CNN Anderson Cooper Show *AC 360* Ken Ballen Interview and Report (9/11/07)

So much attention is being paid, of course, to Iraq and to Afghanistan. But one of the next great places where potential threats is Pakistan. There was a suicide attack there today.

And a new poll out shows just how popular Osama bin Laden is in some parts of Pakistan, a country which is, in many ways, an ally of the United States in this so-called war on terror.

CNN Terrorism Analyst **Peter Bergen** reports.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

PETER BERGEN, CNN TERRORISM ANALYST (voice-over): Six years on the run, six years taunting the West, inspiring, if not executing, terrorism. The working assumption of U.S. intelligence is that Osama bin Laden is here, in the wild and lawless borderlands of Pakistan.

We know that Pakistan, and especially its president, Pervez Musharraf, is one of the most important allies the United States has in the war on terror.

And we also know the U.S. gives the Pakistani military hundreds of millions of dollars a year to go after terrorists.

So why has al Qaeda managed to regroup in Pakistan? The answer is that al Qaeda's safe haven is built on a solid foundation of favorable Pakistani public opinion.

KEN BALLEN, TERROR FREE TOMORROW: I would say this poll is the most disturbing one of the many that we've ever done. The reason this one is so disturbing is that in the one Muslim nation that already has nuclear weapons, people who are intent on using them against us, such as al Qaeda and bin Laden, enjoy more popular support than the people we are trusting, such as President Musharraf, to safeguard those nuclear weapons.

BERGEN: Ken Ballen runs the independent polling organization Terror Free Tomorrow. These polling numbers, based on more than 1,000 face-to-face interviews across Pakistan in recent weeks, are brand new.

Take the approval ratings. President Musharraf, 38 percent. Osama bin Laden, 46 percent. That's right. Nearly half of Pakistanis on the front line of the war on terror favor Osama bin Laden over their own president.

And in the Northwest Frontier Province, where bin Laden is likely hiding, he enjoys a 70 percent approval rating.

Thirty-eight percent of Pakistanis support the Taliban and a third support al Qaeda. No surprise, then, that when the Terror Free Tomorrow pollsters asked whether U.S. troops should go after al Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan, three-quarters of Pakistanis said no.

And what do Pakistanis think of President George W. Bush? He gets 9 percent approval.

After the American relief effort in Pakistan following the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, Terror Free Tomorrow found 46 percent of Pakistanis had a favorable opinion of the United States. That's now down to 19 percent.

BALLEN: We failed in winning hearts and minds, at least in Pakistan.

BERGEN: The majority of Pakistanis said their opinion of the United States would improve if American educational, medical aid and business investment increased. And the U.S. granted more visas for Pakistanis to work in the United States.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COOPER: Peter joins us now from Washington.

Peter, was there any good news in this poll?

BERGEN: There was some good news, Anderson, for the United States in this poll, even though there was obviously quite a bit of sympathy for al Qaeda and the Taliban and Pakistan. When you ask the question to Pakistanis, would you vote for a coalition of anti- American religious parties, only 3 to 4 percent said yes. So in the coming election, these militant religious parties, which are quite anti-American, are not going to do particularly well -- Anderson.

COOPER: It's still shocking to hear how popular bin Laden and al Qaeda is in so many parts of Pakistan.

Peter Bergen, appreciate the report. Thanks.

CNN.com

Poll: Bin Laden tops Musharraf in Pakistan

Story Highlights: (9/11/07)
Osama bin laden more popular the Pakistan, U.S. presidents, poll finds
Two-thirds of respondents say they believe war on terror is action against Islam
Respondents say view of U.S. would improve if aid, business ties increased
Poll of more than 1,000 Pakistanis conducted for group Terror Free Tomorrow

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf -- a key U.S. ally -- is less popular in his own country than al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, according to a poll of Pakistanis conducted last month by an anti-terrorism organization.

Additionally, nearly three-fourths of poll respondents said they oppose U.S. military action against al Qaeda and the Taliban inside Pakistan, according to results from the poll conducted by the independent polling organization Terror Free Tomorrow.

