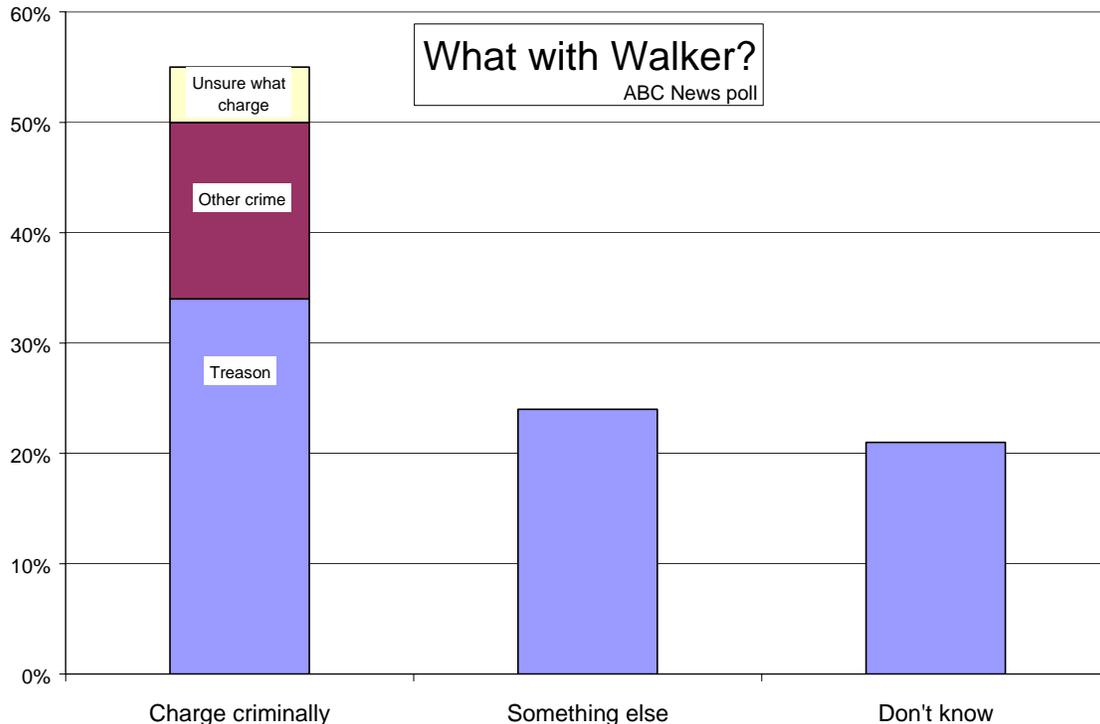


Criminal Trial is Favored For the American Taliban

Punishment is on the public's agenda when it comes to American Taliban John Walker, with most Americans favoring criminal charges against the captured fighter. Treason is the preferred charge, although its support falls short of a majority.

Fifty-five percent say Walker should be returned to the United States to face a criminal charge. That includes 34 percent who say he should be charged with treason, and 16 percent who favor a lesser charge that does not carry the death penalty.

Twenty-four percent favor other punishment, ranging from revoking Walker's citizenship to executing him. Reflecting the uncertainties of the situation, 21 percent have no opinion as to what should be done. But very few – just two percent – say he should be released.



Walker was captured Dec. 1 after apparently participating in an uprising by Taliban prisoners at the Qalai Janghi fort in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, that killed CIA agent

Johnny Micheal Spann. Walker is being detained at a U.S. Marine base southwest of Kandahar; authorities say they haven't decided what ultimately to do with him.

The Fate of John Walker

Charge him with a crime	55%
Includes: Treason	34%
Lesser crime	16
Don't know	5
Do something else	24
Includes: Execute him	5
Don't know	5
Turn him over to Afghans	4
Revoke his citizenship	3
Release him	2
Other	5
No opinion	21

Given the uncertainties, this poll posed the two broadest options, asking if Walker should be arrested to face criminal charges in the United States or if "something else" should be done with him. Those who favored a criminal trial were asked if the charge should be treason, which can carry the death penalty; or a lesser, non-capital charge. Those who favored "something else" were asked what that should be.

The range of verbatim answers sums up the diversity of views on Walker. Here are some:

- "His parents should deal with him."
- "I think he should be prosecuted as a traitor."
- "Hear his side of the story."
- "Leave him alone."
- "Interrogate further to see if he was brainwashed."
- "Whatever the Afghan people want to do with him. He deserves the same punishment that they would give their own people. I think it should be up to them to decide."
- "Hold him prisoner until the war is over, then take away his citizenship."
- "Hang the bastard."
- "The guy is young. He simply ended up where he ended up because of his circumstances. Use him for his knowledge."

Levying criminal charges is the preferred action, and treason is the preferred charge, in nearly all demographic groups. Women are 11 points more likely to have no opinion on what should be done with Walker, while men are nine points more apt to prefer something other than criminal charges.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Dec. 5-9, 2001, among a random national sample of 1,025 adults. The results have a three-point

error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results:

118. A captured soldier who was fighting with the Taliban in Afghanistan has been identified as an American named John Walker. Do you think Walker should be arrested to face criminal charges in the United States, or should something else be done with him?

(If arrested:) Do you think Walker should be charged with treason, which can carry the death penalty; or should be charged with a lesser crime that does not carry the death penalty?

(If something else:) What do you think should be done with him?

	-----Charge-----				Something	No
	Net	Treason	Lesser	No opin.	else	opin.
12/9/01	55	34	16	5	24	21

"Something else" includes (vol.):

Execute him	5
Don't know	5
Turn him over to	
Afghan authorities	4
Revoke citizenship	3
Release	2
Other	5

END