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Official Russian comments on Litvinenko poisoning**Sergey Ivanov, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) spokesman Interfax 20 November**

All accusations levelled at the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service look unconvincing, to say the least...since 1959, when Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera was killed, the Soviet intelligence service and its successor, the Foreign Intelligence Service, has not been carrying out operations to physically liquidate people who are not to Russia's liking....those guilty of what happened to Litvinenko should be sought among his entourage in London.

Gennadiy Gudkov, Duma deputy and FSB colonel in reserve. Ekho Moskv, 20 November

Frankly speaking, I - as a security expert - am at a loss as to who may be interested in eliminating Litvinenko, who does not present any threat or force. All his influence comes down to the fact that at one point he was Berezovskiy's trusted man. That's it. That is why, frankly speaking, all this looks staged...in any event, I would like to once again wish Litvinenko a full recovery because he does little harm and without him Berezovskiy would be very bored.

MOSCOW/LONDON. Nov 20 (Interfax) - A spokesman for the Russian embassy in London has dismissed as "speculation" several foreign media reports claiming that Russian officials might have been involved in the poisoning of former Russian special services officer Alexander Litvinenko, who resides in the United Kingdom.

"We have a policy of not commenting on this kind of speculation, which is virtually absurd," the embassy's spokesman Vladislav Novikov told Interfax. "An investigation into the situation is a matter for police," he said.

Some newspapers in the United Kingdom have been publishing articles since early November, when Litvinenko was allegedly poisoned, offering comments outlining the position of Russian businessman Boris Berezovsky and Oleg Gordiyevsky, a former KGB officer who defected to the West and was granted asylum in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, Novikov said.

Sergey Ivanov, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) spokesman, RBK TV, 21 November

The Foreign Intelligence Agency has nothing to do with Aleksandr Litvinenko's state of health. You would understand that the state of relations between Great Britain and Russia is a lot more important to us. So no politician in our time would gamble with an individual case like Litvinenko's state of health. So I would wish Aleksandr Litvinenko, a fairly young man of a little over 40, a speedy recovery.

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Grishankov, Deputy Chair of the Duma Security Committee RTR Planeta TV, 21 Nov

Allegations are part of a 'political game' by Berezovsky, aimed at discrediting Russia's image.

Gennadiy Gudkov, Duma deputy and FSB colonel in reserve. Kommersant 22 November

Litvinenko's calibre does not allow the authorities to stoop to such a petty settling of scores with rank-and-file employees. If one is to assume hypothetically that the Russian authorities did decide to take such actions they would send their secret agents after the most prominent individuals and not after third-rate 'small fry'....as for all that racket that Western newspapers have kicked up - it only reflects the attitude to Russia. This may be due, for example, to the disapproval of Russia's policy in the energy field. This racket may be in the interests of the US Democratic Party, which has come to power and is trying to highlight the problem of Russia. All methods are acceptable in order to solve the Iranian problem and to do everything to ensure Russia's maximum loyalty. This is why any excuse or scandal may play into the hands of the Democratic Party and the US politicians, who have concrete priorities and always ensure their implementation through any means, sometimes most dubious ones.

Igor Morozov, Member of the Duma International Affairs Committee, Motherland faction, Ren TV, 22 November

The Russian special services have nothing to do with this, because Mr Litvinenko himself is of no interest whatsoever for them as a subject of search and investigation. And I think the Russian special services are right to advocate taking an active part in the process of investigating this poisoning. I link this action with the death of Anna Politkovskaya, because it is evident that somebody is very displeased about the rise of Russia. Somebody has an interest in compromising the policies of the rising Russia and therefore the death of Politkovskaya and the poisoning of Litvinenko are not the latest actions on this route.

MOSCOW. Nov 22 (Interfax) - The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service has again said it has nothing to do with the poisoning of former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko in London.

"Such steps are not in our interests," Russian intelligence service spokesman Sergei Ivanov told Interfax on Wednesday.

"Russia and the United Kingdom have a relationship of trust and mutual understanding. These relations became even stronger during the G8 summit in St. Petersburg. It is totally absurd to disturb this mutual understanding because of ridiculous accusations against Russia," he said.

