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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
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ATTACKS AT HOME DRAW MORE INTEREST THAN WAR ABROAD

As reports of anthrax attacks dominate the media, the public is paying far greater attention to news of terrorism at home than to the war in Afghanistan. Interest in terrorist attacks is now running as high as during the early days after Sept. 11 – fully 78% are following news of terrorism very closely. By contrast, just 51% are tracking the U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan very closely, well below the 67% who paid very close attention to the early stages of the war in the Gulf.

Despite the large audience following the anthrax outbreak, a growing number of Americans feel the media is exaggerating the dangers posed by the disease. Better than four-in-ten (42%) say news organizations are exaggerating the risk, while 50% disagree. In an ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted Oct. 15, fewer people (34%) saw the media overhyping the anthrax risk, while 62% said coverage did not exaggerate dangers.

The latest Pew Research Center survey of 404 Americans, conducted Oct. 17-21, finds that people are gradually becoming less addicted to the media's coverage of terrorism – 49% say they can't stop watching news about terrorism, down from 63% in mid-September (Sept. 13-17). But they remain almost as fearful over what they are seeing.

Public Still Interested, Less Obsessed

<i>Following news story</i>	<u>Mid-Sept</u>	<u>Now</u>
Watching stories about terrorism attacks on U.S.	%	%
Very closely	74	78
Fairly closely	22	16
Not closely	4	5
Don't know/Refused	*	<u>1</u>
	100	100
Watching stories about U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan		
Very closely	n/a	51
Fairly closely	n/a	35
Not closely	n/a	13
Don't know/Refused	<u>n/a</u>	<u>1</u>
		100
<i>Reactions to coverage</i>		
I can't stop watching terrorism news		
Agree	63	49
Disagree	34	47
Don't know/Refused	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
It's frightening to watch terrorism news		
Agree	77	69
Disagree	21	29
Don't know/Refused	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
<i>News media exaggerated danger of anthrax ...</i>	<u>Oct 15*</u>	<u>Now</u>
	%	%
Yes	34	42
No	62	50
Don't know/Refused	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100

* ABC/Washington Post trend.

About seven-in-ten (69%) say they are frightened by the coverage of terrorism, compared with 77% in mid-September.

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 404 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period October 17-21, 2001. 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 5.5 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.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
& COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
AMERICA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD, III
GENERAL PUBLIC CALLBACK TOPLINE
OCT 17-21, 2001
N = 404**

N.1 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.
[INSERT ITEM; ROTATE]

		Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not too Closely	Not at all Closely	DK/Ref
a.	The U.S. military effort in Afghanistan January, 1991 ¹	51 67	35 28	10 4	3 1	1=100 0=100
b.	Terrorism attacks on the United States	78	16	4	1	1=100
	Early October, 2001 ²	73	22	4	1	*=100
	Mid-September, 2001	74	22	3	1	*=100
	July, 1996 ³	69	23	6	2	*=100
	June, 1995 ⁴	58	32	8	2	*=100

1 In January 1991, the question was worded: "How closely have you been following news about the War in the Gulf?"

2 In Early October 2001 and Mid-September 2001 the question was worded: "News about the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington?"

3 In July 1996 the question was worded: "the crash of a Paris-bound TWA plane off the coast of New York."

4 In June 1995 the question was worded: "the Oklahoma City bombing."

N.2 I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you feel when you are watching coverage of terrorism on TV. For each statement that I read tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree [INSERT ITEM; ROTATE] Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement?⁵

		Strongly <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	I can't stop watching news about terrorism	17	32	39	8	4=100
	Mid-September, 2001	24	39	30	4	3=100
	January, 1991	11	39		48	2=100
b.	It's frightening to watch news about terrorism	26	43	26	3	2=100
	Mid-September, 2001	33	44	19	2	2=100
	January, 1991	17	50		32	1=100

N.3 Generally speaking, do you think the news media have [READ AND ROTATE]

		<i>ABC/Wash. Post</i> <u>Oct 15, 2001</u>
42	Exaggerated the danger of the anthrax situation or have they	34
50	Reported the anthrax situation without exaggerating the danger	62
<u>8</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>4</u>
100		100

⁵ In Mid-September 2001 the question was asked about "terrorists attacks." In January 1991 the question asked about "watching coverage of the war on TV."