

Editorial: Facts about Iraq? Who cares?

Polls reveal an astonishing lack of knowledge on basic information.

By Register Editorial Board

The Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius once wrote, "The opinion of 10,000 men is of no value if none of them knows anything about the subject."

That is the quote that comes to mind now that a new poll reveals many Americans are misinformed about Iraq. Researchers at the University of Maryland tested 1,265 respondents about their level of information on Iraq and the tragedy of Sept. 11. The results troubled even the pollsters: Americans just don't know the truth about the basics.

One-third of respondents believes the U.S. military_ has already found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

In truth, none has been found.

Twenty-two percent thought Iraq had used chemical and biological weapons.

Wrong again.

Half the people polled thought Iraqis were among the Sept. 11 hijackers. Only 17 percent knew that not one single hijacker was from Iraq.

It's troubling. No, it's downright scary. It means Americans are basing their opinions about the Iraq war on misinformation. If people believe Iraq was involved in the World Trade Center tragedy, attacking the country seems retaliatory. If they wrongly believe weapons were found and even used by Iraqis, it lends justification to a war and subsequent military action.

This information also sheds some light on why the Bush administration may not be so concerned about finding the still-elusive weapons of mass destruction in Iraq: It doesn't matter. The people *think* they were found. The people *think* Saddam Hussein was somehow involved in the Sept. 11 hijackings. The people *think* it's OK to attack a country. Because they don't know the facts.

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