

# The **Terrorism** Index



Center for American Progress



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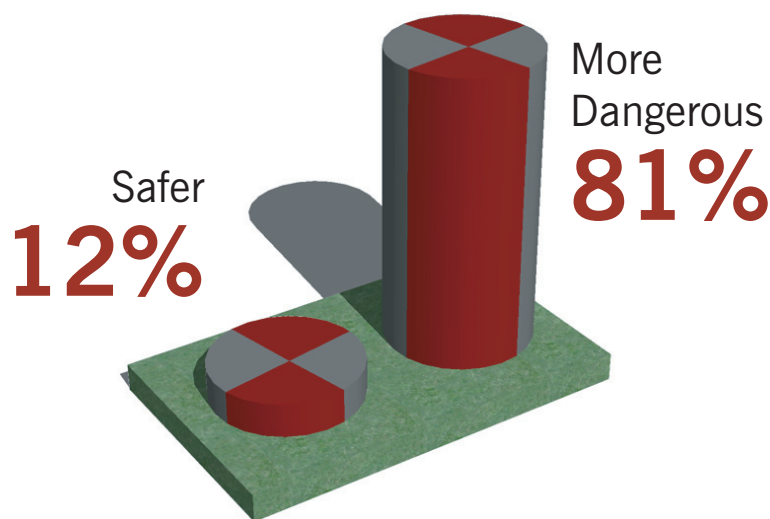
Six months ago, we launched a groundbreaking new index that asked more than 100 of America's top foreign-policy hands if the United States was winning the war on terror. Their answer? No. Now, surveyed again today, this bi-partisan group sees a world that continues to grow more dangerous and a U.S. national security strategy that is failing on several fronts. In the second FOREIGN POLICY/Center for American Progress Terrorism Index, these experts warn that not only is another attack imminent, but that the United States may be distracted from the threats that matter most.

America's leaders like to say that the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, represented a watershed. After that fateful day, Americans were told, problems that had been allowed to linger—terrorist sanctuaries, dangerous dictators, and cumbersome government bureaucracies—would no longer be neglected and left for terrorists to exploit. Yet, more than five years later, Americans are more skeptical than ever that the United States has effectively confronted the threat of terrorism. Barely half believe that their government has a plan to protect them from terrorism. Just six months ago, 55 percent of Americans approved of the way the war on terror was being handled. Today, that number is just 43 percent—lower than at practically any point since the 9/11 attacks.

That skepticism could be easily attributed to dark events in the past six months: a bloody war between Israel and Lebanon, a plot in Britain to explode liquid bombs aboard airliners bound for the United States, North Korea's nuclear test, a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan, and Iraq's downward slide into deadly sectarian strife. But is the public's pessimism over the war on terror just a problem of perception? After all, the United States has yet to be attacked again at home—and that could be the most important benchmark of all.

To help determine whether the United States is growing more or less safe, FOREIGN POLICY and the Center for American Progress teamed up once again to survey more than 100 of America's top foreign-policy experts—Republicans and Democrats alike—in the second FOREIGN POLICY/Center for American Progress Terrorism Index. First launched last June, the Terrorism Index is the only com-

Thinking about the present situation, would you say that the world is becoming safer or more dangerous for the United States and the American people?

