

# Afghans Favor Expanding Peacekeeping Operation

January 29, 2006

## Approve Stopping Opium Production

A large majority of Afghans approve of the recent expansion of the NATO peacekeeping force beyond the capital Kabul and would like to see it expanded even further, according to a new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll conducted November 27 to December 4, 2005, with 2089 Afghan adults. The poll was developed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes and fielded by ACSOR/D3 Systems, Inc.

Since international forces occupied Afghanistan in 2001 a controversy has swirled around the fact that international peacekeeping forces, known as ISAF, have been limited until recently to the capital city Kabul. Because Afghanistan's security forces are not fully developed, this left the majority of Afghanistan under the domination of local warlords. While many have called for expanding the peacekeeping operation (manned largely by NATO forces, run by a NATO command since 2003) beyond Kabul, it has never been known how the Afghan people would respond to such a prospect. While the increased security might prove attractive, Afghans might also see it as compromising their sovereignty or as threatening the positions of local commanders to whom they may feel loyalty. Recently the ISAF peacekeeping force was expanded, so that it now includes nine "provincial reconstruction teams" in northern and western towns, and is able to affect the security situation in about half of Afghanistan's territory. ISAF plans further expansion into the south in 2006. (Source: <http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/evolution.htm>)

The new WPO poll finds strong support for this new expansion of the peacekeeping operation. Asked, "As you may know, the NATO peacekeeping forces known as ISAF have recently expanded their presence beyond Kabul to several other areas. Do you approve or disapprove of this expansion?" just 18% opposed it while two out of three (66%) favored it.

### Expanding ISAF Peacekeeping Operation

*NATO peacekeeping forces (ISAF) have recently expanded their presence beyond Kabul. Do you approve or disapprove of this expansion?*



WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG 1/2006

There also appears to be fairly strong support for further expansion of the peacekeeping operation. Those who said that they were in favor of the recent expansion were asked whether they would favor expansion to more areas. Eighty-nine percent of those asked (58% of the total sample) said they would favor it.

An even larger percentage said that they perceive the ISAF peacekeeping force as effective. Eighty-two percent said they see it as very effective (46%) or somewhat effective (36%). Ten percent said they see it as not very effective and 5% not at all effective.

The only ethnic group to not show strong enthusiasm for expanding the role of ISAF was the Uzbeks. Only 48% approved of expanding ISAF beyond Kabul and only 42% even further. But their perception of the effectiveness of ISAF was nearly as high as the others (very effective 39%, somewhat 34%).

Regionally, there was less support in the north, where 53% approved and 30% disapproved of the recent expansion and 44% approved of further expansion.

### **Stopping Opium Production**

Perhaps the most delicate aspect of international intervention is the effort to stop opium production. This is a highly intrusive form of intervention against an activity that provides a form of livelihood to significant numbers of Afghans, as well as stimulating the economy. Nonetheless, most Afghans say they support the international effort to stop it.

Respondents were asked whether they favor "international military forces' efforts to stop the growing of opium poppies in Afghanistan." A resounding 78% said that they approve, with just 15% disapproving. In the east and south-central regions, a lower 72% approved while 22% disapproved.