

The Plot to Blow Up NYC Subway is Bogus

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Global Research, October 10, 2005

10 October 2005

Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [Terrorism](#)

Its official: I'm a conspiracy theorist.

I'm probably one of thousands — maybe tens of thousands — who believe President George W. Bush and his most senior advisors, will do anything to improve the president's poll numbers just to turn the public's attention away from scandals engulfing the White House.

It's not safe to have a healthy dose of skepticism like this these days. But this has to be said: I don't believe the country is going to be attacked by al-Qaeda anytime soon. I don't care how specific the so-called threat was against New York City's subway system. I don't care how many targets have been identified. I don't care how solid this new information is. I don't buy any of it. What I do believe is whenever Bush's approval ratings start slipping the president's administration issues a terrorist warning saying an attack is imminent. Coincidence? I don't think so.

Consider the evidence.

Last year, on Memorial Day weekend, during the contentious presidential campaign between Bush and Democratic challenger, Sen. John Kerry, right through mid-June Bush's approval ratings yo-yoed due to bad news coming out of the war in Iraq. By mid-June, 51% of Americans disapproved of the way Bush was handling the war in Iraq, up about four points from May, according to polling results from Zogby, Gallup and Pew.

Bush was taking a beating in the press in May and June 2004 because of the Abu-Ghraib prison scandal and the high number of American military casualties the U.S. suffered in Iraq. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, on May 26, Attorney General John Ashcroft held a press conference warning the public that al-Qaeda "wants to hit America hard." Ashcroft didn't release specific information because he didn't have any. He said that somewhere in this country seven al-Qaeda operatives were planning an attack. That's hardly information that warrants a press conference. His announcement didn't even elevate a change in the color coded terrorist alert system. In fact, it was all a smokescreen to change the news cycle. It worked. Bush's numbers went back up soon after Ashcroft's press conference.

However, the Wall Street Journal reported a couple of days later that the Department of Homeland Security found that Ashcroft's dire warnings of an attack on American soil "had been known for some time" and "was not new or specific enough to merit an announcement or other action."

Ashcroft cried wolf on a half-dozen other occasions too; last July 4, last Christmas and right before the Super Bowl, to name a few. Those alleged terrorist threats identified banks, shopping malls, power plants and stadiums, obvious targets for a militant group that wants

to rack up a high number of casualties.

So when Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge announced last summer that terrorists want to blow up the Citicorp building in Manhattan's financial district, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. and the Prudential Building in Newark, N.J. the threat seemed more real, more imminent, because, for the first time, we got specific information. But as far as I'm concerned, the Bush administration picked those targets out of a hat. The only way this administration can rebuild its credibility is if one of those targets is blown up or an attack is thwarted.

Why? It just so happens that every single terrorist warning was issued whenever Bush's approval ratings lagged and when bad news was coming out of the war in Iraq, such as the failure to find any weapons of mass destruction, the huge financial cost of the war and a shortage of troops. Need evidence? Check pollingreport.com and then check the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department web sites and you'll see how the terrorist warnings were issued at the same time Bush started to fall behind in the polls.

The Australian newspaper, The Age, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/05/27/1085461878375.html?from=storylhs&oneclick=true>, ran a Reuters story that quoted unnamed senior U.S. officials as saying that the constant flow of terrorist warnings since March 2003 "may also just be a ploy to shore up the president's job approval ratings or divert attention from the increasingly unpopular Iraq campaign."

A few weeks before the Democratic National Convention, The New Republic ran a story alleging that senior Pakistani intelligence officials were pressured by members of the Bush administration to make arrests of so-called high valued terrorists during the Democratic National Convention in an attempt to boost Bush's standing in the polls during a time when John Kerry, the Democratic Presidential nominee, would have likely received a bounce in percentage points for his campaign.

The July 7, 2004 article, "July Surprise", said a Pakistani official was told by a White House aid "that it would be best if the arrest or killing of [any] HVT were announced on twenty-six, twenty-seven, or twenty-eight July.' — the first three days of the Democratic National Convention in Boston."

That event actually occurred on July 29 when Reuters reported that an unidentified U.S. official confirmed that Pakistan arrested "a senior al Qaeda member wanted by the United States in connection with the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa" all of which lends credibility to the fact that the White House will do whatever it has to do to make sure Bush is reelected.

Here's more proof. At the end of the Democratic National Convention in July 2004, a Newsweek poll showed Democratic Presidential nominee John Kerry leading Bush in the polls 52% to 44%. Less than a week later, Ridge, Bush's Homeland Security chief, announced that al-Qaeda planned to blow up targets in New York, New Jersey and Washington, D.C. The jury's still out on whether the latest terrorist alert coming out of New York City will improve Bush's poll numbers.

Bush has said time and time again that America is safer since the overthrow of Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein. But at a recent news conference, Bush told reporters "America is

in danger.” Talk about flip-flopping.

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