



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 22, 2009

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
Andrew Kohut, Director
Carroll Doherty, Associate Director

But Most See Possible Taliban Takeover as Major Threat
PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN MISSION SLIPS

Public support for keeping U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan has declined since June and Americans express decidedly mixed views about whether the United States is making progress in reducing civilian casualties, defeating the Taliban militarily and establishing democracy in Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, a sizable majority of the public (76%) views the possibility of the Taliban regaining control of Afghanistan as a major threat to the well-being of the United States. In fact, nearly as many regard the Taliban regaining control of Afghanistan as a major threat as say that about Iran possibly developing nuclear weapons (82%).

Currently, half of Americans (50%) say military troops should remain in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, while 43% favor removing U.S. and NATO troops as soon as possible. In June, 57% favored keeping U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, while 38% favored their removal as soon as possible.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Sept. 10-15 among 1,006 adults finds that most Democrats (56%) favor removing troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Just 37% of Democrats say U.S. and NATO troops should remain in the country, down somewhat from the 45% who said this in June. By contrast, Republicans by a wide margin (71% to 25%) continue to favor maintaining U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. Opinion among independents mirrors that of the population as a whole; currently, 51% favor keeping U.S. and NATO troops in the country while 43% are opposed.

**More Support U.S. Troop Withdrawal;
Taliban Takeover Seen as Major Threat**

| <i>U.S./NATO troops in Afghanistan...</i> | <u>June</u> % | <u>Sept</u> % |
|--|------------------|---------------------|
| Keep until country is stable | 57 | 50 |
| Remove as soon as possible | 38 | 43 |
| Don't know | 5 | 7 |
| | 100 | 100 |
| | | <u>Major threat</u> |
| <i>Possible threats to the U.S.:</i> | | % |
| If Iran developed nuclear weapons | | 82 |
| If Taliban regained control in Afghanistan | | 76 |
| If extremists took control in Pakistan | | 64 |

Q49,50a-c.

Since June, there has been a sharp decline in the proportion of those 65 and older who favor maintaining U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. Currently, opinion among those 65 and older is split, with 44% in support of keeping the troops there and 41% opposed. In June, people in this age group favored maintaining troops in Afghanistan by approximately two-to-one (63% to 31%).

Little Progress toward Major Goals

The public is skeptical of the progress the United States is making toward meeting many specific objectives in Afghanistan. The only area where the balance of opinion is clearly positive is in training Afghan security forces: 51% say the United States is making progress in training Afghan forces while 28% say it is losing ground. A slight plurality (44%) say the U.S. is making progress in promoting economic development in the country while 35% say that effort is losing ground.

Opinion is evenly divided regarding three major U.S. objectives in Afghanistan: establishing democracy in the country (42% making progress, 41% losing ground); defeating the Taliban militarily (41% making progress, 42% losing ground); and reducing civilian casualties (37% making progress, 43% losing ground).

Fewer Say NATO and U.S. Should Keep Troops in Afghanistan

| | June 2009 | | Sept 2009 | | Keep troops June-Sept Change | Sept N |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| | Keep troops | Remove troops | Keep troops | Remove troops | | |
| | % | % | % | % | | |
| Total | 57 | 38 | 50 | 43 | -7 | 1006 |
| Republican | 75 | 21 | 71 | 25 | -4 | 250 |
| Democrat | 45 | 52 | 37 | 56 | -8 | 353 |
| Independent | 57 | 36 | 51 | 43 | -6 | 327 |
| Men | 64 | 32 | 55 | 39 | -9 | 486 |
| Women | 49 | 44 | 44 | 47 | -5 | 520 |
| 18-29 | 46 | 49 | 46 | 51 | 0 | 163 |
| 30-49 | 55 | 40 | 53 | 43 | -2 | 287 |
| 50-64 | 64 | 32 | 53 | 39 | -11 | 311 |
| 65+ | 63 | 31 | 44 | 41 | -19 | 229 |
| College grad+ | 69 | 25 | 63 | 33 | -6 | 353 |
| Some college | 62 | 31 | 51 | 43 | -11 | 267 |
| HS or less | 46 | 49 | 40 | 51 | -6 | 383 |
| Q49. | | | | | | |

Views of U.S. Progress in Afghanistan

| | Making progress | Losing ground | No change/ DK |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Training Afghan security forces | 51 | 28 | 21=100 |
| Promoting economic development | 44 | 35 | 21=100 |
| Establishing democracy | 42 | 41 | 17=100 |
| Defeating the Taliban militarily | 41 | 42 | 17=100 |
| Reducing civilian casualties | 37 | 43 | 19=100 |

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. QUS51a-e.

Republicans' evaluations of progress in Afghanistan are more positive than those of Democrats or independents. More than six-in-ten Republicans say the United States is making progress in training Afghan security forces, while 21% say it is losing ground. Opinions about progress in this area are more divided, though on balance positive, among Democrats and independents.

