

Most in Multinational Poll Favor U.N. Peacekeeping Force for Lebanon; Half of Countries Willing to Send Troops

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Most of those surveyed in a 33-nation poll by [Gallup International](#) agree that a U.N. peacekeeping force is needed on the Israeli-Lebanese border. In half of the countries polled a majority or plurality is willing to send their own troops.

Seven out of ten (72%) of those surveyed by Gallup International during the second and third week of August agreed that a “U.N. peacekeeping force should be present in the region” as a buffer between Israel and Jordan. Most Israelis (62%) and three out of four (75%) Lebanese are also in favor.

A French peacekeeper in southern Lebanon, August 2006. (UN Photo/Mark Garten)

In sixteen countries, a majority or plurality was willing to contribute troops, according to figures released by [Roy Morgan Research](#), one of the pollsters participating in the survey. Majorities or pluralities favored sending troops in six of the 17 European countries polled. Substantial majorities wanted to send forces in all six of the predominantly Muslim countries surveyed (including Kosovo, a U.N.-administered province of the former Yugoslavia). Also expressing a willingness to send troops were New Zealand, India, Cameroon and South Africa

In Europe, Scandinavians were the most likely to be in favor of participating in a Mideast peacekeeping force. Substantial majorities in Norway and Sweden (both 67%) favored dispatching troops to Lebanon. Most Irish (66%) and Luxembourgers (54%) also supported contributing forces. All four have a history of participation in international peacekeeping operations. Pluralities favored contributing troops in Iceland (49%) and Finland (49%).

European nations have promised to dispatch a total of 6,900 peacekeepers to the region, almost half of the 15,000-member contingent authorized by the U.N. Security Council. Italy, which was not included in the Gallup International Survey, will provide 2,500 troops, the largest national contingent so far. Also not included in the survey were France, which is sending 2,000 troops in addition to the 400 French peacekeepers already there, and Germany. Although Germany has ruled out deploying ground troops, its government is considering taking charge of an international naval force along the Lebanese coast to stop the flow of arms.

Majorities in the five predominantly Muslim countries surveyed thought their government should send forces to Lebanon, if asked. Lebanese (78%) were overwhelmingly in favor of taking part in the U.N. operation on their southern border. Morocco (76%) was the next most enthusiastic country, followed by Pakistan (70%) and Senegal (63%). Sixty percent were also in favor in Kosovo which still has international peacekeepers on its own soil.

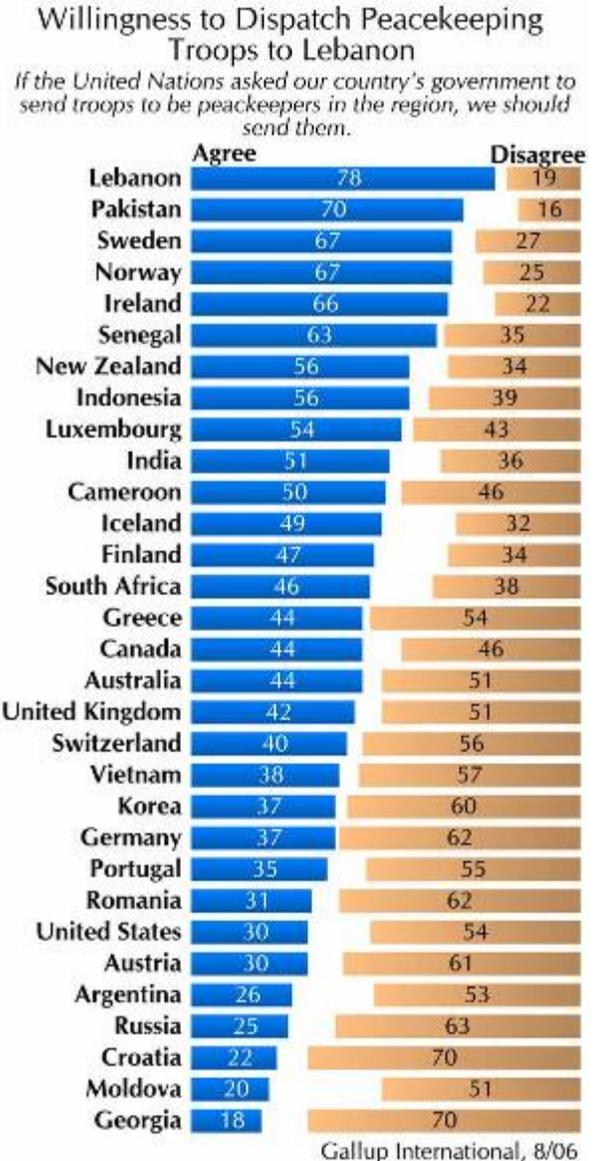
Israel, however, has said it would be reluctant to cooperate with a U.N. force including Muslim nations that do not recognize the Jewish state. Of the Muslim countries surveyed, only Senegal has diplomatic relations with Israel.

Others expressing willingness were New Zealanders (56%) and a bare majority of Indians (51%). Pluralities in Cameroon (50% agreed, 46% disagreed) and South Africa (46% agreed, 38% disagreed) would also be willing to send troops.

Those unwilling to send peacekeepers included key members of the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing” in Iraq: Americans, 54 percent of whom said the U.S. military should not contribute forces, Australians (51%) and the British (51%). Canada, which is a major contributor to the international coalition in Afghanistan, was divided on the question of sending peacekeepers to Lebanon: 46 percent did not want their military to participate while 44 percent did.

Gallup International also probed international attitudes toward Israel and Hezbollah, though it did not release a breakdown of its results by country.

Among the key findings:



- More than half of those surveyed overall (51%) agreed that Israeli actions were “increasing support for Hezbollah.”
- Most (57%) considered Hezbollah to be a “terrorist organization” over which the “Lebanese government has no control” (58%).
- Substantial majorities (63%) said “the United States should not interfere in the conflict.”
- Overwhelming majorities (76%) agreed that “there can be no peace in the region without a settlement of the Israel/Palestine issue.”