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**Pluralities of Public, Independents Believe Bush Campaign
Is Behind Swift Boat Veterans' Ads, Annenberg Data Show**

A plurality of Americans believe the Bush campaign is behind the television ads run by critics of John Kerry over his service in Vietnam and his antiwar statements after he returned to the United States, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

In polling from Monday through Thursday, 46 percent said they believed the Bush campaign was behind the ads, while 37 percent said they believed they were made independently. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus three percentage points.

Belief in Bush campaign backing of the ads increased during the week. On August 23 and 24, when the Kerry campaign was making the accusation, 42 percent said the campaign was behind the ads and 41 percent said they were truly independent. On August 25 and 26, after Benjamin L. Ginsberg resigned as national counsel to the Bush campaign when his connection to the ads' sponsors was revealed, 50 percent said the campaign was connected and 34 percent said it was not.

Kerry's attackers, known as Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, first accused him of deception about earning the medals he received in Vietnam. Belief that Kerry had not earned all of his medals rose from 23 percent early in August to a high of 30 percent on August 19, but declined after news reports documented discrepancies between the claims of the ads, previous statements by the attackers, and government records.

The rise in belief that Kerry did not earn all of his medals coincided with extensive cable and political talk radio discussion of the original Swift Veterans ad. The decrease followed a five day period in which investigations by major news outlets challenged the story told in the ad and an eyewitness first person account in The Chicago Tribune corroborated Kerry's account of one of the events in question.

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In the August 23-26 polling, of 1,244 adults, belief that Kerry had not earned his medals had receded to 24 percent, a view held by 43 percent of Republicans, 25 percent of independents, and 7 percent of Democrats.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the National Annenberg Election Survey and its parent Annenberg Public Policy Center, said “When news reports uncritically relay ad content to an audience, the credibility of the ad as well as its likely impact rise. But when credible news organizations question an ad over a number of days, the credibility of the ad and its likely impact fall.”

The group’s second ad challenged Kerry over his anti-war testimony before the Senate, and the question about the Bush campaign’s responsibility dealt with both ads. The question was “Do you think the Bush campaign is behind television ads attacking Kerry over Vietnam or do you think the ads have been made with no connection to the Bush campaign?”

Again, partisanship was heavily reflected in the answers, although 23 percent of Republicans thought their candidate’s campaign was behind the ads. So did 48 percent of independents and 67 percent of Democrats, though 20 percent of Democrats said they were not connected to the Bush campaign.

When it came to Kerry’s anti-Vietnam war statements themselves only 44 percent of the public said they had “seen, heard or read” about them. In that group, 39 percent approved and 52 percent disapproved of his statements. But the group who were aware of the statements was not representative of the public as a whole. It had more Republicans and more veterans than the general public, and both of those groups were more likely to disapprove of Kerry’s statements than were Americans generally.

That discrepancy was explained by Talia Jomini Stroud, senior research analyst on the survey and a doctoral student at the Annenberg School for Communication. “We are naturally drawn to content that connects to our interests and backgrounds. Educators are more likely to focus on education issues, veterans are more likely to focus on an ad attacking a veteran over protests about a war and Republicans to a subject that could damage a Democratic presidential candidate.”

Media exposure was clearly related to opinions on the ads’ sponsorship and Kerry’s record in and after Vietnam. Frequent viewers of cable news, where the ad has been the subject of extended discussion and repeated airing, were more likely than others to disapprove of Kerry’s statements (60 percent) or to believe he did not earn all of medals (31 percent). People who watch cable news four days a week or more are considerably more Republican than the population generally; 37 percent of them call themselves Republicans, compared to 24 percent of those who watch three days a week or less.

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On the other hand, people who watch cable news three days a week or less were evenly divided over Kerry's antiwar statements, with 44 percent approving and 44 percent disapproving. And among people who watched network news frequently, 53 percent said the Bush campaign was behind the ads and 37 percent said they were made independently.

Moreover, people who got their news from newspapers or from network television viewed Kerry's anti-Vietnam war statements more positively than did the cable-reliant respondents. While 33 percent of heavy cable watchers approved of Kerry's anti-war comments, 45 percent of those who watched network news heavily and 43 percent of those who read newspapers four days a week or more did so.

