

# THE PIPA/KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS POLL

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

In Collaboration With the  
Advanced Methods of Cooperative Security Program, CISSM

## AMERICANS ON WMD PROLIFERATION

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**PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL  
POLICY ATTITUDES (PIPA)**

A joint program of the Center on Policy  
Attitudes and the Center for International and  
Security Studies at the University of Maryland



**Knowledge  
NETWORKS**

A polling, social science, and  
market research firm based in  
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**The Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA)** is an independent non-profit organization of social science researchers devoted to increasing understanding of public and elite attitudes shaping contemporary public policy. Using innovative research methods, COPA seeks not only to examine overt policy opinions or positions, but to reveal the underlying values, assumptions, and feelings that sustain opinions.

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## INTRODUCTION

Weapons of mass destruction are very much in the news these days. The war against Iraq was premised largely on the concern that Iraq already had a large and growing stockpile of unconventional weapons and would not be easily deterred from using them. Efforts to stop North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons are making little progress. The recent revelation that Pakistani scientists were illicitly selling nuclear weapons technology within a far-reaching black market has reduced confidence in existing efforts to contain proliferation.

These developments naturally raise questions about the health and viability of the international regime for containing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. While the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is still in place, some non-nuclear weapon states continue to be frustrated by the failure of the nuclear weapon states to move more rapidly toward nuclear disarmament. The US has come under particular fire for exploring the possible development of new types of nuclear weapons, refusing to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and implying that it might use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states if attacked with non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction—all steps seen as contrary to the overarching NPT goal of reducing the role of nuclear weapons. The US, however, argues that as long as nuclear weapons are part of the US arsenal they need to be improved, and implies that new threats of non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction require a reevaluation of constraints established during the Cold War.

Many of these issues are embedded in a larger debate about whether the US should primarily address the problem of proliferation through the use of military threats against potential proliferators, or through developing and strengthening a multilateral regime for preventing proliferation through arms control.

Typical of this debate is the current controversy surrounding the biological weapons treaty. At present this treaty does not have provisions for international inspectors to examine biological research laboratories to verify compliance with the treaty. There have been international efforts to increase the treaty's effectiveness by adding a verification and enforcement protocol, but the US opposes such a protocol on the basis that inspections of US laboratories could jeopardize US security and commercial interests without providing reliable protection against cheaters.

Other controversies in regard to nuclear weapons include the debate about whether the US and Russia should reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert, and the recent Bush administration proposal to have nuclear weapons under US-Russian arms reduction agreements be dismantled rather than destroyed, preserving the option of reconstituting them—a position opposed by the Russians. There are also the continuing debates about how large the US nuclear arsenal needs to be and whether the US should build a ballistic missile defense system.

Yet another debate is on the question of whether, in the course of the US undertaking research on defense measures against biological weapons, the US should develop test pathogens—that is, new infectious diseases--as an aid to developing antidotes in anticipation of hostile parties developing such pathogens as biological weapons.

To find out more about how the American public responds to these debates, the Program on International Policy Attitudes, in collaboration with CISSM’s Advanced Methods of Cooperative Security Program, conducted a nationwide poll of 1,311 Americans from March 16-22. The margin of error was plus or minus 2.8%-4.5%, depending on whether the question was administered to all or part of the sample. The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).

Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Ford Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Key findings of the study were:

**1. Concern for Proliferation of WMD**

The public continues to show high levels of concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A majority believes that 10 or more countries have secret programs for developing weapons of mass destruction. A very large majority continues to say that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons should be a very important US foreign policy goal. In dealings with Pakistan, preventing the proliferation of WMD is given a higher priority than the hunt for al Qaeda.....3

**2. Preference for Approach Based on Multilateral Arms Control**

To approach the problem of proliferation, Americans show a strong preference for multilateral arms control over the use of military threats. This is consistent with a broad and growing emphasis on multilateral cooperation in US foreign policy. A very large majority believes that the recent discovery that Pakistani scientists have dispersed nuclear weapons technology points to the need for enhanced arms control efforts. Support for international treaties banning chemical and biological weapons is near-unanimous. Broadly, rejection of the idea that the US should go its own way in international matters is at an all-time high. Support for increased defense spending has slipped to its lowest point in over a decade. ....5

**3. Strengthening the Biological Weapons Treaty**

A very large majority supports giving international inspectors the power to examine biological research laboratories in all countries, including the US, to determine if they are abiding by the biological weapons treaty. Three-quarters incorrectly believe that the US government supports such an inspection regime. ....8

**4. *The NPT and the Goal of Eliminating Nuclear Weapons***

A majority is not aware that the US made a commitment to seek the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons as part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, a very large majority thinks doing so was a good idea and that the US should make greater efforts toward that goal. Even without this information, a large majority favors pursuing the goal of elimination of nuclear weapons, though two-thirds believe this is not the goal of the Bush administration. ....9

**5. *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty***

Americans overwhelmingly and consistently support US participation in the treaty banning all nuclear explosions, even when presented arguments for and against participation. A majority incorrectly assumes that the US is already a member of the treaty. ....11

**6. *Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons***

Americans favor reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US security policy. A majority favors the US reaffirming its commitment not to use nuclear weapons against countries that do not have nuclear weapons, as a way of encouraging them not to acquire or build nuclear weapons. Despite heightened concerns about a chemical or biological attack, most oppose seeking to deter such an attack by threatening nuclear retaliation and generally oppose the US ever using nuclear weapons first. An overwhelming majority supports an international agreement to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert. Majorities say it is not necessary for the US to develop new types of nuclear weapons, including small nuclear weapons. ....12

**7. *Reducing the Number of Nuclear Weapons***

Americans favor deep cuts in the number of weapons in the US nuclear arsenal, even while grossly underestimating the actual number. Most oppose the idea of dismantling, rather than destroying, nuclear weapons that come under US-Russian arms reduction agreements. ....18

**8. *Biodefense Research***

A large majority opposes the idea of the US inventing new infectious diseases so as to develop countermeasures, in anticipation of hostile groups or countries inventing such disease agents to be used as biological weapons. ....19

**9. *Weapons in Space and Missile Defense***

A large majority favors a new treaty banning weapons in space. Only a small minority favors deployment of a ballistic missile defense system, but a large majority favors continued research. ....20

## FINDINGS

### *1. Concern for Proliferation of WMD*

The public continues to show high levels of concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A majority believes that 10 or more countries have secret programs for developing weapons of mass destruction. A very large majority continues to say that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons should be a very important US foreign policy goal. In dealings with Pakistan, preventing the proliferation of WMD is given a higher priority than the hunt for al Qaeda.

