

Putin's Fantasies About Georgian Terrorists

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During an interview on RT television last week, President Vladimir Putin made a truly sensational statement by revealing the real reason for the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008. Apparently, Russia delivered a preventative strike to liquidate international terrorists who were sent by Georgian forces to penetrate Russian territory. Putin said the terrorists advanced to positions 30 kilometers south of Sochi before they were eliminated.

"About six or seven years ago when we had to attack Georgian territories, those were not just strikes on Georgia. We targeted militant groups that came very close to Sochi. ... Georgian

police vehicles were transporting the militants to the Russian border. So we had to take some pre-emptive measures. And I informed the president [Dmitry Medvedev] about this," Putin said.

First of all, Putin's timeline is all wrong. Russia's war with Georgia was five years ago, not six or seven. There were no other military conflicts between the two countries during Medvedev's presidency except the five-day war in 2008.

This is not the first time that Putin has made a surprising statement intended to show how well-informed Russia's intelligence agencies are. Instead, however, everyone was left wondering, "What are those people smoking?"

On June 21, 2004, when U.S.-Russian relations were good, Putin decided to present a gift to his friend, U.S. President George W. Bush, and told him during their summit in Astana that Russian intelligence agencies had warned the U.S. that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was "preparing a terrorist attack on U.S. territory." Bush purportedly personally thanked the Russian agents for the information.

But the U.S. State Department said it had not received such information from Moscow and that Bush had not thanked Russian intelligence agencies.

By 2011, when U.S.-Russian relations had already soured, Putin told viewers of his annual call-in show another mind-boggling story meant to show the amazing reach of Russian intelligence: Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi was not killed by rebels but by U.S. agents as part of a special operation.

But Putin's revelation about the Russia-Georgia war tops them all.

The question is why Moscow did not complain to the United Nations that Georgian forces were transporting international terrorists to Russia's borders near Sochi. Why did Russia maintain such stoic silence for the last five years, a silence that apparently would have continued had Putin not unexpectedly lifted the veil of secrecy to the reporters from RT?

At the start of the Russia-Georgia war on Aug. 8, 2008, Georgian aircraft bombed Russian tanks as they neared the South Ossetian city of Dzhava. But Dzhava is not 30 kilometers from Sochi; it is 900 kilometers away.

A distance of 30 kilometers from Sochi is essentially on Russia's border. Putin's remarks creates a completely absurd picture. According to Putin, Georgian forces transported international terrorists 200 kilometers across Russian-controlled Abkhazia to Russia's southern border near Sochi. Rather than block that caravan and exposing those terrorists to the world, for some reason Russia sent tanks to Dzhava in South Ossetia, a full 900 kilometers away.

And Putin recalls this whole scenario for the first time only five years after it all supposedly happened. George Orwell himself could not have come up with a better piece of dystopian fiction.

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