

## Who's afraid of Islamic State?

By Marc Zwelling

Before entering the Parliament buildings on October 22, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau fatally shot corporal Nathan Cirillo, a Canadian soldier guarding the nearby National War Memorial. Two days earlier in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, south of Montréal, two soldiers were run over by Martin Couture-Rouleau, a local man the police believe had jihadist sympathies. He was shot and killed by the police. One soldier died later.

Did the two attacks make Canadians more anxious? Yes. More bellicose? No.

In an Abacus Data national poll, 56 per cent said they believe “Canada faces a growing risk of radical Islamist terrorism in Canada.” Abacus conducted the survey from October 30 to November 4.

In the Abacus poll 32 per cent said they “feel more threatened and less secure personally” as a result of the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa events while 68 per cent said they feel no more at risk than before.

In a Forum Research poll (November 19-20), two thirds agreed ISIS is a direct threat to Canada (67 per cent), up 11 points from a Forum September survey.

But if Canadians had a war cry, it's “Send jets, not troops.”

Before the attacks on the soldiers, 55 per cent opposed deploying “Canadian troops on the ground in Iraq and Syria to fight ISIS” in an October Nanos Research poll. After the two incidents 57 per cent opposed sending troops (November 15-18).

Before the two attacks, 65 per cent backed using “Canadian fighter jets to support the international mission” against ISIS. After the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa assaults, it was still 65 per cent.

- 47 per cent told Abacus the Ottawa and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu attacks “prove Canada must take a harder line in the fight against terror in the Middle East” while 53 per cent said “the attacks don’t affect my view of what we should do in the fight against terror in the Middle East.”
- Forum’s sample of the national population split evenly — 47 per cent agreed, 47 per cent disagreed — that the attacks on the Canadian soldiers justified joining the US-led “mission” against ISIS in Iraq (5 per cent had no opinion).

Stephen Harper and defence minister Rob Nicholson instantly linked the Ottawa and Québec incidents with ISIS. Harper asserted, “Canada will never be intimidated.” Nicholson said Canada’s Iraq deployment “will continue unimpeded.”

However, the voters aren’t as certain as Harper and Nicholson about the attackers’ motives.

In the November Abacus poll, 51 per cent said the attacks “were caused by the growing conflict with radical Islamic influences in the Middle East.” On the other side, 49 per cent felt the incidents “were more about two deranged individual attackers than a broader conflict.”

The threat of terrorism rouses Conservatives. If people believe ISIS is targeting Canada it serves Harper’s interest. Federal Conservative Party supporters are the most alarmed — 68 per cent in the November Abacus survey said there is a growing

risk of Islamic terrorism in Canada compared with 53 per cent of federal Liberals and 51 per cent of NDP voters.

In the November Forum survey, 39 per cent overall called the attacks “acts of terrorism,” while 46 per cent said they were “actions of mentally unbalanced individuals.” Conservative voters are way more inclined than other voters to call them terrorist acts, by 58 per cent to 34 per cent of Liberal voters and 25 per cent of NDPers.

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*Marc Zwelling is the founder of the Vector Poll™ ([www.vectorresearch.com](http://www.vectorresearch.com)) and author of *Public Opinion and Polling For Dummies*, published by Wiley (2012).*