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## Public Reaction to Libby Indictments Is Low Key

Majority denies that case demonstrates Bush administration has low ethics

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### GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- According to a CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll conducted this past weekend, less than half of the American public believes former senior White House aide I. Lewis Libby Jr. did anything illegal in the matter for which he was indicted; a majority says the controversy involving him is an isolated incident rather than symptomatic of low ethics at the White House; and there is little shift in the already low opinion ratings of the players closely associated with this controversy, including ratings of presidential adviser Karl Rove and Vice President Dick Cheney. President George W. Bush's job approval rating has also not changed compared with polling conducted a week ago.

Given the potential for a scandal of this magnitude to undermine support for the administration, it is worth noting that Republicans tend to stand by the administration when answering questions concerning the controversy over Libby's role in leaking a CIA operative's name to the press two years ago (while Democrats, predictably, do not).

Clearly, most Americans believe Libby did something wrong in connection with the case concerning the alleged outing of CIA operative Valerie Plame. While Libby was not charged with any crimes specific to the leak per se, he was indicted on five felony counts concerning the truthfulness of statements he made to FBI agents and of his testimony before the grand jury hearing the case. Albeit a plurality, fewer than half (45%) believe Libby's actions in the case were illegal, while 31% say they were unethical but not illegal. Only 8% say he did nothing wrong.

These results vary considerably by party, as only 28% of Republicans, but 56% of Democrats, consider Libby's actions illegal.

*As you may know, a special prosecutor has investigated the leak of the name of a CIA employee by White House officials. On Friday, a grand jury indicted Lewis Libby on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. From what you have heard or read about Libby's involvement in this matter, which of the following statements best describes your view of his actions -- [ROTATED: he did something illegal, he did something unethical but nothing illegal, or he did not do anything seriously wrong]?*

	Illegal	Unethical	Nothing wrong	OTHER (vol.)	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
National adults	45	31	8	1	15
Republicans	28	40	13	*	19
Independents	52	27	5	1	15
Democrats	56	26	5	1	12
* Less than 0.5%					
(vol.) = Volunteered response					

Despite much speculation that Libby's indictment will deepen public skepticism of Bush and spell the political unraveling of his administration, the initial reaction of Americans appears to downplay the matter's significance. Only 38% of Americans say the charges are a sign that "the Bush administration in general has low ethical standards." The majority, 56%, say the charges are "based on an isolated incident."

A majority of independents agree with most Republicans that the controversy stands alone, while most Democrats contend the charges are symptomatic that the Bush administration itself is corrupt.

*Do you think these charges are a sign that the Bush administration in general has low ethical standards, or do you think these charges are based on an isolated incident?*

	<b>Sign of low ethical standards</b>	<b>Isolated incident</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	%	%	%
National adults	38	56	6
Republicans	10	83	7
Independents	38	54	8
Democrats	65	31	4

(An ABC News/*Washington Post* poll released this past weekend contained a question suggesting that the scandal does cast a broader shadow over the administration. However, the ABC News/*Washington Post* question sets a lower threshold, asking whether the Libby case indicates "broader problems with ethical wrongdoing in the Bush administration." With this wording, ABC News and the *Washington Post* found 55% saying the case does indicate broader problems, while 41% say it is an isolated incident.)

### **Bush Approval Is Steady**

A key indicator of the Libby case's political impact is President Bush's overall job approval rating. According to the Oct. 28-30 poll, Bush's job approval remains exactly where it was in a poll conducted Oct. 24-26, just before Libby's indictment on Friday, and is statistically similar to two other polls conducted in the weeks before that. Forty-one percent of Americans now approve of the way Bush is handling his job as president, identical to the 41% who approved in a survey just before the indictments, and the same as his average rating spanning four Gallup Polls conducted this month.

