

FOR RELEASE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 1997, A.M.

## **PUBLIC INDIFFERENT ABOUT NATO EXPANSION**

*FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:*

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Robert C. Toth, Senior Associate  
Kimberly Parker, Research Director  
Claudia Deane, Survey Analyst  
Pew Research Center for The People & The Press  
202/293-3126  
<http://www.people-press.org>

## PUBLIC INDIFFERENT ABOUT NATO EXPANSION

The American public continues to support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) but is uninterested and equivocal about the question of expanding the alliance to include some former Soviet satellites in East Europe. A *Pew Research Center* poll found a 61% majority favoring maintaining NATO despite the end of the Cold War. However, only a narrow plurality want its membership expanded (45% to 40%). Few Americans are thinking about the issue -- just 20% have followed the debate about enlargement very closely (5%) or fairly closely (15%). Among this engaged segment of the public, however, enlargement was backed by a strong majority (54% vs. 37%).

| <b>Should NATO Be Maintained</b> |              |             |             |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                  | <u>1991*</u> | <u>1994</u> | <u>1997</u> |
|                                  | <u>%</u>     | <u>%</u>    | <u>%</u>    |
| Maintained                       | 62           | 60          | 61          |
| Not necessary                    | 17           | 27          | 21          |
| DK/Refused                       | <u>21</u>    | <u>13</u>   | <u>18</u>   |
|                                  | 100          | 100         | 100         |

\*Source: Gallup poll.

The poll also found a narrow plurality would broaden NATO's mission beyond Europe to defend Western interests outside of the continent, such as in the Persian Gulf (49% vs. 38%). The public gave majority support for other proposed new NATO missions including combatting international terrorism and drug trafficking (both 51%) and peacekeeping operations within and near its borders (56% and 54%, respectively).

Whether the 50-year-old security alliance should be expanded geographically as well as in terms of its mission is expected to be the most difficult foreign policy issue President Clinton will face this year. A decision is expected at the NATO summit meeting in July with any expansion subject to Senate ratification. Russia appears adamantly opposed, claiming that the admission of Central European states -- Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are the most likely to be admitted initially -- would represent hostile advancement of NATO toward its borders. Opponents

fear that expansion could abort the democratic evolution in Russia and even revive the Cold War. Proponents claim that expansion is not only in America's interest but that conversely, failure to expand geographically, after all the arguments, could also have negative effects.<sup>1</sup>

For example, almost twice as many Americans in the poll said they were more concerned that Russia will be encouraged to again threaten its European neighbors if NATO is *not* expanded than said a NATO expansion will anger Russia (41% vs. 24%). Among those respondents who have followed the issue closely, the margin fearing an emboldened rather than an angry Moscow was somewhat greater (46% vs. 24%).

The Pew survey of 1,503 adult Americans conducted January 9-12, 1997 also found that foreign affairs in general do not enjoy much priority for the American people these days. Fully 86% said domestic policy was more important for Mr. Clinton to focus on right now, with merely 7% saying foreign policy. However, the public took notice of the President's Secretary of State designate, Madeleine Albright and responded positively. Her 57% - 16% *favorable* rating is much higher than that of her predecessor, Warren Christopher, (34% - 21%).

In their attitude toward NATO, 53% said their opinion was favorable (9% very, 44% mostly). This was a drop from 61% favorable in June 1995, but that earlier poll followed a period of widely reported NATO action including air strikes in Bosnia and the downing of an American F-16 fighter plane. The broader question, of whether NATO should be *maintained* or is no longer necessary, drew much the same answers as in previous years: 61% vs. 21% now, compared to 60% two years ago and 62% in 1991.<sup>2</sup> Among those who followed the NATO issue closely now, 70% said the alliance should be maintained.

While support for NATO expansion was relatively narrow at 45% to 40%, the demographic breakdown shows that college-educated Americans favor enlargement more than those who never attended college (62% vs. 34%), and men more than women favor enlargement (49% vs. 41%) -- particularly middle aged men (56% of those 30 to 49 years old). No significant difference in support was found across party lines, but those who voted for Clinton last November were more in favor of expansion (51%) as were respondents in all regions of the country except the South (40% in favor).

---

<sup>1</sup> See "NATO: Make It Stronger, Make It Larger," by Henry Kissinger, *Washington Post*, Jan. 14, 1997, p.A15.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup Organization, May 30-June 2, 1991.