Jamieson said, "These different beliefs are at least partially attributable to the political predispositions of viewers, listeners, and readers of each medium. Compared to newspaper readers and network news viewers, non-NPR talk radio listeners and cable news viewers tend to hold opinions more favorable toward Bush and less favorable toward Kerry."

"Putting those with opposing views on a topic on television invites frequent viewers to conclude that the matter is not settled," said Jamieson. "Feature those who disagree about whether Kerry earned his medals and you raise the possibility that he did not. Feature a controversy over whether the Bush campaign is behind the SwiftVets ads and those who had assumed no co-ordination now begin to wonder. In general the side put on the defensive by an extended discussion, loses ground until the charge is decisively rebutted or shown to be untrue by journalists."

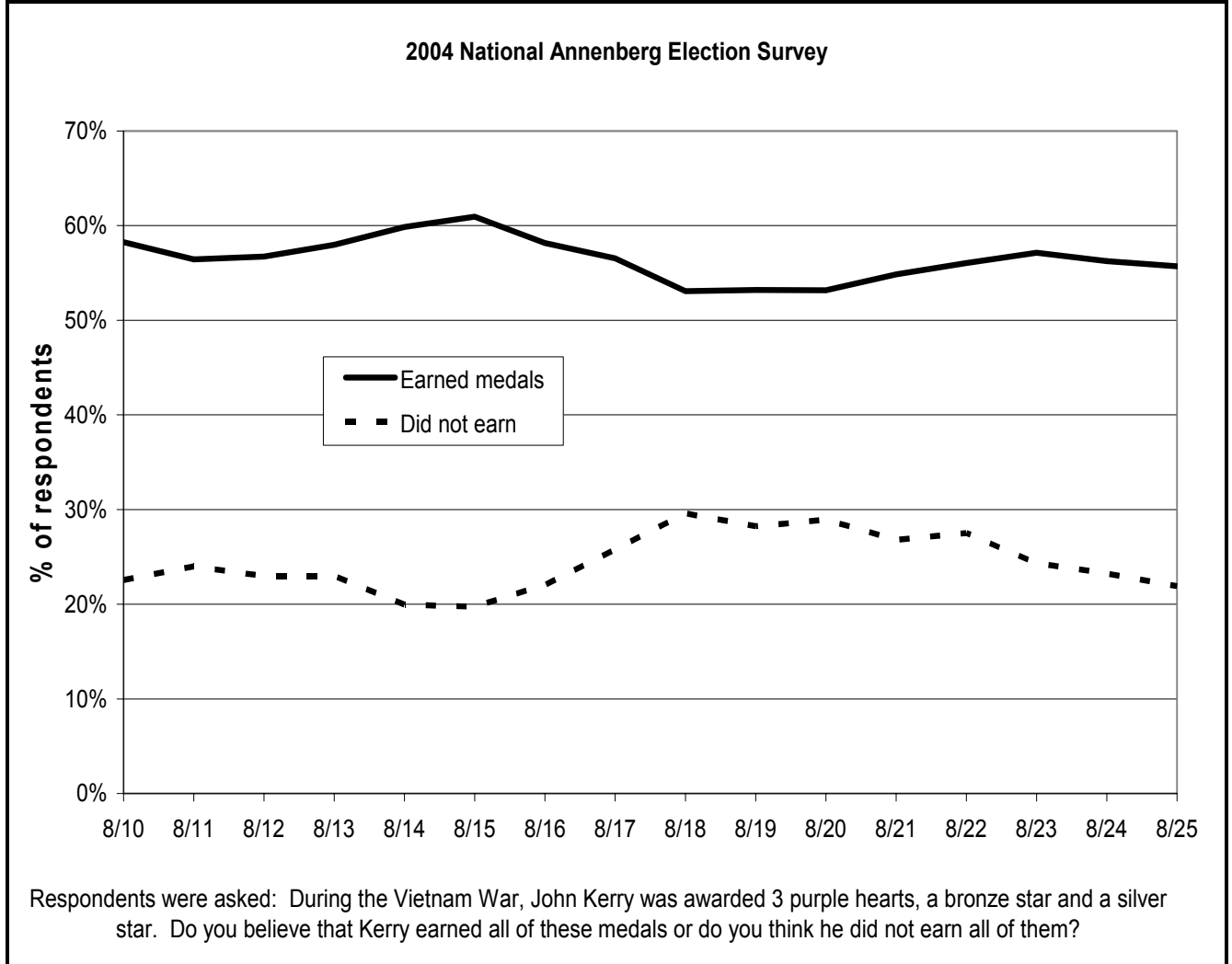
Talia Jomini Stroud, a senior research analyst at The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, developed the research for this report. That National Annenberg Election Survey, the largest academic election poll, is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center (www.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.org). 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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Chart

