

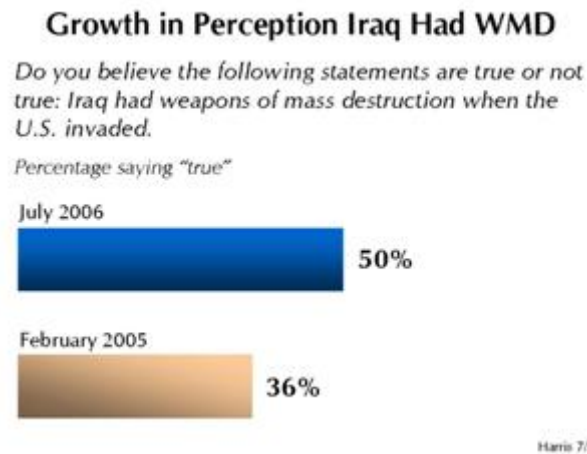
## Percentage of Americans Believing Iraq had WMD Rises

August 9, 2006

Growing numbers of Americans think that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction when the United States launched its 2003 invasion, though majorities also believe that the war has encouraged terrorists to attack the United States and doubt that Iraq will be able to develop a stable, democratic government.

The [Harris Interactive Poll](#), taken July 5-11, shows that half of Americans (50 percent) believe that “Iraq had weapons of mass destruction when the U.S. invaded.” That represents a rise of 14 points from February 2005 when only 36 percent thought Iraq had WMD.

The existence of WMD in Iraq, which Saddam Hussein was supposed to destroy after losing the first Gulf War in 1991, was the major justification for the United States’ March 2003 invasion. However, an investigation by the Iraq Survey Group completed in 2004 concluded that Iraq had dismantled its chemical, biological and nuclear arms programs in 1991 under U.N. oversight.

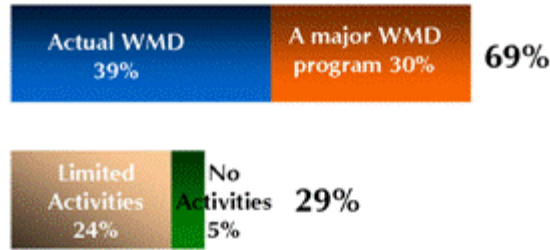


The recent rise in the belief that Iraq had WMD comes shortly after the issue broke back into the news with the release of what some Republican lawmakers touted as new evidence. On June 23, Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania and Rep. Peter Hoekstra of Michigan, who chairs the House Intelligence Committee, released portions of a classified report citing the discovery in Iraq of approximately 500 weapons munitions containing degraded mustard gas or sarin nerve agent. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld also stressed the significance of the discovery, which he said showed that weapons of mass destruction were “still being found and discovered” in Iraq. However, senior intelligence officials, speaking to the media anonymously, downplayed the report, saying the chemical weapons were probably made before the 1991 Gulf war and were not usable.

## What Bush Administration Now Says About WMD in Pre-war Iraq

Is it your impression that the Bush administration is currently saying that just before the war, Iraq had:

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a WMD invasion—or administration did—were widespread, new evidence.

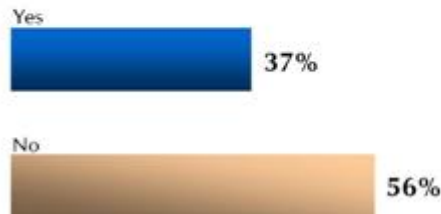
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WPO 3/2006

poll taken in March 2006 found that four out of ten Americans thought Iraq either had WMD (23%) or a program to develop them (18%). A year and a half earlier nearly half (49%) said they believed Iraq had or was developing WMD. The WPO poll also asked respondents about their perceptions of the Bush administration’s position on Iraqi WMD. Sixty-nine percent believed that the Bush administration continued to assert that Iraq either had actual WMD (39%) or a major WMD program (30%), according to the WPO poll. Less than a third (29%) thought that the Bush administration was saying that Iraq had a limited WMD program (24%) or no program at all (5%).

