

# THE PIPA/KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS POLL

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

## AMERICANS ON IRAQ & THE UN INSPECTIONS II

February 21, 2003

### INTRODUCTION

The February 14, 2003 meeting of the UN Security Council seemed to leave the United States and Britain at odds with a majority of state members—including France, Russia, China and Germany--that preferred to let inspections in Iraq continue, instead of moving toward military action. The following day, large anti-war demonstrations took place in cities around the globe.

In this discourse the US has played the role of advocate of military action. Attention to US public opinion has focused primarily on the question of whether the US public would support military action even without the UN Security Council approval that is still quite uncertain.

But what do Americans think the UN should do? Do Americans think that the UN Security Council should soon find Iraq in material breach of Resolution 1441 and authorize the use of force? Or do they think the UN should continue, and perhaps strengthen, the inspections process and attempt to disarm Iraq through it?

The US public has been exposed to far more arguments for the first course of action than for the second (arguments for strengthening inspections are primarily heard abroad). When Americans hear the core arguments for both sides, which do they find more convincing? Does hearing these arguments alter their opinions?

Does the public view inspections as doomed to futility in the long run? If inspections are seen as badly flawed, how do inspections compare to the alternative of war? Does the public think that such patience as it has now with inspections will run out—and if so, by when? If the inspectors come across a major weapons find, would the public feel that this is cause to go to invade Iraq or evidence that the inspections are succeeding?

In recent weeks more allies have stepped up and backed the US position on Iraq. What effect might this show of support be having on the US public's willingness to proceed with military action without UN Security Council approval?

If some allies would join with the US, would Americans be willing to proceed without UN approval? How would it compare with letting inspections continue?

In an effort to understand American attitudes on these and other issues in more depth, the Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks conducted a nationwide poll of 3,163 American adults over February 12-18 (a national sample of 2,186, plus oversamples in five states). The margin of error for the full sample was plus or minus 2.6%. The poll was fielded using Knowledge Networks' nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology see page 20, or go to [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).

Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

## FINDINGS

### *Conflict About UN Continuing Inspections or Invasion*

**Americans show intense conflict on the question of whether the UN should strengthen the inspection process or authorize an invasion of Iraq. Arguments in favor of both positions are found convincing by large majorities. When asked to decide, responses vary with no clear majority. However, if the current situation continues for months, or if the inspectors do find Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, a majority says it would then favor the UN authorizing an invasion.**

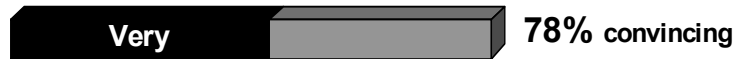
While much discussion focuses on what the US should do if it fails to get UN Security Council authorization for military action against Iraq, Americans appear to be quite conflicted about whether the UN Security Council should authorize military action or if it should strengthen the inspection process as a means of disarming Iraq. When asked initially, only a slight majority of 52% favored the UN authorizing military action, while 43% favored a strengthened inspection process.

More significant, when a separate sample was presented a series of arguments on both sides of the issue, large majorities—in all cases more than 60%-- found arguments on both sides convincing.

## Arguments in Favor of UN Continuing Inspections

Statement: As you may know, there is a currently a debate about whether the UN should seek to disarm Iraq through a strengthened inspection process, or if the UN should authorize an invasion to overthrow the Iraqi government. Here are arguments on both sides of this debate. For each argument, please select whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, somewhat unconvincing or very unconvincing.

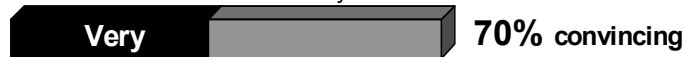
Going to war would be a very destructive process that may even include Iraq using biological and chemical weapons, and will likely result in the deaths of many thousands of American soldiers, Iraqi soldiers, and Iraqi civilians. The UN should not authorize going to war until it has first tried every possible method for resolving this problem peacefully.



The disarmament process is a better method than invasion, because if Iraq is invaded, Saddam Hussein would have nothing left to lose and would likely use weapons of mass destruction against US forces and US cities, and distribute these weapons to terrorist groups.



If the US goes to war with Iraq, it will likely face costs running into hundreds of billions of dollars, including the costs of fighting the war, rebuilding Iraq and keeping troops there for years to come. Given that the US is already running a huge deficit, it does not make sense for the US to leap into a war when inspections are a peaceful and less costly alternative that has not been fully tried.



If the UN were to strengthen its effort to disarm Iraq by putting many more UN inspectors on the ground and the US were to give the inspectors better intelligence, in the short run this would prevent Iraq from deploying any weapons it may have and in the long run would lead to finding and destroying these weapons.



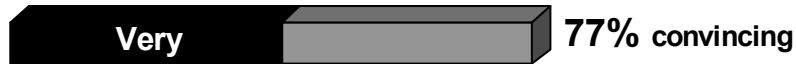
*PIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

## Arguments in Favor of UN Authorizing Invasion

Even if UN inspectors find some of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, chances are they won't find them all. If Iraq has even a few such weapons and chose to use them, many thousands of civilians would die.



The Bush administration has proven that Iraq has violated the terms of UN Security Resolution 1441 by refusing to cooperate with, and actively undermining, the efforts of the UN inspectors to find Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Therefore the UN must follow through and authorize the removal of the Iraqi government by force.



