

ABC NEWS: CRISIS IN KOSOVO

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Six in 10 Support Kosovo Call-Up, Though Many Question Who's Winning

Six in 10 Americans support committing additional U.S. troops and aircraft to the Kosovo conflict, though less than half the public thinks the United States and its European allies are winning the air war.

Sixty-two percent in an ABC News/Washington Post poll support calling up as many as 33,000 National Guard members and reservists and deploying more aircraft to the Balkans. President Clinton was expected to initiate the call-up today.

Majorities also continue to support the military action overall: Nearly two-thirds support the air strikes, 56 percent support sending ground troops if the air strikes fail, and 56 percent say getting involved was the right decision.

These numbers are essentially unchanged from two weeks ago. Now, as then, support for sending ground troops declines when the issue of casualties is raised.

	Support	Oppose
Deploying additional forces	62%	35
Air strikes	65	30
Sending ground troops	56	40
Sending ground troops if casualties	45	52
	Yes	No
Right decision to get involved?	56%	41

These views have held steady despite the fact that less than a majority of Americans – 47 percent – feel the United States and its allies are currently winning the conflict. As many say either that Serbia's winning (25 percent) or it's a draw (21 percent).

	Who's winning:		
	NATO	Serbia	Neither/Draw
4/26/99	47%	25	21

CASUALTIES – Civilian casualties in NATO bombing raids also have not reduced public support for the air war. The reason: Seventy-eight percent say such deaths are “unavoidable accidents of war,” while 19 percent think NATO hasn't been careful enough to avoid civilian casualties.

Most also don't agree with the "war by committee" criticisms of NATO. Seventy-three percent say the allies have been doing a good job working together on strategy.

GROUND WAR – Six in 10 expect that the United States will get into a ground war in Kosovo (also unchanged), although most Americans do not think the country is heading for another Vietnam. Sixty-five percent say the United States will avoid that; a similar number said the same when the United States deployed peacekeepers to Bosnia in November 1995.

	Yes	No
Will get into a ground war	62%	34
Heading for another Vietnam	31	65

CLINTON – Bill Clinton's approval rating for handling the Kosovo situation has remained steady all month; 56 percent approve, while 36 percent disapprove. Most also trust Clinton to make the right decisions on the conflict, though there's some softening here: Those saying they trust Clinton "a lot" is down six points, to 23 percent.

	---A lot/Good Amount---		-----Little/Not at all-----			No	
	NET	A lot	Good amount	NET	Only a little	Not at all	opin.
4/16/99	59%	23	36	40	21	19	1
4/6/99	57	29	28	42	24	18	1

More broadly, Clinton's overall job approval rating is 60 percent, down a bit from 64 percent last month and 68 percent in February. That's his lowest rating since December, but still a strong approval score for any president.

PARTY - The air war is supported by most Democrats (71 percent), independents (64 percent) and Republicans (61 percent) alike. But Republicans are considerably less likely to support sending ground troops (John McCain, take note), and more likely to say the United States never should have gotten involved.

One reason for Republicans' recalcitrance is their distrust of the commander in chief. Only 26 percent of Republicans trust Clinton to make the right decisions about the Kosovo conflict, compared to 80 percent of Democrats and 61 percent of independents.

	Ground troops		U.S. involvement		Trust Clinton	
	Yes	No	Right thing	Mistake	Yes	No
Democrats	64%	33	65	31	80	19
Independents	57	41	55	43	61	38
Republicans	44	53	45	55	26	73

MEN/WOMEN - Finally, there are sizable differences between the sexes on questions of increased military action. Sixty-eight percent of men support increased U.S. military involvement, compared to 56 percent of women; and men are 10 points more likely than women to support sending ground troops if the air war fails.

METHODOLOGY - This poll was conducted by telephone April 25-26, 1999, among a random national sample of 757 adults. The results have a 3.5 point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Ben Fitzpatrick.

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 his job as president?

	-----Approve-----			-----Disapprove-----			No opin.
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/26/99	60	NA	NA	37	NA	NA	3
3/14/99	64	38	26	34	9	25	3
2/14/99	68	46	22	30	7	23	2
2/12/99	67	NA	NA	31	NA	NA	2
2/7/99	66	45	21	33	9	24	1
1/30/99	65	43	22	33	7	26	2

Call for full results dating to 1993.

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

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
4/26/99	56	36	9
4/8/99	56	38	6
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

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

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/26/99	65	30	5
4/8/99	64	32	4
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. 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?

	Support	Oppose	No opin.
4/26/99: Send in ground troops	56	40	4
..if some casualties*	45	52	3
4/8/99: Send in ground troops	57	39	4
..if some casualties*	44	50	5
..if 100 casualties**	37	57	6
..if 500 casualties***	31	62	7
..1,000 casualties****	26	66	7
4/6/99: Send in ground troops	57	39	5
4/5/99: Send in ground troops	55	41	4

*(IF SUPPORT GROUND TROOPS in q4) Would you support or oppose sending in ground troops if there was a good chance that some U.S. soldiers would be killed in the fighting?

** (IF SOME).. if there was a good chance that up to 100 U.S. soldiers would be killed in the fighting?

*** (IF 100) up to 500?

**** (IF 1000) up to 1,000?

5. Just your best guess, do you think the United States is going to get into a ground war in Kosovo, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/26/99	62	34	4
4/8/99	60	36	5

6. As you may know, some civilians have been killed in the air strikes against Serbia by the United States and its European allies. Do you think that the United States and its European allies are not being careful enough to avoid civilian casualties, or do you think these are just unavoidable accidents of war?

	Not being careful enough	Unavoidable accidents of war	No opinion
4/26/99	19	78	3

7. As of now, which side do you think is winning the Kosovo conflict - (Serbia), or (the United States and its European allies)?

	Serbia	US and its European allies	Neither draw (vol.)	No opinion
4/26/99	25	47	21	6

8. As you may know, the United States is committing additional aircraft to the air strikes against Serbia, and says it will call up as many as 33,000 members of the military reserves and the National Guard to help support those aircraft. Do you support or oppose this increase in U.S. involvement in the military action against Serbia?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/26/99	62	35	3

9. 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	opin.
4/26/99	59	23	36	40	21	19	1
4/6/99	57	29	28	42	24	18	1

10. 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
4/26/99	56	41	2
4/6/99	58	40	2

11. Do you think the United States is heading for the same kind of involvement in Serbia as it had in the Vietnam war, or do you think the United States will avoid that kind of involvement this time?

	Another Vietnam	Will avoid that	No opin.
4/26/99	31	65	4
For Comparison: Bosnia			
11/29/95	33	61	6
For comparison: Persian Gulf			
4/3/91*	8	89	3
1/20/91*	11	86	3
12/5/90	32	66	3
11/15/90	26	69	5
9/9/90	18	78	4
8/20/90	22	74	4

*Wording change: "Persian Gulf" in place of "Middle East"

12. As you may know, strategy in the military action against Serbia has to be approved by the United States and the European countries in the NATO alliance. How well do you think the NATO allies are working together in deciding how to proceed - very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly or very badly?

	-----Well-----			-----Badly-----			No
	NET	Very	Smewht	NET	Very	Smewht	opinion
4/26/99	73	20	53	21	5	16	6

END