



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
For The People & The Press

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Broad Concern that U.S. Military is Overcommitted

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## Public Wary of Military Intervention in Libya

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## Broad Concern that U.S. Military is Overcommitted Public Wary of Military Intervention in Libya

The public by a wide margin says the United States does not have a responsibility to do something about the fighting between government forces and anti-government groups in Libya. And while opinion is divided over enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya, this view is undercut by the fact that Americans overwhelmingly oppose bombing Libyan military air defenses.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted March 10-13 among 1,001 adults, finds that 63% say the United States does not have a responsibility to act in Libya; fewer than half as many (27%) say the U.S. has this responsibility. Opinion about U.S. responsibility to take action in Libya is comparable to views about the conflict between Serbs and Bosnians in 1995; just 30% said the U.S. had a responsibility in that case. By contrast, far more Americans said the U.S. had a responsibility to take action in Kosovo in 1999 and in the Darfur crisis of 2007.

Reflecting the public's reluctance about U.S. involvement in Libya, barely half (51%) favor increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions against Libya. The public is divided over the possibility of enforcing a no-fly zone – 44% favor this action while 45% are opposed. Yet just 16% favor bombing Libyan air defenses – 77% oppose bombing the sites. And large majorities reject providing arms to anti-government groups (69%) and sending troops into Libya (82%).

Thinking about the Middle East more generally, Americans see regional stability as more important than increasing democracy. In a separate survey conducted March 8-13, 52%

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### Few Say U.S. Has Responsibility to Act in Libya

<i>Does the U.S. have a responsibility to do something about ...</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>DK</b>
	%	%	%
<b>Fighting in Libya (3/2011)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>10=100</b>
Ethnic genocide in Darfur (12/2006)	51	36	13=100
Ethnic fighting in Kosovo (3/1999)	47	46	7=100
Fighting between Serbs and Bosnians (6/1995)	30	64	6=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 10-13, 2011. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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### Public Split Over No-Fly Zone, Opposed to Bombing Air Defenses

<i>Favor/oppose U.S. and its allies ...</i>	<b>Favor</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>DK</b>
	%	%	%
Increasing sanctions	51	40	9=100
Enforcing no-fly zone	44	45	11=100
Sending arms to anti-government groups	23	69	8=100
Bombing Libyan air defenses	16	77	7=100
Sending troops into Libya	13	82	5=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 10-13, 2011. PEW6. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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say it is more important to have stable governments in the Middle East even if there is less democracy; 38% say it is more important to have democratic governments in the region, even if there is less stability.

Democrats are evenly divided over priorities for the Middle East: 47% say it is more important to have stable governments while nearly as many (43%) say it is more important to have stability. By wider margins, Republicans (58% to 33%) and independents (52% to 38%) say it is more important to have stability.

## Arguments Against and For Using Force

Roughly half of Americans (51%) say that the best argument for not using military force in Libya is that U.S. military forces are already overcommitted. Far fewer (19%) say the best argument for not using force is that opposition groups in Libya may be no better than the current government or that Libya is not of vital interest to the United States (13%).

Opinions about the arguments against the use of force are similar among those who say the U.S. has a responsibility to act in Libya and those who disagree. Roughly half in each group say the strongest argument for not using force is that the U.S. military is overstretched.

The most often cited argument *for* using military force in Libya is that it is important to show that America backs democracy. Roughly a third (32%) say this is the strongest argument for using force. Roughly one-in-five (21%) say the best argument is that removing Col. Qaddafi from power will win the support

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### Argument Against Force: Military Is Overcommitted

<i>Arguments <u>against</u> using military force in Libya...</i>	<b>Mar 10-13</b> %
U.S. military forces already overcommitted	51
Opposition groups may be no better than current government	19
Libya not of vital interest to U.S.	13
None – Do not support force (Vol.)	5
Other/Don't know	<u>12</u>
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 10-13, 2011. PEW8. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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### Arguments For Force: Show Support for Democracy

<i>Arguments <u>for</u> using military force in Libya...</i>	<b>Mar 10-13</b> %
Important to show that America backs democracy	32
Removing Qaddafi will win support of Libyan people	21
U.S. has a moral obligation to stop the violence	20
None – Do not support force (Vol.)	13
Other/Don't know	<u>13</u>
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 10-13, 2011. PEW7. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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of the Libyan people while about the same number (20%) says the U.S. has a moral obligation to stop the violence.

Those who say the United States has a responsibility to act in Libya are far more likely to cite the moral obligation argument than are those who say the U.S. has no responsibility. Nearly four-in-ten (39%) of those who see a responsibility for the U.S. in Libya say the best argument for using force is that the U.S. has a moral obligation to stop the violence. That compares with just 13% of those who say the U.S. has no responsibility to do something in Libya.

