

PUTIN INVADES ALASKA

Apparently, while Alaska's eagle-eyed governor has been traipsing about the lower 48 inciting lynch mobs, the Russians have invaded Alaska.

QAO Gazprom offered to help Alaska develop its natural resources, as Russia's largest energy producer seeks to expand into the U.S. amid the worst chill in relations since the Cold War.

State-run Gazprom sent eight senior executives to Anchorage for talks yesterday with Alaska's Department of Natural Resources and ConocoPhillips Chief Executive Officer Jim Mulva, state and company officials said.

Gazprom, which already supplies a quarter of Europe's natural gas, is seeking to increase its reach with projects around the world, including in North America. The courtship of Alaska comes three weeks before the U.S. presidential election, in which Russia's resurgence has become a campaign issue.

"The timing is as interesting as the visit itself," said Chris Weafer, chief strategist at UralSib Financial Corp. in Moscow.

Sarah Palin, governor of Alaska and Republican candidate for vice president, has criticized Prime Minister Vladimir Putin for "rearing his head" over Russia's sea border with her home state. Relations between the countries hit a low after Russia routed U.S. ally Georgia in a five-day war in August.

"Gazprom's entire senior management goes into Sarah Palin's backyard during a contentious election," Weafer said.

"There's a message there."[my emphasis]

Actually, I think one of two things is going on.

Vote for which you think it is—or give your own explanation in the comments.

It's possible that Vladimir Putin took one look into Sarah Palin's eyes (between winks, of course) and saw they were soulmates: authoritarian, vindictive, and power hungry. So he decided Alaska was a place he wanted to be. (Plus, Putin's been known to be impulsive when it comes to beautiful women.)

More likely, he saw Sarah Palin as an easy mark, and thought it'd be fun to fuck with Palin's bid to be Vice President.

Update: Looks like the answer's B! Putin snuck into Alaska and negotiated with Palin's direct appointees without Palin knowing about it.

Palin has argued that her state's proximity to Russia, as well as trade missions between the between Alaska and Russia, have helped give her the foreign policy experience necessary to be Vice President. But the campaign said **the governor did not know that the Gazprom delegation was meeting with the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, who is a Palin appointee.** [my emphasis]

Ut oh. I guess Putin found the weak point in our defenses...