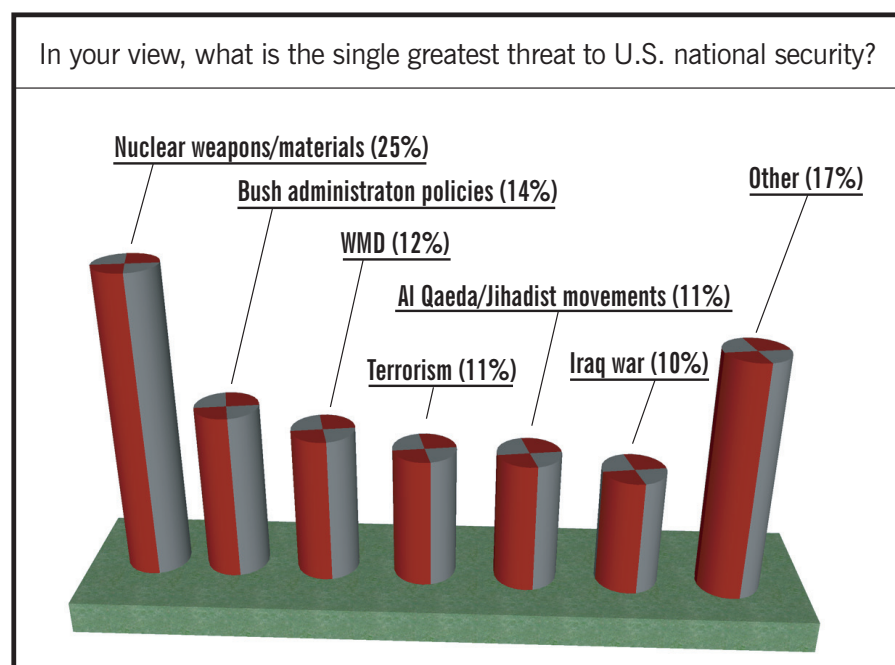


prehensive, nonpartisan effort to mine the highest echelons of the nation's foreign-policy establishment for its assessment of how the United States is fighting the Global War on Terror. Its participants include people who have served as secretary of state and national security advisor, senior White House aides, top commanders in the U.S. military, seasoned intelligence officers, and distinguished academics and journalists. Eighty percent of the experts have served in the U.S. government—more than half in the executive branch, 26 percent in the military, and 18 percent in the intelligence community.

As with the first index six months ago, the results show that America's foreign-policy community continues to have deep reservations about U.S. policies and priorities in the war on terror. Eighty-one percent see a world that is growing more dangerous for the American people, while 75 percent say the United States is losing the war on terror. Those numbers are down marginally—5 and 9 percentage points respectively—from six months ago. Yet, when asked whether President George W.

Bush has a clear plan to protect the United States from terrorism, 7 in 10 experts say no—including nearly 40 percent of those who identified themselves as conservatives. More than 80 percent of the experts continue to expect a terrorist attack on the scale of 9/11 within a decade, a result that is unchanged from six months ago.

Index participants continued to criticize a number of the United States' key national security priorities, including public diplomacy, homeland security, and energy policy. Only one policy—Iraq—received poorer reviews from the respondents than did public diplomacy. Fully 87 percent of the experts said America's public diplomacy is failing, and nearly half said that failure is the result of poor leadership and ineffective policies. In fact, leaders and their policies



apparently matter a great deal to U.S. national security. In the last index, nearly all of the departments and agencies responsible for fighting the war on terror received below-average marks. This time, however, 6 of 9 received above-average rankings, including the Central Intelligence Agency and Defense Department, both of which have welcomed new chiefs since the last index survey was conducted.

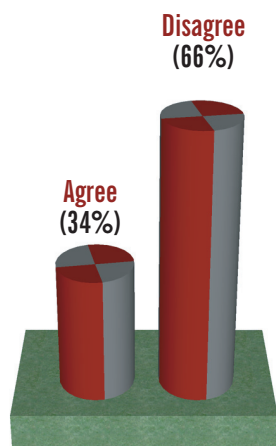
The experts did not show a similar optimism when it came to Iraq, however, even as the White House is sending in more troops. Eighty-eight percent of the experts believe that the war in Iraq is having a negative impact on U.S. national security. Just 19 percent of respondents believe that the strategy of deploying more troops in Baghdad is a good idea. Perhaps more importantly, 92 percent said that the Bush administration’s performance on Iraq has been below average, with nearly 6 in 10 experts of all political stripes saying the Bush administration is doing the “worst possible job” in Iraq.

These pessimistic conclusions would be less troubling if a majority of the experts did not also believe that Iraq is distracting the United States from more dangerous threats. More than two thirds of the experts say that Iraq is not the central front in the war on terrorism. In fact, given the choice between securing and stabilizing Iraq and ridding North Korea of its nuclear weapons, more experts say dealing with Pyongyang is the most important U.S. foreign-policy objective of the next five years. It’s a reminder that, just as America learned on September 11, the threats that are ignored are often the most dangerous.

