

A photograph showing a U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman, HM1 Richard Barnett, in camouflage gear and a helmet with goggles, sitting on the ground and holding a young Iraqi boy. The boy is wearing a pink sweater and has visible blood on his arm. In the background, several other soldiers in camouflage uniforms are standing in a dry, dusty environment.

IRAQ WAR

A HUMAN TOUCH: U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman HM1 Richard Barnett, a medic with the 1st Marine Division, 1st Regimental Combat Team, 3rd Battalion, holds an Iraqi boy in central Iraq March 29, 2003. **REUTERS/DAMIR SAGOLJ**

# The cost of war

Ten years later, Iraq war costs soar past \$2 trillion

BY DANIEL TROTTA  
NEW YORK, MARCH 14, 2013

**T**he U.S. war in Iraq has cost \$1.7 trillion with an additional \$490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than \$6 trillion over the next four decades counting interest, a study released on Thursday said.

The war has killed at least 134,000 Iraqi civilians and may have contributed to the deaths of as many as four times that number, according to the Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

When security forces, insurgents, journalists and humanitarian workers were included, the war's death toll rose to an estimated 176,000 to 189,000, the study said.

The report, the work of about 30 academics and experts, was published in advance of the 10th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003.

It was also an update of a 2011 report the Watson Institute produced ahead of the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks that assessed the cost in dollars and lives from the resulting wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.

The 2011 study said the combined cost of the wars was at least \$3.7 trillion, based on actual expenditures from the U.S. Treasury and future commitments, such as the medical and disability claims of U.S. war veterans.

That estimate climbed to nearly \$4 trillion in the update.

The estimated death toll from the three wars, previously at 224,000 to 258,000, increased to a range of 272,000 to 329,000 two years later.

Excluded were indirect deaths caused by the mass exodus of doctors and a devastated infrastructure, for example, while the costs left out trillions of dollars in interest the United States could pay over the next 40 years.

The interest on expenses for the Iraq war could amount to about \$4 trillion during that period, the report said.

The report also examined the burden on U.S. veterans and their families, showing a deep social cost as well as an increase



RESEARCH TEAM:(L-R) Jessica Stern, Linda J. Bilmes, Catherine Lutz and Neta Crawford led researchers with the Watson Institute for International Studies on the Costs of War Project. **REUTERS/BRIAN SNYDER**

# \$2 trillion

Committed to the Iraq war so far, an expense that could grow to \$6 trillion with interest over the next 40 years.

Source: Watson Institute for International Studies

in spending on veterans. The 2011 study found U.S. medical and disability claims for veterans after a decade of war totaled \$33 billion. Two years later, that number had risen to \$134.7 billion.

### FEW GAINS

The report concluded the United States gained little from the war while Iraq was traumatized by it. The war reinvigorated radical Islamist militants in the region,

set back women's rights, and weakened an already precarious healthcare system, the report said. Meanwhile, the \$212 billion reconstruction effort was largely a failure with most of that money spent on security or lost to waste and fraud, it said.

Former President George W. Bush's administration cited its belief that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's government held weapons of mass destruction to justify the decision to go to war. U.S. and allied forces later found that such stockpiles did not exist.

Supporters of the war argued that intelligence available at the time concluded Iraq held the banned weapons and noted that even some countries that opposed the invasion agreed with the assessment.


"Action needed to be taken," said Steven Bucci, the military assistant to former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the run-up to the war and today a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative

*Text continues on page 4*



COST OF WAR | **HUMAN**

The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan took the biggest toll among civilians.