Despite recent successes in Pakistan, Libya and Iran in the effort to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, Americans have not grown sanguine. Asked to estimate the number of countries that have “secret programs for developing weapons of mass destruction,” the median estimate was ten.

<p><b>Perceived Number of WMD Proliferators</b></p> <p><i>How many countries in the world do you think have secret programs for developing weapons of mass destruction?</i></p> <p>Median estimate: <b>10 countries</b></p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">PIPA/KN 3/04</p>	<p>An overwhelming majority (84%) continues to say that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is a “very important” foreign policy goal of the US—essentially unchanged from the 90% who answered this way in the July 2002 poll by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. An additional 13% said it is a somewhat important foreign policy goal, 1% said it is not very important and another 1% said it is not at all important. These responses are not significantly different from when CCFR asked this question before the September 11 attacks—in both 1994 and 1998, 82% said this goal was “very important.”</p>
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Perhaps most striking, when presented a question that posed a tradeoff between pursuing the goal of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through an inspections process and pursuing the goal of capturing members of al Qaeda, the former was given a higher priority by a two-to-one margin. Respondents were given a description of the current situation in Pakistan with the following introduction:

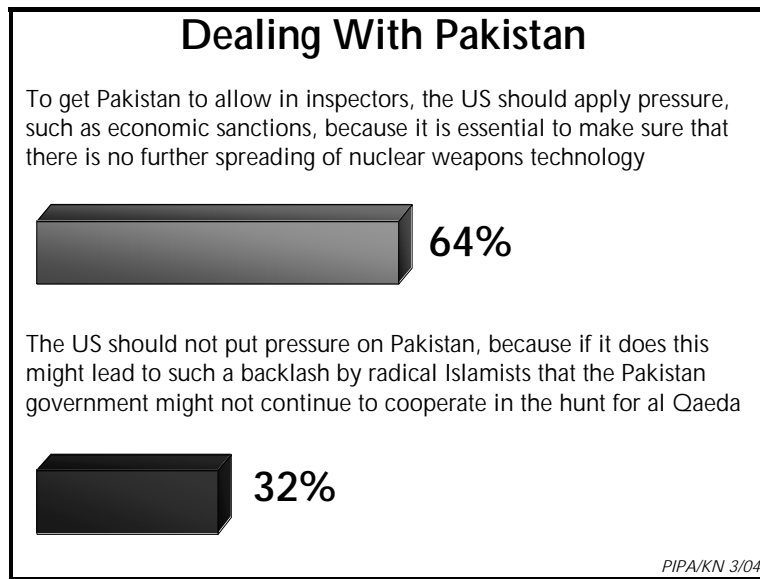
As you may know, it was recently discovered that scientists in Pakistan were illicitly selling nuclear weapons technology to Iran, North Korean and Libya. The Pakistan government has arrested the leading scientist and he has apologized. However, Pakistan has refused to allow international inspectors to monitor its nuclear weapons program to make sure that this does not happen again.

They were then asked to choose between two policy options:

To get Pakistan to allow in inspectors, the US should apply pressure, such as economic sanctions, because it is essential to make sure that there is no further spreading of nuclear weapons technology.

The US should not put pressure on Pakistan, because if it does this might lead to such a backlash by radical Islamists that the Pakistan government might not continue to cooperate in the hunt for al Qaeda.

Sixty-four percent chose the first option giving priority to preventing proliferation, while 32% chose the second option of pursuing al Qaeda.

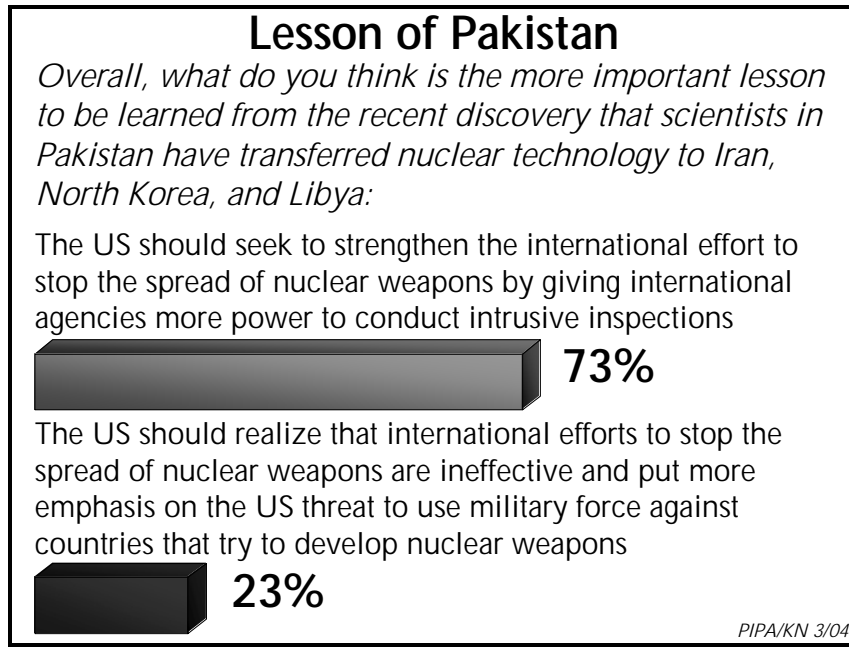


## ***2. Preference for Approach Based on Multilateral Arms Control***

**To approach the problem of proliferation, Americans show a strong preference for multilateral arms control over the use of military threats. This is consistent with a broad and growing emphasis on multilateral cooperation in US foreign policy. A very large majority believes that the recent discovery that Pakistani scientists have dispersed nuclear weapons technology points to the need for enhanced arms control efforts. Support for international treaties banning chemical and biological weapons is near- unanimous. Broadly, rejection of the idea that the US should go its own way in international matters is at an all-time high. Support for increased defense spending has slipped to its lowest point in over a decade.**

Americans show a very clear preference for how they want the US to approach the problem of proliferation of WMD. Respondents were asked what they thought was “the more important lesson to be learned from the recent discovery that scientists in Pakistan have transferred nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea, and Libya.” A

very large majority of 73% chose the position that the key lesson was the need to enhance arms control efforts: “the US should seek to strengthen the international effort to stop the spread of nuclear weapons by giving international agencies more power to conduct intrusive inspections.” Just 23% chose the position that said the US should realize such efforts are ineffective and “put more emphasis on the US threat to use military force against countries that try to develop nuclear weapons.” Also, as mentioned above, support for putting pressure on Pakistan to allow in international arms control inspectors was given a higher priority than maintaining Pakistan’s cooperation in the hunt for al Qaeda.



