action has served only to further radicalize Islamic fundamentalists and embolden terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda. At the same time our cities, which are the frontline defenders against terrorist attacks at home, have been left holding the bag with little support from our federal government, leaving the citizens of our nation more vulnerable than ever.

(Joe Moore is an Alderman for the City of Chicago, and a leader of the Cities for Peace movement. He wrote this piece for Foreign Policy In Focus (online at www.fpif.org) and can be reached at <AldMoore@aol.com>.)

Published by Foreign Policy In Focus (FPiF), a joint project of the Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC, online at www.irc-online.org) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS, online at www.ips-dc.org). ©2003. All rights reserved.

Foreign Policy In Focus

"A Think Tank Without Walls"

Established in 1996, Foreign Policy In Focus is a network of policy analysts, advocates, and activists committed to "making the United States a more responsible global leader and global partner." For more information, visit www.fpif.org.

Recommended citation:

Joe Moore, "War Effort Impedes Security at Home," (Silver City, NM & Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In Focus, July 16, 2003).

Web location:

<http://www.presentdanger.org/commentary/2003/0307cities.html>

Production Information:

Writer: Joe Moore

Editor: Miriam Pemberton, IPS

Layout: Tonya Cannariato, IRC

p. 2

www.fpif.org

A Think Tank Without Walls

