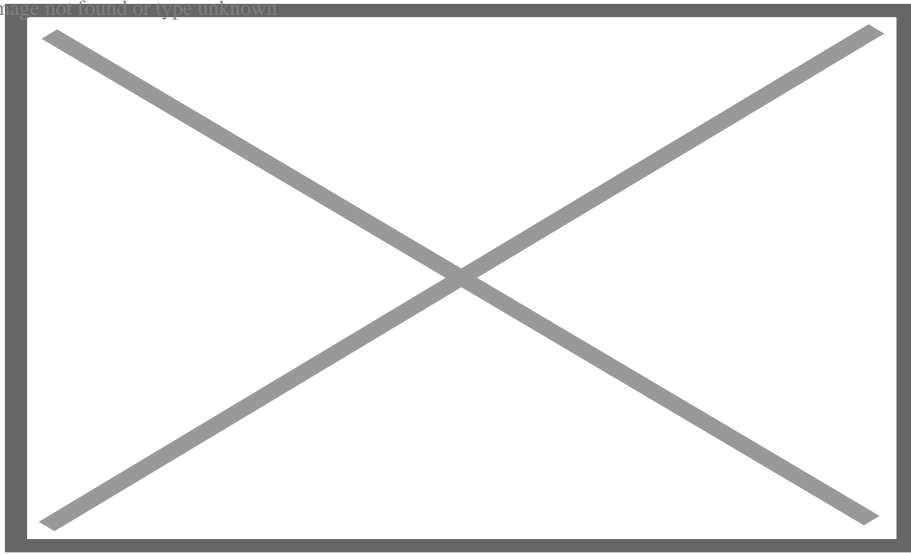

Russia Exposes British Lies On Skripal, But Trail Leads To US

Description

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Moscow says it has proof that the agent used in the UK attack is a chemical weapon patented in the US. So was this a covert operation aimed at ratcheting up tensions between the West and Russia?

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The sensational case of the poisoning of the ex-MI6 agent and former Russian military intelligence colonel Sergei Skripal on March 4 in Salisbury, in the UK, is becoming more and more curious. Under a blinding spotlight from Moscow, the British allegation regarding a Russian hand in the poisoning of Skripal is getting exposed. **An engrossing plot in big-power politics is also unfolding. There is stuff here for a Le Carre novel.**

[. . .]

Egg on May's face

Britain is studiously ignoring the Russian requests for samples of the chemical agent used in the Salisbury attack and for consular access to be granted to the former spy's daughter Yulia. Meanwhile, Britain instead approached the OPCW to investigate.

The [OPCW has now responded](#) that it cannot identify the country of origin of the chemical agent used in the Salisbury attack.

There is egg on PM Theresa May's face.

However, Russians managed to get their hands on the report prepared for the OPCW by its reputed laboratory in Spiez, the Swiss Center for Radiology and Bacteriological Analysis. [According to the Swiss lab's report](#), the chemical formula used in the Salisbury attack has been in service in the US, the UK and other NATO countries. Furthermore, neither the Soviet Union nor Russia “ever developed or stockpiled similar chemical weapons.”

That's more egg on May's face.

Now comes the bombshell. [On April 18, Moscow disclosed that it has formally handed over to the OPCW proof](#) to the effect that the Novichok agent purportedly used in the Salisbury attack actually happens to be patented as a chemical weapon in 2015 in the US and produced in that country. (By the way, unlike Russia, the US is yet to destroy its chemical weapon stockpiles, as required under the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997.)

Now, not only the British government but Washington too has some explaining to do.

Was Skripal attack a covert op by the West?

Simply put, the Salisbury attack might even have been an Anglo-American joint covert operation undertaken with the ulterior motive to ratchet up tensions between the West and Russia. ([The Washington Post reported on Monday](#) that the former National Security Advisor HR McMaster might have hoodwinked President Donald Trump into approving the expulsion under the wrong notion that similar numbers of expulsions by European allies was in the pipeline. In the event though, the Europeans made only token expulsions.)

Britain is steadily edging away from the Skripal case, hoping, perhaps, that the matter will die down. But will Moscow let Britain off the hook?

On their part, the Russians seem to be holding back on some explosive information pointing toward the US's direct complicity in this affair.

Indeed, if this was McMaster's swan song, the indefatigable Russophobe probably hoped to kill two birds with one shot – push Russia's relations with the West to a crisis point and second, scotch the prospects of an early US-Russia presidential summit (which Trump wanted.)

McMaster reportedly tried to stop Trump from congratulating Putin on his big victory in the Russian election on March 18 in a phone conversation where they discussed a possible summit meeting in a near future.

How far all this is linked to Trump's decision on March 22, finally, to sack McMaster as his National Security Advisor is yet another template. By the standards of military people, McMaster probably has the reputation of being an “intellectual” but the man proved to be an unvarnished Cold Warrior fit for a museum.

From all accounts, Trump never trusted McMaster and the two had an acrimonious relationship. The one-star general who was overlooked for promotion by the Pentagon was Trump's default choice following the abrupt departure of Michael Flynn.

Michael Wolff narrates a hilarious episode in his book 'Fire and Fury' that during the job interview for the NSA post, McMaster tried to impress Trump when he showed up in military uniform with his silver star and launched into a wide-ranging lecture on global strategy. **After, Trump reportedly remarked, "That guy bores the shit out of me."**