
Defense Report

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Military Service Ranks High in Public Confidence Polls

As it has each year since 1966, the Harris Survey recently polled adult Americans to determine how much confidence they place in an assortment of U.S. institutions, both public and private. Government institutions covered in the latest (November 1985) survey include the White House, Congress, Supreme Court, state and local governments and the military. Included in the private institutions were medicine, higher education, television news, the press, organized religion, labor and law firms.

For the fourth year in succession, the military ranked at the top of the government institutions among those in which the public has a great deal of confidence. The military was two percentage points ahead of the White House (30 percent) and four points in front of the Supreme Court. With a single exception, when it ranked third, the military has been first or second among government institutions each year since the poll began in 1966.

The military ranked third of all 15 institutions covered in the survey. Medicine, in which 39 percent expressed a great deal of confidence and higher education with 35 percent, led all organizations in degrees of confidence. Following the military's 32 percent were the White House, and the Supreme Court with 30 and 28 percent respectively. Television news at 23 percent ranked well above the print media which, at 16 came near the bottom of the list.

The other institutions rated by the Harris Survey, with the percentage of those indicating a great deal of confidence are: organized religion—21 percent, executive branch of the federal government—19 percent, local governments—18 percent, major companies—17 percent, state governments, Congress and the press—all at 16 percent and organized labor—13 percent. The institution viewed with the least confidence in this poll was the legal profession with 12 percent.

Like two other institutions that are viewed with less confidence—Congress and the media—our military forces spring from and serve the people. The sustained high level of support reflected in this survey is heartening to the men and women who make a career of military service. It is from that support that they draw their strength.