By nearly two-to-one (55% to 29%), Republicans say the U.S. is making progress rather than losing ground in defeating the Taliban militarily. But Democrats and independents are divided – and only about four-in-ten in each group see progress toward defeating the Taliban (37% of Democrats, 40% of independents).

In addition, while a plurality of Republicans (47%) say the United States is making progress in reducing civilian casualties in Afghanistan, pluralities of Democrats (46%) and independents (49%) say that United States is losing ground when it comes to reducing civilian casualties.

Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan Viewed as Major Threat

There is greater agreement about the impact of a Taliban takeover on the well-being of the United States. More than eight-in-ten Republicans (84%), 76% of Democrats and 75% of independents say this would represent a major threat to the United States.

Similarly, there are modest partisan differences in views about whether Iran's development of nuclear weapons would pose a major threat to the U.S. The partisan differences are slightly larger in opinions about a possible takeover by Islamic extremists in Pakistan.

| | <u>Rep</u> | <u>Dem</u> | <u>Ind</u> |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Training Afghan security forces</i> | % | % | % |
| Making progress | 62 | 49 | 52 |
| Losing ground | 21 | 29 | 31 |
| No change/Don't know | <u>18</u> | <u>22</u> | <u>17</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| <i>Defeating the Taliban militarily</i> | | | |
| Making progress | 55 | 37 | 40 |
| Losing ground | 29 | 45 | 47 |
| No change/Don't know | <u>16</u> | <u>19</u> | <u>13</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| <i>Reducing civilian casualties</i> | | | |
| Making progress | 47 | 34 | 36 |
| Losing ground | 32 | 46 | 49 |
| No change/Don't know | <u>21</u> | <u>20</u> | <u>16</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.
QUS51a,b & d.

| | <u>Total</u> | <u>Rep</u> | <u>Dem</u> | <u>Ind</u> | <u>R-D</u> |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>% saying it would be a "major threat" to US if...</i> | % | % | % | % | <i>diff</i> |
| Iran developed nuclear weapons | 82 | 89 | 79 | 84 | +10 |
| Taliban regained control in Afghanistan | 76 | 84 | 76 | 75 | +8 |
| Islamic extremists took control of Pakistan | 64 | 76 | 61 | 65 | +15 |

Q50a-c.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,006 adults, 18 years of age or older, from September 10-15, 2009 (754 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 252 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 103 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. 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/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2008 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.

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:

| Group | Sample Size | Plus or minus... |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Total sample | 1,006 | 3.5 percentage points |
| Republicans | 250 | 7.0 percentage points |
| Democrats | 353 | 6.0 percentage points |
| Independents | 327 | 6.0 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 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
Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, Leah Christian, and Jocelyn Kiley, Research Associates
Alec Tyson, Research Analyst

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS/
PEW GLOBAL ATTITUDES PROJECT
SEPTEMBER 2009 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
September 10-15, 2009
N=1,006**

QUESTIONS 1, 2-4, 6, US10 AND US11, 23-48 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

QUESTION PP1, 5, US8 AND US9, H1-H3 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:

Q.49 Do you think the U.S. and NATO should keep military troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. and NATO should remove their troops as soon as possible?

| Sept 10-15 2009 | | -GAP- June 2009 | Mid- Sept 2008 | -GAP- April 2008 | Feb 2008 | -GAP- May 2007 |
|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 50 | Keep troops in Afghanistan | 57 | 61 | 50 | 61 | 50 |
| 43 | Remove their troops | 38 | 33 | 44 | 32 | 42 |
| 7 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 |

ASK ALL:

Q.50 I'd like your opinion about some possible international concerns for the U.S. What (INSERT), would this be a major threat, a minor threat or not a threat to the well being of the U.S.?

| | | Major threat | Minor threat | Not a threat | (VOL.) DK/Ref |
|----|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| a. | if Islamic extremists took control of Pakistan | 64 | 19 | 6 | 10 |
| b. | if Iran developed nuclear weapons | 82 | 12 | 2 | 3 |
| c. | if the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan | 76 | 17 | 3 | 4 |

ASK ALL:

Q.US51 Thinking specifically about Afghanistan, please tell me if you think we are making progress or losing ground in each area. First, are we making progress or losing ground in [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]? How about [NEXT ITEM]? [IF NECESSARY: Do you think we are making progress or losing ground in this area?]

| | | Making progress | Losing ground | No change | (VOL.) DK/Ref |
|----|--|--------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| a. | Training Afghan security forces | 51 | 28 | 1 | 20 |
| b. | Reducing the number of civilian casualties there | 37 | 43 | 2 | 17 |
| c. | Establishing democracy in Afghanistan | 42 | 41 | 2 | 15 |
| d. | Defeating the Taliban militarily | 41 | 42 | 2 | 15 |
| e. | Promoting economic development | 44 | 35 | 2 | 19 |