Given Iraq's size, if the Iraqi government does not want to cooperate with the inspection process, it can successfully hide some weapons of mass destruction. Since it is now clear that Iraq will not cooperate, the UN really has no choice but to overthrow the Iraqi government.



The longer we wait, the more advanced Iraq's weapons program will become. Saddam Hussein will be more able to threaten the US and his neighbors than he is now, and the harder it will be to stop him. So an invasion of Iraq should be launched as soon as possible.



*PIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

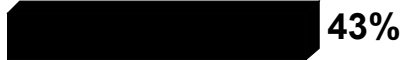
After having heard these arguments, respondents were finally asked to take a position. The response was divided, with those favoring inspections 6% higher than and those favoring authorization of invasion 4% lower than for the sample that did not hear the arguments.

## Should UN Authorize Invasion or Strengthen Inspections?

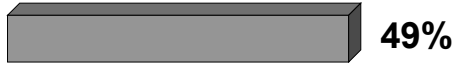
-- Percentage Favoring --

...seek to disarm Iraq through a strengthened inspection process.

*Without arguments*



*After arguments*



...pass a new resolution authorizing invasion

*Without arguments*



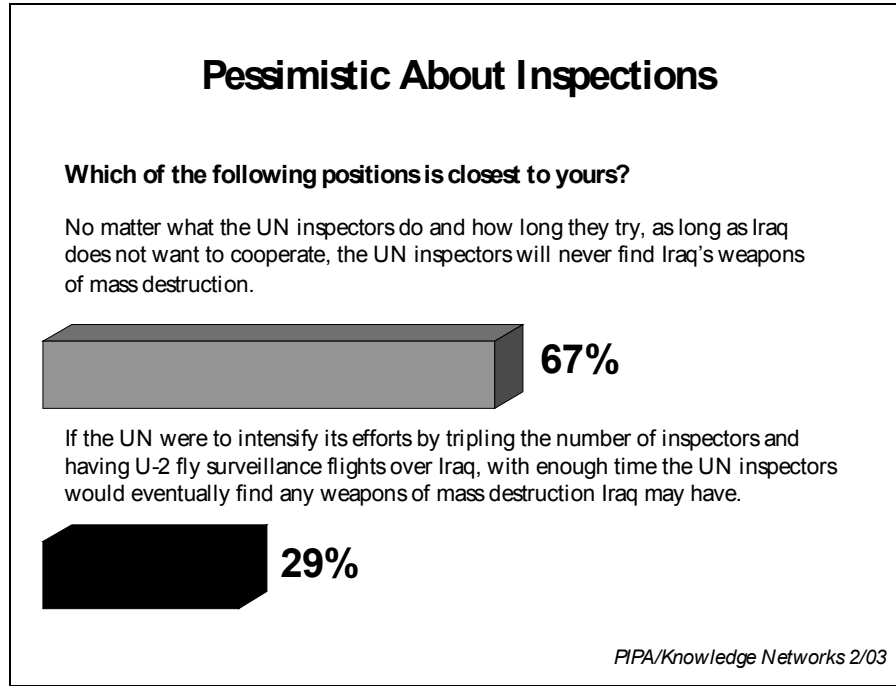
*After arguments*



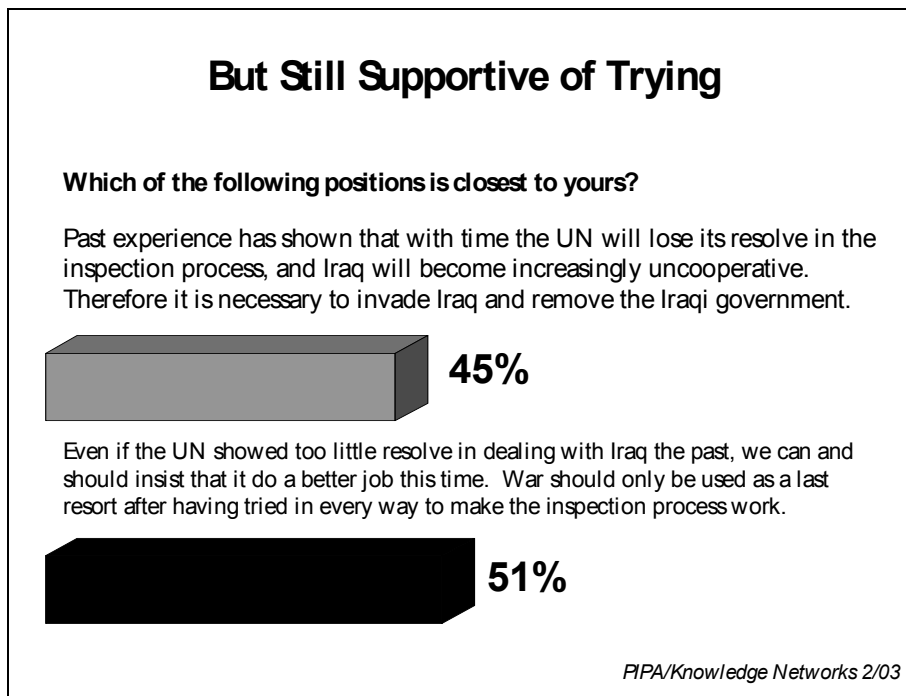
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## The Debate About Feasibility

When asked to consider a pair of arguments on the feasibility of inspections, the argument for their infeasibility prevailed by a large margin.