	<b>Bush Job Approval</b>		
	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	%	%	%
2005 Oct 28-30	41	56	3
2005 Oct 24-26	41	56	3
2005 Oct 21-23	42	55	3
2005 Oct 13-16	39	58	3
<b>Average for the month</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>3</b>

At 41%, Bush's average approval rating for October is down compared with where it stood in September and August (44%), but Gallup's detailed October polling makes it clear that Bush's current job approval situation has not yet changed as a result of the Libby indictments. Bush's job approval ratings are at the low point of his administration, continuing a pattern of sagging approval ratings for him that has been evident since the start of the year. However, the events of the past week apparently have not pushed his ratings down further.

	<b>Bush Job Approval -- Monthly Averages for 2005</b>	
	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>
	%	%
October	41	56
September	44	53
August	44	53
July	47	49
June	46	51
May	48	47
April	49	48

March	50	46
February	52	45
January	52	45

The weekend poll also does not support the hypothesis that the Plame controversy per se has hurt perceptions of Bush on other dimensions. Bush's ratings as being an effective manager of government, being honest and trustworthy, and being a strong leader have dropped since the summer. But trend data show the last two measures are statistically no different from September, suggesting again that Bush's image has been damaged in recent months, but not necessarily damaged further by the indictments.

Since July, those saying Bush can manage government effectively and that he is a strong and decisive leader each declined by 10 points. Over the same period, perceptions that he is honest and trustworthy dropped by only 5 points.

The result is that today, a slim majority of Americans say Bush is a strong and decisive leader (52% vs. 47%). Americans are evenly divided over whether Bush is honest and trustworthy (49% say this applies, while 48% say it does not). A majority now disagrees that he can manage the government effectively (56% vs. 43%).

Additionally, as would perhaps be expected for a president with only a 41% job approval rating and a 56% disapproval rating, the majority of Americans, 55%, say that the Bush presidency has been a failure so far, while 42% say it has been a success. (As can be seen, these numbers are essentially a reflection of the president's job approval rating.) Americans aren't optimistic that things are going to change for the better; 55% say the remaining three years will be a failure, while 41% say they will be a success for Bush.

### **Libby, Rove, and Cheney**

Public reaction to Cheney's former chief of staff Libby is decidedly negative. Only 10% of Americans view Libby favorably (he resigned Friday shortly after the indictments were announced). Close to half (43%) hold an unfavorable view, but a roughly equal number, 47%, have no opinion of him. This is the first time Gallup has asked the public about this previously behind-the-scenes White House figure.

Although Rove has been, and remains, under investigation for his role in the Plame affair, Gallup finds only modest change in public attitudes toward him since these were first measured in July. His favorable rating has held steady at 24%, while his unfavorable rating has inched up slightly from 34% in July to 39% in mid-October and 40% today.

Last week it was reported that Cheney himself may have been Libby's source for Plame's identity, raising questions about his role in coordinating the leak of her name. Thus far it does not appear that Cheney's image has been hurt further by the revelation. The weekend poll finds little change in favorable ratings of Cheney compared with mid-October. About 4 in 10 have a favorable view of him, while half hold an unfavorable view. These ratings are slightly more negative, however, than those recorded in June. At that time, 48% had a favorable view of Cheney and 44% unfavorable.

### **Where Is It Headed?**

The weekend poll asked Americans how well they understand the Libby case. About two-thirds say they understand it very (22%) or somewhat (46%) well, while about one-third (31%) say they don't understand it very well or don't understand it at all.

Those who present themselves as knowledgeable about the case -- saying they understand it "very well" -- tend to be much more critical than others about the seriousness of the charges and the broader implications for the Bush administration. Whether this is an indication that public opinion will grow more critical as the facts become better known, or whether it merely reflects the somewhat higher proportion of Democrats among those highly familiar with the case, is not clear.

