



NEWS RELEASE

70% of Canadians Support Troops in Afghanistan Most Understand New Fighting Role

Most Canadians understand and approve of the current Canadian military mission in Afghanistan, despite the rigours of operating in a conflict zone. Seventy per cent of Canadians in a new EKOS survey said they supported the “peace-support” operation currently underway in Afghanistan, even though it might entail “fighting on the frontline” if necessary.

“It is important that policy makers as well as ordinary Canadians understand what their fellow citizens are thinking at this crucial juncture for the Canadian military,” said Frank Graves, President of EKOS Research Associates. “In our questionnaire, we carefully explained that the current mission goes beyond traditional peace-keeping. Although when forced to choose, Canadians lean slightly to preferring the old-style peace-keeping role for Canada’s troops as a matter of general practice, they are cognizant of the fact that what the Canadian troops are doing in Afghanistan is different, and, for the most part, they support it.”

The poll showed that knowledge of the Afghanistan mission is improving, with four in ten Canadians saying they know “a great deal” (five per cent) or a fair amount (38 per cent), which is up 13 per cent since September 2005. Of those with some awareness of the CF operations, 60 per cent understand that the Afghanistan mission is “peace-support” rather than “traditional peace-keeping”. “Support for the Afghanistan mission has ebbed very slightly as the public has come to understand its dangers,” said Graves. “But it is still overwhelming.”

Nonetheless, he cautioned that public opinion can be “turbulent and tentative” in this area. “Remember that the majority of Canadians supported going to Iraq two months before the war, and now that support is around 15 per cent,” he said.

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METHODOLOGY

The EKOS survey sampled 1,002 Canadians between February 6 and 14, 2006. A sample of this size produces a statistical margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as regions).

All the data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, gender and age composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.