### Few Say U.S. Has Responsibility to Act

The view that the United States does not have a responsibility to act in Libya is shared widely across demographic and political groups. Majorities across gender, age and educational groups say the United States does not have a responsibility to do something about the fighting there.

Just 33% of Democrats say the U.S. has a responsibility to take action in Libya, as do 27% of Republicans and 24% of independents. Slightly more than a third (36%) of those who are following news from Libya very closely say the U.S. has a responsibility to do something about the fighting there. That compares with just 23% of those who are following news from Libya less closely.

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#### Small Partisan Differences in Views of U.S Responsibility in Libya

<i>U.S. has responsibility to do something about fighting in Libya?</i>	<b>Does</b> %	<b>Does not</b> %	<b>DK</b> %
Total	27	63	10=100
Men	30	63	7=100
Women	24	62	14=100
18-29	31	55	14=100
30-49	31	62	7=100
50-64	27	66	6=100
65+	18	69	13=100
College grad+	28	63	10=100
Some college	31	57	12=100
HS or less	25	67	9=100
Republican	27	65	8=100
Democrat	33	57	10=100
Independent	24	67	9=100
<i>Following news from Libya...</i>			
Very closely	36	58	5=100
Less closely	23	65	12=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 10-13, 2011. PEW5. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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## About the Surveys

Most of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 10-13, 2011 among a national sample of 1,001 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (670 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 154 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1001	4.0 percentage points
Republicans	260	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	284	7.0 percentage points
Independents	329	6.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

Some of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 8-13, 2011 among a national sample of 1,370 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (901 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 469 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 220 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that

respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,370	3.5 percentage points
Republicans	343	6.5 percentage points
Democrats	444	6.0 percentage points
Independents	524	5.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
Michael Remez, Senior Writer  
Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley, Senior Researchers  
Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, and Alec Tyson, Research Associates  
Jacob Poushter, Research Analyst  
Danielle Gewurz, Research Assistant

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
MARCH 10-13, 2011 OMNIBUS  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,001**

**PEW1-PEW4 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

On a different subject...

PEW.5 Do you think the United States has a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Libya between government forces and anti-government groups, or doesn't the United States have this responsibility?

	<u>U.S. has responsibility</u>	<u>Doesn't have responsibility</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
March 10-13, 2011	27	63	10
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>			
June 2007: <i>Ethnic genocide in Darfur</i>	49	34	17
December, 2006	51	36	13
March, 1999: <i>Fighting between ethnic groups in Kosovo, a province of Serbia</i>	47	46	7
June, 1995: <i>Fighting between Serbs and Bosnians in what used to be Yugoslavia</i>	30	64	6

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.6 Would you favor or oppose the United States and its allies doing each of the following with respect to Libya. (First,) **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** ... (Would you favor or oppose this?)

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. Increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Libya March 10-13, 2011	51	40	9
b. Enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya March 10-13, 2011	44	45	11
c. Bombing Libyan air defenses March 10-13, 2011	16	77	7
d. Sending arms and supplies to anti-government groups in Libya March 10-13, 2011	23	69	8
e. Sending troops into Libya March 10-13, 2011	13	82	5

**RANDOMIZE PEW.7 AND PEW.8**

PEW.7 Which of the following would be the best argument for using military force in Libya? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Mar 10-13 <u>2011</u>	
32	It is important to show that America backs democracy
21	Removing Qaddafi will win the support of the Libyan people
20	The U.S. has a moral obligation to stop the violence
13	None –Do not support the use of force <b>(VOL.)</b>
1	Other <b>(VOL.)</b>
1	Multiple reasons <b>(VOL.)</b>
11	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**RANDOMIZE PEW.7 AND PEW.8**

PEW.8 Which of the following would be the best argument for NOT using military force in Libya? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Mar 10-13

2011

51	Our military forces are already overcommitted
19	The opposition groups may be no better than the current government
13	Libya is not of vital interest to the United States
5	None –Support the use of force <b>(VOL.)</b>
2	Other <b>(VOL.)</b>
2	Multiple reasons <b>(VOL.)</b>
8	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS  
2011 MARCH POLITICAL TYPOLOGY SURVEY B  
MARCH 8-13, 2011  
FINAL TOPLINE  
N=1,370**

**ASK ALL SURVEY B:****RANDOMIZE QUESTIONS B34 AND B35**

Q.B34 Thinking about recent events in the Middle East, which is more important **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Mar 8-13

2011

38	Democratic governments, even if there is less stability in the region
52	Stable governments, even if there is less democracy in the region
10	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ALL OTHER QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**