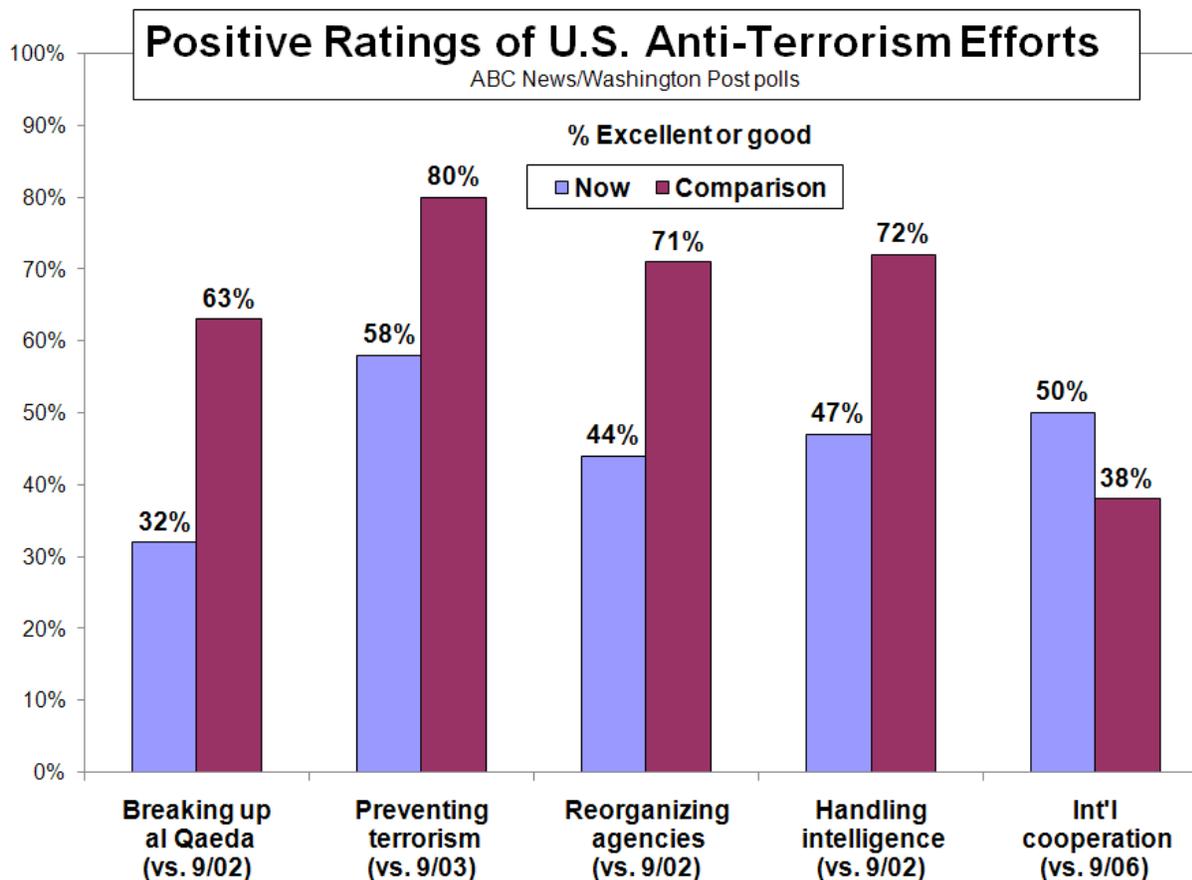


Criticism of Security Efforts Rises in Fallout from Christmas Attack

In an impressive amount of fallout from an unexploded bomb, ratings of the government's anti-terrorism efforts have dropped to post-9/11 lows since the attempted Christmas Day airliner attack, security concerns have moved farther ahead of privacy rights – and most Americans now oppose closing the Guantanamo Bay detention center.

Just a third of Americans in this ABC News/Washington Post poll now give a positive rating to U.S. efforts to break up the al Qaeda network, half what it was in fall 2002. Ratings of federal efforts to prevent further terrorism, improve intelligence gathering and reorganize anti-terrorism agencies likewise are down sharply, also to their lowest in polling since 2002.

Overall barely more than half, 51 percent, say the U.S. campaign against terrorism is going well, down 11 points in 16 months and, like these other measures, its worst in polling after the Sept. 11 attacks. It peaked, by contrast, as high as 88 percent after the overthrow of the Taliban.

