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Poll finds 94 percent of Americans back action; most expect long war

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President Bush received immediate and overwhelming public support for his decision to launch airstrikes against sites in Afghanistan. Most Americans said they think the attacks mark the start of a long war and probably will prompt more terrorist attacks directed at the United States, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

The survey found that 94 percent said they support the U.S.-led military action in Afghanistan, and just as many Americans continue to endorse the way Bush is handling the response to the Sept. 11 assaults.

The poll found that eight in 10 Americans support sending ground troops into Afghani-

stan to kill or capture terrorist leader Osama bin Laden. Nearly as many would send U.S. forces into Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban.

Nearly eight in 10 approved sending humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, though one in five questioned whether the United States should be providing the assistance while the Taliban controls the government.

A total of 506 randomly selected adults were interviewed Sunday night for the poll. The margin of sampling error for the overall results is 4 percentage points.

The survey found that the airstrikes against Afghanistan are broadly popular with the public. Eighty-three percent said they strongly back the attacks and 11 percent some-

what support them. That's nearly 20 percentage points higher than public approval for the airstrikes against Iraq in January 1991 that marked the start of the Persian Gulf War.

Eight in 10 said the United States had used enough diplomacy; nearly as many said it has tried hard enough to win support of Muslims in other countries.

The survey found that Americans support expanding military action beyond Afghanistan to other countries that harbor terrorists. Seven in 10 said the United States should mount a broad war against terrorist groups and the countries that support them; about one in four favor limiting strikes to groups and countries responsible for last month's terrorist attacks.