

# A *Deafness* on National Defense

**M**ost Americans believe they lack sufficient information to make good judgments about military and national security matters. They aren't too interested in learning more, either.

That, in a nutshell, was the conclusion of a recent Gallup survey of 1,000 American adults, 178 one- and two-star officers, and 56 military and national security correspondents. The sponsor of the survey was the Robert

R. McCormick Tribune Foundation of Chicago and the Media and Security Project in New York.

Gallup said 46 percent of the public either thinks it gets inadequate information or doesn't know if it does.

Even more surprising was the survey's finding that the public's desire for military coverage is weak—far weaker than assumed by either the military or the me-

dia respondents. In fact, less than one-half of the public wanted to know about *any* of various types of military stories.

As the graphic shows, the officers vastly overestimated public interest in military issues. This finding is consistent with current conventional wisdom citing waning public engagement in international or military issues. The media's miscalculation of public interest was even greater.

	<i>What the Public Wants to Know ...</i>	<i>What the Military and Media Estimate is the Degree of Public Interest ...</i>	
	<b>Public</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>Media</b>
Terrorist Threats	49%	99%	100%
Counterterrorist Activities	49%	89%	95%
Military Readiness	48%	91%	85%
Effect on Reaching Policy Goals	47%	98%	98%
Physical Damage	46%	93%	100%
Year 2000 Problems	45%	96%	96%
Human Casualties	45%	95%	100%
Quality-of-Life Issues	43%	80%	73%
Sexual Misconduct	28%	65%	89%