### ***Support For Enlargement General In Nature***

Pew respondents who supported expansion volunteered reasons that were broadly inclusive, such as "the larger the better," with almost no mention of a revived Russia again threatening the region. Those who opposed expansion (and followed NATO events closely) offered a wide range of specific reasons including distrust of the East European countries, concern about the additional cost to the United States in money and manpower, and fear of "boxing in the Russians."

The disengaged nature of public opinion about expanding NATO geographically suggested that with visible leadership, more Americans might favor the move. However in a small test of the thesis, the results were equivocal at best, and at worst, contrary to expectations:

◆ Half of respondents were asked simply whether NATO should be enlarged or stay as it is: 45% said expand, 39% said stay as is. The other half of respondents were asked the same question after being told that President Clinton and Republican Congressional leaders believe NATO should be expanded. Then 46% said expand, 40% said stay as is. The different results are not statistically significant.

◆ Among those who follow the issue closely, of those responding to the simple form of the question, 56% said expand, 36% said stay as is. When the question was preceded by noting leadership support, however, only 51% of the well-informed public said expand, 39% said stay as is. These results are marginally significant.

# TABLES

## THE FUTURE OF NATO

|                      | NATO Should Be<br><u>Maintained</u><br>% | NATO Not<br><u>Necessary Anymore</u><br>% | Don't<br><u>Know</u><br>% | <u>N</u> |
|----------------------|--|---|---------------------------|----------|
| <b>Total</b>         | 61                                       | 21  | 18=100                    | (1,503)  |
| <b>Sex</b>           |  |   |                           |          |
| Male                 | 67                                       | 25  | 8                         | (754)    |
| Female               | 55                                       | 19  | 26                        | (749)    |
| <b>Race</b>          |  |   |                           |          |
| White                | 64                                       | 20  | 16                        | (1256)   |
| Non-white            | 46                                       | 29  | 25                        | (230)    |
| Black                | 44                                       | 27  | 29                        | (126)    |
| <b>Race and Sex</b>  |  |   |                           |          |
| White Men            | 70                                       | 23  | 7                         | (636)    |
| White Women          | 59                                       | 17  | 24                        | (620)    |
| <b>Age</b>           |  |   |                           |          |
| Under 30             | 64                                       | 25  | 11                        | (286)    |
| 30-49                | 67                                       | 20  | 13                        | (657)    |
| 50-64                | 59                                       | 19  | 22                        | (310)    |
| 65+                  | 46                                       | 25  | 29                        | (231)    |
| <b>Education</b>     |  |   |                           |          |
| College Grad.        | 76                                       | 17  | 7                         | (448)    |
| Some College         | 70                                       | 20  | 10                        | (387)    |
| High School Grad.    | 57                                       | 23  | 20                        | (528)    |
| <H.S. Grad           | 40                                       | 25  | 35                        | (134)    |
| <b>Family Income</b> |  |   |                           |          |
| \$75,000+            | 71                                       | 24  | 5                         | (202)    |
| \$50,000-\$74,999    | 75                                       | 21  | 4                         | (200)    |
| \$30,000-\$49,999    | 66                                       | 20  | 14                        | (396)    |
| \$20,000-\$29,999    | 66                                       | 19  | 15                        | (218)    |
| <\$20,000            | 48                                       | 26  | 26                        | (326)    |
| <b>Region</b>        |  |   |                           |          |
| East                 | 64                                       | 20  | 16                        | (300)    |
| Midwest              | 67                                       | 16  | 17                        | (360)    |
| South                | 55                                       | 25  | 20                        | (525)    |
| West                 | 63                                       | 23  | 14                        | (318)    |

Question: Do you think the NATO alliance should be maintained or is the alliance not necessary anymore?

