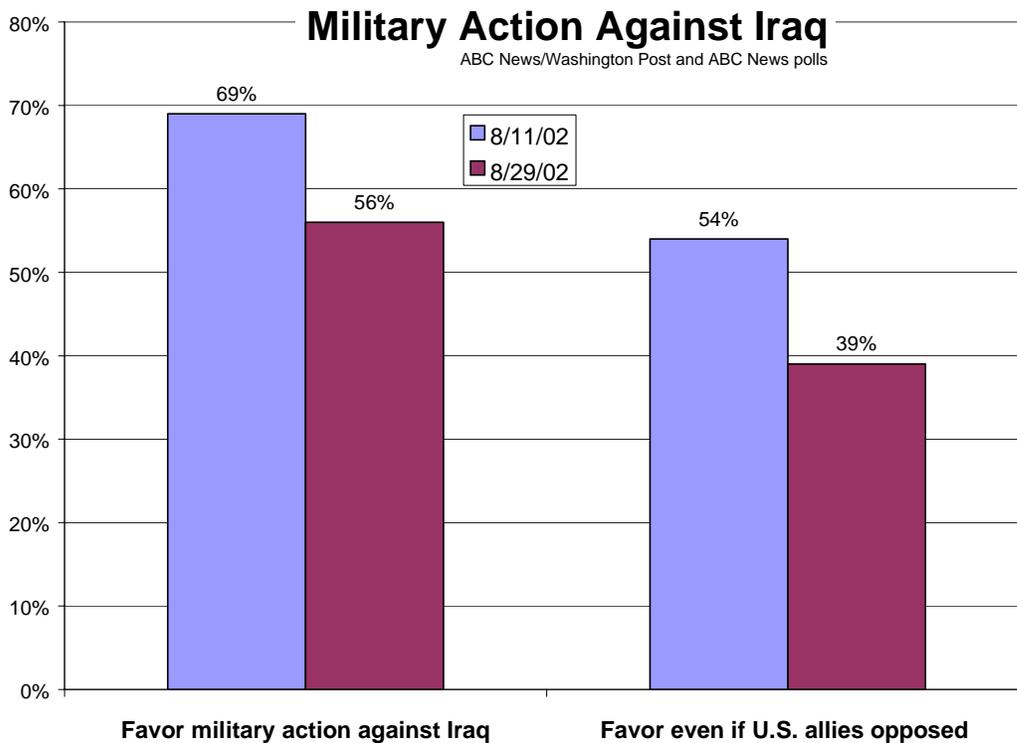


Support for Military Action Against Iraq Declines

Public support for military action against Iraq has dropped to its lowest level since the war on terrorism began, with the public closely divided on whether or not such an attack would create a greater risk of terrorism.