###

| Do you agree with the following statement?<br>"The United States is winning the war on terror." |   |          |  |
|---|---|----------|--|
| Political<br>Affiliation  | Percentage of respondents who selected: |          |  |
|   | Agree                                   | Disagree |  |
| Total   | 16                                      | 75       |  |
| Conservative  | 43                                      | 50       |  |
| Moderate  | 5                                       | 81       |  |
| Liberal   | 5                                       | 93       |  |

Do you agree or disagree that the U.S. should increase troop levels in **Iraq**?



## The Wrong Surge

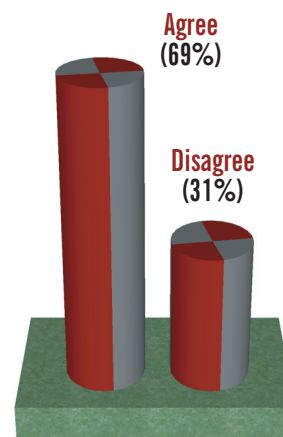
Afghanistan was the first front in the Global War on Terror. In the opinion of the index's experts, it may still be the most critical. As the first deployments of the Bush administration's "surge" of additional combat troops arrive in Iraq, the index's experts recommend adding U.S. forces onto a different battlefield—Afghanistan.

Asked about troop increases, only about one third of index respondents recommended increasing the number of American forces in Iraq, while 66 percent opposed an increase there. By contrast, nearly 70 percent believe that U.S. troop levels should be increased in Afghanistan.

These results may reflect the experts' deeply pessimistic views on Iraq. Six months ago, the highest percentage of experts identified Islamist animosity as the "one principal reason why the world is becoming more dangerous." Now the highest percentage pinpoints Iraq. Fully 88 percent of the experts believe the war in Iraq is undermining U.S. national security. By comparison, 64 percent believe the war in Afghanistan has advanced U.S. national security goals.

The experts may also advocate a surge in Afghanistan, and not in Iraq, because they see evidence that the Afghan state is faltering—and fast. The percentage of experts who said that the war in Afghanistan has had a positive impact on U.S. national security fell some 30 points from the previous Terrorism Index published last July. They also graded the U.S. government's efforts at stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan as below average. With attacks against U.S. and NATO forces up 300 percent since September, and military commanders predicting a Taliban offensive this spring, sending more forces to Iraq may be the right idea in the wrong place.

Do you agree or disagree that the U.S. should increase troop levels in **Afghanistan**?