"Mr. Litvinenko is not the kind of person because of whom bilateral relations can be marred. Geopolitical affairs and this person are incomparable," Ivanov said

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Sergey Ivanov, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) spokesman, ITARTASS, 23 November

Such steps are not in our interests. Russia and the UK have a relationship of trust and mutual understanding, which became even stronger during the G8 Summit. It is absurd to disturb this mutual understanding because of such accusations against Russia....Litvinenko is not the kind of person for whom one would darken bilateral relations. Geopolitical affairs and this person are incomparable....we would like to wish him a speedy recovery. It is a normal human reaction to anyone in trouble...I am sure the London police will uncover the guilty parties.

Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of Duma International Affairs Committee, 23 November

Would be premature and improper to make conclusions about the causes of Litvinenko's death. He was a British citizen and it is up to British special services to carry out an investigation into the incident...if needed, Russia must of course provide help..it is obvious that Litvinenko issued many provocative statements, including statements about European leaders.

Nikolay Kovalev, chairman of the Duma committee for veterans' affairs and former FSB Director, Interfax 23 November

We must ask ourselves the most important question: who will benefit? Undoubtedly, this brought no benefits for Russia and its special services, because, even if they had been involved in the crime, they would have been the prime suspect, which is absolutely not to our benefit....even such defectors to the West as [former KGB officers] Oleg Kalugin and Oleg Gordiyevskiy, who inflicted incomparably more damage on Russia than Litvinenko, enjoy good health in the West.

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Interfax 23 November

There is an agreement among special services and it was MI6 which killed this scoundrel in London...Litvinenko was killed as a traitor.

President Putin, Helsinki Press Conference, 24 November

A person's death is always a tragedy. And I offer my condolences to Mr Litvinenko's family and friends. Meanwhile, as far as I know, the medical conclusions of British doctors offer no indication that this was a violent death. No indication. This means that there is no reason for such suppositions.

In any case, we consider that our British colleagues, including in the law enforcement agencies, understand their responsibilities with respect to ensuring the security of citizens that are on their territory. This applies in full measure to Russian citizens on British territory, independently of their political views and convictions. I hope that the British authorities will not support any tendency to inflate any political scandals which are groundless.

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If necessary, Russian authorities, including investigation agencies such as the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, will provide all necessary help in the investigation if such an investigation is needed.

And finally, with respect to the note that you mentioned. If such a note really did appear before Mr Litvinenko's death, then this raises the issue of why it was not made public during his life. And if this appeared after his passing away, after his death, then naturally it deserves no comment? The people that have done this are not God and Mr Litvinenko is, unfortunately, not Lazarus. And it is very much a pity that even such tragic events like a person's death can be used for political provocations.

Yastrzhembsky, Putin's EU aide, Helsinki, 24 November

What is alarming is the eye-striking excessive number of deliberate coincidences of high-profile deaths of people who positioned themselves as opponents to the existing Russian government with international events in which the Russian president takes part...I am far from being a champion of conspiracy theory. But it looks like we are facing a well-orchestrated campaign or a plan to consistently discredit Russia and its leader....if we were in Ancient Greece, we could wonder who benefits from these sacrifices...the press has no right to ignore this question.

Peskov, Putin's Deputy Press Secretary, Helsinki 24, November

A person's death is always a tragedy. This investigation is a matter for law enforcement services of the UK, where Litvinenko had lived in recent years.

Sergey Ivanov, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service spokesman, Interfax 24 November

Somebody might have needed this, you know, to create a sensation. It is hard to name this person, as this would amount to a murder accusation. So, I will just say that any death of a public person, especially a mysterious death, would naturally attract enormous attention from the press as well as from politicians, who will naturally make use of it for their own political or some other interests. That is, someone needed Litvinenko's death really badly.

Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of Duma International Affairs Committee, Vesti News 24 November

Over the last few years they have been deprived of the opportunity to buy corrupt officials using stolen money. Obviously, they cannot get used to this. Obviously, we can speak about a purposeful action aimed against present-day Russia. Those who are hastily trying to link Litvinenko death to the activities of some Russian structures are, in my view, nothing more than blind tools in the hands of those who are trying to use this situation against Russia. Russia, by definition, could not and, obviously, does not have anything to do with Litvinenko death.

