



CBS NEWS POLL
For release: Tuesday, November 17, 2009
6:30 PM (ET)

ISSUES: AFGHANISTAN, FORT HOOD, TRYING TERRORISTS AND THE ECONOMY
November 13-16, 2009

President Barack Obama must confront a number of critical issues now: the war in Afghanistan, the violence at Fort Hood, where to try suspected terrorists held at Guantanamo prison, and continued problems with the economy and unemployment.

Assessments of how the war in Afghanistan is going for the U.S. are at their lowest point ever in CBS News Polls; just 23% think it is going well. There is no consensus on what should be done with U.S. troops there, and the President's ratings on the war are now more negative.

Americans disagree with last week's decision to try some of the suspected terrorists being held in Guantanamo Bay prison in New York City. More Americans would like to see them tried in a closed military court than in a civilian court.

Nearly half of Americans also consider the shootings that occurred at Fort Hood to be an act of terrorism - one that half the public thinks the military could have prevented.

Concerns about unemployment, which has now passed the 10% mark, have risen seven points in the last month; 35% are now very concerned someone in their household will lose a job.

AFGHANISTAN

Americans' views of how the war in Afghanistan is going for the U.S. have taken a decided turn for the worse in this poll. Just 23% now think the war there is going well, the lowest ever found in CBS News polls. Three times as many, 69%, think the war is going badly for the U.S.

HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR THE U.S. IN AFGHANISTAN?

	Now	9/2009	12/2008	3/2003	12/2001
Well	23%	35%	27%	76%	93%
Badly	69	53	62	14	5

Assessments of the war have dropped sharply among Republicans and independents. In September, 47% of Republicans thought the war was going well; now, that number has dropped to 27%. Among independents, 34% thought the war was going well in September; just 21% say the same now.

The increased negativity has not led to much change in Americans' views on troop levels. As President Barack Obama weighs whether to send the additional troops military advisors have recommended, only about a third of Americans think the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan ought to be increased. Slightly more think troop levels should be decreased. One in five wants them kept the same.

U.S. TROOP LEVELS IN AFGHANISTAN SHOULD...

	Now	10/2009	9/2009	8/2009	2/2009
Increase	32%	37%	29%	25%	42%
Decrease	39	38	32	41	24
Keep the same	20	17	27	23	23

The public offers mixed views of the impact of more troops. 36% think additional U.S. troops would make the situation there better. Fewer, 22%, think more troops would make the situation worse, and 31% expect no impact.

IMPACT OF MORE U.S. TROOPS ON WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

Make it better	36%
Make it worse	22
No impact	31

Republicans (55%) are more likely than Democrats (23%) to think additional troops would improve the situation in Afghanistan.

As assessments of the war have declined, so too have assessments of the President's handling of it. 38% now approve of how President Obama is handling the war -- but more, 43%, disapprove. Disapproval has risen nine points, from 34% last month.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN

	Now	10/2009	8/2009	4/2009
Approve	38%	42%	48%	58%
Disapprove	43	34	30	21
Don't know	19	24	22	21

Most of the change has occurred among independents. Last month, 44% of independents approved and 36% disapproved of the job President Obama was doing on Afghanistan. Now, more independents disapprove than approve: 49% disapprove, and 30% approve.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	38%	23%	57%	30%
Disapprove	43	60	24	49
Don't know	19	17	19	21

PUTTING SUSPECTED TERRORISTS ON TRIAL

In a marked shift from the policies of the Bush administration, the Obama administration has decided to try five terrorist suspects - including one accused of masterminding the 9/11 attacks - in a civilian trial in New York City. But in bucking the policies of the previous administration, President Obama may also be bucking public opinion on this issue: 54% of Americans would prefer suspected terrorists be tried in closed military courts.

SUSPECTED TERRORISTS SHOULD BE TRIED IN..

Open criminal court	40%
Closed military court	54

There are large partisan differences on this issue. While most Democrats (54%) want civilian trials for suspected terrorists, six in 10 Republicans and independents prefer that suspected terrorists be tried in closed military courts.

A similar divide can be seen on the issue of closing Guantanamo Bay, the prison in Cuba where suspected terrorists have been held. Half of all Americans want to keep the prison open, while 39% want to close it down. Americans were more divided on the issue earlier in the year.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO GUANTANAMO?

	Now	2/2009	7/2006
Keep it open	50%	46%	51%
Close it	39	44	34

Again, while most Democrats want to close Guantanamo down, most Republicans and independents want to keep it open.

THE FORT HOOD SHOOTINGS

48% of Americans describe the recent shootings at the U.S. military base at Fort Hood, Texas, where an Army psychiatrist allegedly shot and killed thirteen people, as a terrorist act, while 38% do not. One in 10 is not sure at this point.