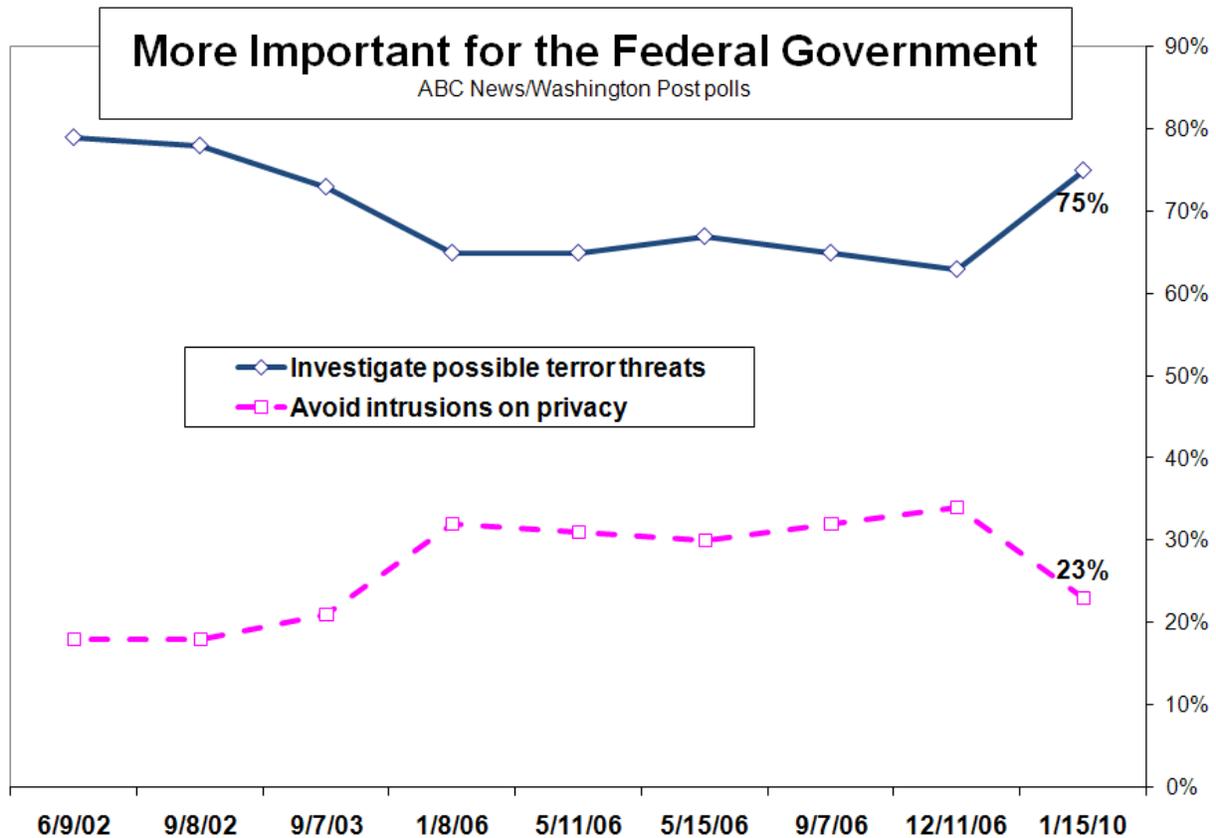


A majority now opposes President Obama’s plans to close the U.S. detention center for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. At 56 percent, opposition has risen sharply, by 18 points, since last spring. And most Americans now express qualified support for passenger profiling as a security measure.

