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THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

--Media Release--

American Public Favors Safe Havens in Syria

Half Approve US Providing Air Cover, But Not Troops

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Two thirds of Americans approve of the idea of the Arab League and Turkey establishing safe havens inside Syria, to provide Syrians who are at risk of being attacked by government forces a place to retreat.

Half (48%) approve of the US providing air cover, though nearly as many (45%) oppose the idea. A majority of Republicans and Democrats favor the idea—54% in both cases—while a plurality of independents are opposed (47% to 34%).

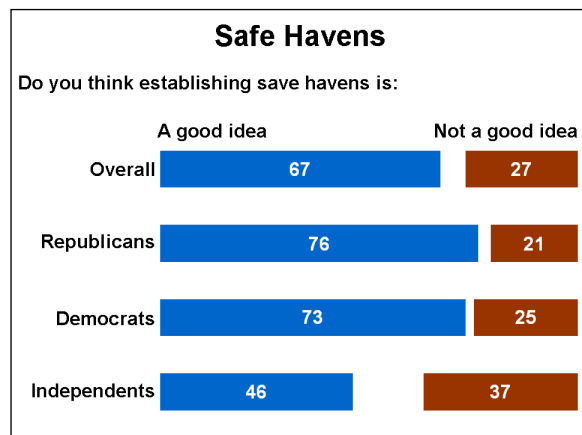
The idea of contributing US troops for the safe havens gets very low support, with three quarters opposed. The idea of providing weapons for the safe havens is only supported by 37%, with 56% opposed.

These are some of the findings of a new poll of 727 Americans, conducted March 3-7 by the Program on International Policy Attitudes. It has a margin of error (including sample design effects) of +/-4.5 percent.

Steven Kull, director of PIPA commented, “Clearly Americans are feeling concerned about the situation in Syria, favor US participation in sanctions and support outside countries in the region taking steps to protect civilians at risk. However, they are divided about US air power getting involved and clearly do not want to send ground troops.”

He adds, “Interestingly, Republicans and Democrats are unified, with majorities approving safe havens and the US providing air cover, while the independents are much less supportive.”

A very large majority favors US participation in sanctions against Syria. Respondents were given a brief description of the situation in Syria and told “the Arab League has

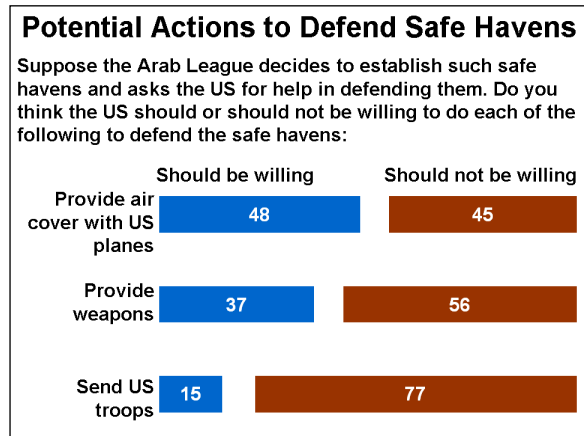


called for pressuring Syria by cutting off economic trade with Syria; the US and other countries have joined in these sanctions.” Seventy-one percent of respondents approved of the US participating in such sanctions, especially Republicans (85%) and Democrats (78%). Independents, however, were divided (44% approve, 40% disapprove).

Respondents were told that, “Members of the Arab League and Turkey are considering establishing safe havens on the border areas inside Syria to provide Syrians who are at risk of being attacked by government forces a place to retreat. Other nations would need to provide military aid to protect them.” They were also introduced to the debate as follows, “Some say this would violate Syria’s sovereignty, while others say that the international community has a responsibility to protect Syrians at risk.”

Sixty-seven percent called such safe havens a good idea, while 27% disagreed. A large majority of Republicans (76%) and Democrats (73%) said safe havens are a good idea, while just a plurality of independents agreed (46% to 37%).

Respondents were asked to assume the Arab League decides to establish safe havens and asks the US for help in defending them. They were then asked about three different forms of military assistance: to provide air cover with US planes; to provide weapons; or to send US troops. As stated above, modest majorities of both Republicans and Democrats favored the idea—54% in both cases--but a plurality of independents are opposed, 47 to 34%. Thus about half of Americans (48%) say the US should be willing to provide air cover, but almost as many are opposed (45%).



On sending US troops to defend the safe havens, three quarters reject the idea. Overall, 77% say the US should not be willing to do this (Republicans 78%, Democrats 82%, independents 69%).

A majority thinks the US should not be willing to provide weapons to protect safe havens. Fifty-six percent are negative on this idea, while 37% are positive. This view is bipartisan, with Republicans negative by 53% to 43%; Democrats by 57% to 42%; and independents by 60% to 22%.

Views are divided as to whether other countries should provide weapons to opposition forces. Respondents were told that “members of the Arab League are considering providing weapons to the opposition forces in Syria.” Forty-five percent said this is a good idea while 48% said it is not. However, views vary strongly by partisan affiliation. A solid majority of Republicans favor the idea (57%), as does a bare majority of Democrats (51%). But independents are clearly negative, with only 24% calling it a good

idea (not a good idea, 56%).

The public is wary of US involvement in the conflict, even to the extent of assisting by sending weapons through an intermediary. Asked to assume that “the Arab League decides to provide weapons to the opposition forces in Syria and asks the US to help,” a full two thirds (66%) said the US should not contribute weapons (Republicans 63%, Democrats 66%, independents 70%).

This study was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, Knowledge Networks provides a laptop and ISP connection. Additional technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html>.