

THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION

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## **Most Americans Say Major Changes Needed in Government Terrorism Agencies**

**Majority blame Bush and Clinton administrations for not taking al Qaeda threat seriously**

*by Jeffrey M. Jones*

### **GALLUP NEWS SERVICE**

PRINCETON, NJ -- In the wake of the highly publicized hearings about the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, most Americans believe the government agencies responsible for preventing terrorist attacks are in need of at least major reforms -- including about one in five who say they need a complete overhaul. A majority of Americans assign at least some blame to the Bush and Clinton administrations for failing to take the al Qaeda terrorist threat seriously. Still, confidence in the government to protect citizens from attacks remains high and basically unchanged since immediately after the Sept. 11 attacks. Additionally, 60% of Americans approve of the way George W. Bush is handling terrorism.

The poll these conclusions were derived from was conducted April 16-18, shortly after national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, CIA Director George Tenet, and others publicly testified before the federal commission investigating the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Some expect the commission to recommend a restructuring of the government agencies responsible for stopping terrorism, such as the CIA and FBI, something the Bush administration is likely to do anyway. Most Americans would apparently support such a change -- 19% say these agencies need a complete overhaul and 44% say they need major reforms. Roughly one in three Americans believe only minor reforms (30%) or no reforms at all (5%) are needed.

**Are the Government Agencies Responsible for  
Preventing Terrorist Attacks in Need of a Complete  
Overhaul, Major Reforms, Minor Reforms, or No  
Reforms at All?**



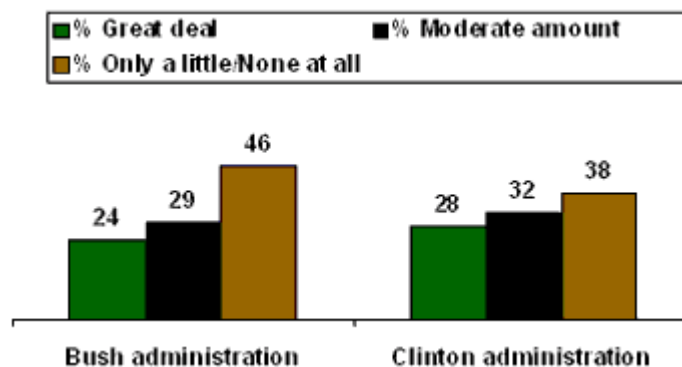
April 16-18, 2004

Democrats (25%) and independents (22%) are twice as likely as Republicans (10%) to say these agencies need a complete overhaul, although this is clearly the sentiment of a minority of all partisan groups.

In the past, Gallup has asked a similar question about other issues. Americans previously expressed a slightly greater desire for "complete overhauls" of the Medicare system (June 2003), the way large corporations are audited (July 2002), and the way ballots are cast and counted in this country (December 2000), than they currently do about the agencies responsible for preventing terrorism.

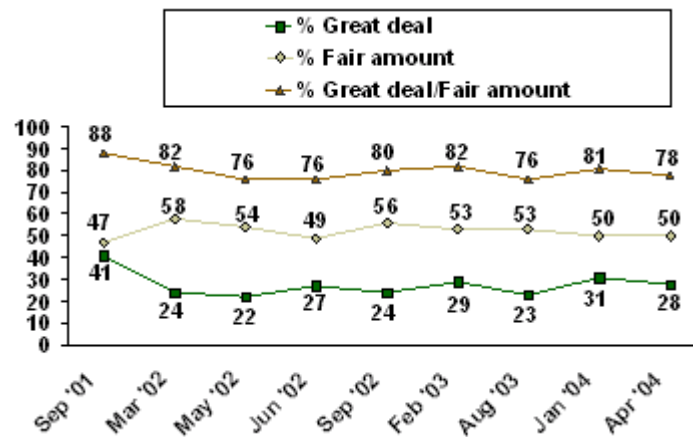
Perhaps a bit of good news for Bush is that Americans are as likely, if not more likely, to be critical of the Clinton administration as they are of the Bush administration for failing to take warnings about the al Qaeda terrorist network more seriously. The poll finds a majority of Americans assigning at least a moderate amount of blame to the Bush (53%) and Clinton (60%) administrations for failing to take the warnings about al Qaeda more seriously. Twenty-four percent blame the Bush administration "a great deal," while 28% blame the Clinton administration this much.

#### Blame for Not Taking the Warnings About Al Qaeda Seriously Enough Before Sept. 11



Also, despite renewed questions about the government's ability to prevent terrorist attacks in the United States, Americans' confidence has changed little. Twenty-eight percent of Americans say they have a great deal of confidence in the U.S. government to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks, and an additional 50% have a fair amount. This combined percentage has been around 80% since March 2002. Days after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, 41% had a great deal of confidence in the government, and 47% a fair amount. But the percentage of Americans expressing a great deal of confidence in the government quickly declined after that, and has only exceeded 30% once (31% in early January 2004).

