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Bombing For Polling Numbers?

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DUMMERSTON, Vt. - The economy is faltering, the stock market has tanked, and President Bush's lame attempt at portraying himself as the champion of corporate responsibility has failed. Sounds like a good time to invade Iraq.

Yes, it's a cynical attitude to have. But we're dealing with cynical people in charge of our country and if bombing Iraq would give President Bush a bump up in the opinion polls, they'd do it a minute - especially with the mid-term elections coming up in November.

Despite the near-unanimous disapproval of our allies, the cage-rattling of late by the U.S. seems to indicate an attack against Saddam Hussein will come sooner rather than later. But I think there's a even better indicator of the timing of the attack. It's how the mood of the country is turning away from the hyped-up, smoke-and-mirrors "war on terror" and toward the realization that corporate greed, dishonesty and hypocrisy has made a shambles of the economy.

Journalist Sam Perry, writing for the Internet news site The Consortium (consortiumnews.com), calls this "the Bush Effect," which he defines as "the combination of a depressed economy, an inability to address pressing domestic needs, the alienation of key allies and endless war."

The Bush administration has been shameless in using the "war" to distract Americans from taking a critical look at how the nation is being led off a cliff by a group of men who have shredded the Constitution and bled our economy dry for the benefit of themselves and their wealthy backers. The folks in Europe seem to be more sensitive to this than most Americans. Ever since the 2000 presidential election was stolen by the Republicans, Europeans have been aghast at the political and economic decision making by the Bush administration.

According to Business Week, lots of foreign money flowed into the U.S. economy in the 1990s, with a ten-fold increase in purchases of stocks and

corporate bonds and a six-fold increase in direct investment between 1995 and 2001. This is the money that helped to finance the last decade's financial boom.

After watching the fecklessness of President Bush and his stunning lack of intelligence in economic and international affairs, foreign investors have been pulling their money out of the U.S. as fast as they can. In the past year, foreign purchases of U.S. stocks and bonds decreased 24 percent and direct investment has fallen 63 percent, according to Business Week. As a result, the dollar and the euro are now equal in value.

Since Bush has been in office, the Dow has lost more than a fifth of its value, the S&P 500 has lost nearly a third of its value and NASDAQ more than half of its value. Throw in the various corporate accounting abuses and the general mistrust investors now have toward Wall Street, and you can see why foreign and U.S. investors are stampeding toward the exits.

All this makes an attack on Iraq more likely. The deeper the economy sinks into recession - or worse - the more likely the Bush administration will resort to war to distract Americans from the spreading domestic chaos. I don't think it's a coincidence that the recent leaks from the Pentagon and the State Department regarding an invasion strategy for Iraq came as the corporate sleaze scandals picked up momentum in the press.

You know that once the bombs are falling on Baghdad, all talk about "corporate responsibility" and "cleaning up Wall Street," not to mention calls to take a closer look at President Bush and Vice President Cheney's own shady business deals, will instantly vanish. The "war on terrorism" will be back on the front burner, providing the smokescreen that will protect the Bush administration from criticism on the domestic front.

The Bush administration wants you to pay no mind to the fact that Iraq had no involvement in the Sept. 11 attacks, that its much ballyhooed "weapons of mass destruction" may not even exist in a deployable state or that the 23 million citizens of Iraq have been held hostage to an U.S.-led embargo that has contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocents by starvation and disease over the past decade. They also don't want you to know that Iraq is the world's second largest source of oil and that the global energy conglomerates are salivating over the chance to have greater access to its oil in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

A statement made by Nazi leader Hermann Goering at the Nuremberg Trials after World War II has been making the rounds since Sept. 11. See if you can find any parallels between Germany in the 1930s and America in the 2000s in his words:

"Why of course the people don't want war. ... But after all it is the leaders of the

country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament or a communist dictatorship. ... Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger."

Something wicked is happening. What are we going to do about it?

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