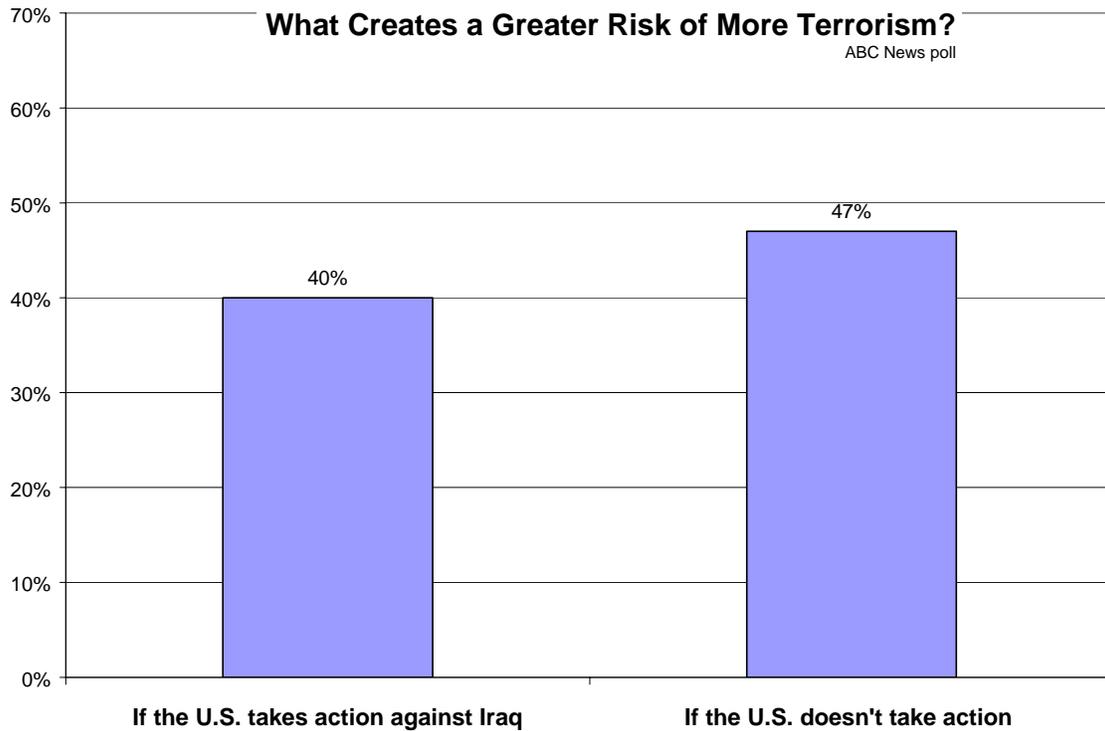
Fifty-six percent of Americans in this ABC News Nightline poll favor military action to force Saddam Hussein from power, still a majority but down sharply from 69 percent in the last few weeks. Support drops further to a 39 percent minority if U.S. allies oppose it. Earlier last month it was a 54 percent majority.



While most Americans (56 percent) think it's "very important" for the United States to force Saddam from power, the challenge for the Bush administration is to make the case that there's a significant enough threat to warrant military action.

Forty-seven percent think the risk of further terrorism will be greater if the United States doesn't take military action against Iraq, but almost as many, 40 percent, think taking action poses the greater threat. In contrast, right after Sept. 11, 73 percent thought

inaction against terrorists posed the greater risk, fueling widespread support for military action.



MORE HURDLES – Another challenge for George W. Bush is convincing the public he has a clear policy on Iraq. Now just four in 10 think he does.

That's one reason the public's rating of Bush's handling of the situation isn't stellar. A bare majority (52 percent) approve, well below his overall job rating which recent polls have pegged in the mid-60s.

Further, Americans overwhelmingly (80 percent) think Bush should get authorization from Congress before launching an attack on Iraq. The public splits on who should have the final say if Bush and Congress disagree: Forty-nine percent think it should be Congress; 45 percent say Bush.

PREDICTION – Weeks of public discussion about the prospect of military action against Iraq has most Americans, 71 percent, thinking the two nations are headed for war. And this isn't just projection on the part of those who support military action: Seventy-five percent of supporters think there will be war and almost as many opponents, 69 percent, agree.

The expectation of war is much higher now than in 1997 when the United States and its allies were in a dispute with Iraq over weapons inspections (54 percent expected war then) and in 1996 when the United States fired missiles after Iraq attacked Kurdish rebels (52 percent).

DRIVERS – A critical factor in support for military action is a sense of threat. Support for attacking Iraq is highest (80 percent) among Americans who see inaction as the greater peril. That dives to 33 percent among those who think military action poses the greater risk of further terrorism.

Having a clear policy also matters. Attacking Iraq to oust Saddam is favored by 72 percent of those who think Bush has a clear policy, compared to 44 percent of those who don't. And it's favored by 78 percent of those who think it's "very important" to force Saddam from power, compared to just 41 percent of those who call it "somewhat important."

	Favor attack to remove Saddam	Favor attack without allied support
Greater risk:		
Military action	33%	18
No military action	80	61
Bush policy clear?		
Yes	72	55
No	44	27
Forcing Saddam out:		
Very important	78	58
Somewhat important	41	21

PARTISANSHIP – The decline in support for military action comes only among Democrats and independents, introducing partisan divisions on the issue.

