



## **Program on International Policy Attitudes**

A joint Program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland

**-- Media Release --**

### **Public Opposes Congress Giving President Authority to Attack Iraq Without UN Approval**

**Favors Goal of Disarmament Over Regime Change**

**Support for Invasion Soft and Contingent on Multilateral Backing**

For Release: Immediate

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College Park, MD: A majority of Americans opposes Congress granting the President's request to give him the power to decide to attack Iraq, unless the resolution specifies that the action would first have UN approval, according to a new poll conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes. The poll of 709 Americans was fielded by the research firm Knowledge Networks September 26-30.

“This position is derived from two deeply held attitudes in the American public about using military force: that Congress should be involved in the decision and that the US should not go it alone” comments Steven Kull, PIPA's director. Asked whether Congress should “grant the President's request” for authority, 60% said that Congress should, “retain the right to vote if the US should go to war.” However when presented the option that the Congressional resolution would only authorize the use of “military force against Iraq if the UN Security Council votes to authorize such action” 76% were ready to give him authority.

In the current debate about whether America's goal should be to seek to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction or to achieve regime change the public comes down on the side of disarmament. Asked to choose between two arguments 68% chose the one that said that ““If Iraq allows the UN to conduct unrestricted inspections, the US should agree to not invade Iraq.”

Support for pursuing disarmament persists even though a majority (58%) expresses strong doubts that UN weapons inspectors will be effective in eliminating the Iraqi threat. Only one in five want to give up trying and proceed to military action.

In addition to conducting its own polling PIPA simultaneously released a comprehensive analysis of polling data from other organizations as well. A careful analysis of the question wording helped explain what may seem to be discrepant findings.

Support for invading Iraq is actually fairly soft. In a variety of poll question support is initially in the 51-59% range. When questions raise the prospect of significant US or Iraqi casualties, or a long war, support drops, often below half.

Questions that ask about “military action” receive higher levels of support, but further questions reveal that this higher level of support is for more limited forms of military action—such as airstrikes or Special Forces operations—not for invasion with ground troops.

Most striking, multilateral support is critical to public support. Only a small minority supports invading Iraq without multilateral support—whether specified as the participation of allies or UN approval. However with multilateral support, a strong majority supports an invasion. Without multilateral support the public is divided about whether to take more limited military action.

Other key findings:

Most Americans (79%) believe that Saddam Hussein already has the capability to attack targets in the US with weapons of mass destruction. If disarmament through inspections is not an option, given the choice between dealing with this threat through deterrence or military preemption, a majority (56%) chooses the latter. Kull comments, “This suggests that, if efforts at disarmament through an inspection process fail, a majority would support using military force, even with the risk of attacks on American cities.”

The problem of Iraq is seen as a high a priority but not as high as the problem of Al-Qaeda. Just under half (47%) say it is very urgent to resolve the problem of Iraq.

The questionnaire was designed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) a group of social science researchers who study public opinion on international issues, and which is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, a polling and social science research firm in Menlo Park, California, using its nationwide research panel, which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology go to <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp>.

The full results of the poll and the analysis of polls from other organization can be found on the PIPA website (<http://www.pipa.org>) or a report can be obtained by contacting PIPA at 202-232-7500.