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Gennadiy Gudkov, Duma deputy and FSB colonel in reserve

Claims that the Russian special services could have been involved in Litvinenko's death are 'ridiculous'...a lot of people now are trying to blame our special services. They could have carried out an operation of revenge and intimidation only if they had completely lost their minds, which can be ruled out... Oleg Kalugin, Oleg Gordiyevskiy and some others inflicted such great damage on us that it makes the damage caused by Litvinenko's 'revelations' simply laughable...Kalugin and Gordiyevskiy are still in rude health.

Gennadiy Gudkov, Duma deputy and FSB colonel in reserve Russian Vesti TV, 24 November

Litvinenko's death is the result of clan infighting around a known Russian oligarch. One should look for the causes in money, influence and the control over some financial flows. I think these are the main causes of the murder. I think that the investigation should work over all versions, of course. Today we are witnessing objective British investigation. I very much hope that it will be objective and balanced. I think that it will find the answer and we will soon see that this theory is right.

Nikolay Kovalev, chairman of the Duma committee for veterans' affairs and former FSB Director,

He was recruited into FSB from convoy troops....recruitment was a dreadful error.

Pavel Krashenninnikov, head of the State Duma's committee on civil, criminal, arbitration and procedural legislation, ITARTASS 24 November

Litvinenko's death took place on British territory and therefore it should be investigated by the British law-enforcement agencies...our special services can only get involved in the investigation if a special request comes from Scotland Yard...presumption of innocence still exists all over the world and only experts are in a position to determine the degree of responsibility of one side or the other...unless there is proof to the contrary, no-one has the right to accuse Russia's representatives of poisoning.

HELSINKI. Nov 24 (Interfax) - An investigation into the death of former Russian special services officer Alexander Litvinenko in London is a matter for UK law enforcement agencies, first deputy of the Russian president's press secretary Dmitry Peskov said.

"A person's death is always a tragedy. This investigation is a matter for law enforcement services of the United Kingdom, where Litvinenko had lived in recent years," he said.

Helsinki, Nov 24: QUESTION: I have a question for Mr Putin and Mr Vanhanen. Mr Putin, after you arrived in Helsinki yesterday, Aleksandr Litvinenko's death in London became known. Today we were informed that before he died, he wrote a letter in which he accused you of his death. What can you say about this? And Mr Vanhanen, did you

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raise this issue in your conversation with Mr Putin and are you concerned about it? Do you think it is somehow connected with Anna Politkovskaya's death? Thank you.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: A person's death is always a tragedy. And I offer my condolences to Mr Litvinenko's family and friends. Meanwhile, as far as I know, the medical conclusions of British doctors offer no indication that this was a violent death. No indication. This means that there is no reason for such suppositions.

In any case, we consider that our British colleagues, including in the law enforcement agencies, understand their responsibilities with respect to ensuring the security of citizens that are on their territory. This applies in full measure to Russian citizens on British territory, independently of their political views and convictions. I hope that the British authorities will not support any tendency to inflate any political scandals which are groundless.

If necessary, Russian authorities, including investigation agencies such as the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, will provide all necessary help in the investigation if such an investigation is needed.

And finally, with respect to the note that you mentioned. If such a note really did appear before Mr Litvinenko's death, then this raises the issue of why it was not made public during his life. And if this appeared after his passing away, after his death, then naturally it deserves no comment? The people that have done this are not God and Mr Litvinenko is, unfortunately, not Lazarus. And it is very much a pity that even such tragic events like a person's death can be used for political provocations.

QUESTION: Mr Putin, you mentioned this affair of Anna Politkovskaya's and Prime Minister Vanhanen talked about this as well, and it seems that there are concerns about how the investigation is being carried out. Mr President, please answer this question and comment on how the investigation is proceeding.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: I have already said that we should not forget that such crimes do not only happen in Russia. In other European countries there are well-known political murders that have not yet been resolved. This is our common problem and let's look at what is happening with the mafia in several EU countries which, not in an isolated incident but systematically, destroys representatives of law-enforcement agencies, judges, prosecutors, investigators, journalists and political figures. It takes decades to catch these mafiosi in European countries. This is a common problem. Maybe this problem is somewhat sharper in Russia with respect to our country's present level of development. We are not about to deny this and together with our European colleagues we are preparing to fight against this and to change the situation. I am confident that we will be able to do so. It would be unfortunate if we endlessly politicised these issues or stigmatised only Russia for this. The same thing happens in many other countries. Ms Politkovskaya was a critic of the Russian authorities, that is true, but Mr Paul Khlebnikov was also an American journalist, as I said before. Ms Politkovskaya had American citizenship and Paul Khlebnikov was of Russian origin but was also an American journalist. He criticised precisely those people who are leading an armed struggle against the federal authorities. He was also killed. Is it correct to forget about him? I think not. Let us not politicise these questions but join our forces in the struggle against this evil. And as to the investigation into this affair, hundreds of people are being interrogated,

