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TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2011

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## Record Number Favors Removing U.S. Troops from Afghanistan

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# Record Number Favors Removing U.S. Troops from Afghanistan

As President Obama prepares to announce his policy for drawing down U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the percentage of Americans who favor removing the troops as soon as possible has reached an all-time high in Pew Research Center surveys.

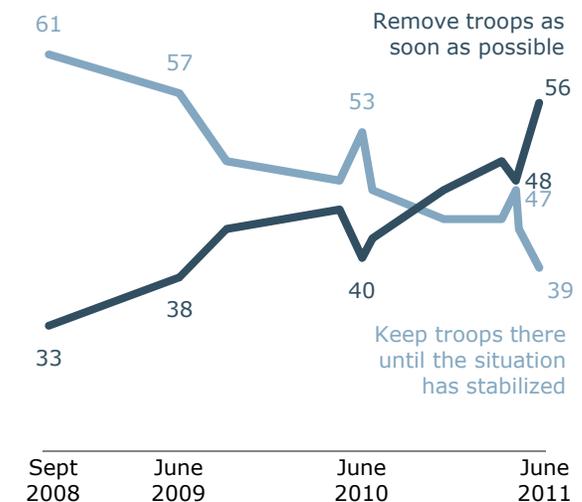
For the first time, a majority (56%) says that U.S. troops should be brought home as soon as possible, while 39% favor keeping troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized.

The proportion favoring a quick withdrawal of U.S. forces has increased by eight points since last month (from 48%), immediately after the killing of Osama bin Laden. A year ago, just 40% favored removing the troops as soon as possible, while 53% favored keeping them in Afghanistan until the situation stabilized.

Americans continue to say the decision to use force in Afghanistan was the right one, and 58% believe the United States will definitely or probably succeed in achieving its goals in Afghanistan. That is largely unchanged from the 62% who said the U.S. would achieve its goals in Afghanistan shortly after Osama's death. But at the same time, a majority (56%) says it is unlikely that Afghanistan will be able to maintain a stable government after the U.S. military leaves.

Even among those who predict the U.S. will be successful in Afghanistan, nearly as many favor removing the troops as soon possible (46%) as favor keeping them there until the situation is stable (51%). Among those who say the U.S. will definitely or probably fail in achieving its goals – 34% of the public – a large majority (75%) supports removing the troops as soon as possible.

## Sharp Rise in Percentage Backing U.S. Troop Pullout



PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 15-19, 2011.

Over the past year, support for removing U.S. troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible has increased across nearly all political and demographic groups.

Two-thirds of Democrats (67%) now say troops should be removed as soon as possible, up from 43% a year ago. A majority (57%) of independents also support immediate troop withdrawal, an increase of 15 points from last year.

Republican support for removing U.S. troops as soon as possible has risen 12 points since last June. At that time, 65% of Republicans favored keeping U.S. forces in Afghanistan until the situation is stabilized while 31% favored removing them as soon as possible. In the current survey, 53% support keeping the troops there and 43% favor their withdrawal.

Over the past year, support for withdrawing the troops has doubled among Republicans and GOP-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party. A year ago only 21% favored immediate troop withdrawal; that has risen to 42% currently.

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### Across-the-Board Increase in Support for Removing Troops as Soon as Possible

	June 2010	April 2011	May 5-8 2011	June 2011	Change 10-11
<i>% remove troops as soon as possible</i>	%	%	%	%	
Total	40	50	49	56	+16
Men	40	48	46	52	+12
Women	41	53	51	60	+19
18-29	45	53	37	53	+8
30-49	36	49	50	54	+18
50-64	37	47	52	58	+21
65+	47	54	53	62	+15
Republican	31	40	34	43	+12
Democrat	43	55	53	67	+24
Independent	42	52	54	57	+15
<i>Among Reps and Rep leaners</i>					
Agree with Tea Party	21	39	--	42	+21
Disagree/No opinion	39	48	--	47	+8

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 15-19, 2011. Q75

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## War Still Viewed as Right Decision

A majority (57%) continues to say the U.S. made the right decision in using military force in Afghanistan while 35% said it was the wrong decision. Republicans are more likely than Democrats and independents to say it was the right decision.

