

# America's role in Georgia?

*Vladimir Putin*

*Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was interviewed by CNN's Matthew Chance in Sochi on 28 August 2008. CNN broadcast part of the interview, from which this transcript of the translation is taken.*

**Putin:** ... At this time it was in Beijing and I had an opportunity to have a brief discussion with the President of the United States. George told me that no one wants a war. I hoped that the US Administration would intervene to stop the aggression of the Georgian leadership, but nothing of this kind happened.

**CNN:** You've always enjoyed over your period as President of Russia, and still now, a very close personal relationship with the US President, George W. Bush. Do you think his failure to restrain the Georgian forces on this occasion has damaged that relationship?

**Putin:** Of course it has damaged our relations, first and foremost inter-state relations. But the thing is that not only has the US Administration failed to restrain the leadership from committing this criminal act, but in fact it equipped and trained the Georgian army.

But I have some other comments to add. Even during the Cold War, during the time of tough confrontation between the Soviet Union and the US, we have always avoided direct clashes between our civilians, let alone our servicemen. We have serious reasons to believe that directly in the combat zone citizens of the United States were present, and if this is the case then the suspicion arises that someone in the United States has, on purpose, created this conflict with a view to exacerbating the situation and creating a competitive advantage for one of the Presidential candidates in the United States.

**CNN:** These are quite astounding claims. Just to be clear, Mr Prime Minister, are you suggesting there were US operatives on the

ground assisting Georgian forces perhaps in provoking a conflict in order to give a Presidential candidate in the United States some kind of talking point? And if you are suggesting that, what evidence do you have?

**Putin:** I've told you that if the facts are confirmed that American citizens were present in the combat zone, that means only one thing, that they could be there only on the direct instruction of their leadership. And if this is so, then it means that American citizens are in the combat zone performing their duties and they can only do that following a direct order from their leaders and not on their own initiative. Ordinary experts, even if they are providing training in military matters, should do that not in a combat zone but at training ranges and training centres. I repeat this needs to be checked out further. I'm telling you this based on what our military told me.



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