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February 6, 2006

PRESS RELEASE

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University of Connecticut Releases New National Poll on Government Surveillance Procedures

As hearings open in Washington on the Bush Administration's authorization of warrantless surveillance of Americans, public approval of the program is far from clear cut, varying by the nature of the person being targeted.

Americans similarly divide over whether the government should get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans with ties to suspected terrorists: 52% say the government should and 45% say the government should not. However, if the government is unsure whether the targeted Americans have ties to suspected terrorists, public insistence on court warrants rises substantially. 75% of the public says that the government should be required to get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans if they are unsure whether they have ties to suspected terrorists, whereas 22% say the government should not.

Government Should Be Required to Get Court Approval Before Conducting Surveillance On...

	Yes	No
Americans with ties to suspected terrorists	52%	45%
Americans who may have ties to suspected terrorists	75%	22%

These views split sharply among partisans. 61% of Democrats say the government should be required to get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans with ties to suspected terrorists, compared to 37% of Republicans. The numbers supporting court warrants rises substantially among both parties when terrorist connections are more in doubt. 82% of Democrats and even 60% of Republicans say the government should be required to get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans if the government is unsure whether they have ties to suspected terrorists.

Among Independents, 55% say the government should be required to get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans with ties to suspected terrorists and 79% say the government should be required to get court approval if they are unsure whether they have ties to suspected terrorist.

According to Professor Samuel Best, Director of the Center for Survey Research and Analysis, "Public support for warrantless searches is tenuous at best. In the government's clearest cases – when ties to terrorists are definite – the public is divided over the necessity of court approval. And when terrorist ties are murky, fully three-quarters of Americans feel the courts should decide."

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Complicating the government's situation further, the public expresses doubts that the government can accurately determine who should be monitored and who should not. Only 24% of the public is "very" or "extremely" confident that the federal government can correctly identify which Americans should be monitored and which ones should not be monitored

Confidence That Government Can Correctly Identify Which Americans Should Be Monitored

Extremely Confident	6%
Very Confident	18%
Somewhat Confident	37%
Not too Confident	19%
Not At All Confident	18%

Nonetheless, the public appears confident that the government will not investigate them specifically. Only 13% of the public are "extremely" or "very" concerned the government will use its surveillance powers to investigate them.

Concerned Government Will Use Its Surveillance Powers to Investigate You

Extremely Concerned	6%
Very Concerned	7%
Somewhat Concerned	16%
Not too Concerned	24%
Not At All Concerned	46%

One reason for this may be that many in the public do not interact with people living in foreign countries. Only 29% of the public have been in contact with someone living in a foreign country by email or telephone in the past year.

Contacted Someone in a Foreign Country in the Last Year

Yes	29%
No	70%

Public support for court approval of government surveillance is not entirely based on the rigidity with which the courts will conduct oversight of the government. 40% of the public says judges will frequently look closely enough at the justification for the surveillance, compared to 32% who say they will occasionally look closely enough, 17% who say they will rarely look closely enough, and 5% who say they will never look closely enough.

Regularity with Which Judges Will Look Closely at the Justification for the Surveillance

Frequently	40%
Occasionally	32%
Rarely	17%
Never	5%

According to Professor Best, "The public has real concerns over surveillance efforts where both the government and the courts are concerned. They are skeptical that the government can tell valid cases from invalid ones, and they feel the courts may not give full scrutiny to cases the government does bring before them."

These results are based on a national survey of American adults, conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut. The survey was conducted by telephone with a scientific sample of 800 Americans from across the nation. Interviews were conducted from Tuesday January 31 through Sunday February 5, 2006. Sampling error is 3.5% at the 95% level of confidence for results based on all adults. Error for subgroups is higher. Attached to this release are the survey questions used.

Government Surveillance Survey
 (Note: Marginals rounded to nearest whole number)

How confident are you that the federal government is able to correctly identify which Americans should be monitored and which ones should not be monitored - extremely confident, very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not confident at all?

Extremely Confident.....	6%
Very Confident	18%
Somewhat Confident	37%
Not too Confident	19%
Not Confident at All	18%
Don't Know/No Answer	2%

Do you think the federal government should be required to get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans with ties to suspected terrorists?

*** Half Sample A ***

Yes.....	52%
No	45%
Don't Know/No Answer	3%

Do you think that the federal government should be required to get court approval before conducting surveillance on Americans if the government is unsure whether they have ties to suspected terrorists?

*** Half Sample B ***

Yes.....	75%
No	22%
Don't Know/No Answer	4%

How often do you think judges who authorize surveillance will look closely enough at the justification for the surveillance - frequently, occasionally, rarely, or never?

Frequently.....	40%
Occasionally	32%
Rarely	17%
Never	5%
Don't Know/No Answer	7%

How concerned are you that the federal government will use its surveillance powers to investigate you - extremely concerned, very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not concerned at all?

Extremely Concerned	6%
Very Concerned.....	7%
Somewhat Concerned	16%
Not too Concerned.....	24%
Not Concerned at All.....	46%
Don't Know/No Answer	1%

In the past year have you been in contact with someone living in a foreign country by telephone or email?

Yes.....	29%
No	70%
Don't Know/No Answer	1%