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## A Majority Gives Obama Positive Rating on Iraq

*Highest number ever believe things are improving in Iraq*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – June 25, 2009** – In his first five months since taking office President Obama is receiving positive marks for his handling of the situation in Iraq with a significant improvement in the percentage who believe that the situation is improving. On the issue of when to remove U.S. combat troops from Iraq, the U.S. public is split on the right timetable. Further, most of the U.S. public does not believe that the U.S. combat troops will actually withdraw from Iraq by August 31, 2010.

These are the some of the results of The Harris Poll, a new nationwide survey of 2,177 U.S. adults surveyed online between June 8 and 15, 2009 by Harris Interactive. Other findings include:

- By a 52% – 42% majority of U.S. adults think that President Obama has been doing an excellent or pretty good job handling the situation in Iraq. Among Democrats, the president receives very high marks (80% – 16% positive) while Republicans think the opposite and give him a very poor rating (74% – 22% negative). Independents are closely split with 47% rating him negative and 44% rating him positive.
- Over four in ten (44%) think that taking military action against Iraq was the wrong thing to do with only 36% thinking it was the right thing. While these feelings have not changed significantly since 2005, looking at the past year, since August 2008, the percentage who thinks it was the right thing to take military action has inched up from 33% and the number of adults who think it was the wrong thing has decreased to 44%.
- Almost four in ten (38%) adults think the situation in Iraq is getting better while less than one in ten (8%) think things are getting worse. Forty-two percent say that there hasn't been any real change. Most significantly, the number of Americans who say things are getting better (38%) has increased dramatically in the past year. In May 2008 only 22% thought things were getting better and 32% said things were getting worse in August, 2008. Similarly, those who think that things are getting worse (8%) has dropped from 29% in May 2008 and 16% in August, 2008. Both 38% (getting better) and 8% (getting worse) reflect the highest and lowest *The Harris Poll* has recorded on this question going back to January 2004.

### Timetable for Removal of U.S. Combat Troops

President Obama has said that by August 31, 2010, the combat mission in Iraq will end and U.S. combat troops will be removed from that country. The U.S. public is split as to whether the timetable is right. A third (32%) feels that this is the best date. However, a third of Americans (32%) feel that US troops should remain in Iraq beyond August 31, 2010 and a quarter (23%) think that U.S. combat troops should be removed sooner.

Six in ten (61%) Republicans think that U.S. troops should remain longer and 52% of Democrats feel that the August 31, 2010 timetable is the best one. Independents are more split with 38% thinking the troops should stay longer, 23% thinking the timetable is best and 27% feeling that the troops should be removed earlier.

Despite being split on what is the right timetable, a 57% – 43% majority feel that troops will not be removed. Republicans (66%) and Independents (67%) feel most strongly about this. Democrats are more optimistic with almost six in ten (59%) thinking that the troops will be removed.

**So What?**

Even though President Obama has been in office a short time, the U.S. public is giving him a positive rating on his handling of Iraq. Further, his rating is higher than expected for how he handled Iraq back in January. However, the public hasn't come around to thinking that going into Iraq in the first place was the right action and the U.S. public doesn't think that U.S. combat troops will actually leave Iraq by the August 2010 schedule that the president has set. Nonetheless Americans do sense improvement and feel that things are getting better in Iraq. What is unclear is whether this assessment is due to actual conditions on the ground changing or due to an effect stemming from Obama's overall job approval as president. As President Obama's overall job rating as well as his rating on the economy has started moving downward, one thing he can feel cautiously optimistic about is how he is rated on Iraq.

**TABLE 1  
OBAMA'S HANDLING OF IRAQ**

“Overall, how would you rate the job President Obama has done in handling Iraq over the last several months?”

