Strong Majority of Americans Continues to Approve of Iraq War

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But Only Half Confident Administration Was Not Being Misleading on WMD

[Questionnaire](#)

A new US nationwide PIPA/Knowledge Networks poll finds that 68%
continue to approve of the decision to go to war with Iraq. However, only 50% said that
they were somewhat (29%) or very (21%) certain that "when the US government
presented the evidence to justify going to war with Iraq, it was…not being misleading."
Another 5% said they were not very certain.

President Bush gets high marks for his leadership, with 74% saying that he is showing
strong leadership in dealing with the situation in Iraq. Fifty-eight percent believe that "as
a result of having won the war with Iraq...President Bush is...in a stronger position to
resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Despite the success of the war, there has been no significant increase in the percentage
saying that they approve of the decision itself, as opposed to supporting the President.
Fifty-three percent said, "I support having gone to war, because I think it was the best
thing for the US to do," while another 15% said, "I am not sure if going to war was the
best thing to do, but I support Bush's decision, because he is the president" –representing
no change from when Gallup, Pew and others asked this question during the war. Steven
Kull, director of PIPA comments, "Enthusiasm about the success of the war may be
offset by the failure to find evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction or links to al-
Qaeda."

Kull continues, "For some Americans, their desire to support the war may be leading
them to screen out information that weapons of mass destruction have not been found."
While 59% of those polled correctly said the US has not found Iraqi weapons of mass
destruction, 41% said they believed that the US has found such weapons (34%) or were
unsure (7%). While 69% correctly said that Iraq had not used chemical or biological
weapons in the war, 31% said they believed Iraq had (22%) or were unsure (9%). Kull
adds, "Given the intensive news coverage and high levels of public attention to the topic,
this level of misinformation suggests that some Americans may be avoiding having an
experience of cognitive dissonance."

Such dynamics may also be skewing some Americans' memory of the government's
rationale for going to war. Asked, "Thinking back to when the US government was
making the case for going to war with Iraq, according to the government, what was the
most important reason for going to war with Iraq?" 60% said "the evidence that Iraq had
weapons of mass destruction," and 19% said "the evidence that Iraq was working with

the terrorist group al-Qaeda." But 20% said the most important reason was, "the fact that Saddam Hussein was an oppressive dictator." Asked for the second most important reason, another 32% chose "the fact that Saddam Hussein was an oppressive dictator," while weapons of mass destruction were chosen by 24% and links to al-Qaeda by 42%.

The poll was conducted with a nationwide sample of 1,265 respondents May 14-18. The margin of error was plus or minus 3-3.5%, depending on whether the question was administered to the whole sample or half the sample.

The poll was developed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided Internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.