



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Cable and Talk Radio Boost Public Awareness of Swift Boat Ad,
National Annenberg Election Survey Shows**

Backed by a small time buy in a few states, a TV advertisement sponsored by a 527 called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth began airing on August 5, 2004. The ad claimed that John Kerry lied to obtain his Viet Nam War medals. A news account in the New York Times indicated that the group intended to spend \$500,000 to put the ad on stations in Wisconsin, Ohio, and West Virginia. Though according the article, an aide for the Kerry campaign disputed these figures arguing that the buy "was far smaller, for only \$156,000 in seven smallish markets."

In a dramatic illustration of the power of free media such as talk radio and cable talk shows to assist an independent group in getting its message out, recent polling by the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey finds that more than half of the country has heard about or seen the ad. Thirty-three percent of a national sample of respondents report having seen it and an additional 24 percent report having heard about it. These findings are based on polling of 2,209 respondents between August 9 and August 16, 2004. The margin of error for this sample is plus or minus 2 percent.

"The influence of this ad is a function not of paid exposure but of the ad's treatment in free media," Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the survey and of The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center explained. "The advertisement has received extensive coverage, particularly on conservative talk radio and cable news channels and has been the subject of some attention in broadcast news as well."

Heavier consumers of cable were more likely than lighter viewers to have seen the ad. According to the survey, 48 percent of individuals watching cable news five to seven days in the past week report having seen the commercial, compared to 31 percent who watched cable news one to four days in the past week and 22 percent of respondents who did not watch any cable news in the past week.

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Those who frequently listened to talk radio were more likely to have heard about the ad. Thirty percent of those who listened to talk radio other than National Public Radio (NPR) five to seven days in the past week heard about the ad compared to 22 percent of those who listened one to four days and 23 percent of those who did not listen. An additional 43 percent of those who listened to non-NPR talk radio most days of the week reported seeing the advertisement compared to 30 percent of those who did not listen at all.

Among those who listened to NPR five to seven days in the past week, 28 percent had heard about the ad and 33 percent had seen it. Twenty-two percent of those who did not listen to NPR had heard about the ad and 32 percent had seen it.

Respondents in battleground states report having seen the 'Swift Boat' advertisement more often than those in non-battleground states – 37 percent of respondents in battleground states saw the ad compared with 30 percent in non-battleground states. Respondents in non-battleground states, however, were significantly more likely to have heard about the advertisement, with 25 percent reporting that they had heard about the ad compared to 21 percent in battleground states.

Those who were interested in politics and had higher media use were also more likely to have seen the advertisement. Thirty-seven percent of those who follow politics most or some of the time saw the ad and an additional 28 percent report heard about the ad. Of those who follow politics only now and then or hardly at all, 21 percent saw the ad and 11 percent had heard about it. Those who more frequently read the newspaper and discussed politics with their friends and family were also more likely to have seen the advertisement.

Those holding less favorable opinions of Kerry were more likely to report having seen the commercial. Forty-one percent of those unfavorable toward Kerry saw the advertisement compared to 31 percent of those holding a favorable opinion of Kerry. Talia Jomini Stroud, a graduate research fellow on the survey responsible for this data analysis, noted, "Research on selectivity suggests that individuals are more likely to be exposed to messages that are consistent with the beliefs that they already hold, although it is not always clear whether individuals purposefully seek out this information or happen across it based on their regular media and communication patterns."

Respondents who saw or heard about the ad are split about its believability. Forty-six percent find the ad very or somewhat believable and 49 percent find the ad very or somewhat un-believable. Beliefs about the believability of the advertisement are strongly associated with partisan inclinations. Seventy percent of those with favorable opinions of Bush find the advertisement somewhat or very believable while 19 percent of those with favorable opinions of Kerry find it believable. Independent voters are nearly evenly split over whether they find the ad believable; 44 percent find the ad somewhat or very believable while 49 percent find the ad somewhat or very unbelievable.

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One of the central claims of the advertisement, namely that Kerry did not earn all of the medals he was awarded during the Viet Nam War, also produced partisan differences. Before being asked about their exposure to the advertisement, survey respondents were asked about their beliefs regarding Kerry's medals. Overall, 59 percent of respondents believe that Kerry did earn all of the medals and 21 percent believe that he did not. By party identification, over three-fourths of all Democrats believe that Kerry earned his medals, compared to only 59 percent of Independents and 39 percent of Republicans.

Those individuals who reported seeing the ad were more likely to question whether Kerry earned the medals than were those who did not recall seeing it. Thirty-one percent of those who saw the advertisement did not believe that Kerry earned all of the medals. Twenty-five percent of those who heard about the advertisement but did not see it believe that Kerry did not earn all of the medals. Of those who did not see the advertisement, only 12 percent believe that Kerry did not earn all of the medals. "We don't know whether seeing the ad produced this difference," said Jamieson, "Those who previously doubted Kerry's war record may be more likely to recall seeing the ad."