"We have conducted 23 polls all over the Muslim world, and this is the most disturbing one we have conducted," said Ken Ballen, the group's head. "Pakistan is the one Muslim nation that has nuclear weapons, and the people who want to use them against us -- like the Taliban and al Qaeda -- are more popular there than our allies like Musharraf."

The poll was conducted for Terror Free Tomorrow by D3 Systems of Vienna, Virginia., and the Pakistan Institute for Public Opinion. Interviews were conducted August 18-29, face-to-face with 1,044 Pakistanis across 105 urban and rural sampling points in all four provinces across the nation. Households were randomly selected.

According to poll results, bin Laden has a 46 percent approval rating. Musharraf's support is 38 percent. U.S. President George W. Bush's approval: 9 percent.

Asked their opinion on the real purpose of the U.S.-led war on terror, 66 percent of poll respondents said they believe the United States is acting against Islam or has anti-Muslim motivation. Others refused to answer the question or said they did not know.

"We failed in winning hearts and minds in Pakistan," Ballen told CNN. "In fact, only 4 percent said we had a good motivation in the war on terrorism."

Seventy-four percent said they oppose U.S. military action against al Qaeda and the Taliban inside Pakistan.

After American relief efforts following the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan's Kashmir region, 46 percent of Pakistanis had a positive opinion of the United States, according to another Terror Free Tomorrow poll. But as of last month, only 19 percent reported a favorable opinion.

Meanwhile, al Qaeda has a 43 percent approval rate; the Taliban has a 38 percent approval rate; and local radical extremist groups had an approval rating between 37 percent to 49 percent.

Views of U.S. could improve, responses indicate

There were a few bright spots in the poll results, however. Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto -- a relatively moderate and progressive figure, as well as a woman -- had a 63 percent approval rating.

Seventy-five percent of poll respondents said suicide bombings are rarely or never justified.

And a majority of Pakistanis said their opinion of the United States would improve if, among other things, there were increases in American aid to Pakistan, American business investments and the number of visas issued for Pakistanis to work in the United States.

Terror Free Tomorrow is a non-partisan, nonprofit group in Washington, D.C., and according to its Web site is "the only organization dedicated to a new strategic vision: Leading the fight against terror by winning the popular support that empowers global terrorists."

CNN Analyst Peter Bergen contributed to this report.

Editorial 11/06/07

American policy toward Pakistan had been a failure even before this latest setback. Despite plying Musharraf with public attention and billions in military aid, we haven't got much effective help from him in shutting down al-Qaida and Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal regions.

The best explanation for that failure may come from a poll of Pakistanis commissioned by the American nonprofit group Terror Free Tomorrow.

According to that poll, taken in August, only 19 percent of Pakistanis felt favorably toward the United States. To put that in context, the favorability number for India — Pakistan's neighbor and hated rival, with whom it has fought several wars — was twice as high as that of the United States.

In that same poll, just 9 percent of Pakistanis expressed a favorable view of President Bush, and only 38 percent expressed a favorable view of Musharraf. By comparison, 46 percent of Pakistanis expressed a favorable opinion of Osama bin Laden.

Reversing those numbers would be difficult, but the United States does have some cards to play. The Pakistani people have made clear their yearning for democracy, and if the United States was perceived as supporting that ambition even against our own short-term interests, it could go a long way toward overcoming past mistakes.

The Washington Post

Editorial 11/21/07

Musharraf seems to be on the same path [as Egyptian President Mubarak]. While talking about fighting radicalism, his real energy has been devoted to imprisoning and harassing his democratic opponents. As in Egypt, this approach has elevated the Islamists. Polling by the nonprofit group Terror Free Tomorrow shows broad Pakistani support for democracy, coupled with considerable sympathy for radical groups that oppose the military regime. In the long run, propping up favorable dictators to fight terrorism causes a backlash.

