

U.S. Public Supports Expanding Afghanistan U.N. Peacekeeping Force Beyond Kabul

July 8, 2003

Willing to Contribute U.S. Troops

[Questionnaire](#)

A new PIPA/Knowledge Networks poll finds that a two-thirds majority—66 percent—says that the United States should approve of the expansion of the UN peacekeeping force beyond Kabul so as to cover other areas of Afghanistan presently dominated by various warlords. Assuming that other countries would also be willing to contribute troops toward this expansion, 76 percent say that the United States should contribute troops as well.

Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes, comments: "It is striking that, even as large numbers of U.S. troops are tied down in Iraq, most Americans are willing to contribute more U.S. troops to the operation in Afghanistan. Presumably this is prompted by a combination of a feeling of some moral responsibility for the consequences of the U.S. war against the Taliban with a belief that instability and lawlessness can make Afghanistan continue to be a breeding ground for terrorist organizations."

Asked whether the United States should be contributing troops to a U.N. peacekeeping force in Afghanistan now, 67 percent said that it should with 25 percent saying that it should not.

Americans say they are giving only modest attention to Afghanistan. Thirty-three percent said that they are following the news about the situation there very (5%) or fairly (28%) closely while 66 percent say that they are following not too closely (43%) or not closely at all (23%). This compares to 51 percent who say that they are following news in Iraq very (11%) or fairly (40%) closely.

When initially asked informational questions, respondents as a whole showed no clear picture of the situation there. Asked, "Who is in control of most of the country?" a plurality of 36 percent answered "Afghan warlords," while 26 percent assumed the U.S. military was in control and 25% "a central Afghan government."

Asked whether the U.N. peacekeeping force includes soldiers from European countries, 61 percent answered correctly that it does (28% does not). Those that answered that it does were asked to estimate how many European soldiers are participating. Of this group, 37 percent gave the correct answer of "a few thousand," while 43 percent said "a few

hundred," and 14 percent "just a few." Thus, while a majority was aware of the European contribution, only 23 percent of the full sample had a correct picture of it.

The poll was conducted with a nationwide sample of 1,051 respondents June 18-25. The margin of error was plus or minus 3.5% as each question was administered to three quarters of the sample.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided Internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Ford Foundation.