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Earlier this week, Sens. Tom Coburn (R-OK), Jim DeMint (R-SC), and John McCain (R-AZ) called on Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to divert earmarks in the defense spending bill and transfer those funds to the troops in Iraq if necessary. The defense spending bill contains roughly 2,000 earmarks worth approximately \$5 billion.

There is substantial disagreement over these funds; however the diversion of these funds is one way of closing the gap. The redirection of funds from earmarked projects could require permission from Congress, and it is a safe bet that Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) would not let this occur without a fight.

Some of you may remember my exchange with Chairman Murtha about an earmark for a "Microbial paint shield" that the Pentagon never requested. This single earmark is worth \$2 million. Rep. Murtha could potentially lose this earmark in addition another \$150 million more worth of earmarks if the funds are reassigned.