 = 1,000 people

IRAQ

**DEATHS**



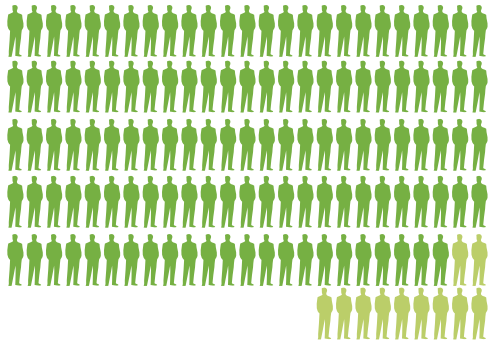
COALITION TROOPS  
**8,054**



U.S. CONTRACTORS  
**2,955 to 6,307**



NATIONAL SECURITY  
FORCES  
**26,405**



CIVILIAN  
**158,219 to 201,885**



JOURNALISTS  
**319**



NGO  
**375**

AFGHANISTAN | PAKISTAN



(est. range)



**WOUNDED IN ACTION**



U.S. UNIFORMED  
**50,476**



U.S. CONTRACTORS  
**25,839 to 55,373**



Source: Costs of War Project of the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University

## IRAQ WAR THE COST OF WAR

Washington-based think-tank.

Bucci, who was unconnected to the Watson study, agreed with its observation that the forecasts for the cost and duration of the war proved to be a tiny fraction of the real costs.

"If we had had the foresight to see how

long it would last and even if it would have cost half the lives, we would not have gone in," Bucci said. "Just the time alone would have been enough to stop us. Everyone thought it would be short."

Bucci said the toppling of Saddam and the results of an unforeseen conflict

between U.S.-led forces and al Qaeda militants drawn to Iraq were positive outcomes of the war.

"It was really in Iraq that 'al Qaeda central' died," Bucci said. "They got waxed."

*Editing by Paul Simao*



DEATH TOL: Widow Sheryl McIlvaine visits the grave of her husband, U.S. Marine Sgt. James R. McIlvaine, in Section 60 at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, October 19, 2009. McIlvaine was killed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on April 30, 2009. **REUTERS/LARRY DOWNING**

# COST OF WAR | FINANCIAL

A look at Iraq war expenses to date, and future estimates:

## IRAQ WAR SPENDING TO DATE: \$1.69 trillion

Cumulative spending to date on Iraq war including costs for veterans benefits and interest paid

**\$1.69 trillion**

Congressional appropriations for Iraq war to date

**\$769.9 billion**

## TOTAL SPENDING ON IRAQ WAR: \$6.21 trillion

Additional obligation to Iraq war veterans, 2014-2053

*In current dollars*

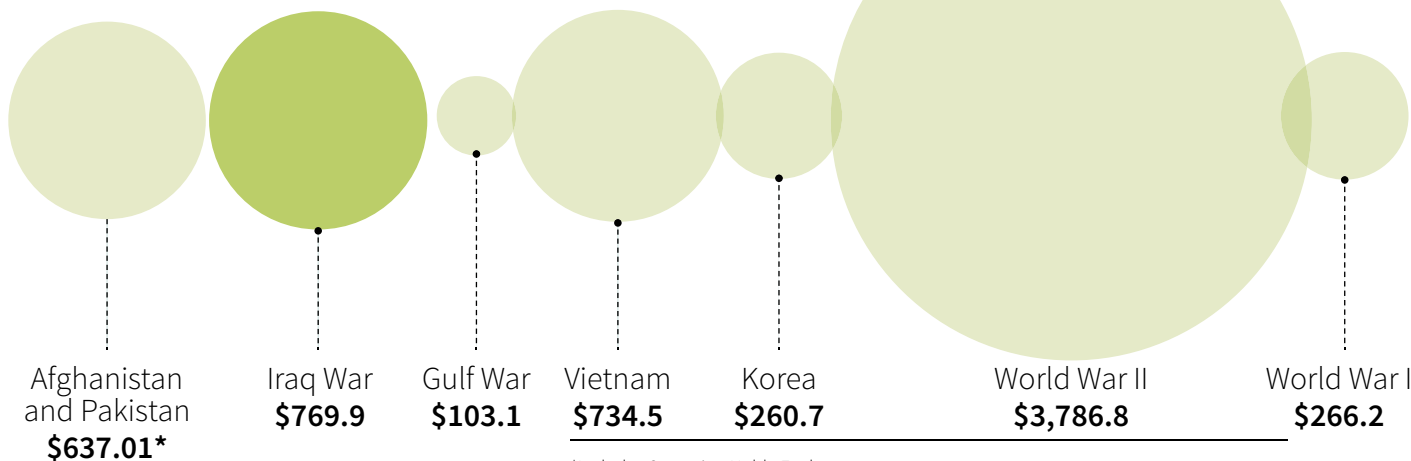
**\$0.49 trillion**

Estimated total Iraq war-related spending by 2053, including interest

**\$6.21 trillion**

## MILITARY COSTS IN U.S. WARS

Figures show military operation costs only and do not reflect veterans' benefits, interest on war-related debt, or assistance to allies. *In billions of current dollars.*