Continued ...

|                                | NATO Should Be<br><u>Maintained</u><br>% | NATO Not<br><u>Necessary Anymore</u><br>% | Don't<br><u>Know</u><br>% | <u>N</u> |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|----------|
| <b>Total</b>                   | 61                                       | 21  | 18=100                    | (1,503)  |
| <b>Religious Affiliation</b>   |  |   |                           |          |
| Total White Protestant         | 61                                       | 20  | 19                        | (723)    |
| White Prot. Evangelical        | 56                                       | 21  | 23                        | (376)    |
| White Prot. Non-Evang.         | 67                                       | 19  | 14                        | (347)    |
| White Catholic                 | 71                                       | 17  | 12                        | (289)    |
| <b>Community Size</b>          |  |   |                           |          |
| Large City                     | 61                                       | 23  | 16                        | (315)    |
| Suburb                         | 68                                       | 16  | 16                        | (347)    |
| Small City/Town                | 60                                       | 23  | 17                        | (515)    |
| Rural Area                     | 57                                       | 22  | 21                        | (312)    |
| <b>Party ID</b>                |  |   |                           |          |
| Republican                     | 65                                       | 22  | 13                        | (417)    |
| Democrat                       | 63                                       | 18  | 19                        | (499)    |
| Independent                    | 59                                       | 25  | 16                        | (504)    |
| <b>1996 Presidential Vote</b>  |  |   |                           |          |
| Clinton                        | 65                                       | 18  | 17                        | (540)    |
| Dole                           | 64                                       | 25  | 11                        | (340)    |
| Perot*                         | 53                                       | 31  | 16                        | (69)     |
| <b>1996 Congressional Vote</b> |  |   |                           |          |
| Republican                     | 66                                       | 26  | 8                         | (414)    |
| Democrat                       | 66                                       | 19  | 15                        | (370)    |

\* Note: small sample size

# SURVEY METHODOLOGY



## **ABOUT THIS SURVEY**

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,503 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period January 9-12, 1997. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on either Form 1 (N=755) or Form 2 (N=748), the sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

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.

## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY IN DETAIL**

The sample for this survey is a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed). The design of the sample ensures this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

The telephone exchanges were selected with probabilities proportional to their size. The first eight digits of the sampled telephone numbers (area code, telephone exchange, bank number) were selected to be proportionally stratified by county and by telephone exchange within county. That is, the number of telephone numbers randomly sampled from within a given county is proportional to that county's share of telephone households in the U.S. Estimates of the number of telephone households within each county are derived from 1990 Census data on residential telephone incidence that have been updated with state-level information on new telephone installations and county-level projections of the number of households. Only working banks of telephone numbers are selected. A working bank is defined as 100 contiguous telephone numbers containing three or more residential listings.

The sample was released for interviewing in replicates. Using replicates to control the release of sample to the field ensures that the complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample.

At least four attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making a contact with a potential respondent. All interview breakoffs and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to completed interviews. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the "youngest male 18 or older who is at home". If there is no eligible man at home, interviewers asked to speak with "the oldest woman 18 or older who lives in the household". This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown empirically to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender.

Non-response in telephone interview surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis.

The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 1994). This analysis produced population parameters for the demographic characteristics of households with adults 18 or older, which are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The analysis only included households in the continental United States that contain a telephone.

The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters.

# THE QUESTIONNAIRE

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS**  
**JANUARY 1997 NEWS INTEREST INDEX**  
**-- FINAL TOPLINE --**  
**January 9 - 12, 1997**  
**N=1,503**

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates in Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and TV stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home. [IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?]

Q.4 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?  
**[READ AND ROTATE LIST]**

|   | <u>Very<br/>Closely</u> | <u>Fairly<br/>Closely</u> | <u>Not too<br/>Closely</u> | <u>Not at all<br/>Closely</u> | <b>VOL</b><br><u>DK</u> |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| j. The discussion and debate about expanding NATO into Eastern Europe | 5                       | 15                        | 32                         | 47                            | 1=100                   |

**ON ANOTHER SUBJECT...**

Q.5 Right now, which is more important for President Clinton to focus on... domestic policy or foreign policy?

|                 |                        | <u>Dec<br/>1994</u> | <u>Oct<br/>1993</u> |
|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 86              | Domestic policy        | 85                  | 76                  |
| 7               | Foreign policy         | 7                   | 13                  |
| *               | Neither ( <b>VOL</b> ) | 2                   | *                   |
| 5               | Both ( <b>VOL</b> )    | 4                   | 7                   |
| <u>2</u><br>100 | Don't know/Refused     | <u>2</u><br>100     | <u>4</u><br>100     |