Responses to whether Kerry earned all of his medals by date



Note: Data used Chart A is unweighted. Analysis indicated that the unweighted data was not substantially different from the weighted data in the cross section analyzed in this release. The trends over time should not change depending upon whether weighted or unweighted data is used. The data has been smoothed using a three day moving average. This means that data for each day is averaged with the previous day and the following day. This technique is used to attempt to remove day-to-day sampling variation. Those who said don't know or refused are not included. For additional information on the analysis of rolling cross sectional data and a justification for using unweighted data with this type of analysis, please see the book *Capturing Campaign Dynamics: The National Annenberg Election Survey* by Daniel Romer, Kate Kenski, Paul Waldman, Christopher Adasiewicz, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson.

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Tables

A. During the Vietnam War, John Kerry was awarded three 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 all of them?

%	Earned all of his medals	Did not earn all of his medals
Total	55%	24%
Republican	34%	43%
Democrat	77%	7%
Independent	55%	25%
Men	53%	29%
Women	58%	19%
Whites	53%	26%
African Americans	68%	7%
Latinos	61%	13%
High school or less	54%	22%
Some college	53%	27%
College degree or more	62%	23%
18-29 years old	58%	25%
30-44	58%	19%
45-64	54%	26%
65 and over	51%	24%
Household income below \$35,000	57%	20%
\$35,000 to less than \$75,000	54%	26%
\$75,000 and over	58%	25%
Union household	63%	15%
Non-union household	54%	26%
Conservative	38%	36%
Moderate	63%	20%
Liberal	71%	12%
Northeast	62%	20%
Midwest	53%	25%
South	53%	25%
West	55%	24%

%	Earned all of his medals	Did not earn all of his medals
Married or living as married	54%	25%
Other	58%	20%
Veteran	52%	35%
Non-veteran	56%	22%
Follow government		
Most or some of the time	57%	25%
Only now and then or hardly at all	53%	19%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: George W. Bush		
Favorable	37%	37%
Unfavorable	79%	10%
Neutral	49%	19%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: John Kerry		
Favorable	79%	8%
Unfavorable	23%	53%
Neutral	53%	17%
Discussed politics with friends & family last week		
0-3 days	54%	21%
4-7 days	59%	29%
Read the newspaper last week		
0-3 days	53%	23%
4-7 days	58%	24%
Watched cable news last week		
0-3 days	56%	19%
4-7 days	54%	31%
Watched network news last week		
0-3 days	53%	24%
4-7 days	60%	23%
Listened to radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues, or politics other than NPR last week		
0-3 days	55%	21%
4-7 days	35%	49%

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B. Those who said that they had seen, heard or read anti-Vietnam war statements John Kerry made to Congress after returning from service in Vietnam were asked, “From what you know about his anti-Vietnam war statements, do you approve or disapprove of what he said?”

%	Approve	Disapprove
Total	39%	52%
Republican	14%	80%
Democrat	70%	18%
Independent	43%	47%
Men	37%	56%
Women	40%	46%
Whites	36%	56%
African Americans	63%	9%
Latinos	43%	39%
High school or less	34%	51%
Some college	37%	57%
College degree or more	44%	48%
18-29 years old	47%	45%
30-44	35%	52%
45-64	40%	52%
65 and over	38%	53%
Household income below \$35,000	37%	49%
\$35,000 to less than \$75,000	37%	56%
\$75,000 and over	42%	52%
Union household	56%	37%
Non-union household	34%	55%
Conservative	15%	76%
Moderate	44%	46%
Liberal	73%	16%
Northeast	42%	50%
Midwest	39%	55%
South	34%	56%
West	42%	44%
Married or living as married	34%	58%
Other	48%	39%