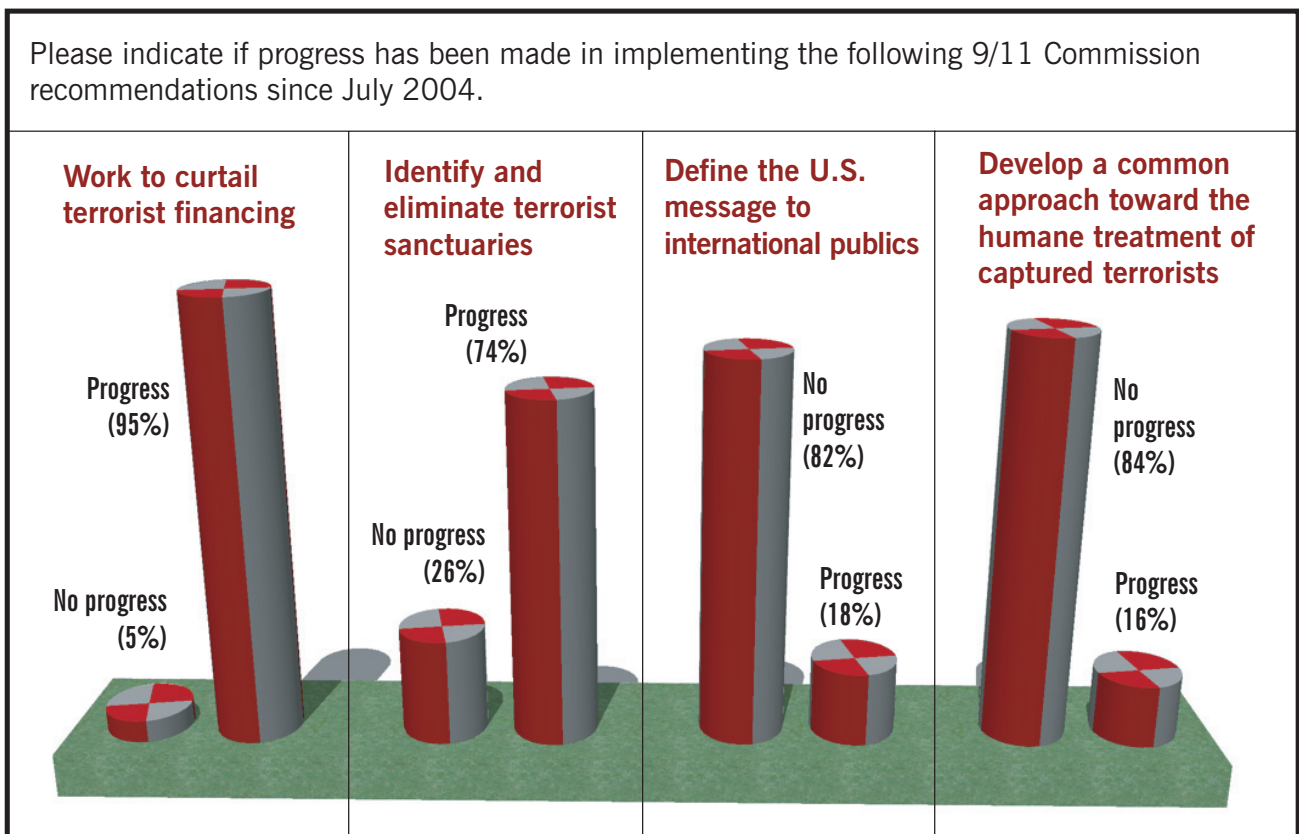


# Chasing the Money

It's often said that if you want to catch a criminal, all you have to do is follow the money. Since Sept. 11, 2001, Western governments have invested countless hours chasing the money trail of international terrorist groups. And, according to the index's experts, those efforts are working—perhaps better than any other policy initiative of the past six years.

When asked to judge the United States' efforts at staunching the flow of terrorist money worldwide, 95 percent of the experts said that some or a great deal of progress had been made. It's a conclusion that is apparently shared across the foreign-policy community. That could be because, in the past six years, the United States has led the charge to freeze more than \$140 million in terrorist assets in 1,400 bank accounts worldwide. "It's worth remembering that this was the one area where the 9/11 Commission gave an A-level grade to the Bush administration. They were savvy to leverage earlier initiatives to combat financial abuse, apply them to terrorist financing, and secure broad international support," says index participant Daniel Drezner, a professor at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Many may consider these efforts a success, but attacks in recent years have also served as a reminder that terrorists do not need large sums of cash to be deadly effective. The 2002 Bali bombings cost just \$50,000, but they killed more than 200 people. The attacks on Madrid's train system two years later killed nearly as many for just \$10,000. Cheaper still were the London subway attacks in July 2005. They killed 52 people, injured hundreds more, and cost the terrorists less than \$2,000. It's a reminder that, even as one fight is being won, another may be just beginning.



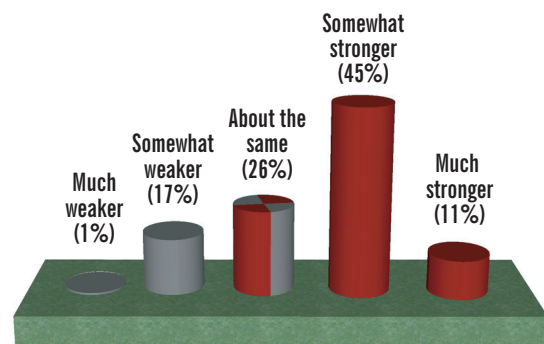
# The Dangers of Distraction

While the United States has been looking toward Iraq, a problem that could be just as serious has been growing in the hills of Afghanistan. The Taliban has regrouped. An overwhelming majority of the survey's experts—83 percent—say that the fundamentalist Islamist group that harbored Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda while they planned and executed the September 11 attacks has strengthened in the past year. So too, they say, have other terrorist organizations in the Middle East, including Hezbollah and Hamas.

