

# THE PIPA/KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS POLL

## THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

### PIPA-Knowledge Networks Poll:

## Americans on Intervention in Liberia

### Support for Contributing US Troops to Liberia Soft but Growing

The most recent poll on contributing US troops to a UN peacekeeping operation in Liberia, conducted by Gallup July 25-27, finds a strong 63% approving – up from 57% when Gallup asked the same question July 7-9. This upward movement may be in response to increased reporting on the situation there and the US beginning to position troops for eventual participation.

However, other polling conducted over the last month reveals strikingly variable responses suggesting that support is soft and not well formed.

A new PIPA/Knowledge Networks poll conducted July 11-20 with 1,066 respondents finds that a plurality of 48% supports contributing US troops with 41% opposed.

An analysis of polls from other organizations finds support ranging from a high of 63% in the most recent Gallup poll to a low of 35% in a July 15-16 Fox News poll. Other polls were from Newsweek (51% support), Christian Science Monitor (51%), Zogby (46%), ABC/Washington Post (41%), and Time/CNN (35-43%).

An analysis of the wording of the various poll questions also reveals some of the variables influencing responses. The highest level of support is found in poll questions that make it clear that other countries would also be contributing troops, that it is a peacekeeping operation, and that it would be under the auspices of the United Nations. The lowest level of support tends to be found in polls that do not mention these items and use phrases that are ambiguous about what the operation would be doing or imply that the troops would be actively involved in enforcement activity in the midst of an active civil war. Support also tends to be lower when the question about Liberia followed a series of questions that required respondents to think about the costs and risks of the war with Iraq.

What all this suggests is that support is likely to solidify if the operation is clearly perceived as a multilateral operation under the United Nations and is likely to erode if it appears that the situation in Liberia is so unstable that the operation will likely require not just peacekeeping but active enforcement against parties engaged in hostilities. Developments in Iraq may also influence whether Americans are feeling overstretched by the operation there.