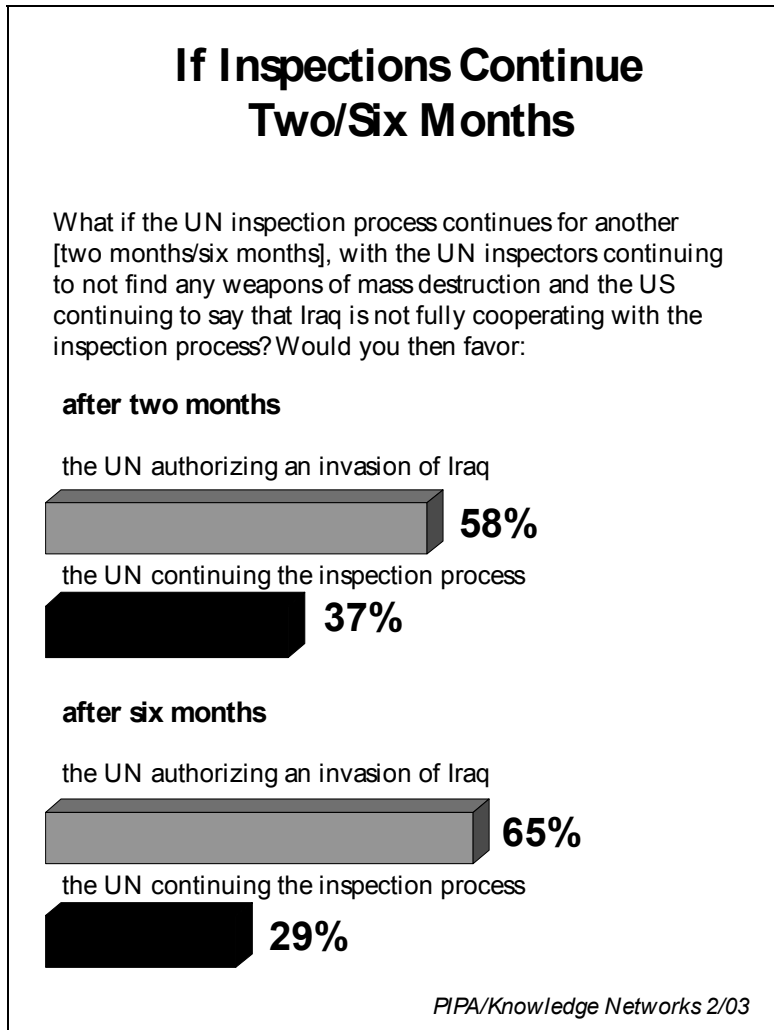


However, when the argument of infeasibility was posed against one that stressed the need to keep trying all options before going to war, a slight majority endorsed the latter.



## Will Patience With Inspections Run Out?

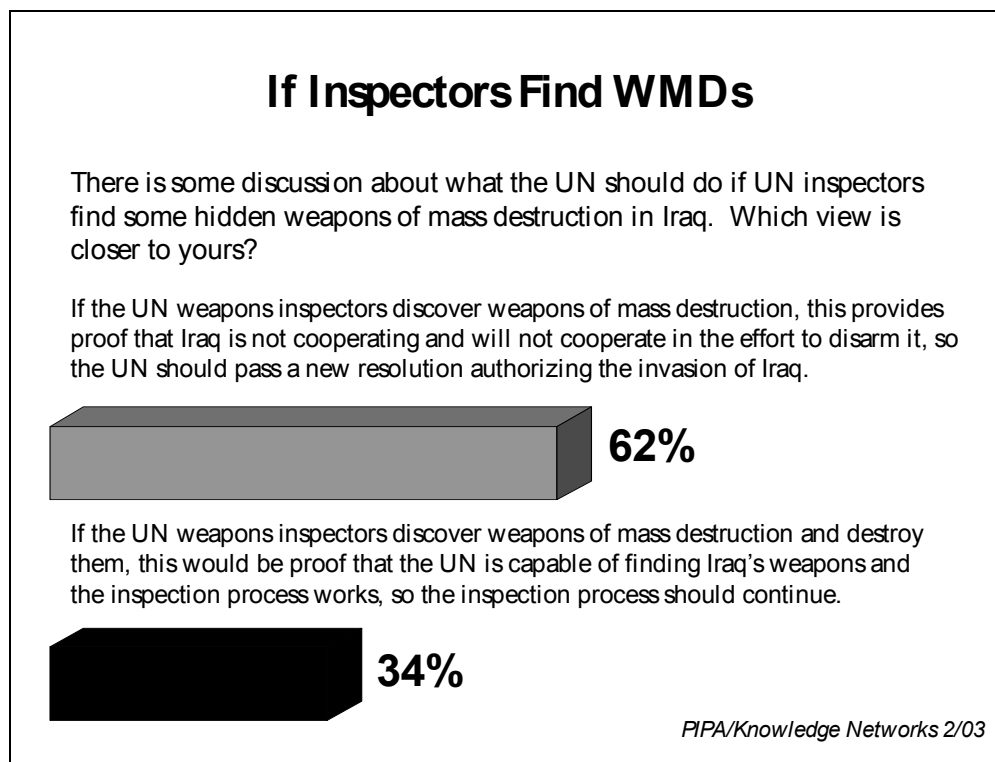
In theory, the public says its patience with the inspection process is not limitless. When asked how they would feel if the inspection process continued for two months or six months more, with the inspectors not finding anything and the US continuing to say that the Iraq was not cooperating, given a time frame, increasing majorities say they would favor the UN authorizing action.



