MILITARY V. CIVILIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD NUCLEAR USE AND LEGALITY

CONDUCTED JULY 19 - AUGUST 5, 2024

MARGIN OF ERROR ± 3.9 – 4.5%[1]

Sample Size: 1500 US residents
(750 active duty military & veterans / 750 general population)

conducted by Human Security Lab @ UMass Amherst in collaboration with YouGov

with generous support from Lex International and the Swiss Philanthrophy Fund


As far as you know, which statement is more accurate?

- **General Population**
- **Military trained**

Under international law, it is sometimes permissible to launch a nuclear strike against a civilian populated area

General Population: 17
Military trained: 17

Under international law, it is never permissible to launch a nuclear strike against a civilian populated area

General Population: 83
Military trained: 83
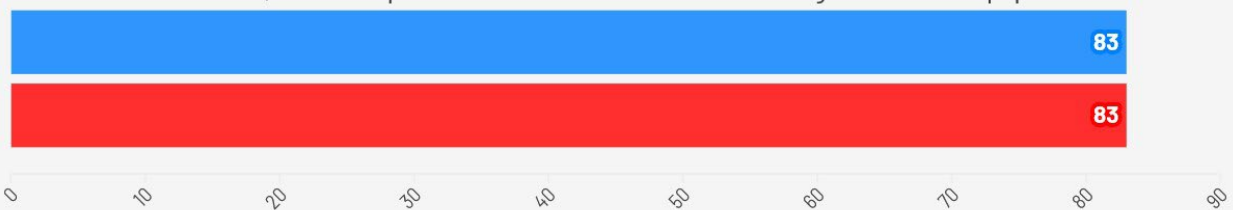
N = 1500 (750 general population, 750 military & veterans); margin of error ± 3.9 – 4.0.

If we were at war with Iran and you had to choose between launching a nuclear strike that would directly and intentionally kill 2 million Iranian civilians, or continuing a conventional ground war with Iran that would risk 20,000 US troops, which option would you prefer?

- **General Population**
- **Military trained**

X-axis: 1 - Strongly prefer to continue ground war, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 - Strongly prefer to launch strike
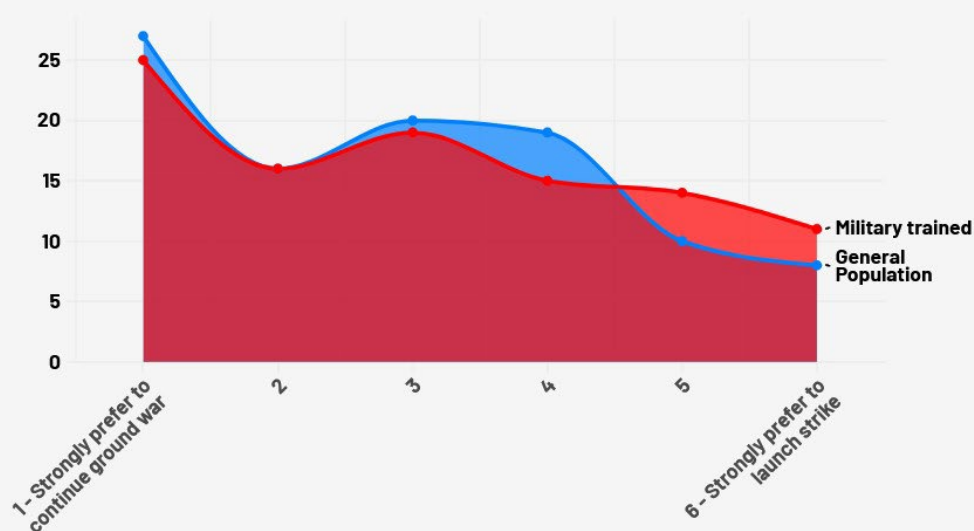
N = 1497 (747 general population, 750 military & veterans)

