



Canadians believe Bush is a threat to peace: Poll

Many fear U.S. will launch strikes on Iran, N. Korea

Bin Laden still perceived as greatest danger

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WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—Canadians believe the world has become a more dangerous place since George W. Bush was elected U.S. president and a majority believe he will launch military strikes in Iran or North Korea before his term ends in 2008, according to a new *Toronto Star* poll.

Canadians also consider Bush more dangerous to world peace than Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

The EKOS poll was done in Canada for the *Star* and Montreal's *La Presse* ahead of Tuesday's U.S. mid-term elections, expected to be decided on the issue of the Iraq war. The same questions were posed to respondents by pollsters in Britain, Israel and Mexico.

Canadians — like Americans — have soured on the U.S. invasion of Iraq with 73 per cent now telling EKOS that Washington had no justification for it. When the same question was asked of Canadians in April 2003, right after the Bush invasion, EKOS found 53 per cent thought it unjustified.

Also like Americans, Canadians are split on whether the U.S. should stay and finish the job or come home as soon as possible.

Canadians told EKOS they believed Osama bin Laden posed the greatest danger to the world, followed by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, then Bush, Ahmadinejad and Nasrallah.

Mexicans ranked Bush the second-most dangerous of the five, behind Al Qaeda's bin Laden.

Views in Israel were radically different, where only 9 per cent ranked Bush a "great danger," compared to 34 per cent of Canadians, 41 per cent of Britons and 58 per cent of Mexicans.

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Charles Pena, Independent Institute

Israelis ranked Ahmadinejad — who has vowed to wipe the country off the map — the most dangerous, slightly ahead of bin Laden.

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In addition, 57 per cent of Canadians said they believed the U.S. would intervene militarily in North Korea or Iran in the next two years over objections to their nuclear programs.

The polls were conducted in late October and involved 1,000 people in each country. The results are considered accurate within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Analysts here say anti-Americanism has become more intense under Bush than any other U.S. president before him.

"The feeling goes well beyond just policy choices," says Charles Pena of the Independent Institute. "There is the perception the Bush administration went into Iraq unilaterally and has made other choices unilaterally. There is a belief we ran roughshod over allies and that their opinions didn't matter and we wouldn't listen anyway."

Charles Kupchan of the non-partisan Council on Foreign Relations says there is a sense in the world that "America has gone off the reservation ... it is no longer a team player.

"It's a reaction to an Iraq war which seems to get worse by the day and is a festering wound. It will damage the U.S. image to 2008 and beyond because this eight-year period under Bush is something that will take years to overcome."

The Canadian view is not that different from that held by Americans. A *New York Times/CBS News* poll published yesterday indicated 26 per cent of Americans believe Bush had a clear plan to deal with the situation in Iraq and only 8 per cent said they believed he should continue on his present course in the war. Bush had the approval of 34 per cent of those polled.

The Pew Research Center in the U.S. regularly tracks America's global image and it, too, has found the image being tarnished with each passing year of the Bush administration.

Pew found the only time anti-Americanism had shown signs of abating was 2005 because of positive feelings generated by U.S. aid for tsunami victims in Indonesia and elsewhere. But a year later, America's image also had declined significantly in India (from 71 per cent to 56 per cent with a favourable opinion) and Indonesia (from 38 per cent to 30 per cent), Pew reported.

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