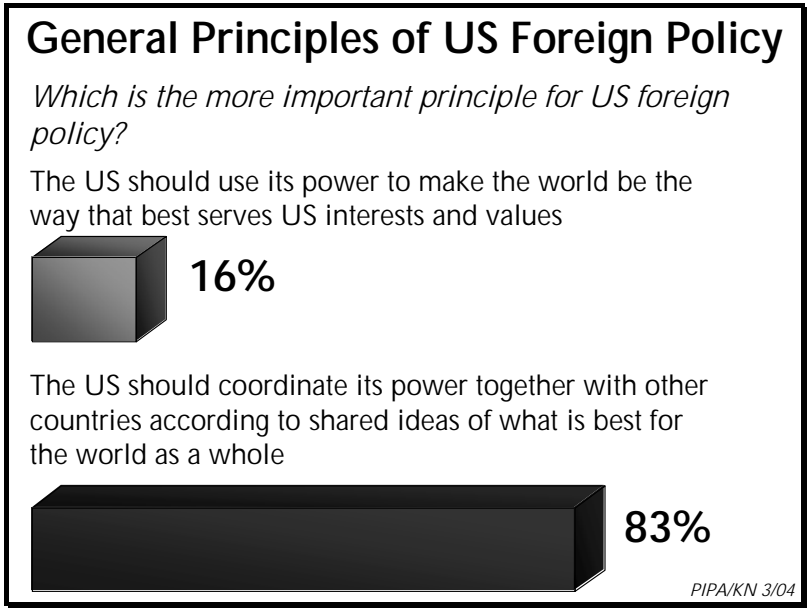
Support for international treaties to prevent proliferation of WMD is nearly unanimous. Ninety-one percent said that the US should participate in the “treaty that bans all chemical weapons,” and the same number favored participation in “the treaty that bans all biological weapons.”—the US does in fact participate in these two treaties.

More broadly, Americans show a strong and growing preference for a multilateral approach to US security interests. Asked whether they agree with the statement “Since the US is the most powerful nation in the world, we should go our own way in international matters, not worrying too much about whether other countries agree with us or not,” 79% said they disagreed. This is the highest number that has ever disagreed with this question, going back to 1964.

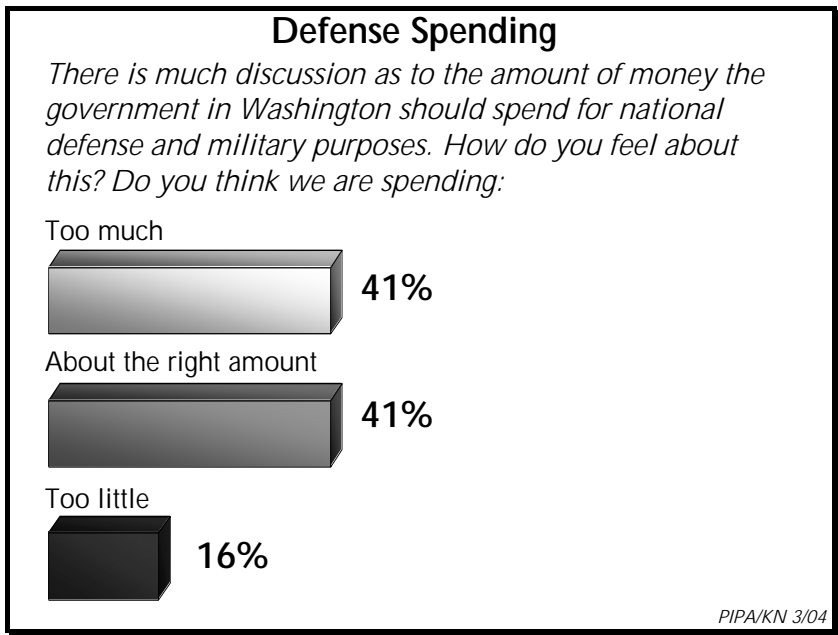
Asked to choose between two statements characterizing broad policy orientations, only 16% chose the one that said, “The US should use its power to make the world be the way that best serves US interests and values.” Rather, 83% chose the one that



said, “The US should coordinate its power together with other countries according to shared ideas of what is best for the world as a whole.”



Consistent with the aforementioned support for deemphasizing the role of military threats in dealing with the threat of proliferation, support for increased defense spending has slipped to its lowest point in a decade. Just 16% said the US spends too little on defense, while 41% say it spends too much and 41% say the present level is about right. The last time the percentage saying the US spends too little has been so low was in January 1992 (NBC/Wall Street Journal).

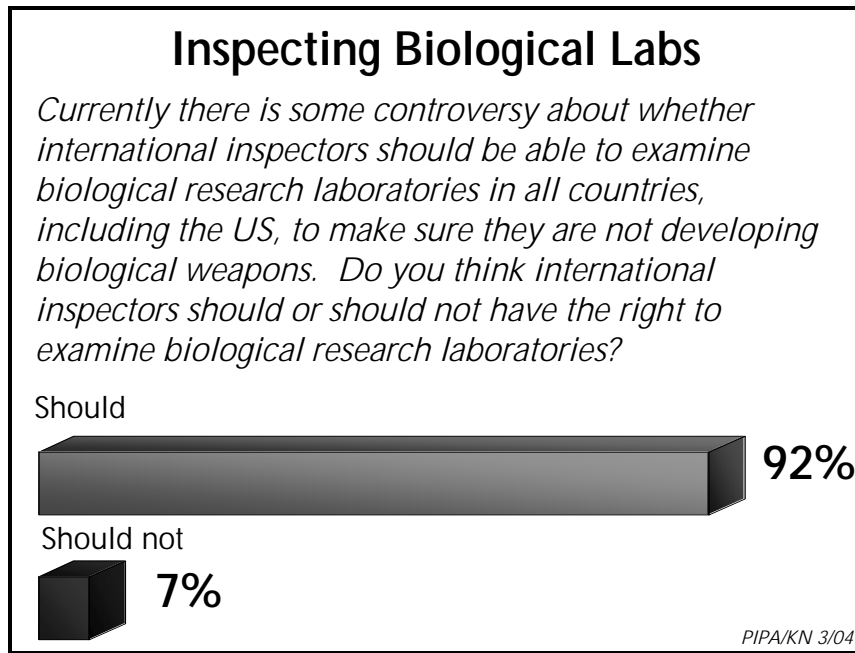


**3. Strengthening the Biological Weapons Treaty**

**A very large majority supports giving international inspectors the power to examine biological research laboratories in all countries, including the US, to determine if they are abiding by the biological weapons treaty. Three-quarters incorrectly believe that the US government supports such an inspection regime.**

As mentioned above, 91% support US participation in the “the treaty that bans all biological weapons.” Most (68%) also assume, correctly, that the US does participate in this treaty.