During your time in the military, how much training did you receive/ have you received in how to fight and/or survive a war involving the use of nuclear weapons?
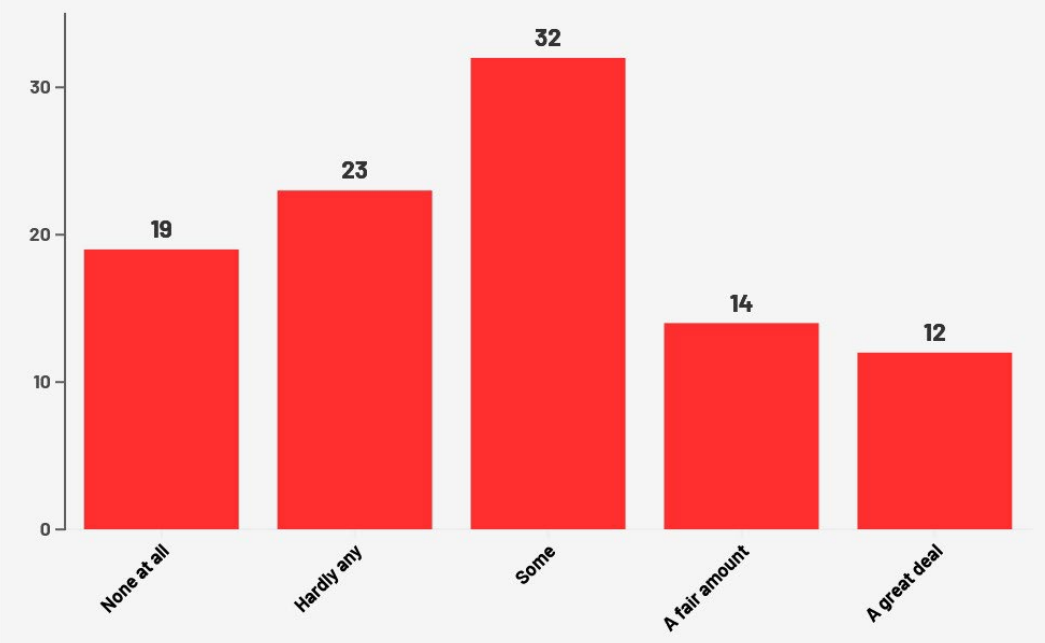
N = 682 (50 general population, 632 military & veterans)

Currently, US nuclear policy allows the use of nuclear weapons at the Commander-in-Chief's discretion. Which is closer to your view:
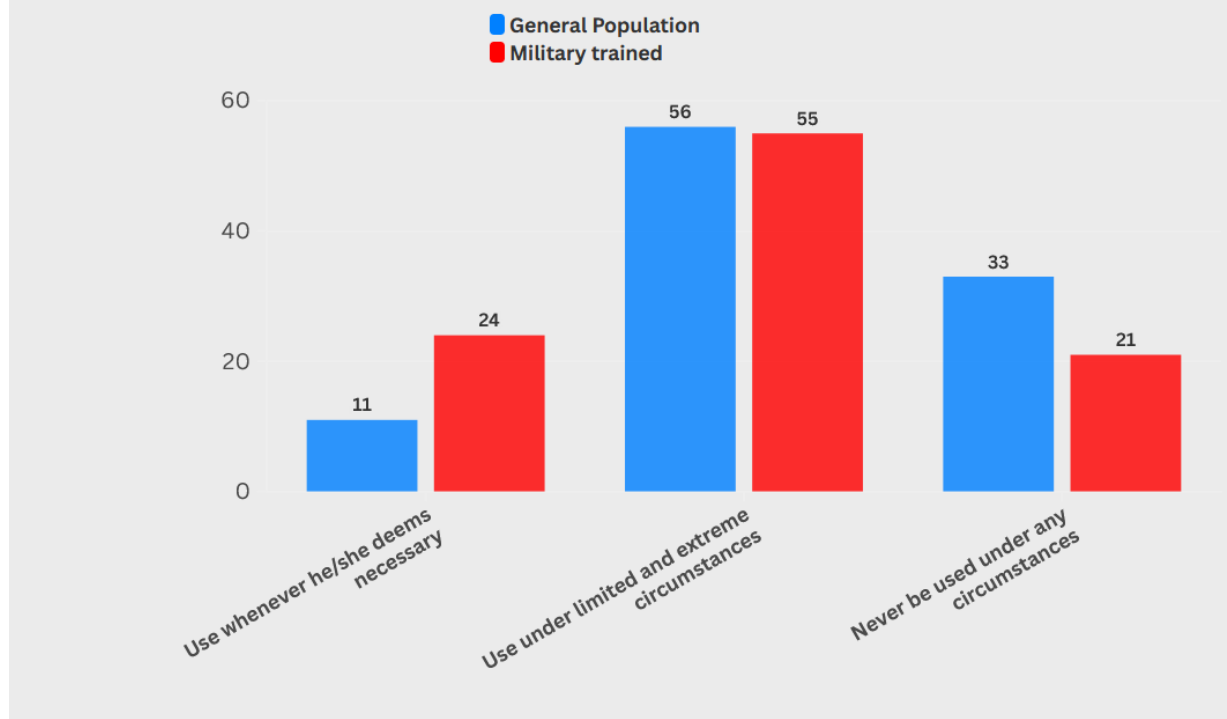
N = 1203 (571 general population, 632 military & veterans)

Which of the following limitations would you place on nuclear use?