Two in three Republicans consider the incident at Fort Hood to be an act of terrorism, while Democrats are more divided. Older Americans are also more likely than younger people to call what happened at Fort Hood terrorism.

CONSIDER SHOOTING AT FORT HOOD AN ACT OF TERRORISM?

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind
Yes	48%	65%	40%	46%
No	38	23	47	38
Don't know	14	12	13	16

Just over half of Americans think the U.S. military had information that could have helped prevent the shootings at Fort Hood. 29% do

not. Republicans and independents are more likely than Democrats to think the shootings could have been prevented.

DID THE U.S. MILITARY HAVE INFORMATION THAT COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE FORT HOOD SHOOTINGS?

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind
Yes	51%	53%	48%	54%
No	29	31	32	25
Don't know	20	16	20	21

President Obama, who traveled to Fort Hood last week to speak at the memorial service for those killed in the attack, gets good marks for his handling of the incident. 57% of Americans approve of the way he handled the incident at Fort Hood, including most Democrats (70%) and independents (52%). Nearly half of Republicans (45%) also approve. Few Americans - 18% - disapprove of how the president handled the incident, but another quarter are not sure.

OBAMA'S HANDLING OF INCIDENT AT FORT HOOD, TEXAS

	All	Rep	Dem	Ind
Approve	57%	45%	70%	52%
Disapprove	18	27	9	20
Don't know	25	28	21	28

More than eight in 10 Americans have heard or read something about the Fort Hood incident, including 56% who have heard a lot about it. Those who have heard a lot about it are more likely to consider the incident to be an act of terrorism and to think it could have been prevented.

HOW MUCH HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE FORT HOOD SHOOTINGS?

A lot	56%
Some	29
Not much	12
Not at all	3

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

With the national unemployment rate rising to over 10% - the highest mark in over a quarter of a century - concern about job loss has spiked upwards. The percentage of Americans who are very concerned about someone in their household losing their job in the next twelve months has risen seven points, from 28% in October to 35% today. Another 30% are somewhat concerned. That means two out of three Americans are at least somewhat jittery about someone in their household's job prospects.

CONCERN ABOUT HOUSEHOLD JOB LOSS

	Now	10/2009
Very concerned	35%	28%
Somewhat concerned	30	28
Not concerned	34	44

Very few Americans - just 7% - think the economic stimulus package passed by Congress and signed into law by the president has created any jobs, despite last week's report of job creation. Americans are becoming more pessimistic about whether the stimulus package will create jobs. Now 46% of Americans think the stimulus package will create jobs in the future, down from a majority of 52% in September. 42% think the stimulus package won't create a substantial number of new jobs.

THE STIMULUS PACKAGE HAS...

	Now	9/2009	7/2009
Created jobs already	7%	7%	4%
Will create jobs eventually	46	52	53
Will never create jobs	42	38	41

Overall assessment of the condition of the national economy remains low, with four in five Americans saying the economy is bad.

CONDITION OF THE ECONOMY

	Now	10/2009	8/2009	4/2009	2/2009
Good	19%	16%	20%	16%	5%
Bad	79	84	79	84	94

And though 32% of Americans think the economy is getting better, 42% think it is staying the same and 25% think the economy is getting worse.

PRESIDENT OBAMA

Although a slight majority of Americans still approve of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president, this percentage has slipped three points since last month. Now 53% of Americans approve of how he is handling his job, down from 56% in October.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB APPROVAL RATING

	Now	10/2009	6/2009	4/2009
Approve	53%	56%	63%	68%
Disapprove	36	34	26	23

This drop in support is largely among independents, a group that is now more divided as to whether it approves of how the president is handling his job. Now 45% approve, down from 52% last month, while 40% disapprove.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB APPROVAL RATING

	All	Dems	Reps	Ind
Approve	53%	83%	18%	45%
Disapprove	36	10	69	40

On specific domestic issues, the president has seen drops in approval for his handling of the economy and his handling of health care. He does somewhat better on handling foreign policy.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S APPROVAL RATINGS

	Now	10/2009	6/2009	4/2009
Overall	53%	56%	63%	68%
Economy	49%	54%	57%	61%
Health Care	44%	47%	44%	--
Foreign policy	50%	48%	59%	59%

Still, the president's overall approval rating remains much higher than that of the legislative branch. Just 26% of Americans approve of how Congress is handling its job, and 60% disapprove.

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,167 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone November 13-16, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

CBS NEWS POLL

Issues: Afghanistan, Fort Hood, Trying Terrorists and the Economy
November 13-16, 2009

q1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Oct09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	53	18	83	45	56
Disapprove	36	69	10	40	34
DK/NA	11	13	7	15	10

q3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling foreign policy?