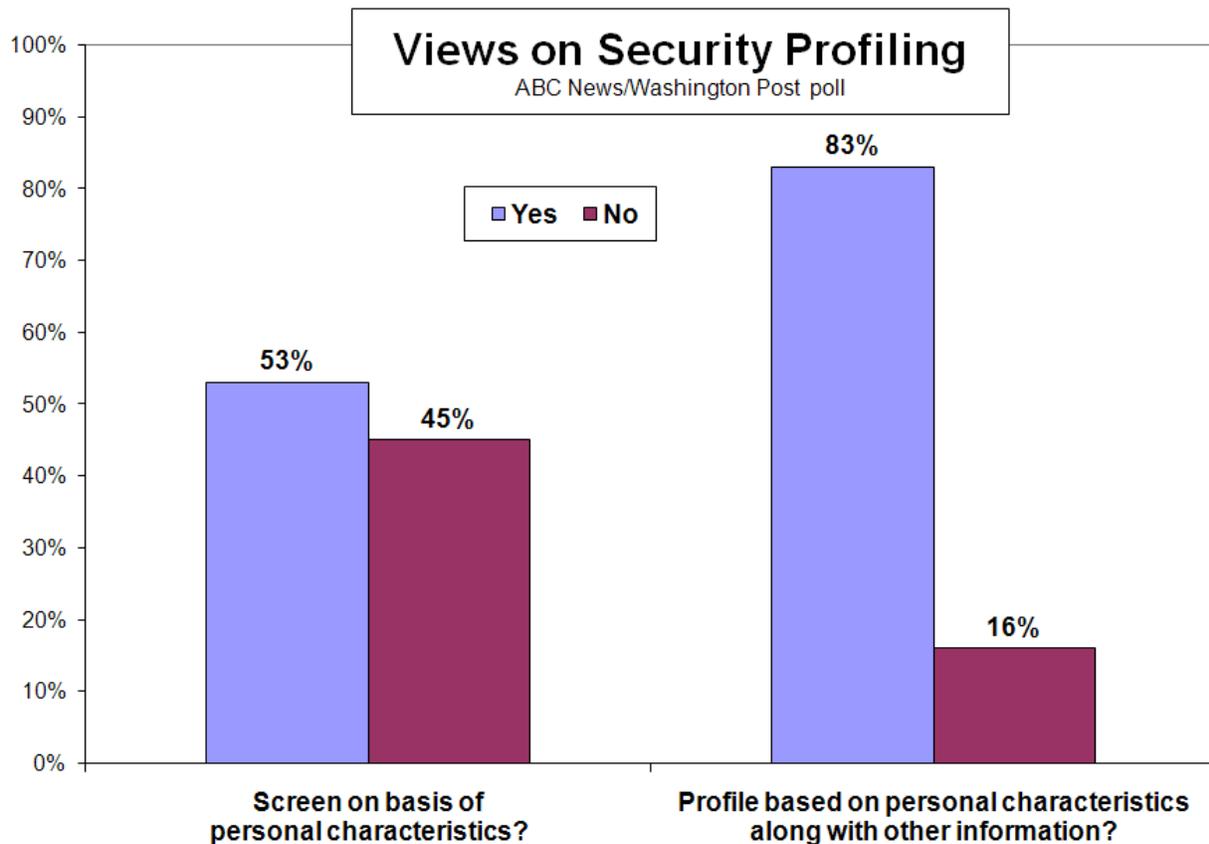
Despite the heightened concerns, Obama receives broad approval for handling the government’s response to the attempted bombing – at 62 percent it’s his highest individual rating of six in the latest ABC/Post poll. And 63 percent express at least some confidence that the intelligence errors associated with the attack will be fixed – although just 14 percent are “very” confident of it.

The Senate held hearings today on the Christmas Day terrorism attempt, which Obama has blamed on a “systemic failure” to link and act upon available intelligence. He promised better intelligence efforts, expanded terrorism watchlists and more rigorous airport screening.

RIGHTS and PROFILING – While security has outpaced privacy rights as a concern steadily since Sept. 11, the dial has moved farther in that direction: Seventy-five percent now call it more important for the government to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy – up 12 points from a late 2006 poll to the most since September 2002.



Results on profiling, however, show that privacy concerns do remain. Americans fairly narrowly (53 percent) support the authorities using personal characteristics such as religion, ethnicity and nationality in airline passenger security screening. But if it's a more targeted effort, in which these characteristics are combined with other information to create an overall profile, rather than just used on their own, support soars to 83 percent.



Previous polling has pointed the same way, indicating that the public is willing to accept privacy intrusions in the name of security, but with a preference for those intrusions to be as focused and targeted as possible – and, of course, effective.

COMPARED WITH BUSH – There clearly are different concerns about Obama's approach compared with those of his predecessor. Americans by 63-27 percent are more worried that Obama will not go far enough to investigate terrorism because of concerns about constitutional rights, rather than going too far in compromising such rights in order to investigate threats. It was a much closer 48-44 percent split for George W. Bush.

At the same time, and despite the other criticisms, more say the Obama administration is doing better rather than worse than the Bush administration in handling intelligence reports about terrorist threats, 30 percent vs. 20 percent. The rest say they're performing about the same.

DROPS – Ratings of the success of the campaign against terrorism overall soared as high as 88 percent in January 2002, after the invasion of Afghanistan and overthrow of the Taliban. Today's 51 percent is a new low numerically, although it's been about here once before, 52 percent in September 2006, amid broad discontent with the war in Iraq. It had recovered to 62 percent in the last ABC/Post reading in September 2008.

