



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
 Wednesday, March 19, 2008

A Year After The Walter Reed Scandal
PUBLIC CONTINUES TO FAULT GOVERNMENT FOR TROOP CARE

A year after the problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other military hospitals made major news, the public remains highly critical of the government's performance in supporting and caring for soldiers who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fully 72% say the government does not give enough support to soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is unchanged from March 2007. In addition, just 29% rate the government's job of providing medical care for the returning troops as excellent or good, while 63% rate it as only fair or poor. These opinions about the medical care for returning troops also have changed little since last March.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Feb. 20-24 among 1,508 Americans, finds that opinions about the government's handling of care for returning troops are

divided along partisan lines, with Republicans less critical than Democrats of the government's care of the troops. Nonetheless, 62% of Republicans say the government does not provide enough support for the returning troops, while just 32% say it does. Roughly three-quarters of Democrats (76%) and independents (74%) say the government does not do enough for soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the war in Iraq enters its sixth year, half of the public says the American people give enough support to soldiers, while 46% disagree. This is virtually the same as a year ago; in March 2007, 51% said Americans gave enough support, while 44% said they did not. Notably, there are no significant differences in opinion on this question by party or ideology.

No Improvement in Views of Troop Care		
<i>US govt gives enough support to troops?</i>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
	%	%
Yes	21	22
No	72	72
Don't know	7	6
	100	100
<i>Govt's job in providing medical care for troops</i>		
Excellent	4	5
Good	22	24
Only fair	33	37
Poor	32	26
Don't know	9	8
	100	100

Soldiers' Families Views No Different

Just 5% of Americans say the government has done an excellent job in providing medical care for returning troops, while 24% say the care has been good. More than twice as many people rate the government's medical care for the returning soldiers as either only fair (37%) or poor (26%).

Four-in-ten Republicans rate the government's care for returning troops as excellent or good. That compares with 25% of independents and 24% of Democrats.

Notably, there are no differences in opinions about the government's performance in caring for returning troops between those who say they have a close family member who has served in either Iraq or Afghanistan – 29% of the public – and those who do not. About three-in-ten (28%) of those with close family involved in the current wars say the government has done an excellent or good job of providing medical care to the soldiers, a view shared by 29% of those who are not so directly tied to the conflicts.

	<i>Close family in Iraq/Afghan (29%)</i>	<i>No close family in Iraq/Afghan (71%)</i>
<i>Govt's job providing medical care:</i>	%	%
Excellent/good	28	29
Only fair/poor	64	63
DK/Ref	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100
<i>Govt gives enough support to troops?</i>		
Yes	22	22
No	74	71
DK/Ref	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100

In rating the government's overall support for returning military personnel, 22% of those with a close family member who has served in either conflict – and an identical percentage of those without a family tie to the troops – say the government has given enough support to the troops. In addition, half of those with close family who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan say the American people have given enough support to returning soldiers, the same as those who are not so directly linked to the wars.

Criticisms of Government's Performance

People who say the government has not provided enough support for the returning troops offer detailed criticisms of where the government has fallen short. Nearly half (48%) specifically cite a medical concern as the kind of problem the government is doing too little about.

In addition, about a third (34%) cites a mental health issue, with 7% specifically mentioning depression and an additional 5% citing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. More than a quarter (27%) mention financial issues, including the difficulties that returning military personnel face in getting jobs and keeping their homes. Other issues, such as the need to support military families (5%) and the problems faced by disabled war veterans (3%) also are cited as issues on which the government has failed returning service members.

Where the Government Falls Short in Supporting Troops	
	<u>%</u>
Medical Care (Net)	48
General medical/health problems	33
Quality of care/facilities	7
Medical bills/insurance	4
Mental health (Net)	34
General mental/psychology	22
Depression/stress	7
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	5
Financial issues (Net)	27
No jobs/preparing troops for work	12
Money/financial support	9
Other issues (Net)	25
General concerns about care	5
Needs of military families	5
Transition to civilian life	5
Disabilities/loss of limbs	3
Based on those who said the government did not give enough support to returning soldiers [N=1,093]. Figures add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.	