However, it should be noted that poll respondents are not necessarily good at predicting what their future responses will be. Without a trigger for taking action, it is possible that the public will continue to feel dissatisfied with the inspection process, but will have trouble actually shifting to strong support for military action as long as there is hope that the inspection process might still work.

### What If Inspectors Find Something?

Apparently, the trigger for action could be the UN inspectors finding evidence that Iraq has been hiding weapons of mass destruction. A clear majority favored the argument that this would be cause for the UN to proceed with an invasion, over the argument that this is evidence that the inspection process is working and should continue.

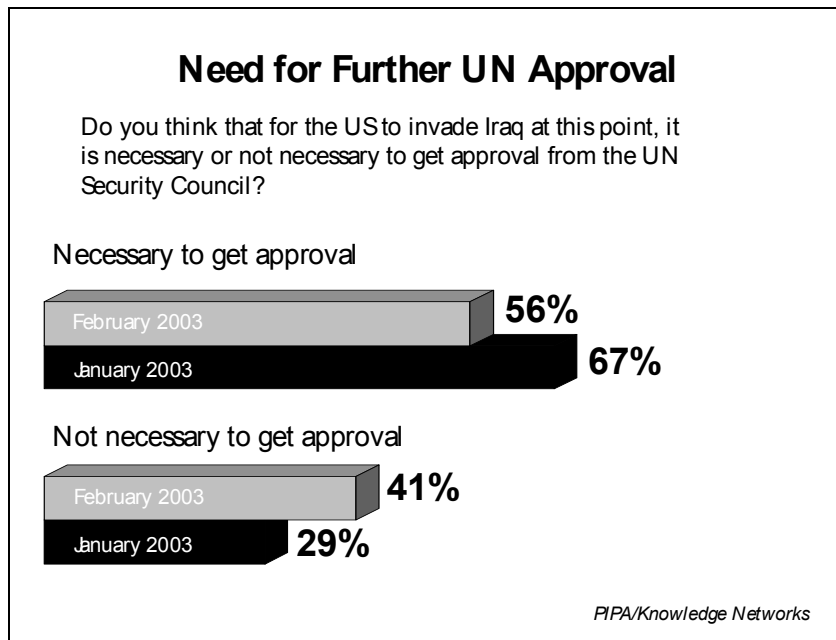




***UN Approval, Participation of Some Allies***

**A majority continues to want UN approval before the US invades Iraq. However, here too, Americans show signs of conflict, with majorities responding favorably to opposing arguments on whether the US should be ready to invade without UN approval. If some allies would support invasion, a majority still prefers continuing inspections. However, when the option of inspections is removed, a majority expresses readiness to invade with just the support of some allies. If the President proceeds without UN approval, a majority says it would support the President, though a majority says it would not agree with the decision.**

A clear majority continues to insist on the US getting UN approval before invading Iraq, though this majority may be declining. In one poll question a majority of 56% said it is *necessary* for the US to get UN Security Council approval before invading Iraq--down from 67% who held this position in a January PIPA/Knowledge Networks poll.



However, in another trend line question the movement was not significant. The percentage saying they were ready for the US to go it alone was up 4%. This change was not significant and, more importantly, currently stands at just 32%. A very large majority either favored the position that the US must get UN approval and the support of its allies (52%) or should not invade Iraq at all (15%).

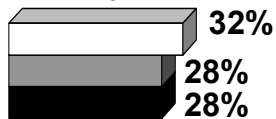
## Low Support for Unilateral Action

There has been some discussion about whether the US should use its troops to invade Iraq and overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. Which of the following positions is closest to yours?

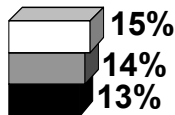
The US should only invade Iraq with UN approval and the support of its allies



The US should invade Iraq even if we have to go it alone



The US should not invade Iraq



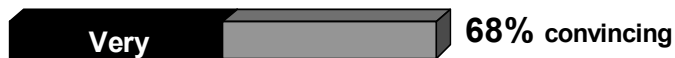
PIPA/Knowledge Networks

Americans do, however, show substantial conflict about this issue. When presented strongly stated arguments on whether the US should be ready to invade Iraq without UN approval, large majorities found arguments *on both sides* convincing, though the arguments against acting without UN approval did distinctly better.

## Arguments for US Military Action Without UN Approval

Statement: Currently the US is pressing for the UN Security Council to authorize military action against Iraq, but some members of the UN Security Council want to continue seeking disarmament through inspections. There is some debate about whether the US, if it fails to get UN Security Council authorization, should nonetheless proceed with military action against Iraq, or whether the US should not act unless the UN Security Council authorizes such action. Here are some arguments that have been made on this issue. Please tell me if you find them convincing or not convincing.

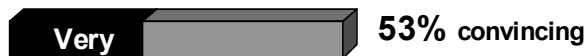
The UN Security Council has already passed a resolution saying that if Iraq does not cooperate with the disarmament process, it will face severe consequences. Clearly Iraq is not cooperating with the disarmament process, and thus the US already has adequate UN authorization to proceed with military action against Iraq.



The threat to the US from Iraq is so great that it cannot let the UN Security Council prevent it from exercising its legitimate right of self-defense.



