

"No Patients Have Experienced Symptoms Of Nerve Agent Poisoning In Salisbury"

By Moon of Alabama

There have been some interesting developments in the alleged poisoning case of the British-Russian double-agent Sergej Skripal and his daughter.

The British governments standing on the issue is getting worse as more inconsistencies and doubts on its statements come to light. The international support for its claims is weakening.

On March 4 the Skripals collapsed on a public bench in Salisbury in England after they had visited a pub and a restaurant. They were brought to the local hospital. A local policemen was probably also affected. (See our previous posts, linked at the end, for many additional details.) A week later, on March 12, the British government said that a nerve agent was the cause of the incident and [accused Russia](#) of being responsible for the act:

Mr Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with Novichok—a **military-grade nerve agent developed by Russia**. Based on this capability, combined with Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations—including against former intelligence officers whom it regards as legitimate targets—the UK Government concluded it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for this reckless and despicable act.

Novichok is not a nerve agent but supposedly a group of chemical substances investigated in the Soviet Union for their nerve agent potential. [Only recently](#) have some of these substances been synthesized.

Former ambassador Craig Murray [reported](#) that the formulation "*... a military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, ...*" was a compromise negotiated between the British government and its chemical weapon specialists in its Porton Down laboratory. Note that the statement does not implicate at all that Russia is involved in the current case.

The British government demanded a Russian response within 24 hours without presenting any evidence of Russian involvement. Russia rightly pointed out that such a demand is in breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) procedures as supervised by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and rejected it.

The U.S, Britain, France and Germany issued a common supporting statement which [repeated](#) the British formulation:

This use of a military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, constitutes the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since the Second World War.

We share the United Kingdom's assessment that there is no plausible alternative explanation, and note that Russia's failure to address the legitimate request by the government of the United Kingdom further underlines Russia's responsibility. We call on Russia to address all questions related to the attack in Salisbury.

Since then many [questions](#) and [doubts](#) about the British government's Noviochok drama have been raised. Bit by bit the case is falling apart.

Consider for example this picture which shows Mr. Skripal and his daughter Julia presumably in the pub or the restaurant they visited before they collapsed. Who is the third person, visible in the mirror between them, who took the picture?



Via [Maxim A. Suchkov](#) and [Дмитрий Стешин](#) - [bigger](#)

Is this third person the former [MI6 agent Pablo Miller](#) who once recruited Skripal as British double agent. Pablo Miller who like Sergej Skripal lives in Salisbury and is still his friend? The same Pablo Miller who worked with former MI6 agent Christopher Steele at Orbis to create the 'dirty dossier' about Donald Trump? How much were the Skripals involved in creating the fake stories in the anti-Trump dossier for which the Clinton campaign paid more than \$100,000 dollars. Did the Skripals threaten to talk about the issue? Is that why the incident happened?

So far no information about the third person that took the above picture has been coming forward.

On March 16 the British government was still pleased with the success of the drama it constructed [from a movie script](#) (video) around the Skripal incident.

The headline and intro of the BBC story are telling: [Russian spy: UK government response going to plan so far](#)

Among senior ministers and officials, there's quiet satisfaction that **the Russia crisis seems to be going according to plan**. Maybe even better.

According to one senior government source, "it's gone at least as well as we'd hoped".

That may end soon.

The London Times reported on March 14th that 40 people in Salisbury needed treatment because of poisoning. A reader's letter to the paper written by "Steven Davies - Consultant in emergency medicine, Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust" disputes that report. The letter seems to say that none of the hospital's patients were effected by "nerve agents" at all:

Sir, Further to your report "Poison exposure leaves almost 40 needing treatment", (Mar 14), may I clarify that **no patients have experienced symptoms of nerve agent poisoning in Salisbury and there have only been ever been three patients with significant poisoning**.



[bigger](#)

The wording of the letter is not 100% clear. Does the "no patients" refer to only the 40 the Times mentioned or to all patents including the Skripals? Are the three patients with "significant poisoning" the Skripals and the affected policeman? Commentator *Noirette* had suggested here that the Skripal case was about food poisoning or a food allergy, not nerve agents. The Skripals had visited a fish restaurant one hour before they were found. The letter points into a similar direction.

I have yet to see a follow up on the letter by any media. Why is there no interview with the doctor? All medical personal involved are astonishingly silent. Since day one there has been no medical update on the health status of the Skripals. Has the government issued a gag order. Why? By writing the above letter Steven Davies, the Salisbury emergency consultant, probably circumvented it.

The UK has since folded on its unilateral demand outside of the OPCW procedures. It has now, as Russia demanded, involved the OPCW and OPCW specialist are expected to visit the British chemical weapon laboratory in Porton Down, which is near Salisbury, to investigate the case.

But the British Foreign office also [raised](#) a new accusation against Russia:

The Foreign Secretary revealed this morning that we have information indicating that within the last decade, Russia has investigated ways of delivering nerve agents likely for assassination. And part of this programme has involved producing and stockpiling quantities of Novichok. This is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson used a [less hedged wording](#):

"We actually have evidence within the last 10 years that Russia has not only been investigating the delivery of nerve agents for the purposes of assassination, but has also been creating and stockpiling Novichok," Johnson told the BBC.



British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson - [bigger](#)

Craig Murray [took the Johnson statement apart](#). If the UK really had or has such information why did it not, as the CWC demands, inform the OPCW of Russia's potential breach of its obligations? Why is this coming out only now?

The British allies seem to be unimpressed by Boris Johnson's show.

Today the German Foreign Minister [tracked back](#) from the common position issued last week:

Heiko Maas, the German foreign minister, has described Russia as a "difficult partner", but said **the UK poisoning was a "bilateral" issue**, indicating that Britain can count on little support from the EU.

Maas spoke ahead of a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels on Monday (19 March)

A common statement after the EU foreign ministers meeting [did not blame Russia](#). It repeated the carefully negotiated wording of the original British accusation but did not endorse the British position:

The European Union takes extremely seriously the UK Government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible.

The European Union is shocked at the offensive use of any military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, for the first time on European soil in over 70 years.

The EU welcomes the commitment of the UK to work closely with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in supporting the investigation into the attack.

The statement is false in that nerve agents have actually been used on European soil over the last 70 years. During the Cold War Britain tested various types of chemical and biological weapons, including nerve agents, [on its own population](#) as well as in its colonies and in other countries. Why should we exclude an even more recent use?

The Skripal poisoning case stinks. The British government is obviously not telling the truth about it. It uses the script of a recent spy drama to allege a 'Novichok' attack to implicate Russia and to raise anti-Russian sentiment. Information about the case is evidently held back. The media is mostly complicit.

Foreign countries have noticed that the story stinks and are tracking back on their support.

The people and the British opposition should urgently demand more and better answer from May's failing government.

Previous *Moon of Alabama* pieces on the Skripal case:

- March 8 - [Poisoned British-Russian Double-Agent Has Links To Clinton Campaign](#)
- March 12 - [Theresa May's "45 Minutes" Moment](#)
- March 14 - [Are 'Novichok' Poisons Real? - May's Claims Fall Apart](#)
- March 16 - [The British Government's 'Novichok' Drama Was Written By Whom?](#)