%	Approve	Disapprove
Veteran	34%	60%
Non-veteran	40%	49%
Follow government		
Most or some of the time	40%	51%
Only now and then or hardly at all	28%	53%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: George W. Bush		
Favorable	13%	78%
Unfavorable	76%	13%
Neutral	18%	68%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: John Kerry		
Favorable	75%	16%
Unfavorable	5%	87%
Neutral	26%	60%
Discussed politics with friends & family last week		
0-3 days	33%	54%
4-7 days	45%	49%
Read the newspaper last week		
0-3 days	33%	54%
4-7 days	43%	50%
Watched cable news last week		
0-3 days	44%	44%
4-7 days	33%	60%
Watched network news last week		
0-3 days	35%	57%
4-7 days	45%	45%
Listened to radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues, or politics other than NPR last week		
0-3 days	36%	53%
4-7 days	*	*

* This question was only asked of those who had seen, heard or read Kerry's anti-Vietnam war statements. Data is not included because there were too few respondents to analyze.

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C. Do you think the Bush campaign is behind television ads attacking Kerry over Vietnam or do you think the ads have been made with no connection to the Bush campaign?

%	Bush campaign behind ads	Ads made with no connection to Bush campaign
Total	46%	37%
Republican	23%	61%
Democrat	67%	20%
Independent	48%	37%
Men	48%	37%
Women	45%	37%
Whites	45%	39%
African Americans	64%	24%
Latinos	43%	38%
High school or less	41%	41%
Some college	49%	33%
College degree or more	54%	35%
18-29 years old	48%	36%
30-44	45%	36%
45-64	48%	38%
65 and over	41%	40%
Household income below \$35,000	42%	40%
\$35,000 to less than \$75,000	47%	38%
\$75,000 and over	56%	34%
Union household	64%	23%
Non-union household	43%	40%
Conservative	30%	51%
Moderate	52%	35%
Liberal	65%	23%
Northeast	54%	35%
Midwest	48%	35%
South	40%	43%
West	48%	34%
Married or living as married	44%	40%
Other	50%	34%

%	Bush campaign behind ads	Ads made with no connection to Bush campaign
Veteran	48%	42%
Non-veteran	46%	37%
Follow government		
Most or some of the time	50%	37%
Only now and then or hardly at all	43%	32%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: George W. Bush		
Favorable	23%	60%
Unfavorable	74%	16%
Neutral	48%	27%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: John Kerry		
Favorable	65%	24%
Unfavorable	23%	62%
Neutral	42%	34%
Discussed politics with friends & family last week		
0-3 days	44%	37%
4-7 days	53%	38%
	33%	17%
Read the newspaper last week		
0-3 days	41%	39%
4-7 days	52%	35%
Watched cable news last week		
0-3 days	44%	36%
4-7 days	50%	40%
Watched network news last week		
0-3 days	43%	38%
4-7 days	53%	37%
Listened to radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues, or politics other than NPR last week		
0-3 days	45%	34%
4-7 days	35%	57%

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Political Attitudes among Different Media Users

%	Cable News 4 to 7 days in last week	Network News 4 to 7 days in last week	Newspaper 4 to 7 days in last week	Non-NPR talk radio 4 to 7 days in last week
Republican	37%	27%	30%	45%
Democrat	33%	39%	36%	23%
Independent	21%	29%	28%	29%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: George W. Bush				
Favorable	50%	44%	44%	65%
Unfavorable	39%	45%	46%	30%
Neutral	11%	11%	9%	5%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: John Kerry				
Favorable	45%	54%	51%	35%
Unfavorable	37%	28%	30%	52%
Neutral	18%	18%	19%	14%

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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 primarily with interviewing conducted from August 23 through 28, when 1,244 adults were interviewed. In theory, in 19 out of 20 cases, results for all registered voters will differ by no more than three 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 political independents it would be plus or minus five percentage points. Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, which would lead to higher potential sampling error.

The report also refers to polling conducted from August 9 through August 26, when 5,198 people were interviewed. But the data is reflected not in overall totals, but in three-day moving averages, for which the margin of sampling error 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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