
Defense Report

AUSA



Americans Trust Their Military Establishment—Their Confidence is Well-Deserved

A recent poll to determine which American institutions are most trusted has shown "The Military" ranked third, just behind the churches and the banks but way ahead of the Supreme Court, Labor Unions and Congress. The survey, by the American Institute of Public Opinion, showed that organized religion is accorded a "great deal" of confidence by 60 percent of those polled, while the banking industry got a 55 percent "high confidence" vote and the military got 48 percent. Congress was at the bottom of the list with a high confidence rate of just 18 percent. The presidency was not one of the institutions listed in the poll.

In all fairness it must be reported that Congress (at 40 percent) led the second category—"some confidence"—but this is hardly spectacular for the elected representatives of the people. When all levels of confidence are combined the Congress winds up with 58 percent and the military with 78 percent. Only the churches have a higher combined confidence total than the military.

The high ranking of the military establishment is all the more gratifying to the professional Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines because of something the assessment of the poll says—"Despite the Vietnam experience a total of 48 percent express a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the military." The Princeton, New Jersey polling organization perpetuates the notion that puts sole blame for the Vietnam catastrophe on the military. However the people polled show they have been able to put Vietnam in a more reasonable perspective.

There are some lessons to be learned here, and probably the most significant lesson is that the military establishment is not the public whipping boy many in the press and in Congress find it convenient to assume. A second lesson might be that the public recognizes the kind of job the military has to do and the scant opportunity a professional military person has to acquire much in the way of worldly goods that measure success in other elements of our society. The American public seems to be saying, "You men and women who wear the uniform of the United States give us your loyalty, your professionalism and, sometimes your blood. The least we can do in return is to offer our confidence."

In the 202 years since the United States Army was created, and followed later by its sister services, there has never been any reason to believe that the public trust in the military establishment was not deserved. Unfortunately, there are all too few opportunities for the public to express that trust. This most recent poll serves as an excellent reminder to any doubters—The United States' military deserve and get public confidence.