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 1,508 adults, 18 years of age or older, from February 20-24, 2008. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,508	3.0 percentage points

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 CENTER

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 eight 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:

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
LATE FEBRUARY 2008 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
February 20 - February 24, 2008
N = 1,508

QUESTIONS 1-81 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
NO QUESTIONS 82-84

Thinking about the U.S. military...

ASK ALL:

ROTATE Q.85 AND Q.86

Q.85 Do you think the American people give enough support to soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, or not?

		March <u>2007</u>
50	Yes, the American people give enough support	51
46	No, the American people do not give enough support	44
<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>5</u>
100		100

ASK ALL:

ROTATE Q.85 AND Q.86

Q.86 Do you think the U.S. government gives enough support to soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, or not?

		March <u>2007</u>
22	Yes, the U.S. government gives enough support	21
72	No, the U.S. government does not give enough support	72
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>7</u>
100		100

IF ‘NO, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DOES NOT GIVE ENOUGH SUPPORT’ (Q.86=2), ASK [N=1093]:
 Q.87 From what you have read and heard, what kinds of problems are soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan having that the government is not doing enough about? (**OPEN-END. PROBE ONCE IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS “DON’T KNOW.” ACCEPT UP TO THREE RESPONSES. PROBE ONCE WITH “ANYTHING ELSE?”**)*

- 48 MEDICAL ISSUES (NET)**
- 33 Medical/Health care problems/Physical health (general mentions)
- 7 Quality of care/facilities
- 4 Medical bills/Insurance/Health-care benefits
- 2 Injuries
- 2 Rehabilitation
- 1 Long-term medical care
- 1 Head/Brain injuries
- 2 Other medical issues

- 34 MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES (NET)**
- 22 Mental health/Psychological health issues (general mentions)
- 7 Depression/Stress/Emotional problems, etc.
- 5 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- 2 Counseling
- 1 Suicide

- 27 FINANCIAL ISSUES (NET)**
- 12 No jobs/Preparing returning military personnel for the workforce
- 9 Money/Financial support/Financial issues (general mentions)
- 3 Housing/losing homes/homeless veterans
- 3 Benefits (generally)
- 3 Military personnel don’t get paid enough/Compensation
- 3 Education

- 25 OTHER ISSUES (NET)**
- 5 Don’t get enough/high enough quality care or support (generally) upon return
- 5 Other, various
- 5 Needs of military families/Need to support military families
- 5 Transition to civilian life
- 3 Disabilities/Loss of limbs/Care related to disabilities
- 2 Deployments are too long/frequent/tightly spaced/Bring them home
- 1 Once back, they are forgotten/not respected
- 1 Equipment (in war zones) not sufficient

- 11 Don’t know/Refused

* Total adds to more than 100% because some respondents gave more than one answer. Individuals who list more than one item in a category are counted only once for the category’s net calculation.

ASK ALL:

Q.88 How would you rate the job the government has been doing providing medical care to U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan? **[READ IN ORDER]**

		March
		<u>2007</u>
5	Excellent	4
24	Good	22
37	Only fair, OR	33
26	Poor	32
<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>9</u>
100		100

ASK ALL:

Now, just a few questions for statistical purposes only.

VETERAN Are you yourself **[IF RESPONDENT IS MARRIED – MARITAL=1 – ADD: or is your husband/wife]** a veteran of the armed services? **[IF YES, PROBE FOR WHOM]**

26	Military Household
15	Respondent
10	Spouse
1	Both
74	Non-Military Household
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused [VOL.]
100	

SERVED Do you have a family member you are close to who has served in the current military efforts in Iraq or Afghanistan?

29	Yes
71	No
<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	