

# VLADIMIR PUTIN TOO BUSY REARRANGING HIS SOCK DRAWER TO ATTEND THE G8

I have to admit, the old KGB hand Vladimir Putin sure plays hardball in matters of diplomacy. Normally when you blow off a major summit (Putin will be sending Dmitri Mevedev in his place), you give more than a ten day's notice.

Vladimir Putin will miss a planned visit to the US this month for a key global summit and a much-anticipated meeting with President Barack Obama, the Kremlin has confirmed, as the Russian president faced pressure from protests and opposition criticism at home.

The White House announced on Wednesday that Putin was unable to join the other leaders of the Group of Eight industrial nations meeting outside Washington on 18-19 May. The Kremlin said Putin needed to finish work setting up his government.

I guess Vlad didn't know what a mess his sock drawer was in when the US used him as an excuse to move the G8 away from protestors in Chicago to Camp David.

Russian opposition to U.S. and NATO plans for a missile defense shield in Europe was the subtext of a surprise announcement earlier this spring of a change in venue for the G-8 meeting. The summit was long planned to take place adjacent to a larger summit of NATO leaders in Chicago.

Putin let it be known that he did not want to attend the NATO summit, as Russian leaders sometimes do by

invitation, or engage NATO leaders on the missile issue, U.S. and other diplomats said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomacy. The missile defense plan is on the NATO agenda for Chicago, although most of the summit discussions are likely to center on Afghanistan.

The switch to Camp David was partly an attempt by the U.S. to appear welcoming to Putin, so that he could meet quietly with European and other large powers at the dawn of his presidency without the awkward juxtaposition with NATO and the missile shield issue, the diplomats said.

Though a desire to appease Putin was, just like Putin's excuse about naming a cabinet, just a convenient excuse.

I've not yet seen any analysis of Putin's real reasons for blowing off the G8. But I would guess it has something to do with whatever grand plan the US has that would warrant a pre-summit one-on-one meeting with France's new President, François Hollande. Furthermore, I suspect Carnegie Moscow Center head Dmitri Trenin is totally missing the point when he suggests Putin should have blown off the G20 rather than the G8.

Other analysts said it was entirely possible that domestic politics had kept Mr Putin in Moscow, and it was not just a fig leaf covering a broader crisis. "Putin has no reason to snub Obama that I can see," said Dmitri Trenin, head of the Carnegie Moscow Center, the thinktank.[snip]

"To me it looks like domestic stuff is more important at the moment," said Mr Trenin. "Something is going on there, something that does not get leaked to the media, which means that it is

serious.”

However, Mr Trenin said it was strange that Mr Putin would be attending the G20 summit next month in Mexico, a less important venue where Russia plays a more modest role.

“G20 is [the] perfect place for Medvedev but instead it’s Putin that is going,” he said.

By blowing off the G8, Putin effectively increases the importance of the G20, and with it the views of the countries that attend the G20 but not the G8—including Russia’s co-BRIC members like China, India, and Brazil—all countries, notably, with which the US has had troubled high level meetings recently.

The rest of the world is getting really tired of US economic bullying. And Vladimir Putin sure has his ways of making that clear.