Now, 48 percent of Democrats support military action, down from 65 percent a few weeks ago, and support among independents has dropped by a similar amount (down 18 points to 53 percent). Republicans haven't wavered, with their support holding steady at about three-quarters.

Support may have softened among those less loyal to the administration as a result of the recent public debate which has highlighted opposing views on how best to handle the issue.

	Favor military action against Iraq	
	8/29	8/11
All	56%	69
Democrats	48	65
Republicans	74	76
Independents	53	71

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Aug. 29, 2002, among a random national sample of 504 adults. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Daniel Merkle.

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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*=less than 0.5 percent.

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation with Iraq and Saddam Hussein?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
8/29/02	52	36	12

2. Would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein from power?

	Favor	Oppose	No opin.
8/29/02	56	34	10
8/11/02	69	22	9
3/10/02	72	24	4
2/21/02*	67	30	4
1/27/02	71	24	4
12/19/01	72	24	5
11/27/01	78	17	6
10/11/94**	72	23	5
1/15/93***	82	15	3
8/21/92 RV	65	30	5
2/9/92	62	35	3
4/22/91	51	43	6
4/5/91	54	37	9
3/15/91	57	38	5

*Strongly/somewhat follow asked

**10/11/94 and previous: Gallup

***1/15/93 and previous: Would you support or oppose having U.S. forces resume military action...?

3. (IF FAVOR) What if U.S. allies opposed such military action - in that case would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq?

	Favor	Oppose	No opin.
8/29/02	69	24	6
8/11/02	80	17	4
3/10/02	77	21	3

2/3 NET. Would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein from power? (IF FAVOR) What if U.S. allies opposed such military action - in that case would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq?

	NET	-----Favor-----			-----If allies oppose-----	
		Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Oppose	No op.
8/29/02	56	39	14	4	34	10
8/11/02	69	54	11	3	22	9

3/10/02 72 55 15 2 24 4

4, Just your best guess, do you think the United States is headed for war with Iraq, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
8/29/02	71	22	6
11/11/97*	54	40	6
9/3/96	52	44	4
1/13/93	59	35	6

*11/97 and previous: "another war"

6. How important do you think it is for the United States to force Saddam Hussein from power -- very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all?

	-----Important-----			-----Not important-----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Smwht.	NET	Not too	At all	
8/29/02	85	56	30	12	7	5	3

7. Do you think George W. Bush has a clear policy on Iraq, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
8/29/02	40	47	13
8/11/02	45	42	14

8. If Bush decides to go to war with Iraq, do you think he should get authorization from Congress before launching an attack, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
8/29/02	80	17	3
8/11/02	75	21	5

9. (IF YES) If Bush and the Congress disagree on attacking Iraq, who should have the final decision - Bush, or the Congress?

	Bush	Congress	No opin.
8/29/02	34	61	4
8/11/02	37	59	4

8/9 NET. If Bush decides to go to war with Iraq, do you think he should get authorization from Congress before launching an attack, or not? (IF YES) If Bush and the Congress disagree on attacking Iraq, who should have the final decision - Bush, or the Congress?

	-----Bush's final decision-----				Don't know whose decision	No op.
	NET	Don't ask Congress	Ask Congress but his decision	Congress' decision		
8/29/02	45	17	28	49	4	3
8/11/02	48	21	27	44	4	5

10. What do you think would create a greater risk of further terrorism to this country - if the United States DOES take military action against Iraq, or if the United States does NOT take military action?

	Does take action	Does not take action	No diff. (vol.)	No opin.
8/29/02	40	47	8	5

Compare to: What do you think would create a greater risk of further terrorism in this country - if the United States DOES take military action against terrorists, or if the United States does NOT take military action?

	Does take action	Does not take action	No diff. (vol.)	No opin.
9/20/01	15	73	8	3

END