

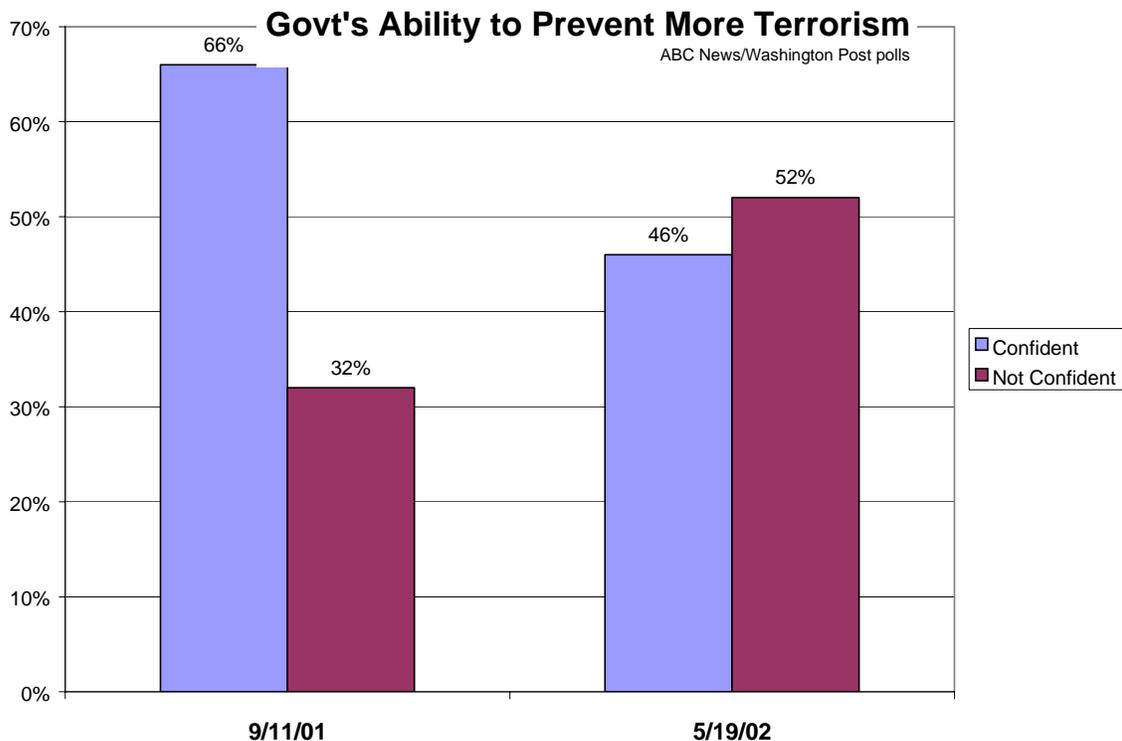
Concern About Future Terrorism Rises; Criticism of Pre-9/11 Efforts is Muted

Americans express only muted concern about the Bush administration's handling of pre-Sept. 11 terrorist threats, but increased alarm about the dangers ahead.

For the first time since Sept. 11, a narrow majority of the public lacks confidence in the government's ability to deter further attacks. And there's been a decline, to 54 percent, in the number who think the authorities are doing all they can to prevent such attacks.

Most, 56 percent, do support a congressional investigation of how the administration handled pre-Sept. 11 intelligence. But most in this ABC News/Washington Post poll also accept the administration's position that the warnings were too vague to act upon. And George W. Bush's job approval rating stands tall, at 76 percent.

CONFIDENCE – Most striking is the concern about further attacks. The night of Sept. 11, 66 percent of Americans expressed confidence that the government could prevent terrorist attacks in the future. Today just 46 percent say so, while the number who lack such confidence has risen by 20 points, to 52 percent.



Gov't's ability to prevent further terrorism:		
	Confident	Not confident
5/19/02	46%	52
9/11/01	66	32

(Full trend below)