Los Angeles Times

Editorial (11/15/07)

Today, Pakistan is in crisis once more. Musharraf has managed to alienate secular democrats and radical Islamists alike. As Musharraf clings to power, we continue to

lose traction in the battle against extremism in Pakistan. A recent Terror Free Tomorrow opinion poll found that most Pakistanis are so alienated that they give Osama bin Laden higher approval ratings than they give to Musharraf -- or to George Bush.

Guardian Unlimited

Editorial November 8, 2007
The only way to explain why the US and its allies do not abandon a leader who is less popular (as shown by a Terror Free Tomorrow survey) with his people than the terrorist whom he is being paid billions to hunt is that the people of Pakistan are considered irrelevant in discussions about Pakistan.

THE HUFFINGTON POST.
Opinion November 8, 2007

Musharraf has been so successful as an anti-terrorist that he is now less popular in Pakistan than Osama Bin Laden (linking to Terror Free Tomorrow's poll).

NEW YORK POST
24 HOURS A DAY

Editorial (11/21/07)

Al Qaeda is quite popular there. A recent poll for the group Terror Free Tomorrow found that Osama bin Laden has a 70 percent favorability rating in the Northwest Frontier Province and other Pakistani tribal areas (not so coincidently, where US intelligence believes he is now holed up). The publicity about any US-led or -supported operation won't help. The poll shows there is no support for any US military action against these groups; Pakistanis see the War on Terror as America's problem - not theirs.

THE JERUSALEM POST **The NEW YORK Sun**
Editorials (10/08/07)

All this is of great moment to Americans because of Pakistan's role in the war against Islamist extremism. Within Pakistan, the war is not going well. This is confirmed by the Washington-based research institute, Terror Free Tomorrow, which released a survey showing that three quarters of Pakistanis oppose American military action against Al Qaeda and the Taliban inside Pakistan…. Aside from that, popular support for the Taliban and Osama bin Laden has hardened in Pakistan. The Terror Free Tomorrow

survey found that, bin Laden was more popular among Pakistanis than Musharraf. The al-Qaida leader received a 46 percent approval rating to Musharraf's 38 percent. Asked about their view of the purpose of the US-led war on terrorism, 66 percent of Pakistanis said they believe that the US is acting against Islam.

MiamiHerald.com ⓗ **The Sacramento Bee**

baltimoresun.com

Editorials (10/06/07 – 10/14/07)

A poll of Pakistanis released by Terror Free Tomorrow in early September found than bin Laden had a 46 percent approval rating, while Musharraf's stood at 38 percent. A destabilized Pakistan is yet another al Qaeda threat to world security. And like the battles in Iraq and Afghanistan, this one has profound military, economic and political consequences for the United States.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Editorial (9/23/07)

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Pakistan's political landscape has been repeatedly reduced
to the binary that pits extremist militants against the
military. Take, for example, the oft-quoted survey released
earlier this month by the Washington-based think tank
Terror Free Tomorrow. Local and international politicians,
policy makers as well as the mainstream media have
highlighted the fact that the survey shows bin Laden to be
more popular than General Musharraf amongst Pakistanis,
with the former boasting approval ratings of 46 per cent
against the president's 38 percent. Of course, the politics
and problems of a nation as diffuse as Pakistan are rarely
so easily summarized. What most media coverage of the
Terror Free Tomorrow survey neglects to report is that the
statistics also show Pakistanis to have a 69 percent
approval rating of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, 63
percent for Benazir Bhutto and 57 percent for Nawaz Sharif.
The average Pakistani's ability to see that there are many
influential actors in the epic drama that is national
politics is, however, dismissed in favor of a neat binary
placing the military in opposition with the militants.
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The New York Times

In a front page story, the *Times* cites Terror Free Tomorrow's recent survey of Pakistan:

"A poll in September by Terror Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based nonprofit group, showed that Osama bin Laden was more popular in Pakistan than General Musharraf, with 46 percent of respondents giving him a "favorable" rating against 38 percent for the president. Ms. Bhutto got a "favorable" rating from 63 percent. The nationwide poll surveyed 1,044 adults and had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points."