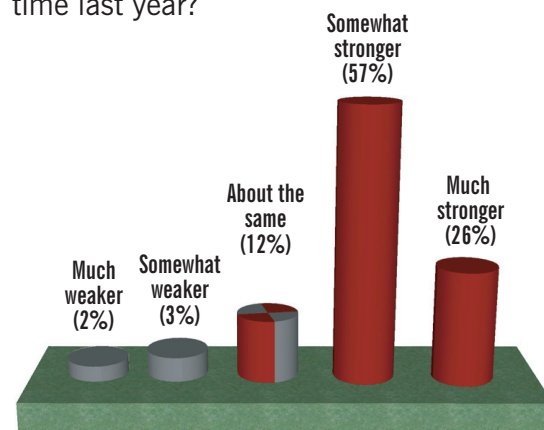
Their fears are not baseless. Last year was the bloodiest in Afghanistan since the United States overthrew the Taliban in 2001. Attacks against U.S. and NATO forces have risen fourfold in the past 12 months, with Taliban fighters adopting many of the tactics used by Iraqi insurgents. What's worse, U.S. intelligence experts believe that al Qaeda may be collaborating with the Taliban along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, where much of its leadership retreated after 2001. "There is extensive evidence of collaboration between al Qaeda and key Taliban-allied leaders," says index participant Steve Coll, a historian of Afghanistan and staff writer at *The New Yorker*. "Among other things, al Qaeda seems to be encouraging or training the Taliban to carry out suicide attacks and to employ more deadly improvised explosive devices."

The experts' opinions bear out these concerns. When asked to choose the country most likely to become the next al Qaeda stronghold, Pakistan came in second, just behind Somalia. And 91 percent of the participants believe that the United States must increase pressure dramatically on Pakistan to confront militants in the tribal areas. As the events of Sept. 11, 2001, should have taught us, just because a problem is out of sight doesn't mean it should be out of mind.

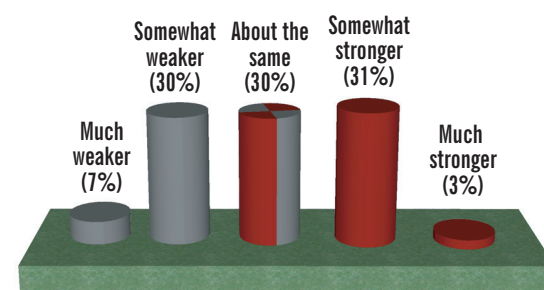
How would you rank the relative strength of **Hamas** today as opposed to the same time last year?



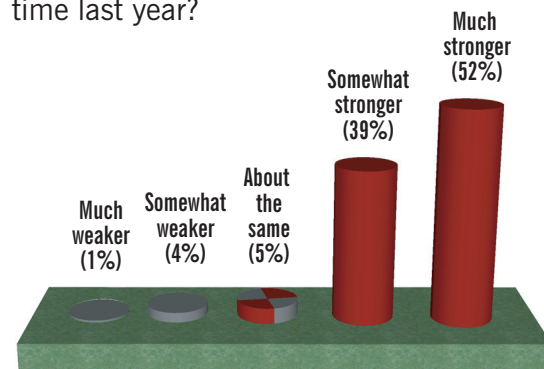
How would you rank the relative strength of the **Taliban** today as opposed to the same time last year?



How would you rank the relative strength of **al Qaeda** today as opposed to the same time last year?



How would you rank the relative strength of **Hezbollah** today as opposed to the same time last year?





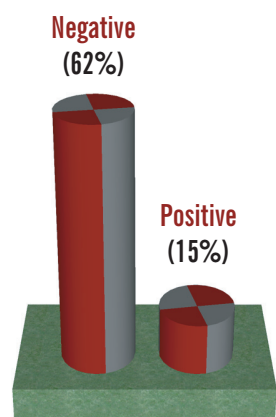
Which countries are likely to transfer nuclear technology to terrorists in the next three to five years?