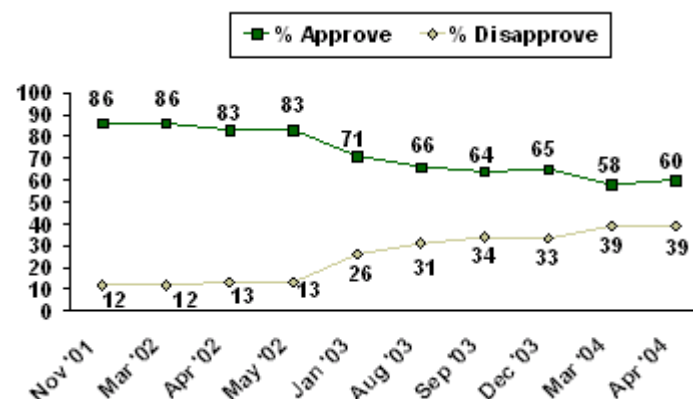
#### Confidence in the Government to Protect Citizens From Future Terrorist Attacks



Republicans (47%) are much more likely to say they have a great deal of confidence in the government to protect U.S. citizens from terror attacks than are independents (19%) and Democrats (19%).

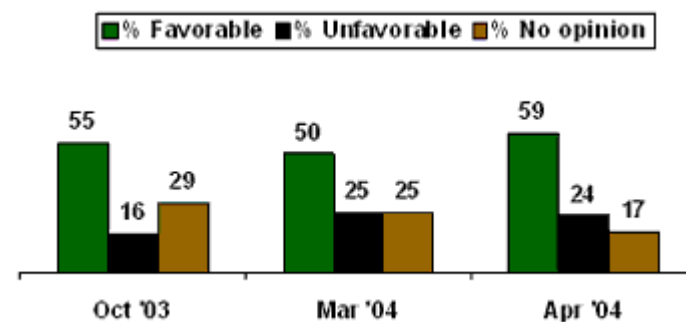
Sixty percent of Americans now approve of the way Bush is handling terrorism, a slight improvement from a 58% reading in March. However, this still rates as one of Bush's poorest scores on his handling of terrorism since the terrorist attacks.

#### George W. Bush's Job Approval: Terrorism



The much-anticipated public testimony from Rice before the Sept. 11 commission appears to have improved her public image. Fifty-nine percent of Americans now have a favorable opinion of her. Prior to her testimony, a March 26-28 poll found 50% with a favorable view of Rice. Her unfavorable ratings have stayed the same, at 24%.

#### Favorable Ratings: National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice



These results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,003 adults, aged 18 and older, conducted April 16-18, 2004. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is  $\pm 3$  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.

5. *Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling -- [RANDOM ORDER]?*

### C. Terrorism

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
	%	%	%
2004 Apr 16-18	60	39	1
2004 Mar 26-28	58	39	3
2003 Dec 5-7	65	33	2
2003 Sep 8-10	64	34	2
2003 Aug 25-26	66	31	3
2003 Jan 31-Feb 2	71	26	3
2002 May 20-22 ^	83	13	4
2002 Apr 5-7 ^	83	13	4
2002 Mar 20-22 †	86	12	2
2001 Nov 2-4 †	86	12	2

^ WORDING: U.S. military action abroad to fight terrorism.

† Alternate wording asked in Nov. 2-4 and March 20-22 poll produced similar results; data presented are the average of two wordings: "efforts to prevent future acts of terrorism in the U.S." and "U.S. military action abroad to fight terrorism."

6. *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. First, ... How about... [ITEM A READ FIRST, THEN ITEMS B-D ROTATED, ITEM E READ LAST]*

### C. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Never heard of	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2004 Apr 16-18	59	24	9	8
2004 Mar 26-28	50	25	14	11
2003 Oct 24-26	55	16	17	12

12. *How much confidence do you have in the U.S. government to protect its citizens from future terrorist attacks -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?*

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None at all	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
2004 Apr 16-18	28	50	15	6	1
2004 Jan 2-5	31	50	15	4	*
2003 Aug 25-26	23	53	19	5	*
2003 Feb 7-9	29	53	14	4	*

2002 Sep 2-4	24	56	16	3	1
2002 Jun 7-8	27	49	17	5	2
2002 May 20-22	22	54	18	5	1
2002 Mar 8-9	24	58	15	2	1
2001 Sep 14-15	41	47	9	2	1

## Q.13-14 ROTATED

13. Overall, how much do you blame the Bush administration for not taking the warnings about the al Qaeda terrorist network seriously enough before the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks -- a great deal, a moderate amount, only a little, or not at all?

	<b>Great deal</b>	<b>Mode- rate amount</b>	<b>Only a little</b>	<b>None at all</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2004 Apr 16-18	24%	29	23	23	1

14. Overall, how much do you blame the Clinton administration for not taking the warnings about the al Qaeda terrorist network seriously enough while in office -- a great deal, a moderate amount, only a little, or not at all?

	<b>Great deal</b>	<b>Mode- rate amount</b>	<b>Only a little</b>	<b>None at all</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2004 Apr 16-18	28%	32	21	17	2

15. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think the government agencies responsible for preventing terrorist attacks in the United States are in need of – a complete overhaul, major reforms, minor reforms, or no reforms at all?

	<b>Comp- lete overhaul</b>	<b>Major reforms</b>	<b>Minor reforms</b>	<b>No reforms at all</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2004 Apr 16-18	19%	44	30	5	2