If the US shows leadership by deciding to take military action even without further UN approval, many other nations will ultimately follow the US and most nations will realize that the US did the right thing.



Overthrowing the Iraqi government will create an opportunity for a transformation of the Middle East, making it more stable and democratic. The US cannot forgo this option simply because it cannot get enough votes on the UN Security Council.



*PIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

## Arguments against Military Action Without UN approval

If the US takes military action against Iraq without UN approval, this will increase hostility toward the US, especially in the Muslim world, and will increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks against the US.

**Very**

**79% convincing**

If countries were to feel that they could attack each other whenever they thought it was best, the world would soon fall into chaos and conflict. It is very important for the US to set a good example to other countries by getting UN approval for taking military action.

**Very**

**71% convincing**

In Europe as well as in other parts of the world, there have been rising anti-American feelings and criticism of the US as not being cooperative enough. If the US proceeds to take action in defiance of the other countries on the UN Security Council, it could seriously damage US relations with some of its most important allies and could weaken support for the war against terrorism.

**Very**

**70% convincing**

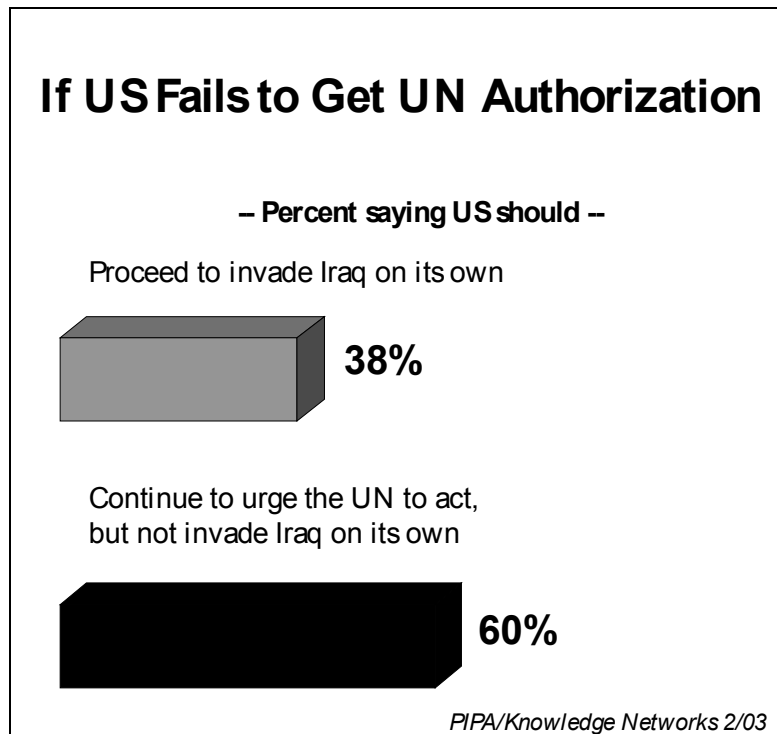
The US should not play the role of world policeman. If the US invades Iraq with UN approval it is more likely that other countries will participate and share the costs of occupying and rebuilding Iraq.

**Very**

**67% convincing**

*FIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

But in the final analysis, a majority does come down clearly on one side. After hearing these various arguments, respondents were finally asked, what the US should do if it “fails to get to UN Security Council authorization.” In this case 38% said the US should “proceed to invade Iraq on its own,” while 60% said it should “continue to urge the UN to act, but not invade Iraq on its own.”



Even when respondents were asked to imagine how they would feel after two months of continued inspections, only 43% favored taking action unilaterally. A different sample was asked to imagine six months of inspections; support for unilateral action rose just to 48%.

### Acting With Just Allied Support

As a number of key allies have expressed support for US action against Iraq and a possible willingness to even participate, this poses the question of how the public would react if the UN Security Council did not authorize an invasion, but these allies were nonetheless supportive. This question was posed in a variety of ways and elicited varying answers.

In several questions in which respondents were offered the choice of continuing inspections or invading with some allies, only a minority chose the latter. In one case respondents who initially said they favored the UN authorizing an invasion (52% of the sample) were then asked:

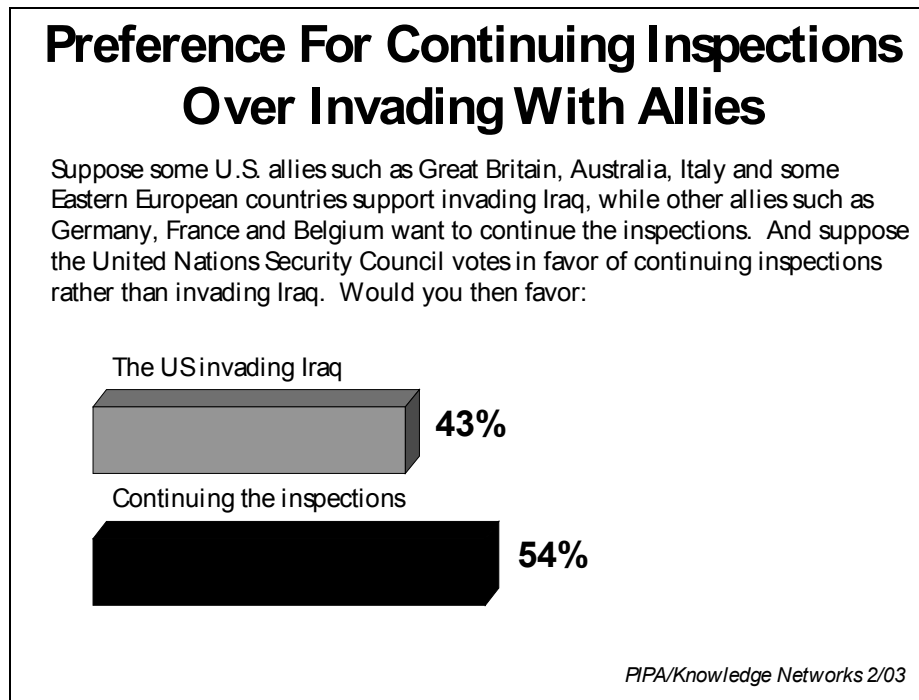
If the UN Security Council does not pass a new resolution authorizing the invasion of Iraq would you then favor the United States and *some other countries* invading Iraq anyway? (emphasis added)