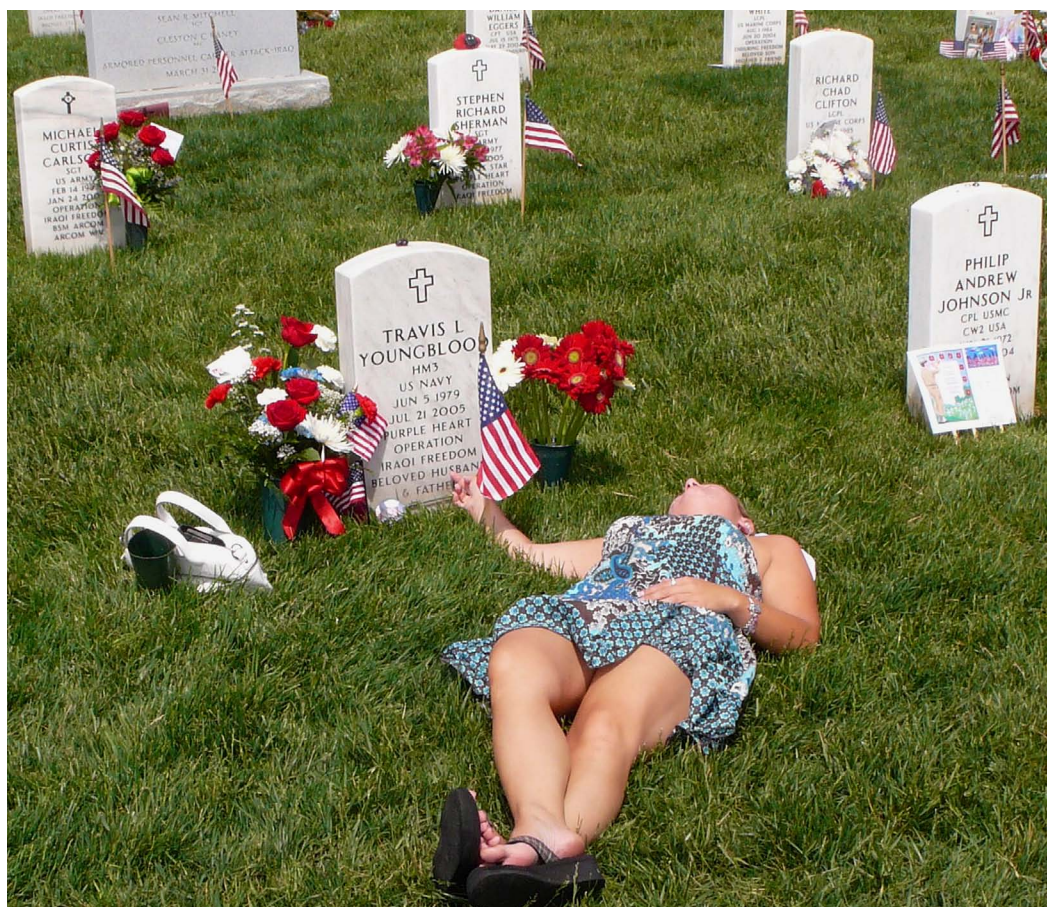
\*Includes Operation Noble Eagle

Sources: Costs of War Project of the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University (post-2011 costs); Congressional Research Service (past wars)





MISCALCULATION: The administration of former President George W. Bush, above, believed the Iraq war would be short and far less deadly than what resulted. Military families bore much of the burden. **REUTERS/KEVIN LAMARQUE/LARRY DOWNING**



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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