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hundreds. I want to express my hope that the work is not only being conducted in the most active way but will also be brought to completion.

Gleb Pavlovskiy, Kremlin-linked commentator, Russian NTV, 25 November

Last night TV channels around the world interrupted their news bulletins with the news of former spy Aleksandr Litvinenko's death in a London hospital. Litvinenko became "famous" after he told a news conference in Moscow in 1998 that he had been ordered to kill tycoon Boris Berezovskiy. In 2000, Litvinenko fled to Great Britain. From there he accused the Kremlin and the FSB of everything, including the explosions in Moscow organized by Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev, of the murder of TV presenter Vladislav Listyev and even of paedophilia, presenter said. According to him, Litvinenko suffered from paranoia. "In his brain the Kremlin became the tumour, the disease and the devil that was orchestrating all the deaths around." To a question about any murder, Litvinenko always answered convincingly: yes, it is them. According to presenter, Litvinenko's death was a natural end to a murky life

RUSSIA-PROSECUTOR-GENERAL-LITVINENKO-2

Russia ready to assist in probe of Litvinenko case - prosecutor (Part 2)

MOSCOW. Nov 26 (Interfax) - The Russian Prosecutor General's Office has stated its readiness to assist Scotland Yard in its investigation of the circumstances surrounding the death of Alexander Litvinenko, an official of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office told Interfax on Tuesday.

"[Russia] is ready to assist Scotland Yard in its investigation of the circumstances surrounding the death of former officer of the Russian Federal Security Service Litvinenko, who died on November 24 in London," he said.

"[Russia] has not received any requests from the UK," he added.

"Noting the constructive and dynamically developing cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of the two states, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office is ready to provide every assistance to its British colleagues in line with the signed agreements and dialogue with the interior ministry and Scotland Yard," the representative said. Russia "is also ready to welcome British investigators in Moscow and offer them full support," he said.

RUSSIA-PROSECUTOR-GENERAL-LITVINENKO

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Federal Security Service Litvinenko, who died on November 24 in London," he said.

"[Russia] has not received any requests from the UK," he added.

**PROSECUTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE SAYS IT IS READY TO ASSIST
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RUSSIA-LITVINENKO-INVESTIGATION-OPINION

No political strings must be attached to Litvinenko death - Duma deputy

MOSCOW, Nov 27 (Interfax) - The death of ex-FSB Colonel Alexander Litvinenko must be viewed exclusively from the point of view of the law, not politics, Pavel Krasheninnikov, the head of the State Duma's legislation committee, said.

"At the current stage, when, unfortunately, the man is dead, all aspects of this mysterious death must be considered from the angle of the law - criminal law, not politics," Krasheninnikov told Interfax on Monday.

"All of these issues must be handled by British law enforcement services," he said.

"I think it's important to find the people involved, instead of establishing the origin of the substance which killed Litvinenko," Krasheninnikov said. "The rest is political speculation," he added.

Question (Speigel) - FSB agent Litvinenko who lived in London has died. Could the Russian special services be behind that?

Sergei Ivanov - I rule out that version. I don't see the sense. Of course I didn't know Litvinenko. Thank God I have no such acquaintances. But I have heard that he worked in the FSB, in the organized crime division. By the way, the crime level then was far higher than now. That's as far as the question of murders in Russia is concerned. Regrettably they do occur. To be objective I'll say, as in the rest of the world.

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RUSSIA-LITVINENKO-MOROZOV-VIEW

Litvinenko's death could not benefit Russia - MP

MOSCOW. Nov 28 (Interfax) - Russia and the Russian authorities had the most to lose from the death of former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko in London, Oleg Morozov, deputy secretary of the presidium of United Russia party's general council, told journalists on Tuesday.

