

Americans Shift to More Negative View of Libya Military Action

Now more likely to disapprove than approve

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Global Research, June 26, 2011

[Gallup](#) 26 June 2011

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

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PRINCETON, NJ — Americans are more likely to say they disapprove than approve of the U.S. military action in Libya. That represents a shift from three months ago, just after the mission began, when approval exceeded disapproval.



The results are based on a Gallup poll conducted June 22. The House of Representatives is set to vote on resolutions that would limit the U.S. role in Libya, partly because of questions about whether the mission violates the War Powers Act since President Obama did not obtain congressional authorization for it. The U.S. sent forces to Libya in March as part of a multinational force to protect rebels in that country from attacks by Libyan President Moammar Gadhafi.

Democrats are the only political group to show more support for than opposition to the U.S. involvement. Independents are the most likely to show opposition, with a majority disapproving.

Republicans' opinions have changed the most since March, moving to 39% approval from 57%. This likely reflects increased criticism of the mission's legality and cost from some Republican congressional leaders and presidential candidates. Independents' views have become slightly more negative over the last three months, while Democrats' opinions have been largely stable.



Opposition Mainly Because of Substance, Rather Than Legality, of Military Operation

The poll sought to explore Americans' reasons for opposition to the operation by asking those who disapprove whether they disagree with the substance of the policy or with how it was executed. Most who disapprove, 64%, do so because they do not think the U.S. should be in Libya at all. Just under a third, 29%, disapprove because they do not think the president obtained the necessary approval from Congress to conduct the operation.



Republicans who disapprove divide about equally between saying the U.S. should not be in Libya (48%) and saying the president did not go through the proper procedures (46%).

Supporters View Gadhafi Removal as Ultimate Goal

The stated goal of the military operation was to protect Libyan citizens from attacks by the country's government, but the obvious question is whether the ultimate goal should be removal of the government, namely, President Gadhafi, from power. The poll asked those who approve of the mission whether the U.S. action should continue until Gadhafi is removed from power, and the vast majority, 85%, agree.

Implications

Gallup found initial support for the U.S. mission in Libya [low compared with other recent U.S. military engagements](#). As the operation continues into its fourth month, and with increased criticism of the effort from political leaders, it is not surprising that support for it has eroded. It is still unclear whether Congress will ultimately limit the mission in Libya or authorize it to continue. The president's Wednesday announcement of troop withdrawals from Afghanistan shows he is sensitive to pressure to scale down U.S. military operations abroad as the U.S. struggles to improve the economy and get the federal budget deficit under control.

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted June 22, 2011, on the Gallup Daily tracking survey, with a random sample of 999 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each sample includes a minimum quota of 400 cell phone respondents and 600 landline respondents per 1,000 national adults, with additional minimum quotas among landline respondents for gender within region. Landline telephone numbers are chosen at random among listed telephone numbers. Cell phone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted by gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, adults in the household, and phone status (cell phone only/landline only/both, cell phone mostly, and having an unlisted landline number). Demographic weighting targets are based on the March 2010 Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older non-institutionalized population living in U.S. telephone households. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting and sample design.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Polls conducted entirely in one day, such as this one, are subject to additional error or bias not found in polls conducted over several days.

[View methodology, full question results, and trend data.](#)

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.

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