The Washington Post

In a front page story, the *Post* cites Terror Free Tomorrow's recent survey of Pakistan:

"A poll in August conducted for the Washington-based nonprofit group Terror Free Tomorrow found that 19 percent of Pakistanis held a favorable view of the United States, down from 26 percent the previous year. Osama bin Laden had a far higher approval rating, at 46 percent, than either Musharraf (38 percent) or President Bush (9 percent)."

The Washington Post   Los Angeles Times

"Patience with Musharraf's U.S. backers is also wearing thin. Even before the latest crisis, Pakistanis were highly suspicious of U.S. intentions. A poll released in September by the Washington-based nonpartisan group Terror Free Tomorrow found that only 19 percent of Pakistanis had a favorable view of the United States."

Chicago Tribune

"A poll released in September by Terror Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based non-profit, found that only 19 percent of Pakistanis polled had a favorable opinion of the U.S. -- making the U.S. the most unpopular country here, even more unpopular than historic enemy India."

The New York Times

A poll released Tuesday by Terror Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based nonprofit organization, showed that [Osama bin Laden](#) was more popular in Pakistan than General Musharraf, polling 46 percent support against 38 percent for the president. The nationwide poll surveyed 1,044 adults last month and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points. It showed that nearly three-quarters of Pakistanis opposed unilateral American military action against Al Qaeda in Pakistan. In addition, 67 percent of respondents in North-West Frontier Province, where most of the militants are based, opposed the Pakistani military's pursuing Qaeda or Taliban militants.

FT .com
FINANCIAL TIMES

An opinion poll released on Tuesday by Terror Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based non-profit organisation, showed that Mr Sharif was catching up on Ms Bhutto in terms of popularity, with 57 per cent of the 1,044 adults polled last month having a favourable opinion of him, compared with 63 per cent for the PPP leader. Osama bin Laden, with 46 per cent support, was viewed more favourably in Pakistan than Gen Musharraf, whose 38 per cent rating makes him the most unpopular figure in Pakistani politics. The nationwide poll showed that 67 per cent of respondents in North-West Frontier Province, where most militants are based, opposed the Pakistani military's pursuit of al-Qaeda or Taliban forces.

The Washington Post

A poll released this week by a U.S.-based group showed that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is more popular than Musharraf in Pakistan, but both get far more approval than President Bush. The poll, by the bipartisan group Terror Free Tomorrow, revealed that only 19 percent of Pakistanis have a positive view of the United States.

The Washington Post

The Pakistan People's Party is the nation's largest, and Bhutto remains popular, although some of the party's leaders worry that her public standing will be hurt if she associates herself with Musharraf. A recent opinion poll conducted by the U.S.-based bipartisan group Terror Free Tomorrow found that 38 percent of Pakistanis have a favorable view of Musharraf, compared with 63 percent for Bhutto.

Summary of Coverage in Pakistan:

The News (Pakistan) Editorial (9/23/07)

"Since the Lal Masjid showdown, Pakistan's political landscape has been repeatedly reduced to the binary that pits extremist militants against the military. Take, for example, the oft-quoted survey released earlier this month by the Washington-based think tank Terror Free Tomorrow. Local and international politicians, policy makers as well as the mainstream media have highlighted the fact that the survey shows bin Laden to be more popular than General Musharraf amongst Pakistanis, with the former boasting approval ratings of 46 per cent against the president's 38 per cent. Of course, the politics and problems of a nation as diffuse as Pakistan are rarely so easily summarized. What most media coverage of the Terror Free Tomorrow survey neglects to report is that the statistics also show Pakistanis to have a 69 per cent approval rating of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, 63 per cent for Benazir Bhutto and 57 percent for Nawaz Sharif. The average Pakistani's ability to see that there are many influential actors in the epic drama that is national politics is, however, dismissed in favor of a neat binary placing the military in opposition with the militants."