### Seriousness of Charges According to Knowledge of Case

	Understand case very well	Understand case somewhat well	Do not understand case well
	%	%	%
Illegal	61	49	29
Unethical	21	38	27
Nothing wrong	15	7	4
No opinion/OTHER (vol.)	3	6	40
	100%	100%	100%

(vol.) = Volunteered response

### Survey Methods

These results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 800 adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Oct. 28-30, 2005. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is  $\pm 4$  percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
2005	%	%	%
2005 Oct 28-30	41	56	3
2005 Oct 24-26	41	56	3
2005 Oct 21-23	42	55	3
2005 Oct 13-16	39	58	3
2005 Sep 26-28	45	50	5
2005 Sep 16-18	40	58	2
2005 Sep 12-15	45	52	3
2005 Sep 8-11	46	51	3
2005 Aug 28-30	45	52	3
2005 Aug 22-25	40	56	4
2005 Aug 8-11	45	51	4
2005 Aug 5-7	45	51	4
2005 Jul 25-28	44	51	5
2005 Jul 22-24	49	48	3
2005 Jul 7-10	49	48	3
2005 Jun 29-30	46	51	3
2005 Jun 24-26	45	53	2
2005 Jun 16-19	47	51	2
2005 Jun 6-8	47	49	4
2005 May 23-26	48	47	5
2005 May 20-22	46	50	4
2005 May 2-5	50	45	5
2005 Apr 29-May 1	48	49	3
2005 Apr 18-21	48	49	3
2005 Apr 4-7	50	45	5
2005 Apr 1-2	48	48	4
2005 Mar 21-23	45	49	6
2005 Mar 18-20	52	44	4
2005 Mar 7-10	52	44	4
2005 Feb 25-27	52	45	3
2005 Feb 21-24	51	45	4
2005 Feb 7-10	49	48	3
2005 Feb 4-6	57	40	3
2005 Jan 14-16	51	46	3

2005 Jan 7-9	52	44	4
2005 Jan 3-5	52	44	4
<b>2004</b>	%	%	%
2004 Dec 17-19	49	46	5
2004 Dec 5-8	53	44	3
2004 Nov 19-21	55	42	3
2004 Nov 7-10	53	44	3
2004 Oct 29-31	48	47	5
2004 Oct 22-24	51	46	3
2004 Oct 14-16	51	47	2
2004 Oct 11-14	48	49	3
2004 Oct 9-10	47	49	4
2004 Oct 1-3	50	48	2
2004 Sep 24-26	54	44	2
2004 Sep 13-15	52	45	3
2004 Sep 3-5	52	46	2
2004 Aug 23-25	49	47	4
2004 Aug 9-11	51	46	3
2004 Jul 30-Aug 1	48	49	3
2004 Jul 19-21	49	47	4
2004 Jul 8-11	47	49	4
2004 Jun 21-23	48	49	3
2004 Jun 3-6	49	49	2
2004 May 21-23	47	49	4
2004 May 7-9	46	51	3
2004 May 2-4	49	48	3
2004 Apr 16-18	52	45	3
2004 Apr 5-8	52	45	3
2004 Mar 26-28	53	44	3
2004 Mar 8-11	50	47	3
2004 Mar 5-7	49	48	3
2004 Feb 16-17	51	46	3
2004 Feb 9-12	51	46	3
2004 Feb 6-8	52	44	4
2004 Jan 29-Feb 1	49	48	3
2004 Jan 12-15	53	44	3
2004 Jan 9-11	59	38	3
2004 Jan 2-5	60	35	5
<b>2003</b>			
2003 Dec 15-16	63	34	3
2003 Dec 11-14	56	41	3
2003 Dec 5-7	55	43	2
2003 Nov 14-16	50	47	3
2003 Nov 10-12	51	45	4
2003 Nov 3-5	54	43	3
2003 Oct 24-26	53	42	5
2003 Oct 10-12	56	40	4
2003 Oct 6-8	55	42	3
2003 Sep 19-21	50	47	3
2003 Sep 8-10	52	43	5
2003 Aug 25-26	59	37	4
2003 Aug 4-6	60	36	4
2003 Jul 25-27	58	38	4
2003 Jul 18-20	59	38	3
2003 Jul 7-9	62	34	4
2003 Jun 27-29	61	36	3
2003 Jun 12-15	63	33	4
<b>2003</b>		<b>No</b>	
	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>opinion</b>
	%	%	%
2003 Jun 9-10	62	34	4