Approve	50	21	71	49	48
Disapprove	36	65	14	38	28
DK/NA	14	14	15	13	24

q4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

Approve	49	16	81	40	54
Disapprove	43	78	15	48	38
DK/NA	8	6	4	12	8

q6 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with Afghanistan?

Approve	38	23	57	30	42
Disapprove	43	60	24	49	34
DK/NA	19	17	19	21	24

q7 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

Approve	44	13	72	38	47
Disapprove	48	82	23	50	42
DK/NA	8	5	5	12	11

q8 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama handled the recent shooting incident in Fort Hood, Texas?

Approve	57	45	70	52
Disapprove	18	27	9	20
DK/NA	25	28	21	28

q9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

Approve	26	14	38	21	22
Disapprove	60	76	47	63	65
DK/NA	14	10	15	16	13

q10 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Oct09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	1	0	1	2	1
Fairly good	18	18	22	15	15
Fairly bad	42	46	44	37	49
Very bad	37	35	31	44	35
DK/NA	2	1	2	2	0

q11 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

Better	32	25	44	26	31
Worse	25	31	15	30	18
Same	42	44	40	42	50
DK/NA	1	0	1	2	1

q12 From what you know so far, which comes closest to your own view? 1. The economic stimulus package has already created a substantial number of new jobs in the U.S. OR 2. It will create a substantial number of new jobs but hasn't done that yet OR 3. It will not create a substantial number of new jobs?

					Sep09b
Has already created jobs	7	5	11	5	7
Will, but hasn't yet	46	29	60	42	52
Will not create new jobs	42	64	23	47	38
DK/NA	5	2	6	6	3

q13 As you may know, for the past eight years the United States has been holding a number of suspected terrorists at a U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think the U.S. should continue to operate the prison, or do you think the U.S. should close the prison and transfer the prisoners somewhere else?

					Jun09a
Continue to operate	50	71	35	51	45
Close it	39	19	57	35	42
DK/NA	11	10	8	14	13

q34 What is your impression of how the war in Afghanistan is going for the United States right now--very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

					Sep09b
Very well	4	6	2	5	3
Somewhat well	19	21	20	16	32
Somewhat badly	42	45	44	39	38
Very badly	27	22	25	32	15
DK/NA	8	6	9	8	12

q35 From what you have seen or heard about the situation in Afghanistan, what should the United States do now--should the U.S. increase the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, keep the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan as they are now, or decrease the numbers of troops in Afghanistan?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

	Total	*** Party ID ***			Oct09a
		Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Increase	32	49	17	34	37
Keep the same	20	21	21	18	17
Decrease	39	21	48	40	38
Don't know/No answer	9	9	14	8	8

q36 As you may know, the Obama Administration is considering sending additional troops to Afghanistan. From what you have heard or read, do you think a troop increase would make the situation in Afghanistan better, make it worse, or would it have no impact on the situation in Afghanistan?

Make it better	36	55	23	37
Make worse	22	13	29	21
No impact	31	22	36	31
Depends (vol.)	4	3	2	5
Don't know/No answer	7	7	10	6

q37 When it comes to dealing with people suspected of involvement in terrorist attacks against the United States, which would you prefer: 1) Trying them in open criminal court with a jury, and a civilian judge, OR 2) Trying them in a closed military court with a military judge?

Criminal court	40	29	54	34
Military court	54	63	41	60
DK/NA	6	8	5	6

q38 How much have you heard or read about the recent shooting at the U.S. Army base in Fort Hood, Texas where Nidal Malik Hasan, an army psychiatrist allegedly shot and killed thirteen people -- a lot, some, not much, or nothing at all?

A lot	56	55	52	60
Some	29	32	32	24
Not much	12	11	12	13
Nothing at all	3	1	3	3
DK/NA	0	1	1	0

q39 Do you think the U.S. military had information that could have prevented the shootings that occurred at the Army base in Fort Hood, Texas or not?

Could have been prevented	51	53	48	54
Couldn't have been prevented	29	31	32	25
DK/NA	20	16	20	21

q40 From what you have heard or read, do you consider the shooting incident at Fort Hood, Texas to be an act of terrorism or not?

Act of terrorism	48	65	40	46
Not terrorism	38	23	47	38
DK/NA	14	12	13	16

q43 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

q44 How concerned are you that in the next 12 months you or someone else in your household might be out of work and looking for a job -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned at all?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Oct09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	35	25	42	34	28
Somewhat concerned	30	35	25	32	28
Not at all concerned	34	39	32	33	44
DK/NA	1	1	1	1	0
	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>		<u>WEIGHTED</u>		
Total Respondents	1167				
Total Republicans	311		282 (24%)		
Total Democrats	414		430 (37%)		
Total Independents	442		455 (39%)		