

Should New Zealand send SAS troops to Afghanistan?

The government is due to make a decision about whether New Zealand should send SAS soldiers to Afghanistan, and if so, what role they should play. ONE News commissioned a Research New Zealand poll on the subject and broadcast the results in the 6 pm news bulletin on July 28th.

These following are the results of the poll, which was based on a nationally representative sample of n=500 adult New Zealanders, aged 18 years and over. The results have been weighted by age and gender to ensure the total sample is representative of the New Zealand adult population. Interviews were conducted by telephone, between 6 and 9 July 2009. Results based on the total sample are subject to a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level).

Sending NZ Troops to Afghanistan

Respondents were told that: "New Zealand has 140 troops working on reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. They were due to return to New Zealand in September 2009. The Government has decided to extend their tour of duty by one year until September 2010."

They were then asked the following question: "Do you agree or disagree with this extension."

- ◆ Sixty one percent of respondents agreed with the Government's decision to extend our troops' tour of duty in Afghanistan until September 2010. One-in-four (26 percent) disagreed with the extension, while the remainder (13 percent) were unsure.
- ◆ The following sub-groups of the population were significantly more likely to agree with the decision to extend the tour of duty:
 - ◆ Males (72 percent, compared to 50 percent of females).
 - ◆ Those in the older age groups (for example, 70 percent of those aged 55 to 64 years agreed with the extension, compared to 45 percent of those aged 18 to 24 years).



Respondents were then informed that: "New Zealand has had up to 65 SAS (Special Air Service) soldiers in Afghanistan in the past. Currently we do not have any SAS soldiers in Afghanistan. The United States has asked the New Zealand government to send a contingent of SAS soldiers back to Afghanistan. It is expected to make a decision next month."

And asked the following question: "Are you in favour or not in favour of us sending SAS soldiers to Afghanistan?"

- ◆ Respondents were divided in their opinions as to whether or not NZ should comply with the United States' suggestion that we send a contingent of SAS soldiers back to Afghanistan. Forty seven percent were in favour, 44 percent were not in favour, and the remaining nine percent were unsure.
- ◆ The following sub-groups of the population were significantly more likely to be in favour of us sending a contingent of SAS soldiers to Afghanistan:
 - ◆ Males (61 percent, compared to 34 percent of females).
 - ◆ Those aged 35-44 years (58 percent, compared to 33 percent of 18 to 24 year olds).

Those who were in favour of the New Zealand Government sending SAS soldiers to Afghanistan were asked the following question: "SAS soldiers are likely to be involved in combat if they are sent. Does that change your view of the despatch of New Zealand SAS soldiers to Afghanistan?"

- ◆ For the majority of those in favour of sending SAS soldiers to Afghanistan, the fact that they are likely to be involved in combat if they do go, did little to change their views on the matter (84 percent of whom were still in favour).
 - ◆ There were no significant differences in this regard when the results were examined by gender or by age.



Table 1:

New Zealand has 140 troops working on reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. They were due to return to New Zealand in September 2009. The government has decided to extend their tour of duty by one year until September 2010. Do you agree or disagree with this extension?

	Base =	Total	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
		500	50	85	87	95	83	100
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree		61	45	58	57	61	70	69
Disagree		26	36	26	27	30	18	19
Don't know		13	18	16	16	8	12	12
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2:

New Zealand has 140 troops working on reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. They were due to return to New Zealand in September 2009. The government has decided to extend their tour of duty by one year until September 2010. Do you agree or disagree with this extension?

	Base =	Total	Male	Female
		500	253	247
		%	%	%
Agree		61	72	50
Disagree		26	18	34
Don't know		13	10	16
Total		100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 3:

The United States has asked NZ to send a contingent of SAS soldiers back to Afghanistan. Are you in favour or not in favour of us sending SAS soldiers to Afghanistan?

	Base =	Total	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
		500	50	85	87	95	83	100
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
In favour		47	33	42	58	50	48	46
Not in favour		44	57	44	37	40	47	47
Don't know		9	10	14	5	10	5	7
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4:

The United States has asked NZ to send a contingent of SAS soldiers back to Afghanistan. Are you in favour or not in favour of us sending SAS soldiers to Afghanistan?

	Base =	Total	Male	Female
		500	253	247
		%	%	%
In favour		47	61	34
Not in favour		44	31	57
Don't know		9	8	9
Total		100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 5:

The SAS soldiers are likely to be involved in combat if they are sent. Does that change your view of the despatch of New Zealand SAS soldiers to Afghanistan?

	Sub-sample
Base =	240
	%
Yes	13
No	84
Don't know	2
Total	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Sub-sample based on those are in favour of NZ sending SAS soldiers to Afghanistan.