A highly controversial issue is whether, as part of the treaty, international inspectors should be given the right to examine biological research laboratories to verify compliance with the treaty—something the US opposes. A portion of the sample was told “Currently there is some controversy about whether international inspectors should be able to examine biological research laboratories in all countries, including the US, to make sure they are not developing biological weapons.” A near unanimous 92% said “international inspectors should have the right to examine biological research laboratories (should not: 7%).



To determine how Americans might respond if they heard more of the arguments on this issue, a different part of the sample underwent a different process. Respondents received the same introduction as in the question above, and were also presented two arguments. One opposed inspections, saying: “If international inspectors can look into US biological research laboratories they may get information that they can use for their country’s advantage in commercial biotechnology and biodefense.” The counterargument presented ran: “Since countries like Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China have signed the treaty, it would certainly be important for US security to be

able to inspect their laboratories to seek to make sure they are not developing biological weapons.” After reading these arguments, they were asked their position. In this case a lesser, but still large, majority of 76% concluded in favor of inspections, with 20% opposed.

Most respondents mistakenly assume that the US favors such inspections. The sample that received the question without arguments (discussed above) were asked if it was their impression that the US favors or opposes “giving international inspectors the right to examine biological research laboratories in all countries, including the US, to make sure they are not developing biological weapons.” Three-quarters (74%) mistakenly believed that the US supports establishing such inspections; only 23% correctly said that the US was opposed.

#### ***4. The NPT and the Goal of Eliminating Nuclear Weapons***

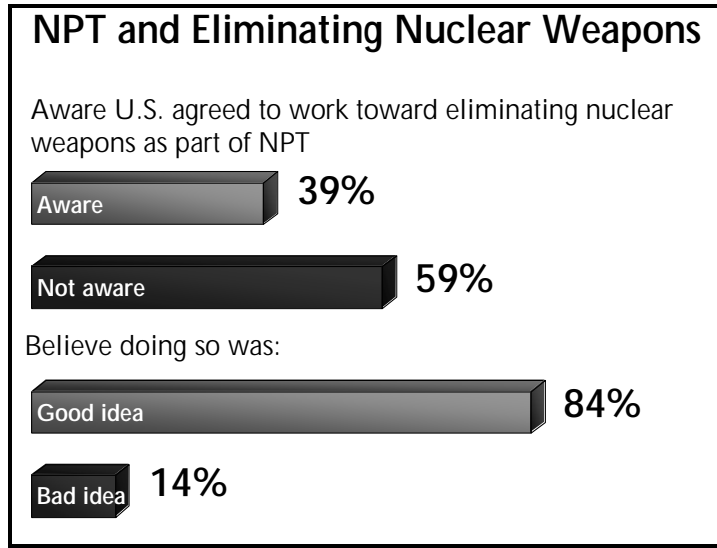
**A majority is not aware that the US made a commitment to seek the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons as part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, a very large majority thinks doing so was a good idea and that the US should make greater efforts toward that goal. Even without this information, a large majority favors pursuing the goal of elimination of nuclear weapons, though two-thirds believe this is not the goal of the Bush administration.**

A majority of respondents were not aware that the US made a commitment to seek the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. One portion of the sample was given the following information about the commitments the US made as part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty:

As you may know, the US and most of the world’s countries have signed a treaty called the Non-Proliferation Treaty. According to this treaty, the countries of the world that do not have nuclear weapons have agreed not to try to acquire them. In exchange, the countries that have nuclear weapons, including the US, have agreed to actively work together toward eliminating their nuclear weapons.

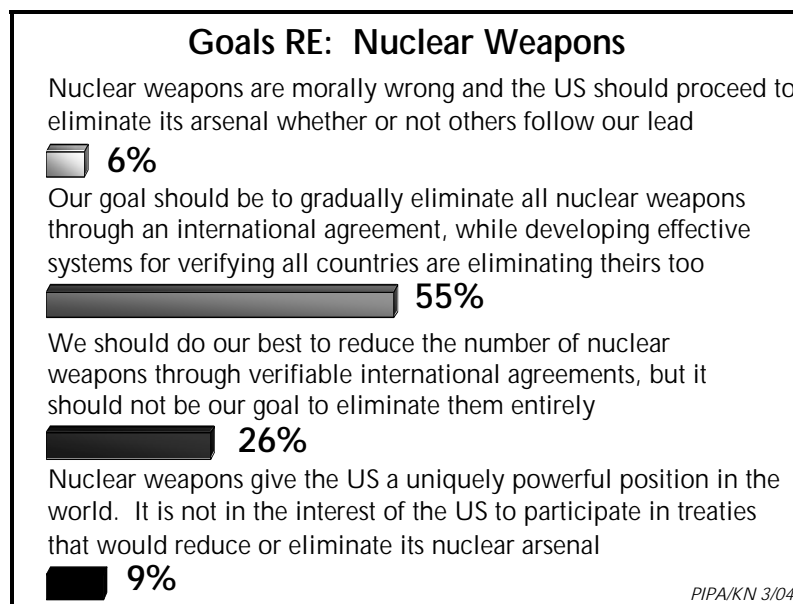
They were then asked, “Were you aware or not aware that the US has agreed to do this?” Only 39% said that they were aware, while 59% said they were not.

However, an overwhelming majority approved of the US making such a commitment. Respondents were then asked, “Do you think it was a good idea or a bad idea for the US to agree to work toward eliminating nuclear weapons as part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty?” Eighty-four percent said that it was a good idea, while just 14% said it was a bad idea. An even higher 86% said the “US should... do more to work with the other nuclear powers toward eliminating their nuclear weapons.”