## Lack of Confidence in Iraq Effort

Are you confident that Iraq will be successful in developing a stable and reasonably democratic government?



Harris 7/06

The most recent Harris poll shows that most Americans reject other arguments used by some proponents of the war in Iraq. Majorities do not appear to think that fighting Islamic terrorists in Iraq has made Americans safer at home. Instead six in ten Americans (61%) agree that “invading and occupying Iraq has motivated more Islamic terrorists to attack Americans and the United States.” Almost as many (56%) agree that “spending huge

sums of money to invade and occupy Iraq has meant that a lot less money has been available to protect the United State against another terrorist attack.” A similar percentage (58%) said they disagreed that “invading Iraq has helped reduce the threat of another terrorist attack against the United States.”

Moreover, a majority of Americans (56%) are not confident that Iraq will be able to develop a “stable and reasonably democratic government,” the Harris poll found. The Bush administration has argued that troops must remain in Iraq until the government elected last year is able to consolidate control. Americans also tend to believe that the invasion of Iraq has made the United States “less respected around the world.” More than two out of three (68%) said the United States’ had lost international respect.

### **WMD, al Qaeda and the Justification for War**

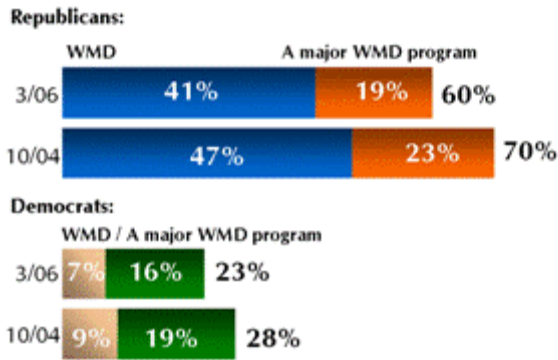
The recent resurgence of the debate over whether Iraq did or did not have WMD at the time of the invasion reflects its importance to public attitudes about a war that has claimed more than 2,500 American lives over the past three years.

[<http://icasualties.org/oif/>] The March 2006 WPO poll gave a wider range of options to describe Iraq’s WMD activities before the war than did the survey by Harris. It also probed perceptions about the administration’s current policy. WPO found that beliefs about whether the government of Saddam Hussein still had WMD in 2003 were highly related to attitudes about whether going to war in Iraq was justified. Those who believed Saddam Hussein had WMD or an ongoing program to develop such weapons also believed overwhelmingly (85%) that going to war was the right decision. However, those who did not believe the Iraqi dictator had WMD or a major weapons program were overwhelmingly convinced (95%) that the invasion was wrong.

Belief in the existence of Iraqi WMD before the war has tended to follow party lines. Overall four out of ten Americans thought that Iraq still had such weapons or a program to develop them, the WPO poll found. This included six in ten Republicans (60%) but less than one in four Democrats (23%).

## Perceptions of Pre War Iraq: WMD

Is it your belief that, just before the war, Iraq had:



WFO 3/2006

The Senate leadership in for completion of a Intelligence into pre-war administration

The issue is crucial Americans (71%) to war if it knew or suspected that the Iraqi government did not have WMD and did not provide substantial support to al Qaeda. This belief is overwhelming among Democrats (87%) but also includes a majority of Republicans (53%).

Democratic Congress has pressed two-year-old Committee probe intelligence on Iraq. because most believe that the Bush should not have gone

There is also a partisan split on the issue of whether President Bush was determined to go to war regardless of whether Iraq posed a threat because of its WMD program or its support for al Qaeda terrorists. Asked whether the president would have invaded Iraq “for other reasons,” two-thirds of Americans (66%) said yes. Those answering affirmatively included an overwhelming majority of Democrats (87%) but slightly less than half of Republicans (47%).