Only 41% (of the whole sample) favored taking such action. Among respondents who were also first presented the series of arguments on whether the UN should continue

inspection or authorize invasion, only 37% favored proceeding with some other countries.

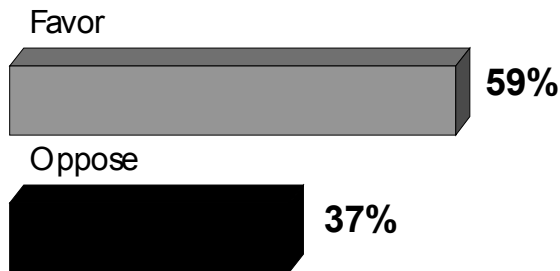
In a different question, respondents were presented a scenario in which the UN Security Council opts for continuing inspections, but some allies support invasion while other allies are opposed. In this case a majority of 54% favored continued inspections while 43% favored invasion (see below).

However, when a separate sample was asked essentially the same question *but the option of continued inspections was removed*, a majority did favor taking action with some allies—when no other action was proposed.



## Except When Inspections Option is Not Offered

Suppose the United Nations Security Council does not approve of the US invading Iraq, but some U.S. allies such as Great Britain, Australia, Italy and some Eastern European countries support it, while other allies such as Germany, France and Belgium oppose it. In that case would you favor or oppose the US invading Iraq?



*PIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

In another case, the 60% who had answered that the US should “continue to urge the UN to act, but not invade Iraq on its own” were asked, “What if several of America’s allies would be ready to join with the US, even though the UN Security Council did not approve of invading Iraq?” Given the prospect of several allies joining the US, 24% of this group (14% of the full sample) said they would then be willing to support an invasion, raising the total accepting action without UN approval to 52%. However, here again, the option of continuing inspections was not offered.

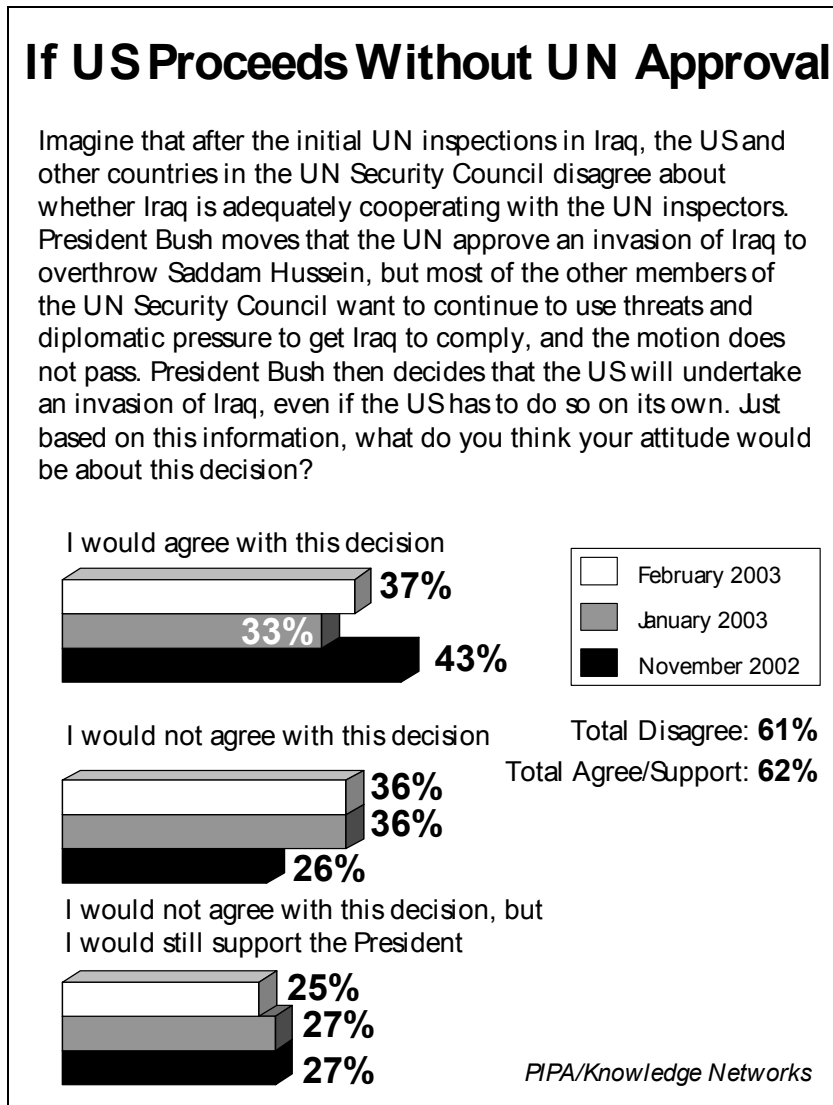
It is hard to determine how significant these findings are because, in fact, the option of inspections will always be on the table. However, they do suggest that a majority of Americans do not have a hard and fast rule that says that it is absolutely necessary to get UN approval for military action, and that with enough allied support they may be willing to make an exception. At the same time, these findings suggest that as long as inspections continue to be an option, it will be hard for a majority to override their natural inclination to wait for UN approval.

