

Survey shows confidence in U.S. military at two-decade low



Washington, August 3 (RHC)-- Fewer Americans are confident in their military than at any point since 1997, according to a Gallup poll published on Monday. With trust in the armed forces dropping ten points in the last two years, the services are currently grappling with a historic recruitment crisis.

Conducted in June, the poll found 60% of respondents expressing “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the military, down from 64% last year. Public confidence in the military last dipped to 60% in 1997, and has not been lower since 1988, when it sat at 58%.

Public support for the U.S. military soared following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, with the armed forces enjoying 82% approval when President George W. Bush invaded Iraq in 2003. While the surge of post-9/11 patriotism receded as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan dragged on, approval sat in the mid-70s until 2020, when it began to steadily decline year after year.

Republicans are traditionally more likely to back the military than Democrats, however their confidence has plummeted from 91% in 2020 to 68% today.

Republican politicians and pundits have been some of the Pentagon's fiercest critics since Biden took office in 2021, and have lambasted the military for its vaccine mandates and its embrace of 'woke' politics – exemplified by its provision of 'sex reassignment' surgery to transgender troops, its teaching of 'critical race theory,' and its efforts to scrap gendered language in the barracks.

Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 – which saw 13 US troops killed in a suicide bombing and tens of billions of dollars worth of US equipment fall into Taliban hands – also earned scathing condemnation from both sides of the political spectrum.

With public support falling, the armed forces are struggling to fill their ranks. Leaders from the army, navy, and air force told a Congressional hearing in March that they all expect to fall short of their recruitment targets this year, after the army experienced its worst year for recruitment last year since the abolition of the draft in 1973.

Of the 17-24-year-olds typically targeted by military recruiters, 80% are physically unfit for service due to obesity, drug use, or poor mental health, according to a Pentagon study published in March. Furthermore, only 9% of this age group are interested in joining in the first place, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth told CNBC News in October.

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