The National Annenberg Election Survey, the largest academic election poll, is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania (www.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.org). It has been tracking the presidential campaign since October 7, and interviewing will continue until after Election Day. Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson is the director of the survey. Ken Winneg is the managing director of the survey. Adam Clymer is the political director of the survey.

Another major election project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center is FactCheck.org, a project that tries to hold politicians accountable by exposing false or misleading campaign statements. It is available online at www.FactCheck.Org.

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Questions

- A. Respondents were asked, “Have you seen or heard about a television ad from some Viet Nam veterans that says John Kerry did not earn his medals in the Viet Nam War but lied about his war record?”

	Seen ad	Heard about ad	Have not seen or heard about ad
Total	33%	24%	41%
Republican	36%	24%	38%
Democrat	30%	25%	43%
Independent	35%	25%	38%
Bush favorability			
Favorable	35%	24%	38%
Unfavorable	33%	23%	42%
Kerry favorability			
Favorable	31%	26%	41%
Unfavorable	41%	24%	33%
Battleground State*	37%	21%	40%
Non-Battleground State	30%	25%	41%
Decided Voters	34%	25%	39%
Persuadable Voters	27%	18%	49%
Watched cable news last week			
Never	22%	23%	53%
1 to 4 days	31%	24%	44%
5 to 7 days	48%	24%	26%
Read newspaper			
Never	30%	19%	48%
1 to 4 days	28%	22%	47%
5 to 7 days	39%	28%	31%
Political discussion with friends and family in last week			
Never	23%	19%	55%
1 to 4 days	32%	23%	42%
5 to 7 days	44%	28%	26%

	Seen ad	Heard about ad	Have not seen or heard about ad
Listened to National Public Radio (NPR)			
Never	32%	22%	43%
1 to 4 days	40%	27%	32%
5 to 7 days	33%	28%	36%
Listened to radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues, or politics other than NPR			
Never	30%	23%	44%
1 to 4 days	38%	22%	38%
5 to 7 days	43%	30%	25%
Follow politics			
Most or some of the time	37%	28%	33%
Only now and then or hardly at all	21%	11%	62%

*"Battleground States" are the 20 states the Bush and Kerry campaigns consider closely contested and where they show television commercials. The states are: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

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B. Those respondents who had seen or heard about the advertisement were asked, “From what you have seen or heard about the ad, how believable do you find the ad?”

	Very or somewhat believable	Very or somewhat unbelievable
Total	46%	49%
Republican	68%	26%
Democrat	23%	73%
Independent	44%	49%
Bush favorability		
Favorable	70%	23%
Unfavorable	14%	82%
Kerry favorability		
Favorable	19%	77%
Unfavorable	76%	18%
Battleground State	45%	49%
Non-Battleground State	46%	48%
Decided Voters	46%	50%
Persuadable Voters	46%	39%
Saw the ad	48%	47%
Heard about the ad	44%	50%

	Very believable	Somewhat believable	Somewhat unbelievable	Very unbelievable
Total	16%	30%	20%	28%
Republican	29%	39%	13%	13%
Democrat	5%	18%	27%	47%
Independent	9%	35%	22%	26%

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- C. Respondents were asked, “During the Viet Nam War, John Kerry was awarded purple hearts, a bronze star and a silver star. Do you believe that Kerry earned all of these medals or do you think he did not earn them?”

	Earned all of the medals	Did not earn all of the medals
Total	59%	21%
Republican	39%	38%
Democrat	78%	8%
Independent	59%	20%
Bush favorability		
Favorable	41%	35%
Unfavorable	81%	6%
Kerry favorability		
Favorable	82%	7%
Unfavorable	32%	43%
Battleground State	57%	23%
Non-Battleground State	60%	20%
Decided Voters	60%	23%
Persuadable Voters	53%	14%
Saw the ad	53%	31%
Heard about the ad	59%	25%
Did not see the ad	65%	12%

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Survey Methodology

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey is based on telephone interviews which began October 7, 2003 and will continue past Election Day.

The sample of telephone exchanges called was randomly selected by a computer from a complete list of thousands of active residential exchanges across the country. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was designated by a random procedure to be the respondent for the survey. The interviewing is conducted by Schulman, Ronca, Bucuvalas, Inc.

The results have been weighted to take account of household size and number of telephone lines into the residence and to adjust for variation in the sample relating to geographic region, sex, race, age and education.

This report deals with interviewing conducted from August 9 through August 16, 2004. During that period, 2,209 adults were interviewed. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results will differ by no more than two percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error would be higher; for example, for those individuals who saw or heard the Swift Boat advertisement, it would be plus or minus three percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

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