

**THE BLOG**

# The Terrorists Have Won

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By Marty Kaplan

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According to a new Pew poll — the one that shows W’s approval at 33% — “President Bush’s declining image also is reflected in the single-word descriptions people use to describe their impression of the president...The single word most frequently associated with George W. Bush today is ‘incompetent,’ and close behind are two other increasingly mentioned descriptors: ‘idiot’ and ‘liar.’ All three are mentioned far more often today than a year ago.”

Since all three single-word terms used by the American people to describe the President are closely bunched together in frequency, I thought it might be illuminating to employ the factorial ( $3! = 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 6$ ) in order to display the combined descriptors in the full array of possibilities. That would be:

Incompetent lying idiot. Incompetent idiotic liar. Lying incompetent idiot. Idiotic incompetent liar. Lying idiotic incompetent. Idiotic lying incompetent.

I wonder whether empirical evidence would show whether Americans marginally favor any one combined formulation over the others. Rhetorically, “incompetent lying idiot” may have a slight edge. Clearly, more research is needed.

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