

Until Today, I Assumed Putin's Russia Had Litvinenko Killed ... Then I Looked for Myself

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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I've always assumed that Putin's KGB (now called the FSB) killed Alexander Litvinenko.

But today's announcement by the British that Putin "[probably](#)" approved Litvinenko's murder made me curious enough to take a look for myself.

Initially, Litvinenko was poisoned with radioactive polonium as he sipped tea in an upscale London hotel. The report makes it sound like only Russia had access to polonium, but it's actually [available online](#) to anyone.

Antiwar [notes](#):

If the Russians wanted to off Litvinenko, why would they poison him with a substance that left a radioactive trail traceable from [Germany](#) to [Heathrow airport](#) – and, in the process, contaminating scores of hotel rooms, offices, planes, restaurants, and homes? Why not just put a bullet through his head? It makes no sense.

But then conspiracy theories don't have to make sense: they just have to take certain assumptions all the way to their implausible conclusions. If one starts with the premise that Putin and the Russians are a Satanic force capable of anything, and incompetent to boot, then it's all perfectly "logical" – in the Bizarro World, at any rate.

The idea that Litvinenko was a dangerous opponent of the Russian government who had to be killed because he posed a credible threat to the existence of the regime is laughable: practically no one inside Russia knew anything about him, and as for his crackpot "truther" theories about how Putin was behind every terrorist attack ever carried out within Russia's borders – to assert that they had any credence outside of the Western media echo chamber is a joke.

The meat of the matter – the real "evidence" – is hidden behind a veil of secrecy. Lord Owen's inquiry was for the most part conducted in secret closed hearings, with testimony given by anonymous witnesses, and this is central to the "evidence" that is supposed to convict Kovtun, Lugovoy, and the Russian government. Lord Owen, explains it this way:

Put very shortly, the closed evidence consists of evidence that is relevant to the Inquiry, but which has been assessed as being too sensitive to put into the public domain. The assessment that the material is sufficiently sensitive to warrant being treated as closed evidence in these proceedings has been made not by me, but by the Home Secretary. She has given effect to this decision by

issuing a number of Restriction Notices, which is a procedure specified in section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005. The Restriction Notices themselves, although not, of course, the sensitive documents appended to them, are public documents. They have been published on the Inquiry website and are also to be found at Appendix 7 to this Report.

In other words, the “evidence” is not for us ordinary mortals to see. We just have to take His Lordship’s word for it that the Russian government embarked on an improbable assassination mission against a marginal figure that reads like something Ian Fleming might have written under a pseudonym.

So who killed Litvinenko ?

Well, Mario Scaramella [met with Litvinenko](#) during the meal when Litvinenko was poisoned. Scaramella [didn’t eat or drink a thing](#) during the lunch, and then *himself* came down with a mild case of [polonium poisoning](#).

La Republica (one of Italy’s largest newspapers) [wrote](#) in 2006 ([English translation](#)) that Scaramella was a bad guy who may have worked with the CIA:

Mario Scaramella is suspected of arms trafficking. Earlier this year, the public prosecutor of Naples has written for this offense to the docket and, soon after, had to stop the investigation. [He was [convicted in Italy for selling arms \(original Italian\)](#).]

Sources found to be very credible by the prosecutor recalled that investigators suspected that Scaramella was actually in close relationship, if not actually working for, the CIA and that his ECPP could be a front company of the agency’s Langley.

Antiwar notes:

As I pointed out [here](#):

Litvinenko was an employee of exiled Russian billionaire [Boris Berezovsky](#) – whose [ill-gotten empire](#) included a Russian syndicate of car-dealerships that had [more](#) than a nodding acquaintance with the Chechen Mafia – but was being slowly cut out of the money pipeline. Big-hearted Boris, who had initially put him on the payroll as anti-Putin propagandist, was evidently getting sick of him, and the out-of-work “dissident” was reportedly [desperate](#) for money. Litvinenko had several “[business meetings](#)” with Lugovoi in the months prior to his death, and, [according to this report](#), he hatched a blackmail scheme targeting several well-known Russian tycoons and government officials.

Indeed, Litvinenko, in the months before his death, had targeted several well-known members of the Russian Mafia with his [blackmail scheme](#). That they would take umbrage at this is hardly shocking.

Alternatively, Litvinenko may actually have *accidentally poisoned himself*. Antiwar again:

Furthermore, there are indications that Litvinenko was engaged in the [smuggling of nuclear materials](#). That he wound up being contaminated by

the goods he was peddling on the black market seems far more credible than the cock-and-bull story about a vast Russian plot originating in the Kremlin,. Apparently Lord Owen has never heard of [Occam's Razor](#).

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