### General Support for the Goal of Elimination

Even without the information that there was a quid pro quo as part of the NPT treaty, a majority (albeit a smaller one) favors the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. A part of the sample that had not heard about the NPT treaty was presented a fine-grained set of positions on nuclear weapons. As shown below, the majority (55%) chose the goal to “gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons through an international agreement, while developing effective systems for verifying all countries are eliminating theirs too.” An additional 6% chose the option of eliminating nuclear weapons irrespective of what others do. Thus 61% favored the goal of elimination. A combined total of 35% took positions opposed to the goal of elimination. This consisted of 26% favoring reductions but not total elimination, and 9% opposing reductions.



The Bush administration was perceived as being considerably more opposed to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. Asked to say what they thought was the Bush administration's position on the same four-point scale, only 27% thought the administration would endorse the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons through an internationally verified agreement (24%) or unilaterally (3%). Sixty-six percent thought the Bush administration would favor reductions but not elimination (32%), or would oppose reductions altogether (34%). Overall, 46% assumed that, as compared to their own position, the Bush administration was more in the direction of being opposed to elimination or reductions; 8% assumed that the Bush administration was more in the direction of supporting them; and 38% assumed that the Bush administration held the same position as they do.

### ***5. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty***

**Americans overwhelmingly and consistently support US participation in the treaty banning all nuclear weapons testing, even when presented arguments for and against participation. A majority incorrectly assumes that the US is already a member of the treaty.**

One of the most prominent debates related to the issue of WMD proliferation is whether the US should ratify the treaty to ban nuclear weapons testing (the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty or CTBT). Proponents emphasize that a failure to ratify the CTBT undermines the commitment that the US made to seek the elimination of nuclear weapons, while opponents argue that as long as nuclear weapons are part of the US arsenal they need to be tested to determine their viability. While the US signed the treaty in 1996, in 1999 it failed to get the necessary two-thirds approval in the Senate to be ratified.

The public, however, shows very strong support for ratification, consistent with its support for the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and the commitments the US made as part of the NPT treaty. Asked whether "the US should or should not participate" in "the treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapon test explosions worldwide," 87% said that it should. This is virtually the same response as the 81% that answered affirmatively to the same question in the June 2002 CCFR poll.

Interestingly, a majority incorrectly assumes that the US is already a member of the treaty. Fifty-six percent said they thought "the US does...participate in...the treaty that prohibits nuclear weapon test explosions worldwide," while about a third—36%—did know that the US is not part of the CTBT.



To test whether such a massive level of support might be soft, giving way to arguments made against the CTBT, later in the questionnaire respondents were presented a series of pairs of pro and con arguments and asked to evaluate them. Indeed, the argument that questioned the effectiveness of the treaty garnered modest majority support. Fifty-three percent found more convincing the statement that “Since a crude nuclear weapon can be built without doing testing, a treaty that bans testing cannot do much to help stop the spread of nuclear weapons.” Forty-three percent preferred the argument that “If countries cannot test nuclear weapons, then it would be harder for countries like China, India and Pakistan to improve their weapons, and non-nuclear countries that might try to develop nuclear weapons would not be sure they really work.”

However, the primary argument that stressed the need to conduct testing did very poorly. Only 18% found convincing the statement: “It is important for the US to be able to periodically test its nuclear weapons because that is the only way we can make sure they still work, and without this certainty America’s enemies might not be deterred from attacking the US.” An overwhelming 77% instead agreed with the counter-argument: “The US has methods for making sure its nuclear weapons work that do not require explosions and, anyway, the US has so many nuclear weapons America’s enemies have to assume that an overwhelming number will work.”

Once respondents had worked through these arguments, they were then asked whether the US should participate in the CTBT or not. Eighty-four percent said the US should participate in the treaty, and only 13% said it should not—a result quite close to respondents’ 87% judgment in the simple question early in the poll.

Thus it seems that a modest majority thinks that the CTBT’s effectiveness in controlling proliferation is likely to be limited, but an overwhelming majority thinks that joining the CTBT would not be a problem for deterrence, and judges that the

treaty's security benefit is well worth the possible costs. This view flows naturally from the very strong majority support for working toward the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

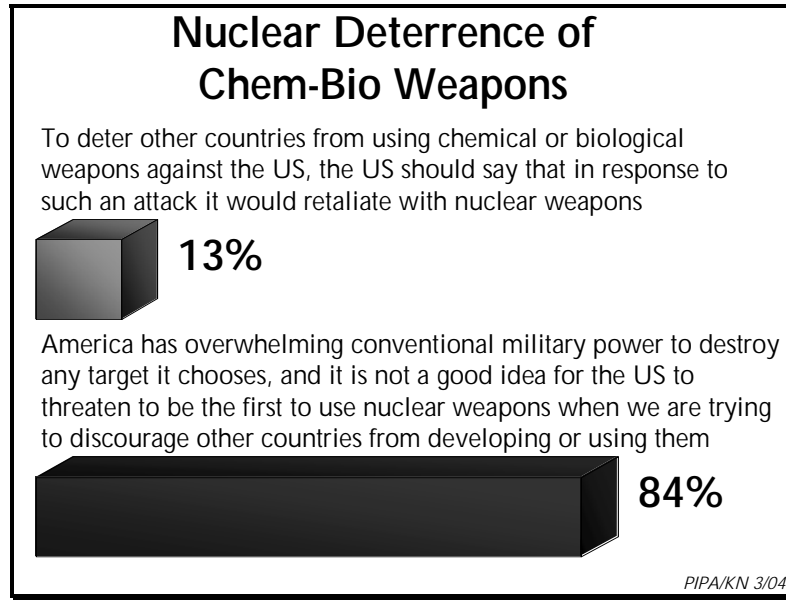
### ***6. Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons***

**Americans favor reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US security policy. A majority favors the US reaffirming its commitment to not use nuclear weapons against countries that do not have nuclear weapons, as a way of encouraging them not to acquire or build nuclear weapons. Despite heightened concerns about a chemical or biological attack, most oppose seeking to deter such an attack by threatening nuclear retaliation and generally oppose the US ever using nuclear weapons first. An overwhelming majority supports an international agreement to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert. Majorities say it is not necessary for the US to develop new types of nuclear weapons, including small nuclear weapons.**

In general, Americans show a readiness to deemphasize the role of nuclear weapons in US security policy—in accord with their strong majority preference (discussed above) to work toward the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons that is part of the NPT treaty's commitments.