Ratings of several specific federal efforts are more clearly at new lows. In September 2002, 72 percent of Americans said the government had done an excellent or good job improving U.S. intelligence-gathering and coordination. That's declined in every subsequent measure, and today it's just 47 percent, below half for the first time. Similarly, the number who say the government's done a good job reorganizing agencies to improve their anti-terrorism efforts has fallen from 71 percent in 2002 to 44 percent now, again below a majority for the first time.

The biggest single drop has come in views that the government has done a good job breaking up the al Qaeda network. Sixty-three percent said so in September 2002. It fell to 47 percent in September 2006. And it's down to 32 percent now.

On another measure, preventing further attacks in the United States, ratings are still mostly positive, at 58 percent. But that's down from a peak of 80 percent in September 2003.

One final gauge, though middling, shows improvement, given Obama's more internationalist approach: Fifty percent say the United States has done a good job winning the cooperation of other countries in fighting terrorism, up from 38 percent in fall 2006. It's been just about this high twice before, though, in 2002 and 2004.

GROUPS – Part of the changes in these views represent a fundamental partisan shift that's accompanied the change in administrations. Sixteen months ago 87 percent of Republicans said the war on terrorism was going well, as did 61 percent of independents; just 49 percent of Democrats agreed. Today that's up by 17 points among Democrats, but down by 14 points among independents – and down by a remarkable 46 points among Republicans. It's also worsened sharply among seniors, the age group most disenchanted with Obama overall.

Similarly, under Bush in 2006, Republicans were far more confident in the government's handling of intelligence and reorganization of agencies; today their views have sharply worsened, down 49 points and 37 points, respectively.

There are fewer partisan differences on some questions. Large majorities across the partisan spectrum rate investigating threats more highly than avoiding intrusions on security; even among liberal Democrats it's 70 percent, rising to 90 percent of conservative Republicans.

In differences among other groups, there's a gender gap on screening: Six in 10 men favor using personal characteristics such as nationality and ethnicity in security screening; this drops to 47 percent among women. But if these characteristics are used as part of a broader profile, rather than on their own, that difference largely disappears.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 12-15, 2010, among a random national sample of 1,083 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents, with an oversample of African Americans (weighted to their correct share of the population) for a total of 153 black respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3.5-point error margin. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-16 previously released.

17. On another subject, do you think the U.S. campaign against terrorism is going very well, fairly well, not too well or not well at all?

	----- Well -----			----- Not well -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	At all	
1/15/10	51	5	45	48	30	18	1
9/7/08	62	14	48	34	20	14	3
9/7/07	54	8	46	45	23	21	1
9/7/06	52	7	45	47	26	21	1
6/25/06	57	13	44	40	23	18	2
12/14/03	65	17	47	33	21	12	2
10/29/03	62	8	54	38	23	14	1
9/7/03	69	12	57	29	19	10	2
4/30/03	83	26	57	16	10	6	1
9/26/02	73	15	58	26	17	9	1
9/8/02	70	10	60	29	21	8	1
7/15/02	75	15	60	24	16	8	1
4/21/02	73	11	63	26	17	9	1
3/10/02	84	21	63	15	10	6	1
1/27/02	88	32	56	11	8	4	1

18. For each item I name, please me tell whether you think the United States has done an excellent job on it, a good job, a not-so-good job or a poor job.

1/15/10 - Summary Table*

	-Excellent/Good -			-Not so good/Poor -			No opinion
	NET	Exc.	Good	NET	Not so	Poor	
a. Preventing further terrorist attacks in the United States	58	8	50	41	30	11	1
b. Breaking up the al Qaeda terrorist network	32	2	30	66	50	16	2
c. Winning the cooperation of other countries in fighting terrorism	50	6	44	50	38	11	1
d. Improving U.S. intelligence gathering and coordination	47	3	44	48	35	12	5
e. Reorganizing government							

agencies to improve
 anti-terrorism efforts 44 3 42 53 38 16 2

*Items a,b asked of half sample, items c-e asked of other half sample.

