

Scheunemann, Iraq and Georgia

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If there's any comic relief in the war between Russia and Georgia, it's this statement from [Randy Scheunemann](#), John McCain's top foreign policy adviser: "In the twenty-first century, nations don't invade other nations." Coming from America's No. 1 advocate for invading Iraq — Scheunemann headed the neocon-inspired [Committee for the Liberation of Iraq](#) in 2002 — that's rich. Or perhaps Scheunemann thinks the US invasion of Iraq happened in an earlier century.

What's not funny, though, is Scheunemann's ties to Georgia. Where's the outrage? Why isn't there a congressional investigation of the McCain's adviser's entanglements?

It's no laughing matter that McCain's top adviser is multiply connected to Georgia, whose ill-advised assault on Russian positions in South Ossetia fully qualifies it as the first, overtly American-allied "rogue nation." Most important, Scheunemann's former lobbying firm, Orion Strategies, received at least \$800,000 from the government of Georgia between 2004 and May 15, 2008, when Scheunemann finally severed his ties — officially, at least — to the firm. Before that, between January 1, 2007, and May 15, 2008, Scheunemann was officially on the payroll as both Georgia's lobbyist and McCain's top adviser, [during which time](#) Georgia paid Orion and \$290,000 and McCain paid him \$70,000.

Indeed, there's a nice Iraq-Georgia connection through Scheunemann: the offices of Orion Strategies [shared the same address](#) as the neocon-inspired Iraqi National Congress, founded by charlatan Ahmed Chalabi, who was personally close to both McCain and Scheunemann, *and* the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. They were all located on one, big, war-starting location.

Scheunemann tied it all up in one big bundle when his Orion Strategies helped organize ten members of the former Soviet bloc to support the invasion of Iraq. As Ken Silverstein reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, Orion "scored its biggest success last year when 10 Eastern European countries endorsed the U.S. invasion. Known as the 'Vilnius 10,' they showed that 'Europe is united by a commitment to end Saddam's bloody regime,' Scheunemann said at the time." According to *US News and World Report*, Orion also represented Latvia, Macedonia, and Romania.

Last April 17, Scheunemann's business partner, Michael Mitchell, signed another \$200,000 contract to represent Georgia, [on the very same day](#) that McCain says that he had a telephone conversation with Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili. Did McCain urge Saakashvili to sign the contract? Did Scheunemann and Mitchell urge Saakashvili to lobby McCain to support Georgia? The *Post* reported that [Scheunemann "prepped" McCain](#) for the call to Saakashvili. It's a blindingly obvious conflict of interest, and frighteningly it's one that

conceivably could drag the United States into yet another war in that unstable part of the world.

Not only has McCain defended Scheunemann's ties to the rogue republic, but McCain's campaign charged "that the Scheunemann-Georgia lobbying link had been brought to reporters' attention by a public relations firm working for Russia," [according to](#) the *Times*. McCain said valiantly, "Today we are all Georgians." But not all of us actually get paid for it.

So far, both the Democratic National Committee and the Obama campaign have criticized McCain for his ties to Scheunemann. But there doesn't seem to be any momentum either for a direct legal challenge or a congressional investigation, which could subpoena the players and get sworn testimony.

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