### **Using Nuclear Weapons to Deter Use of Non-Nuclear WMD**

An overwhelming majority rejected the idea of using nuclear weapons to deter attacks with chemical and biological weapons. Concern for the impact on norms related to the non-proliferation regime trumped the goals of using nuclear weapons for deterrence. Offered two positions, only 13% endorsed the position that “to deter other countries from using chemical or biological weapons against the US, the US should say that in response to such an attack it would retaliate with nuclear weapons.” The other position focused on how this proposal might impede nonproliferation efforts, saying “America has overwhelming conventional military power to destroy any target it chooses, and it is not a good idea for the US to threaten to be the first to use nuclear weapons when we are trying to discourage other countries from developing or using them.” An overwhelming 84% agreed.

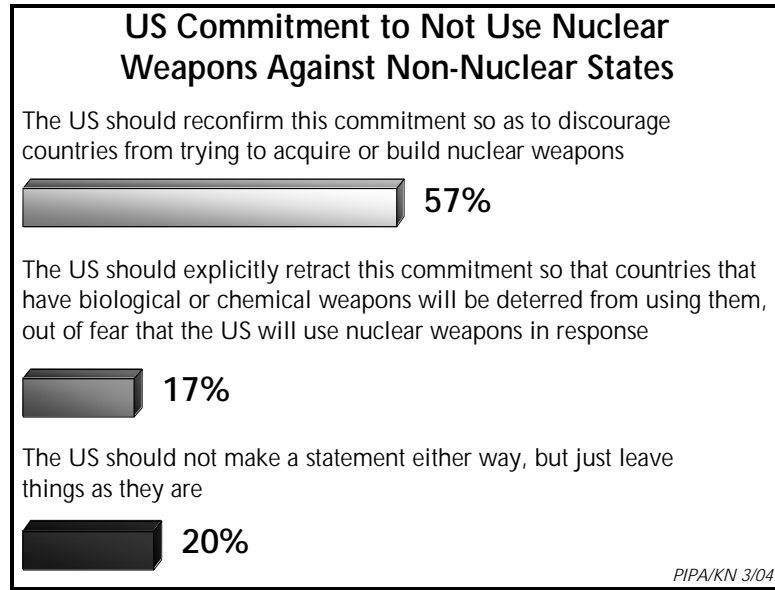


A related question was in regard to the commitment the US first made in 1978 and reaffirmed in 1995 to not use nuclear weapons against countries that have signed the NPT and do not have nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> Respondents were presented three options on this issue. Only 17% endorsed the position that “The US should explicitly retract this commitment, so that countries that have biological or chemical weapons will be deterred from using them out of fear that the US will use nuclear weapons in response.” Rather, 57% chose the option that the US should “reconfirm” its commitment to not use nuclear weapons against countries that do not have nuclear weapons, “so as to discourage countries from trying to acquire or build nuclear weapons.” Here again, concern for the goals of preventing proliferation trumped the goal of using nuclear weapons to deter attacks.

Interestingly, the majority chose the option of reaffirming the commitment in service of the goal of maintaining the non-proliferation regime, even when they were given the option of trying to serve both ends by maintaining some ambiguity. The alternative, “The US should not make a statement either way, but just leave things as they are,” was endorsed by just 20%.

<sup>1</sup> If a non-nuclear state allied with a nuclear state were to attack the US, US forces, or a US ally, this would fall under an exception stated in the commitment. See Arms Control Association Fact Sheet, “U.S. Nuclear Policy: ‘Negative Security Assurances’,” at <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/negsec.asp>.





### First Use of Nuclear Weapons

The public generally opposes the US ever using nuclear weapons first. Respondents were offered three “positions about the possible use of nuclear weapons by the United States.”

Only 18% chose the option that “In certain circumstances, the US should use nuclear weapons even if it has not suffered a nuclear attack.” Rather, 81% chose options rejecting the first use of nuclear weapons, with 60% saying that “The US should only use nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack,” and 21% saying the “The US should never use nuclear weapons under any circumstances.” These responses are essentially the same as when CCFR asked this question in June 2002.



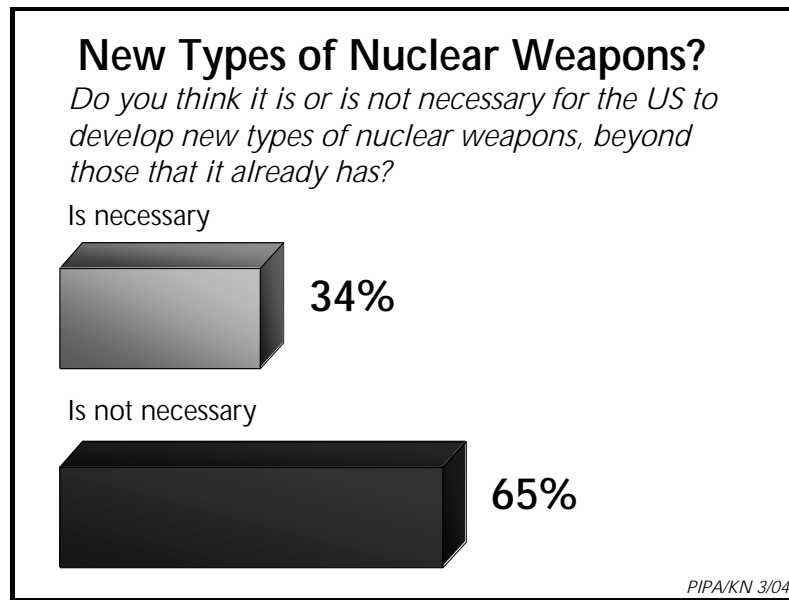
### De-alerting

An overwhelming majority supports an international agreement to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert. Respondents were told that on one hand “some people have proposed that the US and the other nuclear powers could lower the risk of accidental nuclear war by having a verifiable agreement” to lower the number of weapons on high alert, while on the other hand “others oppose this idea, saying it is too difficult to make sure that the other countries would not cheat.” When asked their position, 82% said the US should “work with other nuclear powers to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert,” while 16% said the US should not do so.



