

Fewer think US achieving its foreign policy goals, poll finds

BYLINE: By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press Writer

Fewer people think the U.S. is adequately thwarting terrorists, meeting its objectives in Iraq or achieving other goals overseas, according to a poll that shows a deepening skepticism about the country's foreign policy.

The survey also shows people in the U.S. have flagging hopes that a range of strategies and policies from improving intelligence operations to showing more respect for other countries can do very much to keep the nation safe.

"We are reaching a point where the public seems to be questioning not just whether current policies are working, but whether the United States can have an effective foreign policy at all," said a report accompanying the survey, conducted in the U.S. last month for **Public Agenda**, a nonpartisan public policy group, and the journal *Foreign Affairs*.

The poll also found little taste for a military confrontation with Iran, though there was slightly more interest than earlier this year. Tensions with Tehran have risen over its nuclear program and aid to fighters opposing U.S. troops in Iraq.

Sixty-five percent said they preferred economic or diplomatic moves against Iran, compared to 19 percent who favored military action or threats. When the question was asked in March, 13 percent chose threatened or actual military steps.

The public's increased militancy might reflect that the poll was conducted during Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent

visit to New York and the U.N., when he received a mix reception, the report said.

Asked to assign grades to the U.S. for meeting foreign policy goals, 48 percent awarded As or Bs for giving terrorism the attention it deserves. The number giving those grades was 10 percentage points lower than when the question was asked in 2005.

Twenty-five percent gave those highest grades when asked how well the U.S. was succeeding in Iraq, down 14 points from 2005. There were similar drop-offs in top grades for meeting U.S. objectives in Afghanistan, spreading democracy in the world, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and having good relations with Muslim nations.

While 56 percent said improved intelligence operations would help a great deal to protect the country, that was down nine points from 2005.

Thirty-eight percent said respecting other countries more would do a great deal to improve U.S. security, down 11 points in two years. There were similar or slightly smaller reductions in the portion of people saying tighter immigration controls, better space weaponry and reduced energy dependence would help.

By 65 percent to 28 percent, people said the U.S. should rely more on diplomatic and economic efforts, rather than military might, to combat terrorism, numbers that were virtually unchanged from two years ago.

The survey also found:

Most think global cooperation can reduce global warming, but also doubt the U.S. can keep other countries from getting nuclear weapons or keep oil supplies stable and reasonably priced.

Sixty-four percent said they think the rest of the world sees the U.S. negatively, including 30 percent who said very negatively.

Seventy-nine percent said the world has become more dangerous for the U.S.

A quarter said the U.S. is doing a good or excellent job making the world more peaceful.

People ranked the Middle East as the top U.S. foreign policy problem, with four in 10 choosing it.

The telephone survey of 1,011 adults was conducted from Sept. 17-27. It had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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