General Population (blue)
Military trained (red)

Limitation	General Population	Military trained
Retaliation for a nuclear strike against Americans	47	58
Only if directed solely at military objectives	40	31
Only if no chance of indiscriminate fallout and/or radiation	39	22
Only against other nuclear powers	35	23
Only if authorized by some other oversight authority	30	33
Other	9	12

N = 673 (324 general population, 349 military & veterans)

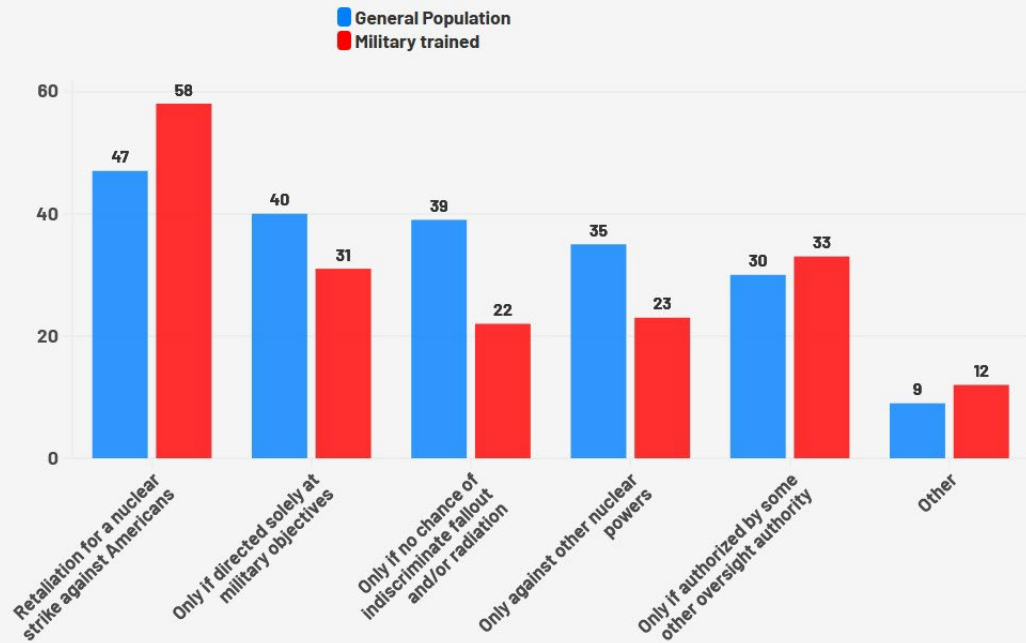## Imagine a scenario where you served in the military and were personally ordered to participate in a chain of events that would culminate in nuclear-bombing a civilian city. What would you be likeliest to do?

General Population (blue)
Military trained (red)

Response	General Population	Military trained
Refuse to obey the order	49	36
Follow order	37	49
Other	13	15
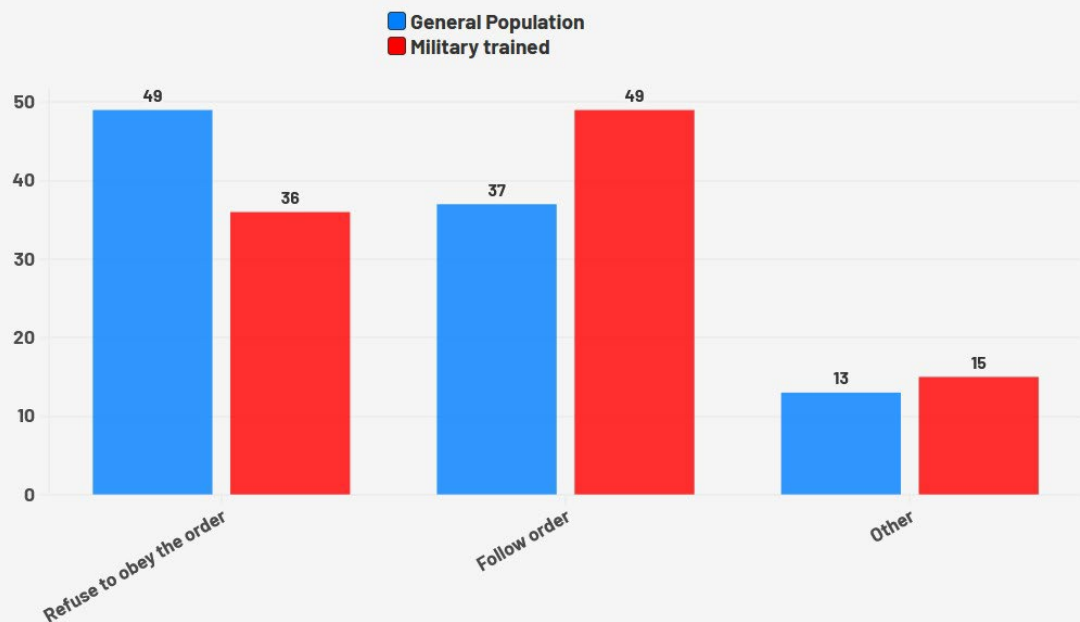
N = 1203 (571 general population, 632 military & veterans)