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5, 8 OR 9 IN PARTY, ASK:

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

| | | | | (VOL.) | (VOL.) | (VOL.) | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| | <u>Republican</u> | <u>Democrat</u> | <u>Independent</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Other</u> | <u>DK/</u> | <i>Lean</i> | <i>Lean</i> |
| | | | | <u>preference</u> | <u>party</u> | <u>Ref</u> | <i>Rep</i> | <i>Dem</i> |
| September 10-15, 2009 | 23 | 34 | 34 | 4 | * | 2 | 13 | 17 |
| August 20-27, 2009 | 26 | 32 | 36 | 3 | * | 3 | 14 | 16 |
| August 11-17, 2009 | 23 | 33 | 38 | 3 | * | 3 | 16 | 15 |
| July, 2009 | 22 | 34 | 37 | 5 | * | 2 | 15 | 14 |
| June, 2009 | 25 | 34 | 34 | 3 | * | 3 | 11 | 16 |
| May, 2009 | 23 | 39 | 29 | 4 | * | 4 | 9 | 14 |
| April, 2009 | 22 | 33 | 39 | 3 | * | 3 | 13 | 18 |
| March, 2009 | 24 | 34 | 35 | 5 | * | 2 | 12 | 17 |
| February, 2009 | 24 | 36 | 34 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 17 |
| January, 2009 | 25 | 37 | 33 | 3 | * | 2 | 11 | 16 |
| December, 2008 | 26 | 39 | 30 | 2 | * | 3 | 8 | 15 |
| Late October, 2008 | 24 | 39 | 32 | 2 | * | 3 | 11 | 15 |
| Mid-October, 2008 | 27 | 35 | 31 | 4 | * | 3 | 9 | 16 |
| Early October, 2008 | 26 | 36 | 31 | 4 | * | 3 | 11 | 15 |
| Late September, 2008 | 25 | 35 | 34 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 15 |
| Mid-September, 2008 | 28 | 35 | 32 | 3 | * | 2 | 12 | 14 |
| Yearly Totals | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 | 25.3 | 35.8 | 31.7 | 3.8 | .3 | 3.1 | 10.5 | 15.4 |
| 2007 | 25.4 | 32.9 | 33.7 | 4.6 | .4 | 3.1 | 10.7 | 16.7 |
| 2006 | 27.6 | 32.8 | 30.3 | 5.0 | .4 | 3.9 | 10.2 | 14.5 |
| 2005 | 29.2 | 32.8 | 30.3 | 4.5 | .3 | 2.8 | 10.2 | 14.9 |
| 2004 | 29.7 | 33.4 | 29.8 | 3.9 | .4 | 2.9 | 11.7 | 13.4 |
| 2003 | 29.8 | 31.4 | 31.2 | 4.7 | .5 | 2.5 | 12.1 | 13.0 |
| 2002 | 30.3 | 31.2 | 30.1 | 5.1 | .7 | 2.7 | 12.6 | 11.6 |
| 2001 | 29.2 | 33.6 | 28.9 | 5.1 | .5 | 2.7 | 11.7 | 11.4 |
| 2001 Post-Sept 11 | 30.9 | 31.8 | 27.9 | 5.2 | .6 | 3.6 | 11.7 | 9.4 |
| 2001 Pre-Sept 11 | 28.2 | 34.6 | 29.5 | 5.0 | .5 | 2.1 | 11.7 | 12.5 |
| 2000 | 27.5 | 32.5 | 29.5 | 5.9 | .5 | 4.0 | 11.6 | 11.6 |
| 1999 | 26.6 | 33.5 | 33.7 | 3.9 | .5 | 1.9 | 13.0 | 14.5 |
| 1998 | 27.5 | 33.2 | 31.9 | 4.6 | .4 | 2.4 | 11.8 | 13.5 |
| 1997 | 28.2 | 33.3 | 31.9 | 4.0 | .4 | 2.3 | 12.3 | 13.8 |
| 1996 | 29.2 | 32.7 | 33.0 | 5.2 | -- | -- | 12.7 | 15.6 |
| 1995 | 31.4 | 29.7 | 33.4 | 5.4 | -- | -- | 14.4 | 12.9 |
| 1994 | 29.8 | 31.8 | 33.8 | 4.6 | -- | -- | 14.3 | 12.6 |
| 1993 | 27.4 | 33.8 | 34.0 | 4.8 | -- | -- | 11.8 | 14.7 |
| 1992 | 27.7 | 32.7 | 35.7 | 3.9 | -- | -- | 13.8 | 15.8 |
| 1991 | 30.9 | 31.4 | 33.2 | 4.5 | -- | -- | 14.6 | 10.8 |
| 1990 | 31.0 | 33.1 | 29.1 | 6.8 | -- | -- | 12.4 | 11.3 |
| 1989 | 33 | 33 | 34 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 1987 | 26 | 35 | 39 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |