



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on March 19, 2026

Pentagon to Request Over \$200 Billion for Iran War

Three weeks into the unconstitutional war with Iran, and the numbers are already spiraling. Far from the “decisive success” repeatedly touted, President Donald Trump’s Defense Department is now preparing to ask Congress for more than \$200 billion in additional funding. That comes on top of the already record-setting, [trillion-dollar](#) military budget — and the [extra \\$156.2 billion](#) in supplemental funding embedded in last year’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act.



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The Washington Post reported on the request on Wednesday. By Thursday, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had [confirmed](#) it, noting the figure “could move.”

At the same time, the conflict appears poised to expand. Reuters [reported](#) on Wednesday that the administration is “considering deploying thousands of US troops to reinforce its operation in the Middle East.”

The news also comes as the U.S. national debt just [surged past \\$39 trillion](#), with roughly a quarter of that total added during Trump’s first term, and skyrocketing further in his second.

The \$200 Billion Ask

According to a *Washington Post* [report](#), “the Pentagon has asked the White House to approve a more than \$200 billion request to Congress to fund the war in Iran.” The request, described by officials as still evolving, represents a massive escalation in both scope and cost.

The figure is not just large — it is structurally different. As the report notes:

That number would far surpass the costs of the administration’s massive airstrike campaign to date and instead seek to urgently increase production of critical weaponry expended as U.S. and Israeli forces have struck thousands of targets over the past three weeks.

In other words, this is no longer about sustaining strikes. It is about replenishing the stockpiles required to continue them.

Hegseth [framed the request](#) in operational terms:

So we’re going back to Congress and our folks there to ensure that we’re properly funded for what’s been done, for what we may have to do in the future, ensure that our ammunition — everything’s refilled, and not just refilled, but above and beyond.

Stripped of its phrasing, the logic is straightforward: Spend more because so much has already been spent, and prepare for escalation by funding it in advance.



War Costs Surge

The scale of the request becomes clearer when placed against the war's early costs. According to the report, "the cost of the war in Iran has rapidly grown, exceeding \$11 billion in the first week alone."

That pace is extraordinary. It suggests a burn rate that, if sustained, would quickly rival or exceed past conflicts. For comparison, the U.S. campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq cost roughly \$2.3 trillion and \$2 trillion, respectively, based on widely cited estimates that are generally reported in nominal terms.

The administration appears to have anticipated this trajectory. "Shortly after the joint U.S.-Israeli campaign began late last month, the Trump administration started preparing an additional funding request," the *Post* reported. This is standard wartime practice meant to "ensure the military can maintain its readiness to defend against threats around the world even during wartime." Yet the speed at which the Defense Department moved to request additional funds is extraordinary.

Inside the Pentagon, the effort has been driven by Deputy Defense Secretary Steven Feinberg. According to the report, he has "focused for the past year on the American defense industry and increasing production of precision munitions."

Those munitions are now running low.

Feinberg's team "put together a range of packages in a bid to quickly address the Pentagon's munitions shortage and jolt the country's at times sluggish defense industry," one source said.

The implication is clear. The war is not just consuming resources — it is outpacing production.

Congress: Resistance and Uncertainty

The political path forward looks anything but smooth.

The *Post* reports that the funding request "is likely to stage a major political battle in Congress." Public support remains weak. Democrats have been "sharply critical." Republicans are more supportive — but far from unified.

Crucially, there is no clear legislative path. Lawmakers "haven't committed to a legislative strategy, or found a clear path to surpass the Senate's 60-vote threshold."

That threshold matters. Without bipartisan backing, the request stalls.

Even within the administration, expectations are tempered. The idea that the full amount will pass appears uncertain at best.

The debate will likely serve as a referendum on the war itself. As Mark Cancian of the Center for Strategic and International Studies put it:

If the administration asks for more money, there will be a big political fight because all the anti-war sentiment will focus on that request.

Seizing on the reporting, Iran signaled confidence in the Israeli lobby's ability to secure the funding. Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, [posted](#) on X, "This \$200b is the tip of the iceberg. Ordinary Americans can thank Benjamin Netanyahu and his lackeys in Congress for the trillion-dollar 'Israel First tax' that's about to hit [the] U.S. economy."



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What “Ending Wars”?

The request also exposes a sharp contradiction, observed the *Post*.

During his campaign, Trump emphasized “ending American adventurism abroad.” He repeatedly criticized previous spending — especially on Ukraine.

Yet, by December, the Republican-dominated Congress had approved “roughly \$188 billion in spending for the war in Ukraine,” according to the U.S. special inspector general.

Additionally, in 2025, the Trump administration [approved](#) roughly \$16 billion in weapons transfers to Israel, adding to the \$3.3 billion in annual military financing and pushing total U.S. wartime support since October 2023 to \$21.7 billion.

Now, the administration is considering exceeding those figures for a single new conflict, one it initially tried to sell to a perplexed public as a quick “liberating” incursion.

And the appetite is nowhere near satisfied. The *Post* reminded:

Even before the war in Iran, Trump had called for a \$1.5 trillion defense budget, a more than 50 percent increase from the previous year.

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reportedly pushed back internally, arguing it was “[too large](#).”

That internal resistance now collides with external reality. War has a way of expanding budgets, regardless of prior “limits.”

Industrial Limits and Strategic Risks

Even if Congress approves the funding, another problem remains: The defense industry may not be able to keep up.

Experts cited in the report warned:

An additional problem with any request will be the limitations on how quickly the U.S. defense industry will be able to increase production, a time frame limited by the number of available workers, production facilities and critical materials required to build the military’s most exquisite weaponry.

Elaine McCusker, a former Pentagon acting comptroller, explained the dilemma bluntly:

Just throwing lots of money into the industrial base doesn’t necessarily get you things sooner, but you’re definitely not going to get it sooner if you don’t.

It is a paradox. Money is necessary — but not sufficient. This raises a deeper question: If the war continues at its current pace, can the U.S. sustain it materially?

For defense contractors, the answer seems to fall into the category of champagne problems.



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Military Bonanza

The financial upside for the military-industrial complex is immediate and substantial.

As *Time* [reports](#), the war is already “providing a boon to U.S. weapons manufacturers,” with new spending flowing into long-term contracts and expanded production commitments. The Pentagon’s new “wartime” acquisition strategy, [announced](#) last November, explicitly calls for awarding firms “bigger, longer deals” to scale output, locking in revenue for years.

That shift is now accelerating.

A significant share of the requested money will flow directly to major contractors producing high-end weapons systems.

The economics of “killing bad guys,” as Hegseth put it, are clear: “It takes money.” And lots of it. Per the outlet:

Each [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD] interceptor missile costs roughly \$12.7 million, and each Patriot PAC-3 interceptor costs about \$3.7 million. That’s millions of dollars going up in smoke each time they’re fired.

The biggest beneficiaries are already positioned. Lockheed Martin leads production of THAAD and Patriot systems. RTX supplies Tomahawk missiles and air defense technologies. General Dynamics, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and L3Harris provide everything from submarines and bombers to sensors and missile components.

Many of these firms have secured multi-year agreements. Others are expanding production lines that will require continued funding commitments. The structure of these contracts ensures that once spending ramps up, it is difficult to reverse.

Industry signals point in the same direction. Contractors are preparing for growth. Production targets are rising. Capacity is being built out for sustained demand.

In practical terms, the conflict is not just a military operation. It is another large-scale transfer of public funds into the defense sector, with profits closely tied to the duration and intensity of the war.



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