On a scale of 1-7, how much do you agree with the following sentence: "I can imagine a scenario in which a nuclear weapon could be used successfully to achieve a military objective without unlawfully targeting or indiscriminately affecting civilians."

■ General Population
■ Military trained
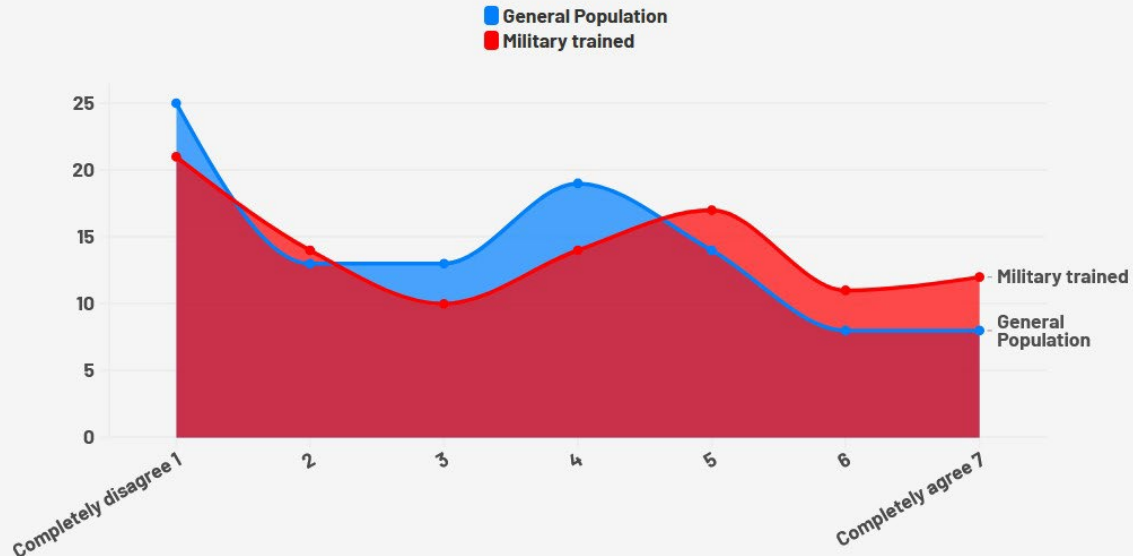
N = 1203 (571 general population, 632 military & veterans)

Which groups do you trust the most when it comes to understanding how nuclear weapons may promote or threaten US national security?

