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Tuesday, Oct 12, 2004

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\$680 million in aid for Darfur advances

The Senate approved the money, some of which could come from funds for rebuilding in Iraq.

By Alan Fram
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Senate approved up to \$680 million in aid for the embattled Darfur region of Sudan yesterday, including money it would shift from an unspent fund for rebuilding Iraq.

The sum would be Congress' latest infusion of assistance to a Texas-sized region of western Africa racked by a conflict that has killed up to 50,000 people and left 1.2 million more homeless. Many others lack food or medical care.

U.S. aid for Sudan has largely drawn bipartisan support. Underscoring that, the assistance included \$150 million that would be transferred from a largely unspent \$18.4 billion fund for rebuilding Iraq, a top U.S. priority that has languished due to violence and red tape.

The Sudan money was included in a \$19.7 billion foreign-aid bill for next year that the Senate approved by voice vote. The House approved its version of the legislation in July and included \$311 million for Sudan. The two chambers will next have to write a compromise measure.

By voice vote, senators added a final \$75 million to the Sudan package, an amendment sponsored by Sens. Jon Corzine (D., N.J.) and Mike DeWine (R., Ohio.).

That money would go to the African Union, which has offered to send troops to Darfur to try to end the crisis but has said it needs money to do so.

Nigeria, which heads the 53-nation African Union, hopes for \$200 million in contributions from rich countries or help with transport and logistics. On Monday, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin said Canada would contribute the equivalent of \$16 million.

Under the Senate legislation, the extra funds from the Iraq account would be available only if President Bush requested them.

"The real challenge is to make sure we stop the genocide, not just feed the hungry," Corzine said.

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Congress approved an initial \$95 million for Sudan earlier this year in a bill that has already become law. In his budget in February, Bush asked for \$436 million in humanitarian, development and food aid for Sudan for next year.

In July, Congress voted to apply the label *genocide* to the warfare in Darfur, where the Arab Janjaweed militia has been attacking non-Arab, black residents. The United Nations considers it the most serious humanitarian crisis in the world.

The bill also included:

\$2.4 billion to help fight AIDS in African and other poor countries, \$220 million more than Bush proposed. Some of the money is also for battling tuberculosis and malaria.

\$1.12 billion for Bush's Millennium Challenge program, less than half the money he requested to aid countries that adopt democratic changes.

\$929 million for Afghanistan, including at least \$504 million in humanitarian assistance, and \$700 million for Pakistan.

\$2.6 billion in military and economic aid for Israel, \$1.8 billion for Egypt, and almost \$500 million for Jordan.

\$731 million for antidrug efforts in Colombia and other Andean countries.

\$83 million for Haiti, one of the world's poorest countries.

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