"There is a well known formula: if you cannot figure out what happened, try to understand who could have benefited from it. Russia and the Russian authorities had the most to lose from [Litvinenko's death]," he said.

"That is why, from this standpoint, the appearance of traces of polonium-210, which reportedly caused Litvinenko's death, in an office of businessman Boris Berezovsky will help understand certain things," Morozov said.

"He [Litvinenko] did something at this office. He was exposed to polonium somewhere. Maybe, it happened at this office. I do not know," he said.

RUSSIA-DEFENSE-MINISTER-LITVINENKO

Russian special services have no hand in Litvinenko death - Ivanov

MOSCOW. Nov 28 (Interfax-AVN) - Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov has dismissed allegations the Russian intelligence services were involved in the killing of ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko.

"I rule out this possibility and see no sense in it. I was not personally acquainted with Litvinenko, but I know that he worked in a division of the Federal Security Service which dealt with organized crime," Ivanov said in an interview with Der Spiegel magazine posted on the Defense Ministry's website on Tuesday.

Answering questions, Ivanov said that Russia had managed to solve several contract murders, including the murder of State Duma Deputy Galina Starovoitova.

"Nearly all who carried out the murder of Central Bank Vice Chairman Kozlov have been arrested. The person who ordered the killing has not been established yet, as far as I know. People, to be more exact the scum that carry out and, worse still, order such crimes, take measures not to be found. Unfortunately, those who kill do not know who

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ordered the hit, as a rule," said Ivanov.

RUSSIA-POLONIUM-SUPPLIES-2

Russia has not supplied polonium-210 to UK for five years - Kiriienko (Part 2)

MOSCOW. Nov 28 (Interfax) - Russia has not supplied the radioactive polonium-210 to Britain for five years, but it is supplying the material to U.S. companies for scientific purposes, Sergei Kiriienko, head of the Russian Atomic Energy Agency Rosatom, told a briefing in Moscow. "Russia supplies 8 grams of polonium per month," Kiriienko said. "Earlier Russia supplied it to the United Kingdom, but from 2001-2002 this practice was stopped," he said.

These companies submit certificates guaranteeing that the polonium will be used for exclusively scientific purposes. Polonium-210 is also used in printing, and in the varnish and paint industries.

The half-life of polonium is 138 days. "Polonium cannot be stored for a long time," he said.

"Polonium-210 is an extremely poisonous material, its extraction is a very complicated process," he said.

Former officer of Russian special services Alexander Litvinenko was allegedly poisoned with Polonium-210 in London earlier this month.

RUSSIA-ROSATOM-POLONIUM-ORIGIN

No way of establishing source of polonium-210 - Kiriienko

MOSCOW. Nov 28 (Interfax) - There are no practical methods to determine the origin of polonium-210, Head of the Federal Atomic Agency (Rosatom) Sergei Kiriienko said on Tuesday.

Some media outlets have linked polonium-210 to the death of former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died in London last week after a suspected poisoning.

"The process of production is simple. Polonium is produced by radiation treatment of bismuth in the neutron current; that means that once you have a bismuth piece, you can produce polonium in any channel reactor," he said.

Either Russia's RBMK reactor, Canada's Candu reactor or British channel reactors could be used, he said.

"Polonium produced in Russia for export is under subject to exceedingly strict control and is transferred in accordance with international agreements," he said.

The consumer company issues Rosatom a certificate that guarantees that it will be used for the stated purposes. "However, the final destinations, usually in printing and in the varnish and paint industries are distributed to a wide number of places, and I do not understand how the world controls it," Kiriienko said.

"Control over production is very strict; I do not believe that somebody stole some from a factory. Eight grams is a lot for an isotope,

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and very easy to control. In addition, it is very dangerous, and is transported in strictly guarded containers. If you touch it, it will penetrate through the skin's pores, it accumulates in various body organs and lungs, it carries death. I cannot imagine a person who could steal it," he said.

