

## **Outraged by the Refugee Crisis, Six in 10 Favor Milosevic's Ouster**

Moral outrage over the Kosovo refugee crisis has strengthened public support for NATO military action against Serbia, inciting public opinion so far as to prompt most Americans to say they'd support using ground troops to oust Slobodan Milosevic from power.

Given the risks of invading Serbia, support for Milosevic's ouster looks more like a measure of public anger than a mandate for action – especially because most Americans express unwillingness to tolerate significant U.S. casualties.

But sentiment against Belgrade clearly has been aroused. Six in 10 Americans polled by ABC News and the Washington Post say Serbia itself is entirely to blame for the Kosovo refugee crisis. Nearly as many say the crisis has made them more likely to support military action against Serbia. And two-thirds say the United States "has a moral obligation" to try to establish peace in Kosovo.

These views have boosted backing for NATO's air strikes on Serbia (now supported by 67 percent) and the use of ground troops to end the conflict (supported by 57 percent), as well as expressed support for ousting Milosevic, at 61 percent. Even more, 72 percent, support the use of ground troops to escort refugees back to their homes in Kosovo once peace has been established.

	Air strikes	Ground troops to end the conflict	Ground troops to oust Milosevic	Peacekeeping troops
Support	67%	57	61	72
Oppose	30	39	36	24

**BAD GUY/GOOD GUY** – Milosevic clearly has established himself as a public enemy in the minds of most Americans: Eighty-six percent say he should be tried for war crimes, nearly as many as said the same thing eight years ago about Saddam Hussein. Indeed, some of the support for Milosevic's removal could reflect frustration with the lost opportunity to oust Saddam in 1991.

Bill Clinton's handling of the Kosovo situation, on the other hand, has gained esteem. Just 48 percent approved of his work on the crisis two weeks ago, on the eve of the air war. Now 60 percent approve.

Approve	60%	54	51	48
Disapprove	34	30	32	39

**GROUND WAR** – Support for military action has risen even amid high expectations of a ground war. Sixty-six percent believe ground troops ultimately will be needed to end the conflict. And 55 percent see the deployment of Apache attack helicopters as the first step in a ground war, not as an extension of the air campaign.

**CASUALTIES** – It’s dicey to anticipate public opinion in the face of casualties. In past conflicts, humanitarian concerns have been a less durable source of support for military action than either a sense of direct threat or a desire for retaliation – both of which are absent here. Indeed, the number of people who think U.S. vital interests are at stake in this fight seems to have stabilized at just under half, now 46 percent.

As things stand, a narrow majority of Americans, 52 percent, says that bringing peace to Kosovo would not be worth the loss of “some” American soldiers’ lives. And more, 63 percent, say it would not be worth the loss of 100 U.S. soldiers’ lives.

**MISSION** – Some other elements of support for military action, beyond humanitarian need, are in place. One is a broad comprehension of the mission’s goals: Sixty-six percent say they have a good understanding of what the United States and its European allies are trying to accomplish. This understanding is a strong factor in support for NATO’s actions.

“Considering everything,” as another question puts it, 58 percent say the United States did the right thing by getting involved in the military conflict in Serbia; 40 percent think not.

Comprehension is crucial in this result: Among people who feel they have a clear understanding of what NATO is trying to do, 68 percent think it was right for the United States to get involved. Among those who don’t understand the goals, just 39 percent think it was right to step in.

**CHANCES** – Finally, most Americans are optimistic about the outcome, despite criticisms about the campaign’s pace and comparisons to Vietnam. Fifty-six percent – not an overwhelming majority, but most nonetheless – say that U.S. military involvement in Kosovo stands a good chance of bringing peace to the region. That’s up somewhat from 50 percent the night before the air war began.

Moreover, most people are not expressing anxiety about the pace of the campaign: Fifty-seven percent say it’s going about as well as they expected. Thirty-two percent say it’s going worse than expected; five percent, better.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone April 5-6, 1999, among a random national sample of 1,011 adults. The results have a 3.5-point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Ben Fitzpatrick and Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at: <http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

Full results follow:

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling the situation in Kosovo?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
4/6/99	60	34	6
4/5/99	57	36	8
3/30/99	54	30	16
3/28/99	51	31	17
3/26/99	51	32	17
3/23/99	48	39	12

2. Do you think America's vital interests are at stake in the situation involving Kosovo, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/6/99	46	49	5
4/5/99	46	50	4
3/30/99	47	42	11
3/28/99	42	44	14
3/26/99	39	51	10
3/23/99	41	54	5
3/14/99	27	57	15

3. Do you support or oppose the United States and its European allies conducting air strikes against Serbia?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/6/99	67	30	3
4/5/99	68	29	3
3/30/99	55	33	11
3/28/99	55	33	12
3/26/99	60	31	9

Compare to:

3/23/99*	47	47	6
3/14/99**	26	62	12

\*The United States and its European allies have said they may bomb military targets in Serbia because it won't agree to a peace plan for Kosovo. If Serbia does not agree to the peace plan, should the United States participate in bombing Serbia, or not?

