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National Journal

Poll: Americans Who Favor Withdrawing Troops Quickly at All-Time High

By Sara Sorcher

6/21/2011

Americans in record numbers favor withdrawing troops from Afghanistan "as quickly as possible," according to a Pew Research Center survey released a day before President Obama is slated to announce the number of troops he'll begin drawing down next month.

The percentage of Americans favoring withdrawal has hit an all-time high for Pew's regular surveys on this topic. It's the first time a majority of Americans surveyed—56 percent—say that the U.S. should bring home troops in Afghanistan as soon as possible. The number is up 8 percentage points since Pew's survey last month in the days after al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden was killed; then, 49 percent favored removing troops as soon as possible. Last June, only 40 percent of Americans favored immediate withdrawal.

In this current poll, based on a national sample of 1,502 adults, just 39 percent said that troops should remain in the country until the "situation has stabilized" or security conditions on the ground allow for a withdrawal.

As Washington buzzes with speculation over the size and scope of the initial drawdown of the [100,000 U.S. troops currently in Afghanistan](#), a senior Pentagon official [told National Journal](#) on Tuesday that he expects the president to endorse a "phased withdrawal" to bring one combat brigade, or about 5,000 troops, home over the summer and a second to begin leaving by the end of the year. Obama will also commit to bringing home the remaining 20,000 "surge" troops by the end of 2012, the official said.

In recent months, lawmakers in recent months have amplified their calls for Obama to start bringing the increasingly unpopular conflict to an end. A group of powerful Democrats -- making up nearly one-third of the Senate -- last week called for a “sizable and sustained reduction” of military personnel in Afghanistan. This shift is also evident in Obama’s Democratic base: 67 percent of Democrats said that troops should be removed as soon as possible. This is a sharp increase of 14 points since just last month, and up 24 points since last June.

Republican support for the war appears to be eroding as well: 43 percent of Republicans said they favor immediate troop withdrawal, up from 31 percent last June. In another big increase since last year, 57 percent of independents also support immediately withdrawing troops, up 15 percentage points.

The United States is slated to hand over security control of the country to Afghan forces in 2014. Even after a decade of war, 56 percent of Americans said it was either very unlikely or somewhat unlikely that the country would be able to maintain a stable government.