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| <b>North Korea</b> | <b>73%</b> |
| Pakistan           | 44%        |
| Iran               | 40%        |
| Russia             | 12%        |
| India              | 2%         |
| Israel             | 1%         |
| United States      | 1%         |
| Other              | 10%        |

Which country has the most dangerous government in the world today?

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Iran               | 40%        |
| <b>North Korea</b> | <b>35%</b> |
| United States      | 9%         |
| Pakistan           | 7%         |
| Saudi Arabia       | 3%         |
| Sudan              | 2%         |
| China              | 1%         |
| Iraq               | 1%         |

Please rate the impact of U.S. policy towards North Korea on protecting the American people from global terrorist networks and in advancing U.S. national security goals.



## Priority No. 1

The United States has reportedly reached a deal that may put the cap on North Korea's nuclear program. If the deal sticks, according to the index's experts, it couldn't have happened a moment too soon.

The Hermit Kingdom, which tested an underground nuclear weapon last October, ranked among the experts' highest concerns. When asked to choose the most important U.S. foreign-policy objective to achieve in the next five years, 26 percent—the largest among the survey's experts—said eliminating North Korea's nukes is the most important task facing U.S. foreign policymakers. In fact, denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula finished ahead of securing and stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan, creating a national missile defense system, and convincing Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment program.

A deal on disarming North Korea's nukes is welcome news. That's because, across the board, the experts said that U.S. policy toward Pyongyang wasn't working. Asked whether the United States' current policy toward North Korea was having a positive or negative impact on America's national security, nearly three quarters of the experts said they believed it was failing.

The stakes for this new nuclear deal couldn't be higher. Not only did more than 1 in 3 experts say that Pyongyang is the world's most dangerous regime—second only to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Iran—but an overwhelming majority also believe that Kim Jong Il is likely to follow in the footsteps of A.Q. Khan, the Pakistani scientist who sold his country's nuclear secrets on the open market. Seventy-three percent of the experts said that North Korea is the country most likely to transfer nuclear technology in the next three to five years. That scenario certainly makes North Korea priority No. 1.

Please choose the U.S. policy objective you believe is most important to achieve in the next five years.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>26%</b> | <b>A denuclearized Korean Peninsula</b>   |
| <b>17%</b> | A stable, secure Iraq                     |
| <b>12%</b> | An Iran that renounces uranium enrichment |
| <b>9%</b>  | A viable national missile defense         |
| <b>5%</b>  | A stable, secure Afghanistan              |
| <b>31%</b> | Other                                     |



# The Public's Perception

The Terrorism Index's experts have had a hand in running America's national-security apparatus. Perhaps it's that experience that has led them to see the world as a more dangerous place than many Americans. Although nearly half of Americans believe they are safer today than they were before the 9/11 attacks, only 12 percent of the experts agree. Likewise, nearly half of Americans believe the United States is winning the war on terror; only 16 percent of the experts are as optimistic. Here's a look at where the index's experts and the American public part ways.

Does the Bush administration have a clear plan for protecting the United States from terrorism?

|         | Yes        | No         |
|---------|------------|------------|
| Experts | 30%        | <b>70%</b> |
| Public  | <b>51%</b> | 45%        |

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling relations with Iran?

|         | Approve    | Disapprove |
|---------|------------|------------|
| Experts | 27%        | <b>73%</b> |
| Public  | <b>40%</b> | 31%        |

Is the United States winning the war on terror?

|         | Yes        | No         |
|---------|------------|------------|
| Experts | 16%        | <b>75%</b> |
| Public  | <b>46%</b> | 33%        |

Would you support or oppose military action against Iran if it continues to develop nuclear weapons?

|         | Support    | Oppose     | Unsure |
|---------|------------|------------|--------|
| Experts | 27%        | <b>61%</b> | 13%    |
| Public  | <b>52%</b> | 37%        | 11%    |

Is the United States safer, about as safe, or less safe from terrorist attacks than before Sept. 11, 2001?

|         | Safer      | Same | Less Safe  |
|---------|------------|------|------------|
| Experts | 12%        | 7%   | <b>81%</b> |
| Public  | <b>43%</b> | 32%  | 25%        |