RUSSIA-POLONIUM-SUPPLIES

Russia hasn't supplied polonium-210 to Britain for 5 yrs - Kiriienko MOSCOW. Nov 28 (Interfax) - Russia has not supplied the radioactive polonium-210 to Britain for five years, but it is supplying the material to American companies only, for scientific purposes, Sergei Kiriienko, head of Russian atomic energy agency Rosatom, told a briefing in Moscow. "Russia supplies 8 grams of polonium per month," Kiriienko said.

. Sawers mentioned Litvinenko, and Nazarov initially reacted defensively. "What evidence did we have [against Russia]?" Once he understood that Sawers was only asking for assistance, he gave assurances that Russia would offer full cooperation, including (when I pressed) facilitation for visas for any police visits to Russia. Nazarov expressed concern however at the tone of UK media coverage. He hoped that HMG would be "wise and cautious" enough not to make untoward allegations. (He nevertheless acknowledged, begrudgingly, that while the media might be speculating, HMG statements had been restrained and cautious.)

Referring to the Russian media, Nazarov, drew a connection between Litvinenko and Berezovsky - "an individual associated with many intrigues". He then complained that both Berezovsky and Zakayev were using their asylum status to pursue political activities: surely the UK could prevent those connected with terrorism from taking part in political conferences. The Prosecutor General's Office would be making full use of the avenues of communication opened up by the new MOU to pursue their extradition. We underlined that the MOU was purely intended to help the Russian authorities better understand our legal system - extradition remained a judicial and not political matter. Nazarov agreed, but persisted that Russia had good dialogue with other countries where (especially) Zakayev travelled, and this had limited Zakayev's ability to take anti-Russian action.

Nov 28 Press Conference

Q: We have discussed Iran, let us now turn to polonium 210. Could the substance have gotten to Britain from Russia and in what amounts and which countries today produce polonium 210?

Kiriienko: You know, I can only provide a technical commentary on polonium 210. Well, polonium 210 is an extremely harmful substance, more toxic than plutonium, a more toxic isotope. It is dangerous on account of its alfa radiation. It is safe at a distance, but it is lethal when it gets into the body.

It's half-life is 138 days, it means that it cannot be stored for a long time. The realistic period in storage is under a year. Beyond that, very little of it is left. Still, it is put to a variety of uses, naturally, each time minimum quantities are used because it is a highly radioactive isotope, so it is used in small doses.

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Russia exports 8 grams every year. 8 grams is a large quantity for polonium 210. We used to supply it to Britain. I think supplies to English companies were stopped in 2001 or 2002. We still supply 8 grams a year to American companies. Each time such companies are obliged to provide an official document, the end-user's certificate and assurances that it is used only for industrial purposes.

In accordance with these certificates they are used actively as ionizers in equipment for removal of static electricity. It is actively used in printing, by major printing companies. It may be used in the production of dyes and varnishes. There is a broad range of uses. So, there is a fair amount of polonium 210 in the world. If we alone supply 8 grams a year -- it is another question that the substance is extremely toxic. Extracting it from the source is an extremely complicated matter. Well, that is all I can say here.

Q: Japanese newspaper. Going back to polonium-210, how rigidly is that substance controlled? Is it possible to track down the origin of that polonium-210?

Kiriyenko: I think this is virtually impossible. At least I don't know how it is possible to track it down. The level of control is very high. As for the production technology, it is very clear. Polonium is obtained through irradiation of bismuth in a neutron flow. This means that in principle one can obtain polonium in any channel-type reactor, if one has a bismuth block. This can be done in any channel reactor. Well, this can be done in Russia's RBMK, Canada's CANDU, or British channel-type reactors.

In this sense, it is possible to obtain it. This is a rather specific activity. The polonium produced in Russia for exports, the amount of 8 grams, is controlled very strictly. There is just one producer and it is produced under tough control in line with international agreements, in compliance with the whole system of control and trade in radio isotopes, and that substance is delivered to a company producing certain equipment, which issues an end user certificate and guarantees that it will only be used for particular purposes. Clearly, this is used in printing, varnish and print production. This has been used rather widely.

I cannot quite understand how control is exercised in the world after that. From the point of view of production, control is very tough. Therefore, I do not believe that someone has stolen it at a producing facility. Just eight grams. In fact, this is quite a lot for an isotope, but it is easy to control this.

