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The American Public on International Issues

-Media Release-

Swing Voters More Critical of Bush on Iraq

Majority Says President Was Misleading

Give Iraq Operation Low Marks, But Do Not Favor Withdrawal

Slight Majority Says War Not Necessary

For release: July 29, 2003

Contact: Steven Kull, (202) 232-7500

College Park, MD: An analysis of recent polls conducted by PIPA/Knowledge Networks finds that swing voters are considerably more critical of Bush's handling of Iraq than the general population, with majorities saying that Bush was being misleading when he presented evidence to justify going to war and questioning the necessity of going to war.

Swing voters were defined as respondents who said they were extremely confident that they would vote in the upcoming election and identified themselves as independents. The analysis' primary focus is the poll conducted July 11-20, but also includes the poll conducted June 18-25.

Overall swing voters are more critical of Bush's handling of Iraq than is the general population. While the general public leans toward giving him positive ratings overall (49% positive, 33% negative) swing voters lean toward giving him negative ratings (38% positive, 46% negative). On a 0-10 scale the general public gives him a slightly positive

Among swing voters 52% said the US government was being misleading and just as many—53%—said President Bush was being misleading when they “presented the evidence to justify going to war with Iraq.” Among the general public 42% said the US government was being misleading and only 36% said this was true of President Bush.

Swing voters were far more likely to say that the president knowingly presented evidence that Iraq has sought to buy uranium from an African country he was knowingly presenting false evidence. While 27% of the general public said he was knowingly presenting false evidence 43% of the swing voters felt that way.

A majority of swing voters (52%) said that “the fact that the president presented information that was in fact false” lowered their confidence in the president some (34%) or a lot (18%). Only 40% of the general public felt this way.

Asked, “How do you think the process of rebuilding Iraq is going” 72% of swing voters said that the operation is going not very well (49%) or not at all well (23%). This is sharply more negative

than the 57% of the general public said that the operation is going not very well (44%) or not at all well (13%). In June 68% of swing voters felt this way, as did 53% of the general public.

Swing voters are not, however, any more eager to withdraw US troops. In fact a larger percentage says that the US has, “the responsibility to remain in Iraq as long as necessary until there is a stable government,”--82% of swing voters, 72% of general public. In June 79% of swing voters said it would be “unwise and immoral” for the US to pull out of Iraq now as compared to 65% of the general public.

Unlike the general public, a slight majority of swing voters say that the war with Iraq was not necessary. In one question 47% said the war was necessary while 51% said it was not necessary. Among the general public 53% said it was necessary, while 44% said it was not necessary.

In another question that placed the concern that “Iraq might develop weapons of mass destruction” front and center, only 48% said that the war was necessary, while 51% said, “The threat could have been contained by keeping some military forces in the region and having UN inspectors in Iraq.” Among the general public, in response to this question 59% said the war was necessary, while 36% said it could have been contained.

Asked whether going to war was the right decision swing voters were 6-9% less supportive. Answering on a scale, 50% of swing voters said it was the right decision while 38% said it was the wrong decision. Among the general public 56% said it was the right decision and 28% the wrong decision. Given just two response options 54% of swing voters said it was the right decision and 41% the wrong decision, as compared to responses of 63% and 32% among the general public.

Some of these differences in attitude about the war may be affected by a lower tendency among swing voters to incorrectly believe that the US has found weapons of mass destruction or evidence of links between Iraq and al Qaeda. Among the general public 21% believe that WMD have been found while just 14% of swing voters believe this. Among the general public 45% believe that evidence of Iraq’s links to al Qaeda have been found, while just 36% of swing voters believe this.

Another factor that may contribute to swing voters lower tendency to approve of the war is that swing voters appear to be more aware of opposition in publics around the world. Among swing voters 50% assumed that the majority of the people in the world oppose the US going to war with Iraq (54% in June) while just 42% of the general public made this assumption. Sixty-nine percent of swing voters assumed that, on average, people in other countries have a negative view of US foreign policy in general. Among the general public 56% made this assumption.

Asked to evaluate the president’s management of US foreign policy in general among swing voters more gave a negative evaluation (42%) than a positive one (39%). Among the general public positive evaluations (51%) outweighed negative ones (31%).

Swing voters are overall more critical of Bush’s foreign policy and, although they divide evenly on whether they voted for Bush or Gore in 2000, more say they are more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate in the next election.

The poll was conducted with a nationwide sample of 1,066 respondents July 11-20. The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the

entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Ford Foundation.

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