

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**27 May 2010**

## **Should our SAS troops stay in Afghanistan?**

The Prime Minister visited Afghanistan in early May to meet with the New Zealand SAS troops in Afghanistan and the Provincial Reconstruction Team stationed in Bamiyan Province.

On his return Mr Key told media that Cabinet would be considering whether to withdraw the SAS contingent altogether when their tour of duty ends in March 2011, or whether to leave a reduced contingent there for a longer period.

A Research New Zealand poll was conducted between 18 and 25 May 2010 to establish the opinion of New Zealanders about the possible reduction of the size of the contingent of SAS troops presently serving in Afghanistan, as against their total withdrawal.

Opinions were fairly evenly divided between these two possibilities. Forty percent want the SAS troops withdrawn altogether, while 37 percent were in favour of a partial withdrawal. Forty-one percent of males favoured a **partial** withdrawal while 43 percent of women favoured a **total** withdrawal. There were no major differences when the results were analysed by age. However, Maori and Pacific People show a clear preference for a total withdrawal (48 percent) as against a partial withdrawal (29 percent).

Interestingly, respondents in the upper half of the North Island favoured a total withdrawal to a larger extent than those living in the lower half of the North Island (44 percent as against 33 percent).

“A Research New Zealand poll conducted in July 2009 found that 41 percent of New Zealanders were in favour of sending SAS troops to Afghanistan, although the proportion fell to 35 percent when respondents were asked if the fact that the SAS troops might be involved in combat would lead them to change their opinion”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatellis.



*The Research New Zealand poll of 502 people aged 15 and over was conducted by telephone between 18 and 25 May. The maximum margin of error is +/- 4.8 % (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of New Zealand's general population. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organization, but as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.*

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**Table 1:**

*Q8. A contingent of New Zealand SAS (Special Air Service) soldiers are currently stationed in Afghanistan. The government is now considering whether to withdraw all or just some of these soldiers. Are you in favour of all or just some of these SAS soldiers being withdrawn?*

	Total	Male	Female
Base =	502	232	270
	%	%	%
Withdraw all	40	36	43
Withdraw some	37	41	33
Don't withdraw any	10	15	5
Don't know	14	8	19
Total	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Table 2:**

*Q8. A contingent of New Zealand SAS (Special Air Service) soldiers are currently stationed in Afghanistan. The government is now considering whether to withdraw all or just some of these soldiers. Are you in favour of all or just some of these SAS soldiers being withdrawn?*

	Total	15-34 years	35 to 54 years	55 years and over
Base =	502	97	183	222
	%	%	%	%
Withdraw all	40	41	38	40
Withdraw some	37	37	38	35
Don't withdraw any	10	6	12	12
Don't know	14	16	11	14
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Table 3:**

*Q8. Changing topics again, a contingent of New Zealand SAS (Special Air Service) soldiers are currently stationed in Afghanistan. The government is now considering whether to withdraw all or just some of these soldiers. Are you in favour of all or just some of these SAS soldiers being withdrawn?*

	Total	New Zealand		
		Maori/Pacific	European	Other
Base =	502	52	403	63
	%	%	%	%
Withdraw all	40	48	37	39
Withdraw some	37	29	36	51
Don't withdraw any	10	12	11	3
Don't know	14	12	15	8
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



**Table 4:**

*Q8. A contingent of New Zealand SAS (Special Air Service) soldiers are currently stationed in Afghanistan. The government is now considering whether to withdraw all or just some of these soldiers. Are you in favour of all or just some of these SAS soldiers being withdrawn?*

	Total	North North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
Base =	502	171	181	150
	%	%	%	%
Withdraw all	40	44	33	43
Withdraw some	37	31	42	38
Don't withdraw any	10	11	9	10
Don't know	14	14	17	9
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.