Q.7 Now I'd like your views on some people and things in the news. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who or what I name. (First,) would you say your overall opinion of... **(INSERT ITEM. ROTATE a-f; THEN ROTATE g-j)** is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? **(INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE")**

|    |  | Very Favorable | Mostly Favorable | Mostly Unfavorable | Very Unfavorable | Never Heard Of | Can't Rate |
|----|--|----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|------------|
| e. | Secretary of State designate, Madeleine Albright | 13             | 44               | 12                 | 4                | 9              | 18=100     |
|    | February, 1995                                   | 2              | 16               | 11                 | 5                | 47             | 19=100     |
| j. | NATO   | 9              | 44               | 23                 | 8                | 3              | 13=100     |
|    | June, 1995                                       | 8              | 53               | 18                 | 7                | 4              | 10=100     |

**ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT, JUST A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT NATO...**

Q.8 Do you think the NATO alliance should be maintained or is the Alliance not necessary any more?

|                  |                    | Dec 1994         | Gallup<br>May 30 - June 2 1991 |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 61               | Maintained         | 60               | 62                             |
| 21               | Not necessary      | 27               | 17                             |
| <u>18</u><br>100 | Don't know/Refused | <u>13</u><br>100 | <u>21</u><br>100               |

**SPLIT FORM Q.9 AND Q.9a/9b: FORM 1 [N = 755]; FORM 2 [N=748]**

Q.9F1 President Clinton and Republican Congressional leaders believe NATO should be expanded to include some countries from Central and Eastern Europe that have not been members in the past. Do you agree that NATO should be expanded, OR do you think NATO should stay as it is?

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 46               | Should be expanded                      |
| 40               | Should stay as it is                    |
| 2                | NATO not necessary anymore <b>(VOL)</b> |
| <u>12</u><br>100 | Don't know/Refuse                       |

Q.9aF2 In your opinion, should NATO be expanded to include some countries from Central and Eastern Europe that have not been members in the past, or should NATO stay as it is?

|           |                                  |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 45        | Should be expanded               |
| 39        | Should stay as it is             |
| 2         | NATO not necessary anymore (VOL) |
| <u>14</u> | Don't know/Refuse                |
| 100       |                                  |

**ASK Q.9b ONLY OF THOSE WHO ANSWERED '1' (VERY CLOSELY) OR '2' (FAIRLY CLOSELY) IN Q.4j**

Q.9bF2 Why do you feel that way?

Those Who Feel It Should Be Expanded

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 47 | The more countries participate, the more likely it will make world peace/The more countries involved the better it will be |
| 40 | Everyone should participate/Have a right to express their feelings   |
| 8  | There will be a stronger, more unified Europe  |
| 1  | Central/Eastern European countries have insufficient defense forces  |
| 7  | Other unrelated  |
| 2  | Don't know   |

Those Who Feel It Should Stay As It Is

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 26 | Can't trust those countries/Uncertain of position of those countries                        |
| 17 | Politicians have their hands full with United States' problems/Worry about our own problems |
| 15 | A/O NATO remains the same mentions  |
| 9  | There hasn't been any positive progress   |
| 16 | Other unrelated   |
| 21 | Don't know  |

**ASK ALL:**

Q.10 What is your greater concern... (1) That NATO expansion will anger Russia and make it more hostile, or (2) that if NATO is NOT expanded, it will encourage Russia to again threaten its European neighbors?

- 25 NATO expansion will anger Russia
- 41 Not expanding NATO will encourage Russia to threaten
- 10 Neither/Both equally (**VOL**)
- 24 Don't know/Refused
- 100

Q.11 As you may know, NATO was established to provide security for Western Europe against the Soviet Union. Do you think NATO forces, including US troops, should now ALSO be used... (**READ AND ROTATE**), OR don't you think this is a proper role for NATO forces?

**SPLIT FORM ITEMS AS INDICATED: FORM 1 [N = 755]; FORM 2 [N=748]**

|      |   | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>DK</u> |
|------|---|------------|-----------|-----------|
| a.F1 | To defend Western interests outside Europe, such as in the Persian Gulf     | 49         | 38        | 13=100    |
| b.F2 | To combat international terrorism   | 51         | 37        | 12=100    |
| c.F1 | To combat international drug trafficking                                    | 51         | 39        | 10=100    |
| d.F2 | To provide peacekeeping in countries bordering NATO members, such as Bosnia | 54         | 34        | 12=100    |
| e.F1 | To provide peacekeeping in case of conflicts between NATO member countries  | 56         | 34        | 10=100    |