2003 May 30-Jun 1	64	32	4
2003 May 19-21	66	30	4
2003 May 5-7	69	28	3
2003 Apr 22-23	70	26	4
2003 Apr 14-16	71	24	5
2003 Apr 7-9	69	26	5
2003 Apr 5-6	70	27	3
2003 Mar 29-30	71	26	3
2003 Mar 24-25	69	27	4
2003 Mar 22-23	71	25	4
2003 Mar 14-15	58	38	4
2003 Mar 3-5	57	37	6
2003 Feb 24-26	57	37	6
2003 Feb 17-19	58	37	5
2003 Feb 7-9	61	34	5
2003 Feb 3-6	59	35	6
2003 Jan 31-Feb 2	61	35	4
2003 Jan 23-25	60	36	4
2003 Jan 20-22	58	36	6
2003 Jan 13-16	61	34	5
2003 Jan 10-12	58	37	5
2003 Jan 3-5	63	32	5
<b>2002</b>			
2002 Dec 19-22	61	32	7
2002 Dec 16-17	63	33	4
2002 Dec 9-10	63	32	5
2002 Dec 5-8	64	29	7
2002 Nov 22-24	65	28	7
2002 Nov 11-14	66	26	8
2002 Nov 8-10	68	27	5
2002 Oct 31-Nov 3	63	29	8
2002 Oct 21-22	67	28	5
2002 Oct 14-17	62	31	7
2002 Oct 3-6	67	28	5
2002 Sep 23-26	68	26	6
2002 Sep 20-22	66	30	4
2002 Sep 13-16	70	26	4
2002 Sep 5-8	66	30	4
2002 Sep 2-4	66	29	5
2002 Aug 19-21	65	28	7
2002 Aug 5-8	68	26	6
2002 Jul 29-31	71	23	6
2002 Jul 26-28	69	26	5
2002 Jul 22-24	69	24	7
2002 Jul 9-11	73	21	6
2002 Jul 5-8	76	18	6
2002 Jun 28-30	76	19	5
2002 Jun 21-23	73	21	6
2002 Jun 17-19	74	20	6
2002 Jun 3-6	70	23	7
2002 May 28-29	77	17	6
2002 May 20-22	76	17	7
2002 May 6-9	76	19	5
2002 Apr 29-May 1	77	20	3
2002 Jun 7-8	74	18	8
2002 Apr 22-24	77	17	6
2002 Apr 8-11	75	20	5
2002 Apr 5-7	76	19	5
2002 Mar 22-24	79	17	4
2002 Mar 18-20	79	16	5
2002 Mar 8-9	80	14	6

2002 Mar 4-7	77	18	5
2002 Mar 1-3	81	14	5
2002 Feb 8-10	82	14	4
2002 Feb 4-6	82	14	4
2002 Jan 25-27	84	13	3
2002 Jan 11-14	83	13	4
2002 Jan 7-9	84	12	4
<b>2001</b>	%	%	%
2001 Dec 14-16	86	11	3
2001 Dec 6-9	86	10	4
2001 Nov 26-27	87	8	5
2001 Nov 8-11	87	9	4
2001 Nov 2-4	87	9	4
2001 Oct 19-21	88	9	3
2001 Oct 11-14	89	8	3
2001 Oct 5-6	87	10	3
2001 Sep 21-22	90	6	4
2001 Sep 14-15	86	10	4
2001 Sep 7-10	51	39	10
2001 Aug 24-26	55	36	9
2001 Aug 16-19	57	34	9
2001 Aug 10-12	57	35	8
2001 Aug 3-5	55	35	10
2001 Jul 19-22	56	33	11
2001 Jul 10-11	57	35	8
2001 Jun 28-Jul 1	52	34	14
2001 Jun 11-17	55	33	12
2001 Jun 8-10	55	35	10
2001 May 18-20	56	36	8
2001 May 10-14	56	31	13
2001 May 7-9	53	33	14
2001 Apr 20-22	62	29	9
2001 Apr 6-8	59	30	11
2001 Mar 26-28	53	29	18
2001 Mar 9-11	58	29	13
2001 Mar 5-7	63	22	15
2001 Feb 19-21	62	21	17
2001 Feb 9-11	57	25	18
2001 Feb 1-4	57	25	

2. Thinking about the following characteristics and qualities, please say whether you think it applies or doesn't apply to George W. Bush. How about -- [ROTATED]?

