

THE DEVIL WENT DOWN TO GEORGIA

Well, okay, it was Dick Cheney. Close enough.
From The Los Angeles Times:

Appearing alongside beleaguered Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Vice President Dick Cheney on Thursday criticized Russia's conduct in its short war with Georgia and pledged to continue American support for reconstruction and humanitarian aid.

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Cheney's remarks probably will further inflame Moscow, where officials have railed against the United States' alliances with the former Soviet states. This week, President Dmitry Medvedev said bluntly that Moscow expected to maintain a "privileged" sphere of influence in the region of the former Soviet Union.

However, U.S. officials Thursday brushed off criticism that the White House is deliberately approaching the brink of confrontation with Russia.

"The United States is not trying to paint Russia as an enemy," said Robert A. Wood, a State Department spokesman. "We're very concerned about its behavior and what that means for the future of the U.S.-Russia relationship. We're looking at all aspects of our relationship with Russia, in terms of how we go forward."

Russian officials also have been dismayed by the apparent staying power of Saakashvili, often referred to in Moscow as a "war criminal" for launching the military operation in early August in the breakaway province of South Ossetia. Russia responded by sending in

troops to defend the pro-Russian enclave, which broke with Georgia's government more than a decade ago. The fighting ended with Russia continuing to occupy parts of Georgia proper to enforce the separation from South Ossetia and another breakaway region, Abkhazia.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said this week that the world should impose an arms embargo on Georgia until Saakashvili is out of power.

Georgian officials have said the United States will help rebuild the country's crushed military. But that was not directly affirmed during Cheney's visit, which came a day after President Bush said the U.S. would provide up to \$1 billion in nonmilitary assistance.

The whole Georgia/Russia war in, and over, the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions in the Caucasus seems somewhat surreal. In spite of the critical nature of what happened, and continues to happen there, there has been a paucity of credible reporting in the United States. What are *still* the two nuclear superpowers in the world, and a clear step toward cold war renewal, were all involved as were, of course, the people who actually live in those areas. Some of them are no longer living; and, yet, we still don't know who the true aggressor was. And, strangely, the American educated, Cheney confidante, Georgian President Saakashvili was literally plastered on American television during the entire conflict in an unprecedented manner for a foreign leader. While there may be slight confusion over who started the Georgia-Russian war; we do know who ended it, the Russians handed the Georgians their own rear ends.

Juan Cole relates:

All sides have committed massacres and behaved abominably. There are no clean

hands involved, notwithstanding the strong support for Georgia visible in the press of most NATO member countries. (Georgia has been jockeying to join NATO, something Moscow stridently opposes.) Still, not everyone in NATO agrees that Saakashvili is a hero. While traveling with the negotiating team of President Nicolas Sarkozy, one French official observed that "Saakashvili was crazy enough to go in the middle of the night and bomb a city" in South Ossetia. The consequence of Russia's riposte, he said, is "a Georgia attacked, pulverized, through its own fault."

Far as I can determine, that is about right. Tiny Georgia made a gutsy, and monumentally ill advised, move on South Ossetia, an area that wanted independence and that was under the protective eye of Russia. Despite initial heavy losses, Georgia did not back off, and Russia rolled over them until there was basically no way for Georgia to continue fighting.

What would motivate Georgia, with a military probably not ready to take on the Alaska National Guard and it's brilliant commander in chief Sarah Palin, to make such an insane play? There appear to be two possibilities 1) Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili decided on his own that Russia would not care that much; and, if they did, the United States and the West would come to his aid militarily, or 2) the United States affirmatively led Saakashvili to believe the scenario in 1 ahead of time. You can place Vladimir Putin emphatically in favor of door number two.

From a remarkable interview with Matthew Chance of CNN, Putin states:

If my suppositions are confirmed, then there are grounds to suspect that some people in the United States created this conflict deliberately in order to

aggravate the situation and create a competitive advantage for one of the candidates for the U.S. presidency. And if that is the case, this is nothing but the use of the called administrative resource in domestic politics, in the worst possible way, one that leads to bloodshed.

You really should read the entire interview. The detail, knowledge, intricate history over hundreds of years – the mastery of the situation, that Putin just casually rattles off unscripted, is eye opening. Then ponder that for seven and a half years Bush has been dealing with Putin thinking he was his equal. Bush looked into Putin's eyes and could see Putin's soul and that Vlad was a man he could do business with. Vlad looked into Bush's eyes and saw an ignorant rube he could take advantage of. Guess which one had it right?

Which brings us back to Cheney.

The devil went down to Georgia, he was looking for a soul to steal.
He was in a bind 'cause he was way behind: he was willin' to make a deal.

The monumental insanity of Georgia's aggression, and the direct allegation by Putin, sure make you wonder about Cheney's trip down to Georgia to placate his friend Saakashvili; and, out of the blue, for apparently nothing in return, decision by the Bush/Cheney Administration to give Georgia a billion dollars in civilian and, potentially, military aid. Would darn near make you think we owed them something for them having started the recent war and getting annihilated. A war that Cheney's designated replacement John McCain, who "was in a bind 'cause he was way behind", took huge advantage of at the time to try to boost his sagging campaign heading into the conventions.

Putin was awfully sure of himself about the deal

he suggested the Fourth Branch government devil may have made in Georgia, and I don't think it was because he had been busting out his collection of old Charlie Daniels Band vinyl recently.