■ General Population
■ Military trained
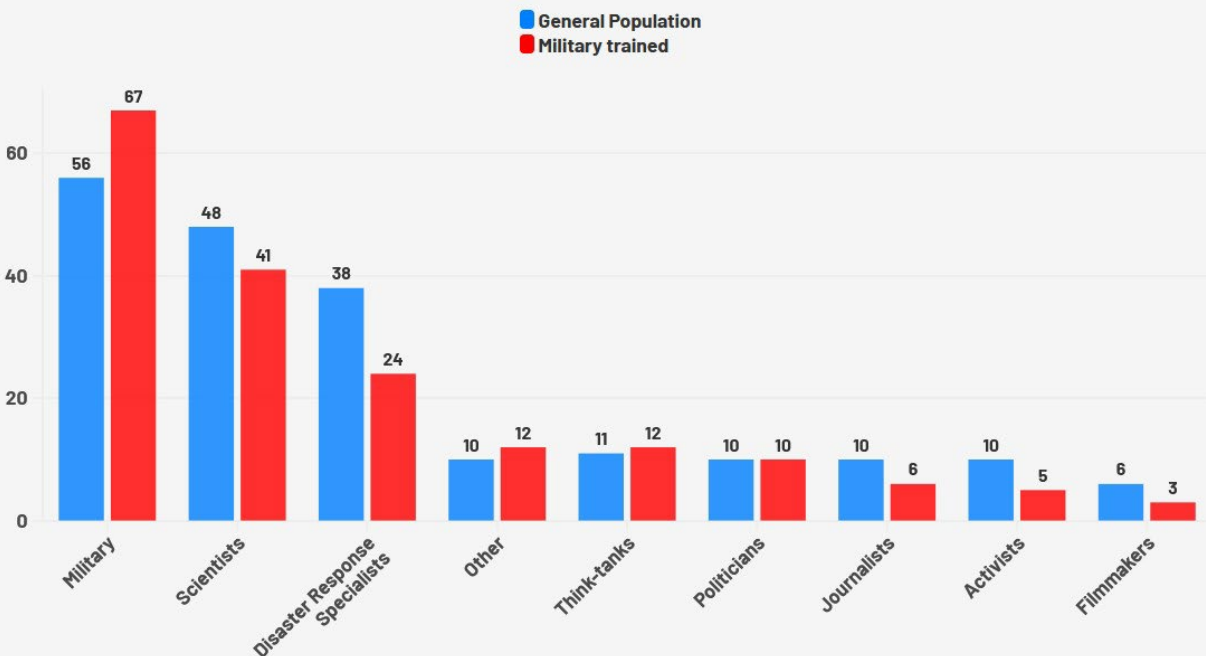
N = 1203 (571 general population, 632 military & veterans)

Of all reasons not to ever actually use nuclear weapons, with which reasons would you most agree:

■ General Population
■ Military Trained

Would affect civilians indiscriminately
General Population: 64
Military Trained: 44

Would cause environmental catastrophe
General Population: 50
Military Trained: 47

Could cause mass starvation
General Population: 40
Military Trained: 33

Fire and radiation are especially cruel
General Population: 39
Military Trained: 29

Even if used away from civilians, would cause unnecessary suffering to troops
General Population: 36
Military Trained: 33

Treaties outlaw nuclear / indiscriminate weapons
General Population: 33
Military Trained: 32

Could risk retaliatory strike against US
General Population: 29
Military Trained: 34

Would undermine nuclear non-use norms
General Population: 19
Military Trained: 25

Other (Explain)
General Population: 5
Military Trained: 10

x-axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55

N = 1,203 (632 general population, 571 military & veterans)

Demographics of Survey

Age	Military	General Population
18-29	8%	21%
30-44	15%	25%
45-64	30%	33%
65+	47%	21%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571
Race	**Military**	**General Population**
White	75%	63%
Black	12%	12%
Hispanic	8%	16%
Other	5%	9%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571
Gender	**Military**	**General Population**
Male	90%	48%
Female	10%	52%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571
Income	**Military**	**General Population**

Under $40K	24%	33%
$40-$80K	36%	32%
$80-$100K	14%	10%
$100K +	26%	25%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	576	508
Education	**Military**	**General Population**
No HS	1%	6%
HS Grad	32%	33%
Some College	21%	16%
2-year Degree	17%	12%
College Grad	17%	21%
Post Grad	12%	12%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571

Region	Military	General Population
Northeast	14%	17%
Midwest	20%	20%
South	44%	40%
West	22%	23%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571

Party ID	Military	General Population
Democrat	37%	47%
Independent	15%	15%
Republicans	48%	38%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	627	554

Ideology	Military	General Population
Very Liberal	7%	11%
Liberal	13%	15%
Moderate	31%	33%
Conservative	28%	21%
Very Conservative	16%	11%
Not Sure	5%	9%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571

Voter Registration	Military	General Population
Yes	96%	86%
No	3%	12%
Doesn't know	1%	2%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	632	571
Political Interest	**Military**	**General Population**
Most time	7%	12%
Some time	14%	16%
Now & then	32%	37%
Hardly at all	30%	23%
Don't know	17%	12%
Totals	100%	100%
Unweighted N	606	523