### **If the President Proceeds Without UN Approval**

Another key question is how the public is likely to respond if the President would proceed with military action without UN approval. A majority continues to say that it would support the President (62% in this poll) but an equally large majority (61%) says that it would not agree with the decision.

Respondents were asked to consider a scenario in which the US and other countries of the UN Security Council disagree about whether the Iraq is adequately cooperating with the UN inspectors and President Bush ultimately decides for the US to proceed with an

invasion of Iraq without UN approval. Respondents were given the option to express whether they would support the President as well as whether they would agree with the decision. Only 37% said they would agree with this decision. A clear majority of 61% said they would disagree, but 25% said they would nonetheless support the President. Combining those who said they would agree with the decision and those who said they would not agree but would support the President, a substantial majority of 62% said they would support the President.



Naturally, one must take such findings with a grain of salt. Respondents are not always good at predicting their responses to events, and actual events would have many more specific variables than can be spelled out in a poll question. Past experience does suggest, though, that it is likely that if the President proceeded he would get a “rally round the President” effect, as suggested by the response to the imagined scenario. Past experience also suggests that if the operation is successful, this support is likely to be

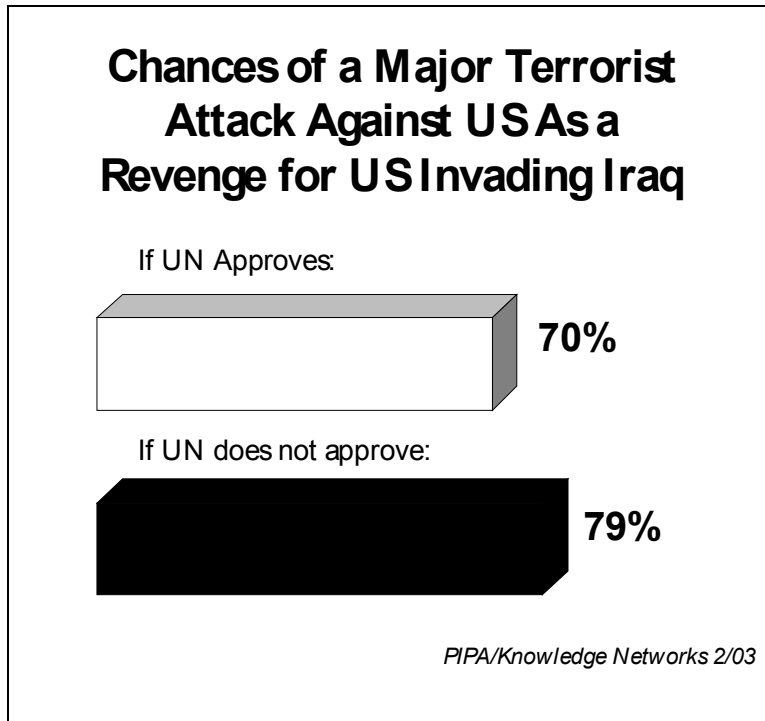


sustained. At the same time, because much of this support is reluctant, it would likely be highly sensitive to any lack of success over time.

***Probability of Major Terrorist Attack Seen as High***

**Asked to estimate the probability of a major terrorist attack in response to a US invasion of Iraq, the average respondent gave an estimate of 70%, rising to 79% if the US attacks without UN approval.**

Americans show a sharply pessimistic view of the prospect of a terrorist attack against the US as response to a US invasion of Iraq. If the UN approves of the action, the median estimate for such an attack is 70%. If the UN does not approve, the estimate rises to 79%.



***Estimates of War***

**The median respondent estimated that a war with Iraq will last six months, will result in 1,000 US troop fatalities and will require that the US remain in Iraq for about 3 years.**

Americans estimate that a war with Iraq would be substantially more demanding than the 1991 Gulf War in terms of length, numbers of fatalities and the need to keep troops based there after the war.

## Estimates of War

About how long do you imagine a war with Iraq would last?

**Median Estimate: 6 months**

About how many American soldiers do you imagine would die in a war with Iraq?

**Median Estimate: 1,000**

How long do you think the US would have to keep troops in Iraq after the war?

**Median Estimate: 3 Years**

*FIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

### *Postwar Reconstruction*

**If the US were to invade Iraq successfully, an overwhelming majority says that the US would have the responsibility to remain in Iraq until there is a stable government. A strong majority says that it is important to bring democracy to Iraq, though this will require US troops remaining there for three to five years.**

Americans seem to feel that if the US invades Iraq successfully, it will have the responsibility to undertake major efforts to stabilize the country and to try to make it democratic. An overwhelming 86% says the US would “have the responsibility to remain in Iraq as long as necessary until there is a stable government.”