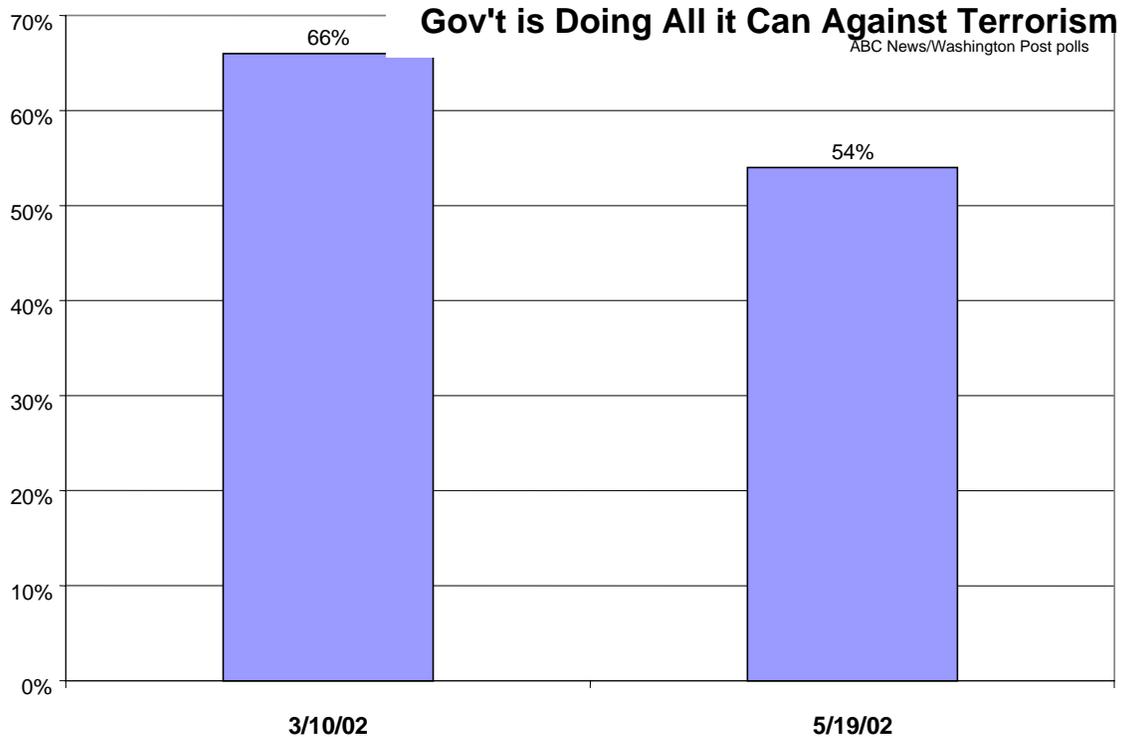
Several factors likely contribute to this change, including a better understanding of the nature of the threat, repeated warnings of further attacks – most recently Dick Cheney’s on Sunday – difficulties in capturing al Qaeda leaders and rising tensions in the Mideast.

More potentially hazardous for the administration is a decline in the number of Americans who say the United States is doing all it reasonably can to prevent more attacks. Fifty-four percent say so, down from a high of 66 percent in March, when U.S. military action against al Qaeda in Afghanistan was more intense.

This measure is key because it represents the bottom line in public interest – the best possible government efforts to prevent a recurrence of terrorist attacks.

Gov't doing all it can against terrorism?		
	Yes	No
5/19/02	54%	42
3/10/02	66	33

(Full trend below)



LOOKING BACK – While concerns about future attacks are up, second-guessing about the past is down. Despite the dispute over pre-Sept. 11 intelligence, the number of Americans who say the government “could have done more” to try to prevent those attacks has declined, from 65 percent at the time to 53 percent now.

The public divides evenly on whether the administration did enough to follow up on pre-Sept. 11 threats. And 50 percent say the FBI was negligent in failing to follow up on an agent’s proposed investigation of Arabs enrolled in U.S. flight-training schools.

But 56 percent also believe the pre-Sept. 11 threats were “too vague for the government to know what action to take,” as administration officials maintain. (Far fewer, 32 percent, think the threats were detailed enough to warrant specific action.) And 82 percent believe the administration is now doing a better job handling such intelligence.

Pre-Sept. 11 terrorist threats were:	
Detailed enough to take action	32%
Too vague to know what to do	56

As noted, 56 percent favor a congressional investigation into what the administration knew about terrorist threats and how it handled that intelligence. But at the same time, Americans divide evenly on whether the administration should make that intelligence information public.

JOB APPROVAL – Bush’s job approval rating soared from 55 percent Sept. 9 to a high of 92 percent on Oct. 9, a record for any modern president. Since then it’s declined gradually, to 76 percent in this poll – still three points above Ronald Reagan’s highest.

Bush’s overall rating has been fueled specifically by his handling of the U.S. response to terrorism, making a decline inevitable as other issues return to the public’s agenda. What’s remarkable is how long his high ratings have lasted – longer than the crisis-inspired ratings of any previous president, in polls that date to World War II.

