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Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute's Inaugural National Defense Survey Shows Partisan Divide Over Security Issues

SIMI VALLEY, California — The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute today released the results of its inaugural National Defense Survey. The survey reveals that the deep political and social polarization characterizing American civic life today is reflected in Americans' views of national security and the military.

“In recent years, politicians and policy professionals who focus on national defense have expressed a need for more information about public perception of defense issues,” said Roger Zakheim, Washington director of the Reagan Institute. “While many surveys assess public opinion of domestic policies, few delve deeply into key national security issues. The Reagan Institute’s National Defense Survey addresses that gap and allows the security community to both gauge public opinion on critical issues and create a baseline against which to track shifts in opinion going forward.”

The survey, which will be conducted annually in conjunction with the Reagan National Defense Forum, found that while the military continues to be one of the few institutions enjoying the overwhelming confidence of the American public, Americans are divided over a number of key areas related to national defense. These include:

- **Support for NATO** – The historic military alliance established to protect western democracies from the Soviet military threat during the Cold War has traditionally enjoyed broad public support particularly among conservatives. In the modern day, however, NATO enjoys far more support from Democrats than Republicans.
- **Defense spending** – Americans are divided by party on the question of increasing the defense budget. Republicans supporting increased defense spending vastly outnumber similar minded Democrats.
- **Space Force** – President Trump’s proposal to create a new U.S. Space Force lacks broad public support. Americans are split down the middle on the idea, with Republicans favoring the idea over Democrats by 2:1.
- **War in Iraq and Afghanistan** – Seventeen years after the introduction of American forces into Afghanistan and fifteen years following the invasion of Iraq, half of the American people view U.S. actions there as failures. Over two-thirds of the public believe Iraq is an enemy rather than a friend.

- **Border security** – Less than one-third of the American people believe a border wall would have a substantially positive effect on U.S. security. Meanwhile, there is a near universal view among Republicans that illegal immigration is a threat to America.

The survey also reveals a substantial gap between administration policies and large segments of the American population on key national security issues. These include:

- **View of Saudi Arabia** – Despite years of partnership and common strategic interests between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, more than half of America views Saudi Arabia as an enemy.
- **View of North Korea** – Notwithstanding intense diplomatic efforts to negotiate with North Korea, it is viewed as America’s greatest nation-state threat, with nearly 90 percent of Americans viewing the regime as an enemy.
- **Russia** – By a margin of ten to one, Democrats are more concerned than Republicans over Russian interference with U.S. elections. In a turnabout from the Cold War, Democrats outnumber Republicans by a three to one margin when it comes to viewing Russia as a threat.
- **China** – Despite China’s growing military presence, its theft of American intellectual property and the present trade war, nearly 40 percent of Americans view the nation as an ally.
- **Cybersecurity** – Americans are more concerned about cyber attacks on their personal computers and the grid than any other threat, including terrorist attacks at home.

The National Defense Survey was conducted November 11-14 by a bipartisan survey team of Anderson Robbins Research and Shaw & Company Research. It is based on interviews of more than 1,200 adult citizens.

For more information about the survey, including an executive summary and additional data, is available [here](#).

To watch a live stream of RNDF and panel discussions about the poll, please visit [here](#).

The annual Reagan National Defense Forum is North America’s premier gathering for defense and national security experts. Each year, the forum brings together hundreds of leaders and key stakeholders in the defense community—including members of Congress, civilian officials and military leaders from the Defense Department and industry—to address the state of our national defense and threats to our national security.

The 2018 Forum is being held on November 30 and December 1 at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.

For more information, visit www.rndf.org or follow RNDF on Twitter at [@ReaganDefense](https://twitter.com/ReaganDefense).

About the Reagan Foundation and Institute:

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute is the nonprofit organization created by President Reagan himself and specifically charged by him with continuing his legacy and sharing his principles - individual liberty, economic opportunity, global democracy and national pride. The Foundation is a non-partisan organization which sustains the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, CA, the Reagan Center for Public Affairs, the Presidential Learning Center, The Air Force One Pavilion and the award-winning Discovery Center, as well as the Reagan Institute in Washington, D.C. The Reagan Library houses over 55 million pages of Gubernatorial, Presidential and personal papers and over 60,000 gifts and artifacts chronicling the lives of Ronald

and Nancy Reagan. It also serves as the final resting place of America's 40th President and his First Lady. www.reaganfoundation.org

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