### Developing New Types of Nuclear Weapons

One of the most important current issues relative to the Non-Proliferation Treaty is whether the US should try to develop new varieties of nuclear weapons, given its obligations under the NPT. Public attitudes on this issue were tested in multiple ways. First, respondents were offered a simple question: “Do you think it is or is not necessary for the US to develop new types of nuclear weapons, beyond those that it already has?” By a two-to-one margin (65% to 34%), a strong majority said they thought it was not necessary for the US to develop new types of nuclear weapons.



To find out how Americans might respond if they heard more of the arguments surrounding this debate, a different part of the sample was presented a series of arguments for and against the US developing new types of nuclear weapons, and had respondents evaluate each. The argument found most convincing was a con argument based on concern for upholding the norms related to the goal of nonproliferation: “The immense destructiveness of nuclear weapons makes it critical that the US discourage other countries from developing them. The US would be setting a bad example if it were to abandon its restraint and start developing new types of nuclear weapons.” Sixty-three percent found this convincing, while 35% found it unconvincing.

One argument favoring developing new weapons also did well: “It is unrealistic to think that it will ever be possible to eliminate nuclear weapons, and as long as they are an important part of the defense of our country we should continue to improve their capability.” Fifty-five percent rated this as a convincing argument, and 43% found it unconvincing.

Two other arguments—one on each side of the debate—were narrowly rejected by the same margin. A con argument emphasized cost: “Developing new types of nuclear weapons when we are already so far militarily superior to any other country is

a big waste of money.” Fifty-three percent found this unconvincing and 46% convincing—suggesting that price alone is not a conclusive argument for a majority. A pro argument focused on the future’s inherent uncertainty: “We cannot be sure what the future holds and what use there may be for nuclear weapons in the future. Therefore, it is important to keep developing new types of nuclear weapons that might serve some unanticipated purpose.” Fifty-two percent found this unconvincing and 46% convincing—suggesting that uncertainty as such is too general a factor to be decisive for many.

Finally, having evaluated the arguments, respondents were asked whether the US “should or should not develop new types of nuclear weapons, beyond those that it already has.” A 59% majority rejected such development, with 39% in favor. This majority was 6 points lower than the majority that opposed such development without having heard the arguments.

### **Developing Small Nuclear Weapons**

Respondents who had not heard the pro and con arguments regarding developing new types of nuclear weapons were asked about developing “small nuclear weapons” with pro and con arguments embedded into the question. It ran as follows:

Some people say that the US should develop small nuclear weapons that might be easier to use than conventional weapons against some limited targets and might produce less fallout than existing nuclear weapons. Others say this is a bad idea, because even small nuclear weapons produce large amounts of fallout and that the US should be leading the world by working toward reducing nuclear weapons, not trying to develop new ways to use them. Do you think the US should or should not develop small nuclear weapons?

With these arguments to consider, 59% rejected developing new types of nuclear weapons, with 38% in favor.

## ***7. Reducing the Number of Nuclear Weapons***

**Americans favor deep cuts in the number of weapons in the US nuclear arsenal, even while grossly underestimating the actual number. Most oppose the idea of dismantling, rather than destroying, nuclear weapons that come under US-Russian arms reduction agreements.**

Americans grossly underestimate the size of the US nuclear arsenal. Asked “How many nuclear weapons do you think the US has in the US, or on submarines, that are ready to be used on short notice,” the median estimate was 200. This is far below the actual number of approximately 6,000 active strategic warheads, more than 2,000 of which are on high alert. Only 18% gave an estimate of 1,000 weapons or more.

Despite this low estimate, respondents showed a readiness to cut the size of the arsenal even lower. Asked “How many nuclear weapons do you think the US needs

to make sure other countries are deterred from attacking it,” the median response was a mere 100—a 50% cut below the perceived level.

**Size of US Nuclear Arsenal**

*How many nuclear weapons do you think the US has in the US, or on submarines, that are ready to be used on short notice?*

Median response: **200**

*How many nuclear weapons do you think the US needs to have to make sure other countries are deterred from attacking it?*

Median response: **100**

Actual number:

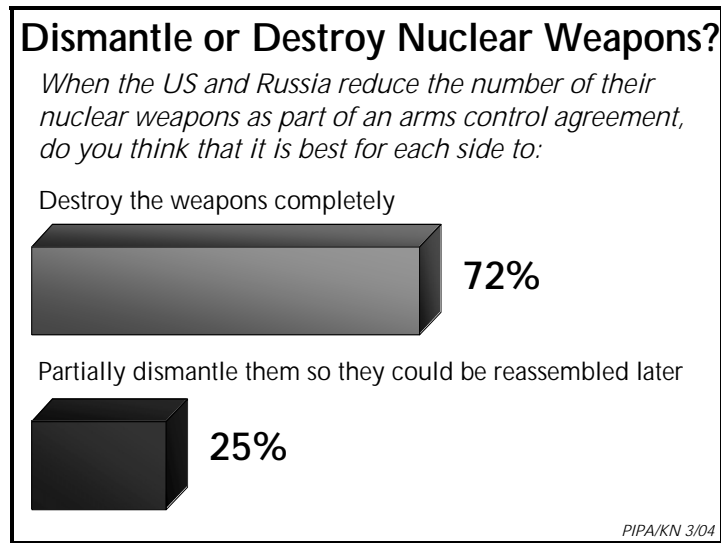
**Approximately: 2,000** high-alert, **6,000** active

PIPA/KN 3/04

According to the most recent US-Russian arms control treaty, called the Moscow Treaty, by 2010 each side would reduce to 1700-2200 operationally deployed strategic weapons worldwide.

### **Dismantling vs. Destroying Nuclear Weapons**

The Bush administration has proposed that the nuclear weapons under US-Russian arms reduction agreements be dismantled rather than destroyed, preserving the option of reconstituting them—a position opposed by the Russians. Respondents were asked, “when the US and Russia reduce the number of their nuclear weapons as part of an arms control agreement,” whether it would be “best for each side to destroy the weapons completely,” or to “partially dismantle them so they could be reassembled later.” A 72% majority opted to destroy the weapons, with just a quarter (25%) preferring to dismantle them.



## 8. *Biodefense Research*

**A large majority opposes the idea of the US inventing new infectious diseases so as to develop countermeasures, in anticipation of hostile groups or countries inventing such disease agents to be used as biological weapons.**

In the course of the US undertaking research on defense measures against biological weapons, the issue has arisen whether the US should develop test pathogens—that is, new infectious diseases—as an aid to developing antidotes in anticipation of hostile parties developing such pathogens as biological weapons.