<b>2005 Oct 28-30 (sorted by "applies")</b>	<b>Applies</b>	<b>Doesn't apply</b>
	%	%
Is a strong and decisive leader	52	47
Is honest and trustworthy	49	48
Can manage the government effectively	43	56

#### Full Trends: Bush Qualities and Characteristics

##### A. Is honest and trustworthy

	<b>Applies</b>	<b>Doesn't apply</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	%	%	%
2005 Oct 28-30	49	48	3
2005 Sep 16-18	47	50	3

2005 Aug 28-30	51	47	2
2005 Jul 22-24	54	44	2
2005 Apr 1-2	56	42	2
2005 Jan 14-16 ^	56	41	3
2004 Feb 16-17	55	42	3
2003 Nov 14-16	59	40	1
2003 Jun 27-29	65	33	2
2003 Apr 5-6	73	25	2
2003 Jan 10-12 ^	70	27	3
2002 Jul 26-28	69	26	5
2002 Apr 29-May 1	77	20	3
2001 Jul 10-11	66	31	3
2001 Apr 20-22	67	29	4
2001 Feb 9-11	64	29	7
2000 Mar 10-12	64	28	8
1999 Sep 10-12	62	29	9

^ Asked of a half sample

#### B. Is a strong and decisive leader

	<b>Applies</b>	<b>Doesn't</b>	<b>No</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>apply</b>	<b>opinion</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
2005 Oct 28-30	52	47	1
2005 Sep 16-18	49	51	*
2005 Sep 8-11	52	47	1
2005 Aug 28-30	60	40	*
2005 Jul 22-24	62	37	1
2005 Jan 14-16 ^	61	37	2
2004 Feb 16-17	65	33	2
2003 Nov 14-16	66	34	*
2003 Jun 27-29	75	24	1
2003 Apr 5-6	80	19	1
2003 Jan 10-12 ^	76	23	1
2002 Jul 26-28	70	27	3
2002 Apr 29-May 1	77	21	2
2001 Oct 5-6	75	23	2
2001 Aug 10-12	55	43	2
2001 Jul 10-11	57	40	3
2001 Apr 20-22	60	37	3
2001 Feb 9-11	61	34	5
2000 Mar 10-12	63	30	7
2000 Feb 25-27	61	32	7
2000 Feb 20-21	58	33	9
2000 Feb 4-6	62	30	8
2000 Jan 17-19	66	24	10
1999 Mar 4	60	14	26

\* Less than 0.5%

^ Asked of a half sample

#### C. Can manage the government effectively

	<b>Applies</b>	<b>Doesn't</b>	<b>No</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>apply</b>	<b>opinion</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
2005 Oct 28-30	43	56	1
2005 Jul 22-24	53	45	2



2003 Jan 10-12 ^	67	31	2
2002 Jul 26-28	66	30	4
2002 Apr 29-May 1	75	21	4
2001 Oct 5-6	79	19	2
2001 Feb 9-11	61	31	8
2000 Mar 10-12	64	28	8
2000 Jan 17-19	66	22	12
1999 Sep 10-14	72	19	9
1999 Mar 12-14	77	15	8

^ Asked of a half sample

3. Since the start of 2001 when George W. Bush became president, in general, would you say his presidency has been a success or failure?