Associated Press of Pakistan (9/14/07)

"President Pervez Musharraf's top political ally, President Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, publicly called into question "the authenticity of the public opinion survey regarding the popularity of leaders released by an American organization Terror Free Tomorrow." The Terror Free Tomorrow survey found that Gen. Musharraf's principal political rivals, Mr. Sharif and Ms. Bhutto, were considerably more popular than Gen. Musharraf, whose 38% favourable rating even fell below Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden."

Daily Times of Pakistan, Associated Press of Pakistan, Pakistan Tribune, Dawn (Pakistan)*, The Nation* (Pakistan)*, The Pakistan News,* GEO TV Pakistan, *BBC Urdu* and others throughout Pakistan (9/11-14/07)

"Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden is more popular in Pakistan than President Pervez Musharraf, according to a poll released on Wednesday by US-based organisation Terror Free Tomorrow (TFT). TFT polled 1,044 people across Pakistan between August 18 and August 29 and found nearly 75 per cent of Pakistanis oppose US military action in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Musharraf's approval rating was 38 per cent behind 46 per cent for bin Laden. Bin Laden's ratings jumped to 70 per cent in the North West Frontier Province. Former Prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, enjoy favourable opinions of 63 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively, while Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry had a 69 per cent favourable rating, the poll showed. "

The New York Times

September 11, 2007

Pakistanis Oppose US Terror Hunts

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Only a quarter of Pakistanis support their military working with U.S. forces to pursue terrorists inside Pakistan, and even fewer favor letting American forces mount such operations on their own, a poll released on Tuesday said.

In a broader measure of America's unpopularity in its erstwhile ally against terrorism, 19 percent of Pakistanis see the U.S. favorably -- half the number with a positive view of India, a bitter rival Pakistan has fought in three wars since 1947. The U.S.-backed Pakistani president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, is less popular than Osama bin Laden, though both are far better liked than President Bush.

The survey was released by Terror Free Tomorrow, a bipartisan group that seeks to reduce support for international terrorism. Its advisory board includes presidential candidate Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Lee Hamilton, the former Democratic congressman from Indiana who helped lead a study of White House Iraq policy last year.

Ken Ballen, the group's president, said the poll was the most worrisome of 23 it has conducted in the Muslim world over the past three years because of the anti-American, pro-bin Laden feelings it found and the unpopularity of Musharraf, who leads the only Muslim nation with nuclear weapons.

"It's disturbing. It's almost like a perfect storm" of distressing findings, Ballen said.

By 49 percent to 40 percent, most Pakistanis said it is important to defeat al-Qaida, the Taliban and other terrorist groups. Most also said they support the

Pakistani military on its own hunting al-Qaida and Taliban fighters inside the country.

But when it came to the U.S. launching unilateral missions against those groups inside Pakistan, only 13 percent voiced approval.

Pakistani officials have said they do not let the U.S. or others pursue militants inside their country. They objected last month when Sen. [Barack Obama](#), D-Ill., a presidential contender, said he would be willing to let American forces chase terrorists in Pakistan even without its consent.

Some U.S. military officials, however, have said they do not need Pakistan's approval for such operations near the mountainous border with Afghanistan, where bin Laden, the al-Qaida leader, and other leaders may be hiding.

By 46 percent to 26 percent, most view bin Laden favorably, including 70 percent who see him positively in the northwest province where he may have sanctuary. That compares to 37 percent in the country with favorable opinions of Musharraf, and nine percent for Bush.

In a measure of their distrust, 56 percent said the U.S. war on terrorism is driven by anti-Muslim goals like killing Muslims, taking their oil or ending their religion. Less than 10 percent suggested positive motivations like seeking global peace.

Three-fourths said suicide bombings are never or rarely justified.

The poll took place Aug. 18-29 in urban and rural areas in all four of the country's provinces, and involved face-to-face questioning of 1,044 adults by native Pakistani interviewers. It was conducted by D3 Systems of Vienna, Va., and the Pakistani Institute for Public Opinion.

On the Net:

Terror Free Tomorrow: http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org