



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Support for increased U.S. defense spending and security assistance to allies and friends remains strong, reveals 2023 Reagan National Defense Survey

Confidence in the U.S. military remains at record lows, while Americans support a global military posture and fear congressional cuts to defense spending will harm capabilities.

SIMI VALLEY, California — The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute today released the results of the sixth annual National Defense Survey. The national opinion poll showed Americans want the United States to increase its military spending and provide security assistance to Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan.

“Our survey shows that Americans remain resolved, like President Reagan was, to support those defending freedom around the world,” said Roger Zakheim, Director of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Institute. “In a time of increased global conflict, rather than backing away, Americans have shown their commitment to standing up against authoritarianism and bolstering U.S. global leadership. As Congress debates cutting defense spending, our leaders should consider the views of the American public, who expect our elected officials to strengthen America’s military and weaken our authoritarian adversaries.”

The survey reveals a disconnect between the American public, with 77 percent supporting increased military spending, and debates in Congress over defense cuts. A supermajority of Americans supports maintaining military bases around the world and fears budget cuts by Congress will threaten the military’s capabilities.

The 2023 survey also showed a majority of Americans view China as the country that poses the greatest threat to the United States but are overconfident about U.S. military capabilities compared to China. Americans have a strong belief in the superiority of U.S. air and naval forces, a belief that is out of step with many expert assessments.

A summary of the survey and the raw polling data are available online at www.reaganfoundation.org/defensesurvey.

Other key takeaways from the survey include:

- **Americans support increased military assistance to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan.** A strong, bipartisan majority supports the idea that America should help its allies and friends defend themselves if they are willing to fight aggression against their own countries. Support for Ukraine has remained consistent over the last three Reagan Institute surveys, despite the narrative about waning support for Ukraine.
- **Americans want a global military presence.** When asked to allocate U.S. military resources and attention globally, respondents gave roughly equal percentages to the Middle East, East Asia, and Europe, demonstrating that Americans generally recognize

which regions are U.S. strategic priorities. The diverse distribution, including resources throughout the world with no region ignored, reflects that Americans support a global military posture.

- **Republicans and Democrats are united in viewing China as the greatest threat to the United States.** More than half of Americans view China as the country that poses the greatest threat to the United States, up from 43 percent last year and just 21 percent in 2018. Americans' top concerns about China are its military build-up and human rights abuses.
- **Perceptions of American military superiority are overly confident.** Belief in the superiority of U.S. air and naval forces over China's is misaligned with expert assessments. On more cutting-edge technologies, Americans view China as having the upper hand, with 33 percent viewing China as having superiority in cyber, as opposed to only 24 percent reporting U.S. superiority.
- **Over half of Americans (52 percent) favor continued military spending on AI.** However, they are unsure about the military applications of AI: Only 20 percent of respondents deemed greater AI integration into the military a good idea, while 27 percent said it was a bad idea, and 49 percent considered it premature to form an opinion.
- **Confidence in the military remains at record lows.** Only 46 percent of Americans report a great deal of confidence in the U.S. military, a number that has plateaued after falling 25 points from 70 percent in 2018.
- **Public opinion of Ronald Reagan remains strong.** Two-thirds of Americans have a favorable view of Ronald Reagan, and his defense and foreign policy worldview continues to reflect the views of most Americans today. Ronald Reagan also remains the most popular recent former president, with 65 percent of Americans viewing him favorably.

The survey was conducted between October 27 and November 5, 2023, by a bipartisan research team at Beacon Research and Shaw & Company Research. It is based on 945 telephone interviews and 1,561 online surveys.

On Saturday, December 2, national security experts will discuss the survey results in a panel discussion at the Reagan National Defense Forum beginning at 7:15 am PT. Moderated by CNN's Brianna Keilar, "Asking Americans: Polling on U.S. Global Engagement Ahead of 2024," will feature Palantir Technologies' Dr. Alex Karp, AEI's Mr. Marc Thiessen, Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), and Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA).

[RSVP](#) to watch the session and additional RNDF programming virtually, live-streamed from the Reagan Library.

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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 advancing his legacy and principles of limited government, individual liberty, economic opportunity, freedom and

democracy, peace through strength, civility, 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, which carries out the Foundation's work 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