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THE TIMES POLL; MILITARY OUSTER OF IRAQI LEADER FAVORED BY 60%

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A solid majority of Americans favor U.S. military intervention to **remove Saddam** Hussein from power in Iraq, and many are also willing to support some uses of armed force in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other conflicts around the world, the Los Angeles Times Poll has found.

The results appear to give President Clinton a relatively free hand to use U.S. air and naval power in those situations and seem to refute the view that Americans have turned deeply isolationist.

Most Americans are still reluctant to endorse the use of U.S. ground forces in Bosnia, the poll found, but about half favor the use of U.S. air power there.

When asked whether they would back an all-out effort in Iraq to topple Hussein -- even "at the risk of losing some American lives" -- 60% of those questioned said yes, only 30% said no.

"These numbers suggest that Bill Clinton has room to exercise American leadership, and that people will follow if he does," said John E. Mueller of the University of Rochester, an expert on public opinion on war. "They also show that the notion that the United States has gone into an isolationist funk doesn't hold up. People are worried about the domestic economy, but they also want the country to stay on the world stage."

The Times Poll confirmed that Americans are far more concerned with the domestic economy than with foreign affairs. Asked what they saw as the most important problem facing the country, respondents cited a number of domestic issues -- jobs, the deficit, health care, morality, homelessness, crime, drugs and education -- before any international problems.

And 67% wanted to spend less money on defense, including a clear majority of those who describe themselves as "conservatives."

At the same time, the poll found widespread support for the use of military power where the costs appear limited.

In the case of Bosnia, the Times Poll found that 58% favored the use of U.S. military force to deliver humanitarian aid and stop atrocities against civilians. Asked about the use of U.S. air power to strike at Serbian forces, 49% said they would favor that kind of intervention, with 34% opposed and 17% uncertain.

Asked about the use of U.S. ground troops to fight the Serbs, 37% were in favor, 47% opposed and 16% uncertain.

"That shows quite high support for intervention," Mueller said. "Of course, people are assuming that any intervention would be successful. . . . If things go wrong, people always reserve the right to change their minds."

The Bush Administration shied away from any military intervention in the Bosnian war, in which ethnic Serb forces have often attacked Croatian and Muslim civilian areas. Clinton has said he would consider using air power to help stop the conflict but has ruled out the use of ground troops.

The Times Poll, supervised by John Brennan, surveyed 1,733 adults nationwide from Jan. 14 through 17; it has a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

While the survey found some sentiment for possible American military intervention in specific areas such as Bosnia and Iraq, on the more general question whether the United States has the responsibility to

"play the role of world policeman," 57% said no and 37% said yes.

As previous polls have found, large majorities of Americans support Bush's recent uses of military power in Somalia and Iraq.

An overwhelming 84% said they approved of the decision to send troops to Somalia to deliver and protect emergency food shipments.

On Iraq, 82% approved of U.S. air strikes against missile sites, and 45% believed the actions taken so far were "not tough enough."

Support for a campaign to overthrow Hussein appeared strong. The Times Poll asked: "Do you favor or oppose an all-out effort to **remove Saddam** Hussein from power in Iraq, at the risk of losing some American lives and upsetting the balance of power in the Middle East?" Of the 60% who said they supported the idea, 44% said they were strongly in favor and 16% were somewhat in favor.

That result was consistent with other polls in the past two years that have found a significant number of Americans complaining that Bush ended the Persian Gulf War "too soon" and should have pursued Hussein.

On the other hand, Mueller noted, public support is no guarantee of success in such a project. "In 1916, there was a lot of support for sending troops into Mexico to capture Pancho Villa, who had been raiding ranches in New Mexico," he said. "That proved to be one of the great fiascoes of American military history."

Indeed, throughout recent history the American public has generally supported military intervention in brush-fire conflicts around the world -- only to change its mind whenever losses began to mount.

The Korean War, the Vietnam War and the American military intervention in Lebanon in 1982 all began with wide public backing, but became unpopular as they cost soldiers' lives.

"Some of these results (in the current Times Poll) may reflect the fact that our most recent military interventions have been successful and relatively cost-free, in Somalia and Iraq," Mueller said.

The poll found that public confidence in Clinton's ability to handle international problems rose markedly as the new President's inauguration approached. When voters were asked in October whether they felt they could trust Clinton in a crisis, 50% said yes; when the same question was asked last week, 61% said yes.

The poll also found a significant gender gap on the issue of military intervention. The idea of air strikes against Serbian forces in Bosnia was favored by 58% of men but only 42% of women. The recent air raids against Iraq were strongly supported by 76% of men but only 56% of women. And 54% of men said the actions against Iraq have not been tough enough, while only 37% of women agreed.

Respondents were divided over Clinton's decision to continue the Bush Administration's policy of intercepting Haitian refugees on the high seas, instead of allowing them to land in the United States. Among all respondents, 51% said they agreed with Clinton; 41% disagreed. But while most white respondents agreed with stopping the Haitians, most black respondents opposed the decision.

Asked to name the most important international problem facing the United States, the largest number of respondents -- 39% -- chose Iraq, reflecting the current crisis there over Hussein's resistance to United Nations authority and the U.S.-led air raids in response.

Trade issues were named next most frequently, by 15%. After that came Somalia (12%), Bosnia (10%), the Middle East (8%) and Russia (5%). Foreign Issues Trail Domestic Concerns

Americans cite problems on foreign soil far less often than their worries at home, a Times Poll found.

The most important problem facing this country: (up to two responses accepted) Economy: 29% Unemployment: 21% Budget deficit: 15% Health care: 14% Homelessness: 11% Moral decline: 11% Crime: 10% Drugs: 9% Education: 8% Middle East: 6% Race relations: 4% Foreign relations: 4% AIDS: 3% Abortion: 2% Inflation: 2% Somalia: 2% Environment: 2% Other: 14% Don't know: 2%*

The most important international problem facing the United States: (up to two responses accepted) Iraq: 39% Trade: 15% Somalia: 12% Bosnia/Yugoslavia: 10% Middle East: 8% Relations with Russia: 5% Foreign aid: 5% Competing with Japan: 4% Losing jobs to foreign countries: 3% North American free trade: 2% Give up nuclear weapons: 2% Competing with Europe: 1% Haiti: 1% Other: 14% Don't know: 19%*

On an all-out effort to **remove Saddam** Hussein from power in Iraq, at the risk of losing some American lives: Favor: 60% Oppose: 30% Don't know: 10%*

On the decision to send troops to the African nation of Somalia as part of the United Nations- authorized

force to help food shipments reach the famine-stricken population of that country: Approve: 84% Disapprove: 12% Don't know: 4%*

On the possible use of U.S. ground troops against Serbian forces that are besieging Bosnia-Herzegovina: Favor: 37% Oppose: 47% Don't know: 16% How poll was conducted: The Times Poll interviewed 1,733 adults nationwide, by telephone, from Jan. 14-17. Telephone numbers were chosen from a list of all exchanges in the country. Random-digit dialing techniques were used to ensure that both listed and non-listed numbers had an opportunity to be contacted. Results were weighted slightly to conform with census figures for sex, race, age, education and household size. The margin of sampling error for the total sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For certain subgroups, and for selected questions asked of half of the sample, the error margin is somewhat higher. Poll results can also be affected by other factors such as questions wording and the order in which questions are presented.

Chart, Foreign Issues Trail Domestic Concerns / Los Angeles Times

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