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Next Pakistan . . . and Maybe Germany **by Scott McPherson**

According to President Bush, we must attack Iraq for five main reasons: (1) Saddam Hussein is a dictator; (2) he probably has weapons of mass destruction; (3) he is a supporter of international terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda; (4) his continued position as head of his country threatens his neighbors; and (5) all of this could destabilize the Middle East.

Let's see if another country possesses these marks justifying a U.S.-led invasion of its sovereign territory.

As U.S. and allied forces search mountain cave hideouts in Afghanistan for Taliban and al-Qaeda holdouts, across the border in Pakistan terrorist training camps are operating — with apparent impunity — just miles from U.S. troops. In fact, al-Qaeda terrorists recently launched an attack on an American base from inside Pakistan. The Pakistani government refuses to destroy the camps, granting de facto sanctuary to terrorists, and is adamantly opposed to U.S. forces' doing the job themselves.

Pakistan, though officially a partner in the “war on terrorism,” is ruled by President Pervez Musharraf, a military dictator with his own distant ties to international terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda. Until recently, he was also a strong supporter of the Taliban.

Moreover, Pakistan's government is definitely in possession of nuclear weapons — the ultimate weapon of mass destruction — and recently brought the Middle East to the brink of nuclear war over the province of Kashmir, control over which it contests with its neighbor India.

Aren't we missing something important here? Each of the five most damning characteristics attributed to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein are found quite generously in the president of Pakistan. Yet it's Iraq, not Pakistan, which finds itself in the crosshairs of the U.S. government. Clearly, being suspected of these five offenses is worse than being guilty of all of them.

If Saddam does *not* have weapons of mass destruction, has no further designs on Kuwait, does not wish to start a massive war in his region, and is not currently assisting radical Islamic

terrorists in their violent attacks on the United States, our treatment of Pakistan is certainly a major incentive for him to start acting differently.

Then again, maybe we should give Bush the benefit of the doubt and assume he's saving the invasion of Pakistan for later, when it, like Iraq after its bloody war with Iran, is no longer useful as an ally.

And what about Germany? German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has been a highly vocal opponent of U.S. intentions towards Iraq from the start, and has now rallied the French to his cause. Germany, which currently serves as chairman of the UN Security Council, said it will not support U.S. military efforts to oust Saddam; and U.S. Ambassador Daniel R. Coats recently said in a German television interview that he is "worried" that "Germany is no longer a partner," and warned that "we need to think about what our future will be like."

Perhaps we're gearing up to attack the wrong regime. Don't forget: In the war on terrorism, they're either with us or against us. Given President Bush's shaky justifications and arbitrary targets for war, if I lived in either Pakistan or Germany, and possibly even France, I'd be thinking long and hard about my future.

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