



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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THE THREAT OF TERRORISM AND THE TREATMENT OF DETAINEES
April 22-26, 2009

Although the recent release of detailed memos describing harsh interrogation techniques used on suspected terrorists under the Bush Administration has fueled calls for a Congressional investigation, most Americans disagree. Six in 10 Americans do not think Congress should hold hearings to investigate the Bush Administration's treatment of detainees.

Nevertheless, many Americans do not think waterboarding and other aggressive interrogation techniques are ever justified, and seven in 10 think waterboarding constitutes torture.

There is no indication that the release of those memos has hurt perceptions of the Obama Administration's dealings concerning terrorism. Most Americans approve of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism, and while few say his administration has made the country safer, only a fifth thinks he has made the country less safe.

INVESTIGATING THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Only a third of Americans thinks Congress should hold hearings to investigate the Bush Administration's treatment of detainees - the same proportion that thought so in February. Six in 10 Americans say Congress should not hold such hearings.

SHOULD CONGRESS INVESTIGATE THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION?

Table with 5 columns: Response, Now, Dems, Reps, Ind. Rows: Should have hearings, Hearings not necessary.

Republicans overwhelmingly oppose Congress holding such hearings, and most independents agree. Democrats - like Democratic representatives in Congress -- are more divided.

But this doesn't mean the public agrees with the tactics used under the Bush Administration to interrogate detainees. While 37% think waterboarding and other aggressive interrogation techniques are sometimes justified, 46% think these techniques are never justified.

Even more Americans - 71% - think the use of waterboarding and other aggressive interrogation techniques constitutes torture.

WATERBOARDING IS...

Table with 3 columns: Response, Justified, Torture. Rows: Yes, No.

Most Democrats think such tactics are never justified, while most Republicans think they sometimes are. Independents are divided.

Opinions on whether waterboarding constitutes torture affect opinions on whether or not it should be used. 60% of those who consider waterboarding to be torture think it is never justified, while 74% of those who think it is not torture think it sometimes is justified.

**THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND THE THREAT OF TERRORISM**

Overall, most Americans approve of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism - 55% approve, while only 28% disapprove. Most Democrats and independents approve of the way he is handling the issue; most Republicans disapprove.

**BARACK OBAMA HANDLING TERRORISM**

	Total	Dems	Reps	Ind
Approve	55%	76%	22%	52%
Disapprove	28	10	63	28

Some Republicans have charged the Obama Administration with making the country less safe from the threat of terrorism, but only 19% of Americans think that is the case. Slightly more - 23% - think the Obama Administration has made the U.S. safer. Half do not think there has been any change. Democrats give the President far higher marks for making the country safer than do Republicans.

**HAS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION MADE THE U.S. SAFER FROM TERRORISM?**

	Total	Dems	Reps	Ind
Safer	23%	38%	5%	18%
Less Safe	19	3	46	21
No Effect	49	51	38	52

This is one area in which Americans expressed general satisfaction with the previous administration's track record. Even as late as the beginning of September 2008 - when only 29% of Americans approved of the way George W. Bush was handling his job as president - 50% of Americans thought his administration had made the country safer.

**GUANTANAMO BAY**

One particular policy on which many Americans agree with the previous Administration - and disagree with Barack Obama -- is whether or not to continue to use the prison facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to hold suspected terrorists. 44% of Americans think the base should be shut down, while 47% think it should remain operational. Views on Guantanamo Bay have changed little since February.

**WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO GUANTANOMO BAY?**

	Now	2/2009	1/2009	7/2006
Keep it open	47%	46%	48%	51%
Close it	44	44	40	34

Most Democrats want to close the base, while most Republicans and independents think the base should remain open.

**LOOKING BACK: GEORGE W. BUSH AND DICK CHENEY**

Americans continue to hold a dim view of the Bush presidency overall. Just 23% of Americans approve of how George W. Bush handled his job as president - a standing that has not improved in the 100 days since he's been out of office.

<b>BUSH JOB APPROVAL</b>			
	Now	1/2009	12/2008
Approve	23%	22%	24%
Disapprove	70	73	68

Six in 10 Republicans approve of the way Bush handled his job as president, while the vast majority of Democrats and independents disapprove.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney - who has emerged recently as perhaps the Bush Administration's most vocal defender - remains unpopular with most Americans. Only 19% of Americans view Dick Cheney favorably, while more than twice as many hold an unfavorable opinion of him.

<b>OPINION OF DICK CHENEY</b>				
	Total	Dems	Reps	Ind
Favorable	19%	7%	50%	14%
Not favorable	42	61	15	37
Undecided/Don't know	38	31	32	47

Cheney remains popular with many Republicans, however - 50% of Republicans have a favorable opinion of the former Vice President. Democrats and independents hold a negative opinion of him.

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 973 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone April 22-26, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

An oversample of African Americans was interviewed, for a total of 212 interviews with African Americans. The results then weighted in proportion to the racial composition of the adult population in the U.S. Census. The margin of error for the sample of African Americans is 7 points.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**CBS/NYT POLL**  
**The Threat of Terrorism and the Treatment of Detainees**  
**April 22-26, 2009**

q1-9 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q10 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Approve	55	22	76	52
Disapprove	28	63	10	28
DK/NA	17	15	14	20

q11-q42 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q43 Do you think the policies of the Obama Administration have made the United States safer from terrorism, less safe from terrorism, or have the policies of the Obama Administration not affected the U.S.' safety from terrorism?

Safer	23	5	38	18
Less safe	19	46	3	21
No effect	49	38	51	52
Don't know/No answer	9	11	8	9

q44-48 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q49 Looking back, do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush handled his job as President?

					Jan09a*
					%
Approve	23	60	6	20	22
Disapprove	70	35	87	71	73
DK/NA	7	5	7	9	5

\*Wording change: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush handled his job as President over the past eight years?"

q50-62 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q63 Do you think it is sometimes justified to use water boarding and other aggressive interrogation tactics to get information from a suspected terrorist, or are these tactics never justified?

Justified	37	60	23	39
Not justified	46	25	61	43
Depends (Vol.)	7	7	4	10
DK/NA	10	8	12	8

q64 In a procedure known as 'waterboarding,' interrogators produce the sensation of drowning in a restrained prisoner either by dunking him in water or pouring water over his face. Do you consider this procedure a form of torture, or not?

Torture	71	51	83	68
Not torture	26	43	15	29
DK/NA	3	6	2	3

q65-67 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q68 Do you want Congress to hold hearings to investigate whether the Bush Administration's treatment of detainees, the use of wiretaps and other Justice Department practices broke the law, or don't you think that is necessary?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Feb09b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Want hearings	34	9	46	35	37
Don't think necessary	62	89	51	60	58
Don't know/No answer	4	2	3	5	5

q69-73 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q74 As you may know, for the past seven years the United States has been holding a number of suspected terrorists at a U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think the U.S. should continue to operate the prison, or do you think the U.S. should close the prison and transfer the prisoners somewhere else?

					Feb09a
Continue to operate	47	70	30	52	46
Close it	44	24	62	37	44
Don't know/No answer	9	6	8	11	10

q75-80 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q81 Is your opinion of Dick Cheney favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Dick Cheney yet to have an opinion?

					Jan09a
Favorable	19	50	7	14	13
Not favorable	42	15	61	37	44
Undecided	21	22	16	25	22
Haven't heard enough	17	10	15	22	20
Refused	1	3	1	2	1

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	973	
Total Republicans	217	196
Total Democrats	411	372
Total Independents	345	405