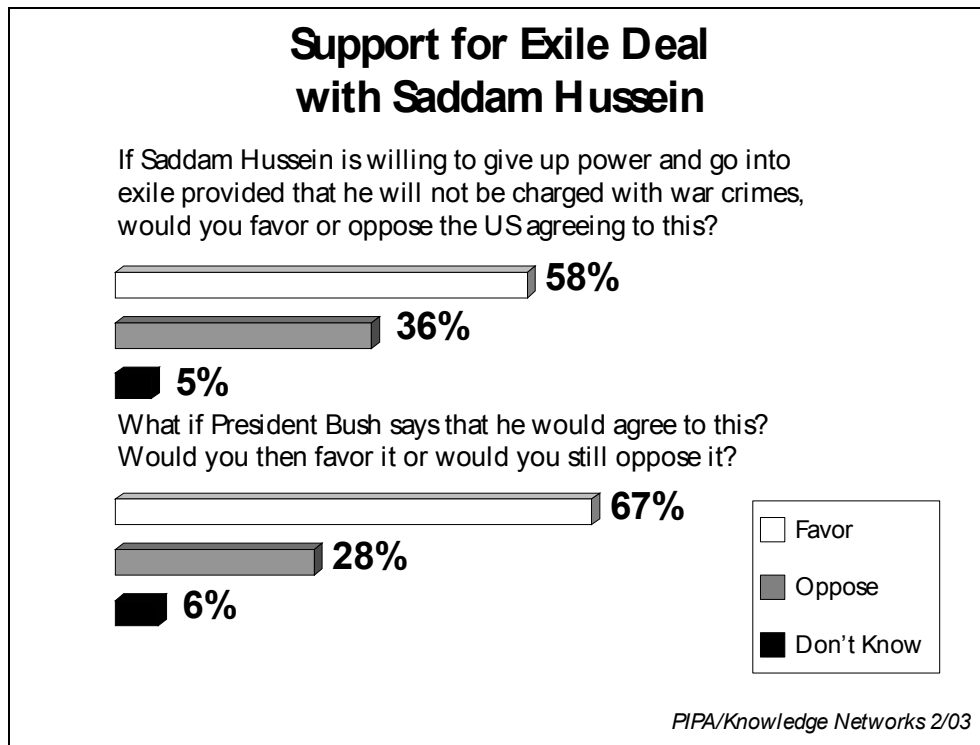
Nearly as many—74%--believe it is somewhat (38%) or very (36%) important to “bring democracy to Iraq.” This is a bit more than the 68% who think this goal is somewhat (29%) or very (39%) important to the Bush administration.

This support is high, even though 53% estimated that bringing democracy to Iraq would require US troops to remain in Iraq for three to five years or more.

### ***Support for Exile Deal With Saddam Hussein***

**A large majority thinks the US should be willing to agree to a deal that entails Saddam Hussein giving up power in exchange for not being charged with war crimes.**

A substantial majority (58%) would favor making a deal with Saddam Hussein that allows him to go into exile. This number rises to 67% if the President endorses it.



### ***Link Between Iraq and Al-Qaeda***

**A modest majority thinks Iraq has given support to al-Qaeda, but only one in five believe that it was directly involved in 9/11.**

Despite the intensive efforts by the administration showing evidence of links between Iraq and al-Qaeda, only a modest majority of 56% said that they are convinced that Iraq has given substantial support to al-Qaeda or was involved in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Twenty-nine percent only believed that a few al-Qaeda individuals have visited Iraq or had contact with Iraqi officials, while another 7% said there is no connection at all.

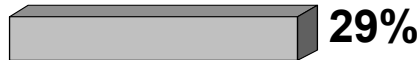
## Link Between Iraq and Al-Qaeda

Please select what you think is the best description of the relationship between the Iraqi government and the terrorist group al-Qaeda.

there is no connection at all



a few al-Qaeda individuals have visited Iraq or had contact with Iraqi officials



Iraq has given substantial support to al-Qaeda, but was not involved in the September 11th attacks



Iraq was directly involved in carrying out the September 11th attacks.



*PIPA/Knowledge Networks 2/03*

Other polls have found higher percentages affirming Iraq's involvement in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. However, these polls did not offer respondents the fine-grained options that allow them to clarify the nature of the link. Thus it appears that some may have been expressing their belief in some kind of link, rather than an actual involvement in the September 11 attacks.

## METHODOLOGY

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Menlo Park, California, with a randomly selected sample of its large-scale nationwide research panel. This panel is itself randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access). The distribution of the sample in the web-enabled panel closely tracks the distribution of United States Census counts for the US population on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, geographical region, employment status, income, education, etc.

The panel is recruited using stratified random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone sampling. RDD provides a non-zero probability of selection for every US household having a telephone. Households that agree to participate in the panel are provided with free Web access and an Internet appliance, which uses a telephone line to connect to the Internet and uses the television as a monitor. In return, panel members participate in surveys three to four times a month. Survey responses are confidential, with identifying

information never revealed without respondent approval. When a survey is fielded to a panel member, he or she receives an e-mail indicating that the survey is available for completion. Surveys are self-administered.

For more information about the methodology, please go to:  
[www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).