Trend:

a. Preventing further terrorist attacks in the United States

	-Excellent/Good -			-Not so good/Poor -			No opinion
	NET	Exc.	Good	NET	Not so	Poor	
1/15/10	58	8	50	41	30	11	1
9/7/06	66	9	57	33	24	8	1
1/18/04	74	14	61	25	19	6	1
9/7/03	80	19	61	19	16	3	1
9/8/02	75	13	62	23	21	3	2

b. Breaking up the al Qaeda terrorist network

	-Excellent/Good -			-Not so good/Poor -			No opinion
	NET	Exc.	Good	NET	Not so	Poor	
1/15/10	32	2	30	66	50	16	2
9/7/06	47	6	41	50	34	15	3
1/18/04	62	11	51	36	26	10	2
9/7/03	60	11	49	37	32	5	3
9/8/02	63	13	50	35	31	4	3

c. Winning the cooperation of other countries in fighting terrorism

	-Excellent/Good -			-Not so good/Poor -			No opinion
	NET	Exc.	Good	NET	Not so	Poor	
1/15/10	50	6	44	50	38	11	1
9/7/06	38	3	35	60	41	19	2
1/18/04	48	6	42	51	34	17	1
9/7/03	42	5	37	57	47	10	*
9/8/02	48	6	42	51	45	6	1

d. Improving U.S. intelligence gathering and coordination

	-Excellent/Good -			-Not so good/Poor -			No opinion
	NET	Exc.	Good	NET	Not so	Poor	
1/15/10	47	3	44	48	35	12	5
9/7/06	59	8	51	37	26	11	4
9/7/03	65	7	59	30	24	6	5
9/8/02	72	10	62	25	20	6	2

e. Reorganizing government agencies to improve anti-terrorism efforts

	-Excellent/Good -			-Not so good/Poor -			No opinion
	NET	Exc.	Good	NET	Not so	Poor	
1/15/10	44	3	42	53	38	16	2
9/7/06	54	5	49	43	28	15	3
9/7/03	70	9	60	27	21	6	4
9/8/02	71	11	60	28	23	5	1

19. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling the government's response to the attempted terrorist bombing aboard an airliner last month?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
1/15/10	62	35	3

20. Compared to the Bush administration, do you think the Obama administration is doing a better job handling intelligence reports about terrorist threats, a worse job, or about the same? (IF BETTER/WORSE) Is that much better/worse or somewhat better/worse?

	----- Better -----			----- Worse -----			About	No
	NET	Much	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Much	the same	opinion
1/15/10	30	17	13	20	7	13	48	2

Compare to: Compared to the way it handled intelligence reports about terrorist threats before September 11, do you think the Bush administration is now doing a better job handling intelligence about terrorists threats, a worse job, or what? (IF BETTER) Is that much better or somewhat better?

	----- Better -----				About the	No
	NET	Much	Somewhat	Worse	same (vol.)	opinion
4/18/04	81	37	44	8	8	3
5/19/02*	82	39	43	3	6	9

*"terrorist threats last summer"

21. Intelligence officials have identified a failure to connect various pieces of information that could have prevented the attempted airline bombing last month. How confident are you that they'll be able to improve intelligence methods to avoid this kind of error again - very confident, somewhat confident, not so confident or not confident at all?

	----- Confident -----			----- Not confident -----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	opinion
1/15/10	63	14	49	37	25	12	*

22. What do you think is more important right now - (for the federal government to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy); or (for the federal government not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats)?

	Investigate threats	Respect privacy	No opinion
1/15/10	75	23	2
12/11/06	63	34	3
9/7/06	65	32	3
5/15/06	67	30	3
5/11/06	65	31	4
1/8/06	65	32	3
9/7/03*	73	21	5
9/8/02	78	18	4
6/9/02	79	18	3

*9/7/03 and previous: "FBI" rather than "federal government"

23. Do you think police and other authorities should or should not be permitted to use personal characteristics like religion, or ethnicity, or nationality in deciding who to search in security lines at airports or other locations?

	Should	Should not	No opinion
1/15/10	53	45	2
9/7/06	47	49	3

23a. (IF SHOULD NOT) What if these kinds of personal characteristics are not used on their own, but are combined with other information as part of an overall profile - in that case do you think personal characteristics should or should not be included in security decisions?

	Should	Should not	No opinion
1/15/10	65	32	3

23/23A NET:

	NET	At first	Now	Should not	No opinion
1/15/10	83	53	29	16	2

24. Do you approve or disapprove of Obama's decision to close the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
1/15/10	39	56	5
6/21/09*	45	50	4
4/21/09**	51	38	11
2/8/09	46	39	15

*"...early next year?";

** 4/21 and 2/8 by Pew; "decision to close...within a year"

25. Which worries you more: (that Obama will not go far enough to investigate terrorism because of concerns about constitutional rights), or (that Obama will go too far in compromising constitutional rights in order to investigate terrorism)?

	Will not go far enough	Will go too far	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/10	63	27	6	4
1/8/06 Bush	48	44	6	2

26-43 previously released or held for release.

END