\*\*The United States has said it may bomb Serbia unless Serbia agrees to a peace plan for Kosovo. If Serbia does not agree to the peace plan, should the United States bomb Serbia or not?

4. So far, would you say the conflict in Serbia is going better than you expected for the United States and its allies, worse than expected, or is it going about the way you expected?

	Better than expected	Worse than expected	About as expected	No opin.
4/6/99	5	32	57	6
4/5/99	3	34	57	6

Compare to Gulf War:

2/24/91	49	5	43	3
2/5/91	27	13	55	4
1/27/91	28	15	54	2
1/20/91	39	7	50	4
1/18/91	50	4	45	2

5. Do you feel you have a good understanding of what America and its allies are attempting to accomplish by attacking Serbia, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/6/99	66	31	2
4/5/99	70	29	2

6. Suppose the bombing does NOT stop Serbia's military action in Kosovo. Would you support or oppose the United States and its European allies sending in ground troops to try to end the conflict in Kosovo? (GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:) Would you support/oppose this strongly or somewhat?

	-----Support-----			-----Oppose-----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	opin.
4/6/99	57	34	22	39	26	13	5
4/5/99	55	31	24	41	29	12	4

7. Just your best guess, do you think air strikes WILL be enough to stop Serbia from continuing its attacks in Kosovo, or do you think ground troops will have to be sent in to try to end the conflict?

	Air strikes enough	Need ground troops	No opinion
4/6/99	27	66	7
4/5/99	25	68	7

8. Would you support or oppose the United States and its European allies sending in ground troops to protect ethnic Albanian refugees who return to Kosovo once there is a peace agreement with the Serbs?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/6/99	72	24	4

9. In addition to participating in the allied bombing of Serbia, the United States is now sending combat helicopters to attack Serbian troops in Kosovo. Do you see this as part of the air strikes against Serbia, or do you see it as a first step in a ground war?

	Part of air strikes	First step in ground war	No opinion
4/6/99	39	55	6

10. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: It would be worth the loss of some American soldiers' lives if the United States could help bring peace to Kosovo.

	Worth it	Not worth it	No opinion
4/6/99	45	52	4
3/26/99	45	49	6
3/23/99	37	59	4

11. (If "worth it" in q10) Would it be worth the loss of 100 American

soldiers' lives if the United States could help bring peace to Kosovo, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/6/99	70	25	5

12. Just your best guess, do you think U.S. military involvement in the Kosovo situation does or does not stand a good chance of bringing peace to Kosovo?

	Does	Doesn't	No opinion
4/6/99	56	39	5
3/23/99*	50	46	5

\*"would or would not"

13. Do you think the United States is doing enough to help ethnic Albanian refugees who are being forced from their homes in Kosovo, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/6/99	67	26	8

14. Do you think the United States and its allies bear some of the blame for the Kosovo refugee situation, or is it entirely Serbia's fault?

	U.S./allies	Serbia's	No opinion
4/6/99	30	61	9

15. Considering everything, do you think the United States did the right thing in getting involved in a military conflict in Serbia, or do you think it was a mistake?

	Yes, right thing	No, mistake	No opinion
4/6/99	58	40	2

16. Has the Kosovo refugee situation made you more likely to support allied military action against Serbia, less likely, or what?

	More likely	Less likely	Same (vol.)	No opinion
4/6/99	58	29	7	6

17. Do you think the United States has a moral obligation to try to establish peace in Kosovo, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/6/99	66	31	3
3/25/99*	64	32	4
3/21/99	58	37	5
2/21/99	52	43	5

\*3/25 and previous: Gallup; "help keep the peace"

18. Would you support or oppose the United States and its European allies sending ground troops into Serbia to try to remove Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic from power?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/6/99	61	36	3

19. Do you think Slobodan Milosevic should be put on trial for war crimes, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/6/99	86	9	6

Compare to Saddam Hussein:  
2/27/91 93 6 1

20. How much do you trust President Clinton to make the right decisions about the military confrontation in Serbia: Do you trust him a lot, a good amount, only a little, or not at all?

	---A lot/Good Amount---			-----Little/Not at all-----			No
	Net	A lot	Good amount	Net	Only a little	Not at all	opinion
4/6/99	57	29	28	42	24	18	1

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