	Success	Failure	No opinion
2005 Oct 28-30	42%	55	3
2005 Aug 28-30 ^	47%	51	2

^ Asked of a half sample

#### **Trends for Comparison:**

##### **Early Bush Administration:**

Do you consider the first year of the Bush administration to be a -- [ROTATED: success (or a failure)]?

	Success	Failure	TOO SOON TO TELL (vol.)	No opinion
2002 Jan 25-27 (vol.) = Volunteered response	83%	11	3	3

Do you consider the first six months of the Bush administration to be a -- [ROTATED: success (or a failure)]?

	Success	Failure	TOO SOON TO TELL (vol.)	No opinion
2001 Aug 3-5 ^ (vol.) = Volunteered response	56	32	7	5

4. Now thinking ahead, do you think the remaining three years of George W. Bush's presidency will be a success or failure?

	Success	Failure	No opinion
2005 Oct 28-30	41%	55	4

5. Next, we'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people -- or if you have never heard of them. How about -- How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

##### **A. Dick Cheney**

Favorable %	Unfavorable %	Never heard of %	No opinion %
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2005 Oct 28-30	42	51	2	5
2005 Oct 13-16	43	47	2	8
2005 Jun 24-26	48	44	2	6
2005 Feb 4-6	51	41	2	6
2004 Nov 19-21	53	41	2	4
2004 Oct 9-10	46	46	2	6
2004 Sep 3-5	48	44	2	6
2004 Aug 23-25 ^	44	45	2	9
2004 Jul 19-21 ^	47	43	2	8
2004 Jul 8-11	46	42	3	9
2004 Feb 16-17	45	42	3	10
2003 Oct 24-26	55	33	3	9
2003 Sep 19-21	54	36	3	7
2003 Jun 27-29 ^	54	34	3	9
2003 Jan 31-Feb 2	61	28	2	9
2002 Sep 23-26	65	24	4	7
2002 Jul 26-28	57	30	3	10
2002 Jan 11-14	67	20	3	10
2001 Apr 20-22	64	22	3	11
2001 Mar 5-7	63	18	5	14
2001 Jan 15-16	61	23	5	11
2000 Dec 15-17	61	23	6	10
2000 Dec 2-4	58	23	8	11
2000 Nov 13-15	51	22	9	18
2000 Nov 13-15	53	22	8	17
2000 Sep 15-17	46	24	8	22
2000 Aug 18-19	54	21	5	20
2000 Aug 4-5	48	21	9	22
2000 Jul 25-26	51	14	12	23

^ Asked of a half sample

#### B. Presidential adviser, Karl Rove

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Never heard of	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2005 Oct 28-30	24	40	21	15
2005 Oct 13-16	22	39	23	16
2005 Jul 22-24	25	34	25	16

#### C. Former vice presidential adviser, Lewis "Scooter" Libby

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Never heard of	No opinion
	10%	43	31	16
2005 Oct 28-30				

6. As you may know, a special prosecutor has investigated the leak of the name of a CIA employee by White House officials. On Friday, a grand jury indicted Lewis Libby on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. From what you have heard or read about Libby's involvement in this matter, which of the following statements best describes your view of his actions -- [ROTATED: he did something illegal, he did something unethical but nothing illegal, or he did not do anything seriously wrong]?

	Illegal	Unethical	Nothing wrong	OTHER (vol.)	No opinion
	45%	31	8	1	15
2005 Oct 28-30					

(vol.) = Volunteered response

7. Do you think these charges are a sign that the Bush administration in general has low ethical standards, or do you think these charges are based on an isolated incident?

	<b>Sign of low ethical standards</b>	<b>Isolated incident</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2005 Oct 28-30	38%	56	6

8. How well do you, personally, understand this case -- very well, somewhat well, not too well, or not at all?

	<b>Very well</b>	<b>Somewhat well</b>	<b>Not too well</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2005 Oct 28-30	22%	46	22	9	1

9. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think Dick Cheney was aware of Lewis Libby's actions in this matter, or was Cheney not aware?

	<b>Yes, aware</b>	<b>No, not aware</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2005 Oct 28-30	55%	29	16