

DID KARL ROVE CHAT TO SAAKASHVILI ABOUT SOUTH OSSETIA TOO?

The White House has started to panic over a July 9 meeting between Condi Rice and Mikheil Saakashvili, desperate to suggest they didn't encourage Georgia's crack-down in South Ossetia. Given that panic, I wonder whether Karl Rove had any similar chats with Saakashvili when they were in Yalta together just days later?

Now, there's been a lot of justified chatter about the role of Randy Scheunemann, who appears to be advising the Republic of Georgia at the same time as he provides campaign advice to John McCain.

Sen. John McCain's top foreign policy adviser prepped his boss for an April 17 phone call with the president of Georgia and then helped the presumptive Republican presidential nominee prepare a strong statement of support for the fledgling republic.

The day of the call, a lobbying firm partly owned by the adviser, Randy Scheunemann, signed a \$200,000 contract to continue providing strategic advice to the Georgian government in Washington.

Given the way McCain has boasted of his frequent calls to Saakashvili in attempts to reclaim the mantle of the best international leader, it raises questions of whether the Administration's "see no evil" approach to Georgia was part of a deliberate campaign strategy.

Particularly when you consider the fact that Karl Rove may have met with Saakashvili just days after the July 9 private dinner between Condi and Saakashvili that the White House, State, and DOD are now panicking about. Rove was

in the neighborhood, in Yalta, at a conference with Saakashvili three days after the meeting (h/t brendanx).

09:30 – 11:00 – Plenary session:
Elections in Russia and the USA: impact on Ukraine and Europe

What will be the foreign policy of the new Russian and American leadership over the coming years? How will it impact their relationship with the European Union and Ukraine, and EU's further enlargement?

Moderator: Richard Haass

Panel: Sergey Glaziev, Director, Institute for New Economy, member of the

1st, 3rd and 4th Russian State Duma

Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Ambassador to the Russian Federation and First Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine

Alexander Rahr, Programme Director, German Council on Foreign Relations, member of the Board of YES

Karl Rove, Former Deputy Chief of Staff to George W. Bush and Chief Strategist for Bush's Presidential Campaigns

Bob Shrum, political consultant and Senior Fellow, Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University

I mean, given that Rove was talking about the upcoming election as Saakashvili was walking in the room, it sure does make you wonder whether Rove said anything to Saakashvili about how a firmer hand in South Ossetia might help Georgia ensure its strong relationship with the US going forward. (And who would look to Bob Shrum, whose only value is in making Mark Penn look like slightly less of an electoral failure, to comment on US politics?)

I'll say this: the Administration is even more desperate to push back against claims that they encouraged Georgia's initial crackdown than

you'd think they would be (compare, for example, their response to claims we gave Israel the go-ahead to invade Lebanon in 2006 or bomb Syria in 2007, and their response to claims that we encouraged Maliki to crack down on Basra). There's something going on—and given Karl Rove's presence close to the scene of the crime, I've got my suspicions.