

THE HARRIS SURVEY

42% of Public Disapproves Viet Invasion of Laos

By Louis Harris

By a narrow 42 to 39 percent, the American people disapprove of the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos with U.S. air support to cut off North Vietnamese supply routes into South Vietnam and Cambodia. The public is split down the middle—41-41 percent—on the sending of South Vietnamese troops into Cambodia with American air support.

The main worry of the public, expressed by 41 percent, is that the stepped-up fighting in Laos will delay withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

For the first time in over a year, a plurality, 46 percent, now feels withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam is "too slow." In January, only 33 percent felt withdrawal from Vietnam should be accelerated.

Public pressure to get out of Indochina can be gauged by the fact that by a margin of 51 to 33 percent, a majority of Americans would favor a Congressional resolution making it mandatory all U.S. troops be withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of 1971.

From February 22nd to 27th, a national cross section of 1620 households was asked.

"South Vietnamese troops have entered Laos with American air support to try to cut off North Vietnamese supply lines into South Vietnam. The Administration favors this move as a means of protecting the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Others disagree and say the move will widen the war in Indochina. Do you approve or disapprove of the South Vietnamese move into Laos with U.S. air support?"

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure
Nationwide	39%	42%	19%
By Region			
East	35	49	16
Midwest	41	44	15
South	39	32	29
West	41	47	12
By Size of Place			
Cities	34	48	18
Suburbs	38	44	18
Towns	44	41	15
Rural	42	37	21
By Age			
Under 30	35	54	11
31-49	42	41	17
50 and over	39	36	25

The cross section was asked:

"Do you feel the stepped-up fighting in Laos will delay withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, will speed up withdrawal, or will not affect the rate of withdrawal?"

	Total Public
Will delay troop withdrawal	41%
Will speed it up	15
Not affect rate of withdrawal	25
Not Sure	19

The cross section was asked in late February, as a comparable cross section had been asked in mid-January:

"Do you feel the pace of withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam is too slow, too fast, or about right?"

	February	January
Too slow	46%	33%
Too fast	4	5
About right	42	55
Not Sure	8	7

The clear shift of roughly one person in eight in the country over the past month has been from belief that President Nixon's rate of troop withdrawal was satisfactory to a current view it is lagging and should be speeded up. The obvious worry of this public is that the new fighting in Laos may not turn out successfully and that a changed military situation will pin down U.S. troops in Vietnam for an extended period of time.

The cross section was asked:

"Would you favor or oppose a Congressional resolution requiring all U.S. troops be withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of 1971?"

	Total Public
Favor total withdrawal	51%
Oppose	36
Not Sure	13

Just after U.S. troops entered Cambodia last May, the prevailing public view was that the incursion would lengthen rather than shorten the war. However, when American troops were withdrawn from Cambodia by the end of June, the public reversed itself and gave belated approval to Nixon's strategy.

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