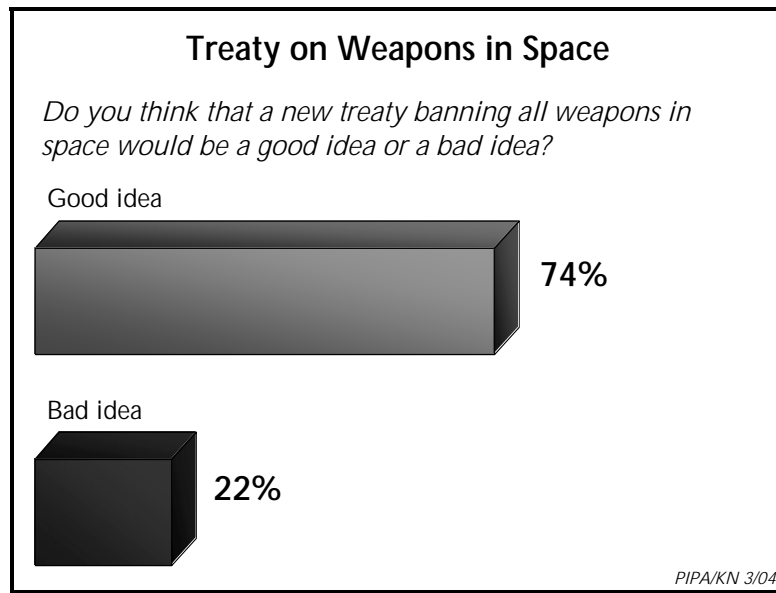
As this is a complex issue respondents were only presented the issue together with the key arguments. Respondents were told “Currently there is a debate about whether the US should work to invent new infectious diseases as part of its biodefense research.” The question then offered one argument in favor of, and one against, the US pursuing this course of action. The question’s pro argument focused on terrorists and the need to be prepared, pointing out that “it is always possible that terrorists will also develop [new infectious diseases], and we need to be ready with new vaccines and antidotes against them.” The con argument said “the US should not develop new infectious diseases because then other countries are more likely to do so,” and that “there is too great a danger that the new infectious diseases will be released into the environment by accident or malicious intent.”

Respondents were then asked whether the US should or should not invent “new infectious diseases as part of its biodefense research.” A strong majority—68%—said the US should not invent such diseases for this purpose, while only about a quarter (28%) favored the idea.

## 9. *Weapons in Space and Missile Defense*

**A large majority favors a new treaty banning weapons in space. Only a small minority favors deployment of a ballistic missile defense system, but a large majority favors continued research.**

Consistent with its support for promoting international arms control agreements, a large majority favors a new treaty banning weapons in space. Simply asked whether such a treaty would be a good idea or a bad idea, 74% said that it would be a good idea, while 22% said it would be a bad idea.



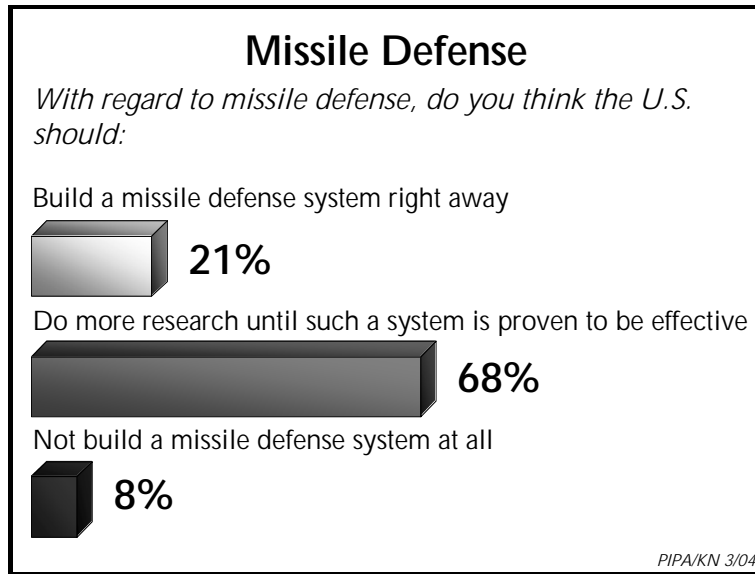
A separate part of the sample was presented a question that contained more information about a possible treaty banning weapons in space. Respondents were presented the following:

As you may know, since the 1960s a number of treaties have banned nuclear weapons in space. Some people have proposed negotiating a new treaty against any kind of weapon in space, including weapons designed to knock out satellites. Here are two positions on this issue.

- a. Such a treaty would stop a new arms race in space and would forbid weapons that would threaten US satellites, which are very important for managing US military capabilities.
- b. Such a treaty would make it harder for the US to do research into missile defense, intended to protect the US homeland, and to build systems to protect US satellites from attack.

They were then asked, “Do you think that a new treaty banning all weapons in space would be a good idea or a bad idea?” In this case support was a bit lower, though still a large majority, with 65% saying it was a good idea and 33% saying it was a bad idea.

The idea of deploying a missile defense system also receives low levels of support, while a majority favors continued research. “With regard to missile defense,” respondents were presented three options. Only 21% chose the option that the US should “build a missile defense system right away”; but then only 8% chose the option that the US should “not build a missile defense at all.” A large majority (68%) chose the option of doing “more research until such a system is proven to be effective.”



These numbers have changed a bit since CCFR asked this same question in June 2002. At that time slightly more (31%) favored immediate deployment and not building a missile defense system at all (14%). But as is now the case, a majority (52%) favored doing more research.

## METHODOLOGY

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Menlo Park, California, with a randomly selected sample of its large-scale nationwide research panel. This panel is itself randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access). The distribution of the sample in the web-enabled panel closely tracks the distribution of United States Census counts for the US population on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, geographical region, employment status, income, education, etc.

The panel is recruited using stratified random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone sampling. RDD provides a non-zero probability of selection for every US household having a



telephone. Households that agree to participate in the panel are provided with free Web access and an Internet appliance, which uses a telephone line to connect to the Internet and uses the television as a monitor. In return, panel members participate in surveys three to four times a month. Survey responses are confidential, with identifying information never revealed without respondent approval. When a survey is fielded to a panel member, he or she receives an e-mail indicating that the survey is available for completion. Surveys are self-administered.

For more information about the methodology, please go to:

[www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).