The public's assessments of the military effort in Afghanistan have changed little over the past few months – 53% say the military effort is going at least fairly well. Republicans are far more likely than Democrats and independents to say the effort is going well.

Optimism about success in Afghanistan increased after bin Laden's death and remains higher than it was last year – 58% say the U.S. will definitely or probably succeed in achieving its goals in Afghanistan. But Republicans (67%) and Democrats (61%) are more optimistic about success than independents (51%).

Only 38% says that it is likely Afghanistan will be able to maintain a stable government when U.S. military forces leave the country while 56% say it is unlikely. In November 2009 the public was more optimistic about Iraq – 52% said it was at least somewhat likely Iraq would be able to maintain a stable government after U.S. forces left. There are very little partisan differences – a majority across party lines says it is unlikely Afghanistan will be able to maintain a stable government.

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### Majority Still Sees War as Right Decision

<i>Using military force in Afghanistan was the...</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>
	%	%	%	%
Right decision	57	68	54	56
Wrong decision	35	25	39	38
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Will U.S. achieve goals in Afghanistan?</i>				
Definitely/probably succeed	58	67	61	51
Definitely/probably fail	34	27	33	40
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>How well is the U.S. military effort going?</i>				
Very/Fairly well	53	65	51	51
Not too/Not at all well	40	30	44	43
Don't know	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>How likely maintain stable government?</i>				
Very/Somewhat likely	38	41	41	34
Very/Somewhat unlikely	56	56	54	62
Don't know	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 15-19, 2011. Q72-74, 77.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted June 15-19, 2011 among a national sample of 1,502 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (1,001 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 501 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 200 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. 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, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is 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 2010 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. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,502	3.5 percentage points
Republicans	408	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	495	5.5 percentage points
Independents	479	5.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**JUNE 2011 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**June 15-19, 2011**  
**N=1502**

**QUESTIONS 1-2, 7-8, 16-18, 30-35, 37-42, 49-51, 53-57, 60-61 78-83 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**NO QUESTIONS 3-6, 9-15, 19-29, 36, 43-48, 52, 58-59, 62-71**

**ASK ALL:**

Thinking about Afghanistan

Q.72 Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan?

	<u>Right decision</u>	<u>Wrong decision</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
Jun 15-19, 2011	57	35	8
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	52	38	10
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009 <sup>1</sup>	56	34	10
Jan 7-11, 2009	64	25	11
Feb, 2008	65	24	11
Dec, 2006	61	29	10
Jan, 2006	69	20	11

**ASK ALL:**

Q.73 How well is the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan going? **[READ IN ORDER]**

	<u>Very well</u>	<u>Fairly well</u>	<u>Not too well</u>	<u>Not at all well</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
Jun 15-19, 2011	10	43	28	12	7
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	7	43	29	15	7
Dec 1-5, 2010	8	39	28	15	10
Jul 8-11, 2010	9	40	31	9	11
Jun 16-20, 2010	8	40	32	13	7
Mar 10-14, 2010	9	43	22	13	13
Dec 9-13, 2009	7	39	32	11	10
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	4	32	41	16	6
Jan 7-11, 2009	7	38	34	11	10
February, 2008	10	38	31	10	11

**ASK ALL:**

Q.74 Regardless of what you think about the original decision to use military force in Afghanistan, do you now believe that the United States will definitely succeed, probably succeed, probably fail, or definitely fail in achieving its goals in Afghanistan?

	<u>Definitely succeed</u>	<u>Probably succeed</u>	<u>Probably fail</u>	<u>Definitely fail</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
Jun 15-19, 2011	13	45	26	8	8
May 5-8, 2011	19	43	18	6	13
May 2, 2011	19	44	20	6	10
Dec 1-5, 2010	9	40	30	9	11
Jun 16-20, 2010	14	45	26	7	8
Mar 10-14, 2010	12	46	22	7	12
Dec 9-13, 2009	11	48	25	7	10
Jan 7-11, 2009	13	49	23	6	9

<sup>1</sup> In October 2009, the question was worded: "Do you think the United States' initial decision to use force in Afghanistan was the right decision or the wrong decision?"