Another positive sign for Bush is that his “strong” support has stabilized. The number of Americans who approve strongly of his work in office had fallen from a peak of 76 percent last October to 47 percent last month. This month it’s 48 percent – the first time since November it hasn’t slipped.

Bush’s direct ratings for handling the U.S. campaign against terrorism are similar – 79 percent approve, and 51 percent approve strongly.

PARTISANSHIP – There are substantial partisan differences in many of the issues measured in this poll. Bush receives almost unanimous approval from Republicans for his job performance – 98 percent – compared to 75 percent among independents and 61 percent among Democrats. His “strong” support is lowest by far among Democrats.

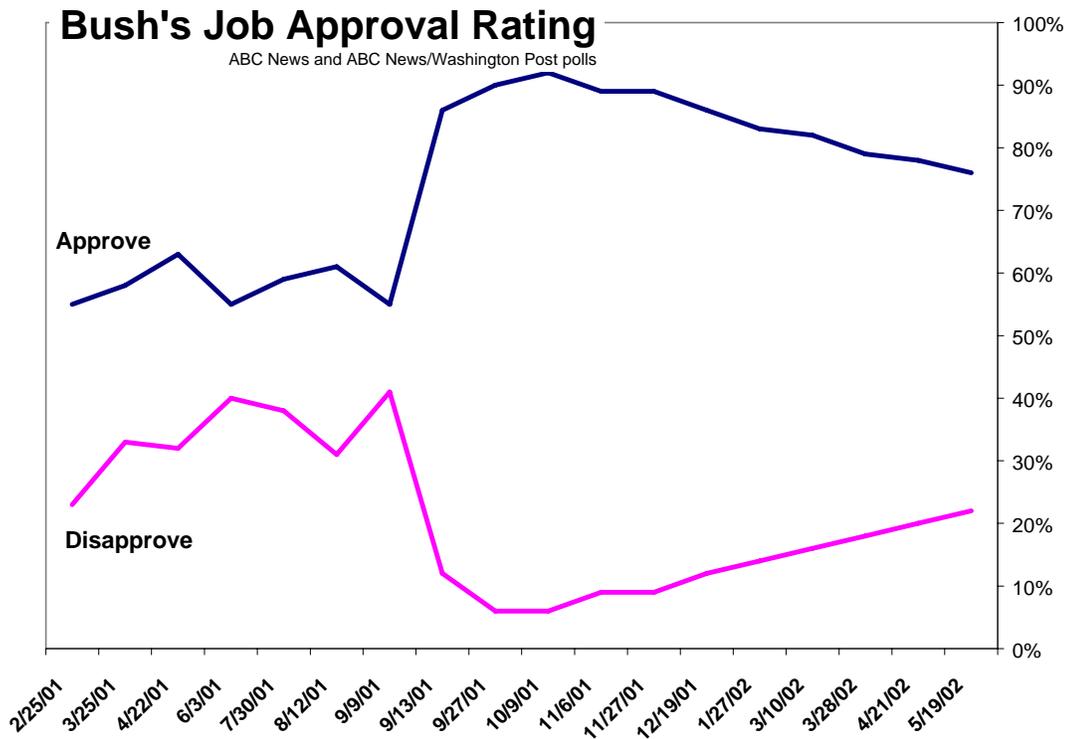
There’s even more of a partisan difference on whether the administration did enough to follow up on pre-Sept. 11 intelligence: Democrats say no by a 2-1 margin, 61-30 percent;

Republicans say yes by more than 2-1, 67-26 percent. (Independents divide evenly.) And Republicans are 30 points more likely than Democrats to accept the administration's position that the threats were too vague to warrant specific action.

Even among Americans who say the administration could have done more to follow up, however, 61 percent still approve of Bush's overall performance as president.

In another partisan split, Republicans are much more likely to express confidence in the government's ability to prevent further terrorism – 62 percent of Republicans do so, compared to 39 percent of Democrats and independents alike. And Republicans are 21 points more apt than Democrats to say the government is doing all it can to prevent future attacks.

Finally, 68 percent of Democrats and 61 percent of independents support a congressional inquiry into the administration's handling of intelligence last summer. Just 37 percent of Republicans agree.



METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone May 18-19, 2002, among a random national sample of 803 adults. The results have a 3.5-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

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Full results follow. * = less than 0.5 percent

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	-----Approve-----			-----Disapprove-----			No opin.
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	
5/19/02	76	48	28	22	13	8	3
4/21/02	78	47	31	20	10	9	2
3/28/02	79	49	30	18	10	8	3
3/10/02	82	52	30	16	7	9	2
1/27/02	83	56	27	14	7	7	3
12/19/01	86	64	22	12	6	6	2
11/27/01	89	69	21	9	5	4	1
11/6/01	89	65	24	9	4	5	2
10/9/01	92	76	16	6	3	3	1
9/27/01	90	70	20	6	3	3	4
9/13/01	86	63	23	12	6	5	2
9/9/01	55	26	29	41	22	20	3
8/12/01	61	28	33	31	17	14	8
7/30/01	59	28	30	38	22	17	3
6/3/01	55	27	28	40	22	18	6
4/22/01	63	33	30	32	16	16	5
3/25/01	58	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	8
2/25/01	55	NA	NA	23	NA	NA	22

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling the U.S. campaign against terrorism? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	-----Approve-----			-----Disapprove-----			No opin.
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	
5/19/02	79	51	27	19	10	9	3
4/21/02	81	56	25	18	10	7	2
3/10/02	88	64	24	10	5	5	2
1/27/02	88	NA	NA	10	NA	NA	2
12/19/01	89	67	22	9	5	4	2
10/15/01	92	75	17	5	3	3	3

3. How much confidence do you have in the ability of the U.S. government to prevent further terrorist attacks against Americans in this country: a great deal, a good amount, only a fair amount or none at all?

	-----Confident-----			-----Not confident-----			No opin.
	NET	Grt.deal	Good amt.	NET	Fair amt.	None	
5/19/02	46	17	29	52	42	10	2
3/10/02	55	18	38	44	39	5	*
1/27/02	57	18	40	42	37	6	1
11/27/01	63	24	39	36	32	5	1
11/6/01	52	17	35	47	40	7	1
9/11/01	66	35	31	32	30	2	1
6/2/97	35	10	26	62	52	10	3
8/5/96	35	12	23	65	49	16	*
5/14/95	36	12	24	63	51	12	1
4/20/95	37	13	24	62	51	11	1

6/28/93	59	22	37	41	32	8	1
4/3/89	46	16	30	54	38	16	*

4. Do you think the United States government did all it reasonably could do to try to prevent the September 11th terrorist attacks, or do you think it could have done more?

	US did all it could	US could have done more	No opin.
5/19/02	43	53	3
9/13/01*	31	65	4
9/11/01*	43	44	13
*9/13/01 and previous: "these attacks"			

5. Do you think the United States is doing all it reasonably can do to try to prevent further terrorist attacks, or do you think it should do more?

	US doing all it can	US should do more	No opin.
5/19/02	54	42	4
3/10/02	66	33	1
12/19/01	59	40	1
11/27/01	62	36	1
11/6/01	56	43	2
10/15/01	68	29	3
10/9/01	71	27	2

6. Do you happen to have heard or read recent news stories that Bush was briefed last summer, before the September 11th terrorist attacks, about intelligence reports of a possible terrorist plot to hijack American airplanes?

	Yes	No	No opin.
5/19/02	83	16	1

7. Do you think the Bush administration did or did not do enough to follow up on these intelligence reports, given what was known at the time?

	Did enough	Did not do enough	No opin.
5/19/02	44	46	10

8. Does it sound to you like these intelligence reports were detailed enough for the government to have taken specific action to increase security, or do you think these reports were too vague for the government to know what action to take?

	Detailed	Vague	No opin.
5/19/02	32	56	12

9. It's also been reported that an FBI agent last July proposed an investigation of Arabs taking flight-school training in the United States. The FBI did not follow up on this proposal. Do you regard this more as a missed opportunity, or more as negligence on the part of the FBI?

	Missed opportunity	FBI Negligence	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opin.
5/19/02	41	50	3	2	4

10. Do you think the administration should or should not publicly release the intelligence information about terrorist threats that it had last summer?

	Should release	Should not release	No opin.
5/19/02	47	47	5

11. Do you think the U.S. Congress should or should not conduct an investigation into what the Bush administration knew about terrorist threats before September 11th and how it handled that intelligence?

	Should conduct	Should not conduct	No opin.
5/19/02	56	41	3

12. Compared to the way it handled intelligence reports about terrorist threats last summer, do you think the Bush administration is now doing a better job handling intelligence about terrorist threats, a worse job, or what? (IF BETTER) Is that much better or somewhat better?

	NET	-----Better----- Much	Somewhat	Worse	About the same (vol.)	No opin.
5/19/02	82	39	43	3	6	9

END