Base: All Adults

	Jan 2009*	June 2009	Political Party		
			Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Positive (NET)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>44</b>
Excellent	11	13	2	25	9
Pretty Good	34	39	20	55	35
<b>Negative (NET)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>47</b>
Only fair	17	26	39	13	33
Poor	13	16	35	3	14
Not sure	25	6	4	4	9

\*Comparison with January 2009 isn't strictly comparable. That data was collected before President Obama became president. The question was phrased differently, (i.e., How good a job do you think President-elect Obama will do regarding Iraq?)

**TABLE 2**  
**MILITARY ACTION IN IRAQ – RIGHT OR WRONG THING TO DO**

"Thinking about everything that has happened, do you think that taking military action against Iraq was the right or wrong thing to do?"

Base: All Adults

	2003		2004								
	Sept	Nov	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Sept	Dec
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Right thing	55	49	55	52	51	49	47	44	43	43	43
Wrong thing	32	37	31	34	33	37	38	42	42	43	43
Not sure	13	13	15	14	16	14	14	14	15	13	14

	2005						2006				
	Jan	March	May	July	Oct	Dec	Jan	March	May	Sept	Nov
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Right thing	39	41	39	38	34	35	40	37	38	39	36
Wrong thing	46	45	48	49	53	53	46	48	47	44	46
Not sure	15	15	13	14	13	12	13	15	15	17	18

	2007					2008	2009	
	Jan	March	May	Aug.	Oct.	Aug.	Jan	June
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Right thing	37	34	36	35	37	33	34	36
Wrong thing	46	46	45	46	46	49	47	44
Not sure	17	19	19	20	18	18	18	20

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 3**  
**SITUATION IN IRAQ – GETTING BETTER OR WORSE**  
 "Do you think that the situation in Iraq is...?"

Base: All Adults

	2004									
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Sept	Dec	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Getting better	24	22	24	9	11	19	18	15	18	
Getting worse	36	38	38	64	65	49	45	54	50	
No real change	31	31	30	20	19	26	30	26	25	
Not sure	8	9	8	6	5	6	7	6	6	

	2005						2006				
	Jan	March	May	July	Sept	Dec	Jan	March	May	Sept	Nov
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Getting better	13	21	21	17	19	20	22	17	20	17	9
Getting worse	53	41	39	44	43	43	36	46	43	45	58
No real change	28	33	34	35	33	32	35	32	31	31	27
Not sure	6	6	6	4	5	5	7	6	5	7	6

	2007						2008			2009
	Jan	March	May	August	Oct.	Dec.	March	May	August	June
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Getting better	13	13	18	20	25	24	27	22	32	38
Getting worse	55	51	46	42	32	25	23	29	16	8
No real change	26	28	29	30	35	42	42	42	41	42
Not sure	7	8	8	8	7	10	8	8	10	12

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 4**  
**VIEWS ON TIMETABLE FOR REMOVAL OF US COMBAT TROOPS IN IRAQ**

"President Obama has said that by August 31, 2010, the combat mission in Iraq will end and combat brigades will be removed. Which comes closest to your opinion?"

Base: All Adults

	Total	Political Party		
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%
Troops should remain in Iraq beyond that date if necessary	32	61	11	38
This timeline seems to be the best one	32	17	52	23
Combat troops should be removed from Iraq well before that date	23	10	27	27
Not at all sure	17	12	10	12

TABLE 5

**LIKELIHOOD OF US COMBAT TROOPS BEING REMOVED FROM IRAQ BY AUGUST 2010**

"Regardless of what you think should happen with the combat troops in Iraq, do you believe that these troops will be removed by August 31, 2010?"

Base: All Adults

	June 2009	Political Party		
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%
<b>Will be removed (NET)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>33</b>
Definitely will be removed	4	2	7	1
Probably will be removed.	40	32	52	31
<b>Will Not be Removed (NET)</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>67</b>
Probably will not be removed	51	59	39	58
Definitely will not be removed	6	7	2	9

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

## Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between June 8 and 15, 2009, among 2,177 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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