**ASK ALL:**

Q.75 Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. should remove troops as soon as possible?

	Keep troops in Afghanistan	Remove troops	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Jun 15-19, 2011	39	56	4
May 5-8, 2011	43	49	8
May 2, 2011	47	48	4
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011 <sup>2</sup>	44	50	6
Dec 1-5, 2010	44	47	8
Jul 8-11, 2010	47	42	11
Jun 16-20, 2010	53	40	6
Apr 15-May 5, 2010 (GAP)	48	45	7
Sep 10-15, 2009 (GAP)	50	43	7
June, 2009 (GAP)	57	38	5
Mid-Sept, 2008	61	33	6
April, 2008 (GAP)	50	44	6
Late Feb, 2008	61	32	7
May, 2007 (GAP)	50	42	7

**NO QUESTION 76****ASK ALL:**

Q.77 All things considered, how likely is it that Afghanistan will be able to maintain a stable government after most U.S. forces leave the country? **[READ]**

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

		<i>Iraq</i>
Jun 15-19		Oct 28-Nov 8
<u>2011</u>		<u>2009</u>
5	Very likely	8
33	Somewhat likely	44
31	Somewhat unlikely	22
25	Very unlikely	20
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	7

<sup>2</sup> In surveys conducted March 30-April 3, 2011 and before, the question was worded "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?"

**ASK ALL:**

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

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

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

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean <u>Rep</u>	Lean <u>Dem</u>
Jun 15-19, 2011	26	34	32	4	*	4	13	13
May 25-30, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	15	17
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	25	32	37	3	*	3	17	16
Mar 8-14, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	17	15
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	16
Feb 2-7, 2011	24	31	39	3	*	2	16	16
Jan 5-9, 2011	27	32	35	4	*	2	15	14
Dec 1-5, 2010	25	33	34	5	1	2	13	14
Nov 4-7, 2010	26	30	37	4	*	2	17	13
Oct 27-30, 2010	25	34	31	6	1	4	13	11
Oct 13-18, 2010	25	31	36	4	*	3	16	13
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	24	32	39	2	*	2	15	17
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	26	33	34	4	*	3	14	14
Jun 16-20, 2010	27	34	34	3	1	2	15	15
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

**ASK ALL:**

TEAPARTY2 From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	No opinion either way	(VOL.) Haven't heard of	(VOL.) Refused	Not heard of/ DK
Jun 15-19, 2011	20	26	50	3	2	--
May 25-30, 2011	18	23	54	2	2	--
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	22	29	47	1	1	--
Mar 8-14, 2011	19	25	54	1	1	--
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	20	25	52	2	2	--

## TEAPARTY2 CONTINUED...

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No opinion either way</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>Haven't heard of</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>Refused</u>	<i>Not heard of/ DK</i>
Feb 2-7, 2011 <sup>3</sup>	22	22	53	2	2	--
Jan 5-9, 2011	24	22	50	2	1	--
Dec 1-5, 2010	22	26	49	2	2	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	27	22	49	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 (RVs)	29	25	32	--	1	13
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	28	24	30	--	1	16
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	29	26	32	--	1	13
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	22	18	37	--	1	21
Jun 16-20, 2010	24	18	30	--	*	27
May 20-23, 2010	25	18	31	--	1	25
Mar 11-21, 2010	24	14	29	--	1	31

<sup>3</sup> In the February 2-7, 2011 survey and before, question read "...do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement..." In October 2010 and earlier, question was asked only of those who had heard or read a lot or a little about the Tea Party. In May through October, it was described as: "the Tea Party movement that has been involved in campaigns and protests in the U.S. over the past year." In March it was described as "the Tea Party protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."