

NO ONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED, REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA, THE FOLLOW-UP

Yesterday, I said,

Since Condi's gone somewhere (probably buying shoes in NYC), let me anticipate what she'll say when she ever gets back to work: "No one could have predicted that the Georgians would incite the Russians to pursue regime change in Georgia."

Today, the NYT's diplomatic correspondent writes,

One month ago, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived in Tbilisi, Georgia, for a high-profile visit that was planned to accomplish two very different goals.

During a private dinner on July 9, Ms. Rice's aides say, she warned President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia not to get into a military conflict with Russia that Georgia could not win. "She told him, in no uncertain terms, that he had to put a non-use of force pledge on the table," according to a senior administration official who accompanied Ms. Rice to the Georgian capital.

But publicly, Ms. Rice struck a different tone, one of defiant support for Georgia in the face of Russian pressure. "I'm going to visit a friend and I don't expect much comment about the United States going to visit a friend," she told reporters just before arriving in Tbilisi, even as Russian jets were conducting intimidating

maneuvers over South Ossetia.

[snip]

Ms. Rice went to Tbilisi just as tensions between Russia and Georgia were escalating. Standing next to Mr. Saakashvili during a press conference, she said that Russia "needs to be a part of resolving the problem and solving the problems and not contributing to it." Mr. Saakashvili, for his part, was clearly thrilled to host Ms. Rice.

[snip]

Ms. Rice did not get on the phone with her Georgian counterpart on Thursday, but left it to Mr. Fried to deliver the "don't go in" message, a senior administration official said. "I don't think it would have made any difference if she had," the official said. "They knew the message was coming from the top."

A few hours later, in the early morning hours of Friday, Aug. 8, Georgia launched its offensive in South Ossetia, and Russia responded with a tenfold show of force. Ms. Rice, the administration official said, "called Saakashvili on Friday morning, after their folks were in."

Now, I'm not even remotely surprised that State is now claiming they had nothing to do with this, Condi's visit and on-the-record confrontation of Russian notwithstanding.

I am wondering, though. At what point do people start calling Condi on her refrain, "No one could have predicted"?