

Skripal poison saga just another episode in West's propaganda campaign to corral Russia

By Finian Cunningham, 30 March 2017

There are many reasons for doubting the official British position blaming Russia for the Sergei Skripal poisoning. This week's 'diplomacy dramatics' of mass Russian expulsions are just too contrived to be taken seriously.

Two factors raising doubt stand out in particular: the unseemly, impossible rush to judgment and carnival of reaction; and, secondly, the immediate, concerted follow-up demand being made on Russia to "*change its behavior.*"

The cause-and-effect sequence here is just too neat to be left to random events. Within days of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia having apparently been poisoned in a public space in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, senior British government officials were accusing Russia of attempted assassination.

The whirlwind British media campaign to find Russia guilty and the rapid international response to expel over 100 Russian diplomats from more than 25 countries this week – all mounted in a matter of three weeks – inevitably betray a premeditated public relations operation.

As Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the US, [said](#) this week: "*The scale of inflicted damage and the preceding information campaign speak of the fact that it had been planned beforehand – simply postponed for the right moment.*"

We should recall that Britain's top investigators at Scotland Yard were initially saying that it would take weeks to establish the facts of the apparent crime committed against the Skripals. Britain's most senior chemical warfare expert, Professor Alastair Hay, went as far as [advising](#) media it could take "*months*" to confirm suspicions of a nerve agent.

Yet, the British government preempted by claiming its scientists had identified the poison apparently used on the Skripals as 'Novichok' – "*of a type developed by the Soviet Union.*"

Former British ambassador Craig Murray has [contested](#) serious flaws in official claims about the alleged nerve agent. Murray points to the sly wording used by the British government inferring authoritative knowledge implicating Russia when in fact, he contends, there is a paucity of hard information.

['No guarantee we will survive this new Cold War' – Peter Kuznick](#)

Russia has also categorically denied any involvement or being in possession of the hypothetical chemical weapon.

The British government has yet to produce any verifiable evidence to back up its claims about the "Soviet-era" nerve agent and how that incriminates Russia – despite British media headlines suggesting it has.

"Britain divulged 'unprecedented levels of intelligence' to convince other countries that Russia carried out attack," according to The Independent.

It went on to report: "The material provided to the allies included sensitive reports and the conclusions of the military research base at Porton Down, as well as an explanation of how these were obtained. The information senior government officials hold was key to 23 states and NATO carrying out a mass expulsion this week of over a hundred Russians working under diplomatic credentials."

But the British government's supposed "evidence" is far from convincing. It still remains a collection of innuendo and unverified assertion. Even the United States and other allies have admitted that they are simply "taking the word of the British" in making accusations against Russia.

If Britain really did have definite evidence, then why aren't the British authorities permitting Russia to access samples to carry out its own independent examination? Such protocol is mandated by the Chemical Weapons Convention to which the UK and Russia are signatories.

Incredibly, we now see a whole host of countries orchestrating an all-out campaign to expel Russian diplomats. Most of the nations are members of NATO or the European Union, and several of them have an anti-Russian axe to grind, such as Poland and the Baltic States. However, several European countries have declined to expel Russian envoys, saying they require evidence first.

The other significant factor is the way that Moscow is being promptly demanded to make concessions.

Speaking in Parliament this week, British Prime Minister Theresa May said: "I have found great solidarity from our friends and partners in the EU, North America, NATO and beyond over the past three weeks as we have confronted the aftermath of the Salisbury incident."

Then she added: "And together we have sent a message that we will not tolerate Russia's continued attempts to flout international law and undermine our values."

UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson also hailed what he called "a turning point" this week in which he said a "united response" from British allies was demonstrating that Russia had to change its behavior.

Nikki Haley, US ambassador to the UN, said the expulsion of 60 Russian diplomats from her country – the biggest single number in this week's sanctions – was a clear message to Moscow that "these actions must stop."

US Defense Secretary James Mattis said Russia "has the potential to be a partner" with NATO but it has "chosen to seek a different path."

'Russia has lots of tentacles': US says it needed no proof, only UK's word to expel diplomats

European Council President Donald Tusk and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also hinted that there would be "*more penalties*" on Russia unless it changed its "*pattern of unacceptable behavior.*"

US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert caused consternation when she apparently invoked a Nazi Germany-era propaganda meme by [describing](#) Russia as a "*sea monster with many tentacles.*"

The insidious effect of the expulsions this week makes all Russian diplomats and overseas officials targets for accusations they are "*spies.*" This delegitimizes and indeed criminalizes the Russian government for conducting normal international business.

The State Department's spokeswoman made the explicit linkage to the Skripal incident and what is being demanded from Russia.

"If Russia wants to improve relations, it needs to first acknowledge its responsibility for the attack, and cease its recklessly aggressive behavior," she said.

Therein lies an alternative, but plausible explanation for recent events. The apparent poisoning incident of the Skripals – we still don't know what really happened due to official British secrecy – has been turbocharged into a criminal conviction against Russia. The concerted international reaction by Britain and its ideologically aligned anti-Russian allies is, in turn, being fashioned into a plea bargain for Moscow to accept.

The plea bargain is: admit your guilt and change your behavior.

And what does "*changed behavior*" entail? It would entail what the US and the NATO alliance have been seeking for several years from Russia under Vladimir Putin's leadership.

That is, a capitulation of Russia's independence to become a vassal of the Anglo-American capitalist world order. That would translate into Russia allowing US corporations to plunder its natural resources, steal its vast energy export markets in Europe, subjugate Russia from unfettered NATO threats, and for Russia to allow the US and its subordinates to run amok militarily anywhere in the world they choose, such as Syria and other oil-rich Middle East countries.

President Putin and Russia have demonstrated over and over they are not willing to be vassals under American hegemony. That's why we see endless repetition of Western propaganda campaigns to corral Russia.

The latest British-featured poison saga is just another episode.