Besides, this is a very hazardous substance. It is transported in strictly protected containers. Even if you touch it via pores, via your skin, it penetrates into the body and settles in bones and lungs. And this means death. Therefore, I cannot quite understand as to who was ready to steal it. This is quite a specific thing and it is toughly controlled.

MOSCOW. Nov 29 (Interfax) - Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov does not believe that the timing of reporter Anna Politkovskaya and ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko's deaths and President Vladimir Putin's foreign visits was accidental.

"Reports about Politkovskaya and Litvinenko's deaths were released when Putin was meeting with EU leaders in Finland. I don't think the coincidence was accidental," Mironov said.

"It would be premature to make any conclusions about Litvinenko's death. We must wait until the investigation produces specific results," Mironov said at a news conference at Interfax on Wednesday.

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"Boris Berezovsky posted a statement on the Internet in the summer of 2005, saying that Putin must be compromised. If a reporter writing on rights issues had been killed, the West would have received a signal that the authorities had cracked down on the press," he said.

"In the autumn Berezovsky said again that he would get Putin discredited in the eyes of the West and nearly get him to resign in the spring of 2007," Mironov continued.

Finally, traces of polonium-210, the toxic agent that allegedly killed Litvinenko, were found in Berezovsky's office.

"I leave all of these circumstances without comment. But the three facts I have cited are not accidental, in my opinion, and they make a logical chain leading to clear conclusions," Mironov said.

MOSCOW. Nov 29 (Interfax) - It is unlikely that the ailment affecting Russian economist and politician Yegor Gaidar was caused by natural factors, Anatoly Chubais, head of Russian power monopoly Unified Energy Systems of Russia (RTS: EESR), told Interfax.

"Yegor Gaidar hung between life and death on November 24. Could it have been a natural disease? Judging by what professional doctors familiar with the situation not by hearsay have said, the answer is 'no'," he said.

Chubais, however, said he does not believe Russian special services could be involved in Gaidar's poisoning. "Moreover, in this case, Moscow would have been a much more convenient and easier place than Dublin. But it is unquestionable for me that a mortal construction of Politkovskaya, Litvinenko and Gaidar, which did not come into being by miracle, would have been exceedingly attractive for supporters of unconstitutional scenarios envisioning a change of power in Russia by force," he said

MOSCOW. Nov 29 (Interfax) - Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov does not believe that the timing of reporter Anna Politkovskaya and ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko's deaths and President Vladimir Putin's foreign visits was accidental.

"Reports about Politkovskaya and Litvinenko's deaths were released when Putin was meeting with EU leaders in Finland. I don't think the coincidence was accidental," Mironov said.

"It would be premature to make any conclusions about Litvinenko's death. We must wait until the investigation produces specific results," Mironov said at a news conference at Interfax on Wednesday.

RUSSIA-LITVINENKO-RADIATION-EXPERTS

Litvinenko could not leave traces of polonium-210 - Russian experts

MOSCOW. Nov 29 (Interfax-AVN) - Russian radiation and chemical security experts ruled out the possibility that people poisoned by polonium-210 can leave traces of the substance at places they visited.

"This is impossible. It is true that, staying within a person's body, polonium-210 remains a source of alpha emission. But it is significantly reduced by tissues and is unlikely to become a source of induced radiation that can be detected with instruments within a certain

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time," Lev Fyodorov, president of the Chemical Security Union, told Interfax Wednesday in comments on reports that London police have detected polonium-210 radiation traces at several locations in the city that ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko visited before his death.

Traces of polonium can be detected only within the body or in organic excretions of an irradiated person, Fyodorov said. "It is quite logical that no clear reasons for Litvinenko's death were found in London. Everyone is waiting for an autopsy," he said.

Deputy General Director of the Russian Institute of Atomic Engineering Igor Ostretsov told Interfax, "In order for traces of polonium-210 to be left somewhere, it has to be either scattered or spilt, if it is a solution. However, this all is quite dangerous."

Polonium-210 is highly radioactive and cannot be safely manipulated, as this could result in irradiation of skin or possibly the entire body, Ostretsov said. Moreover, polonium-210 can be easily aerosolized and contaminate air in this state, he said.

MOSCOW. Nov 30 (Interfax-AVN) - It is unlikely that the traces of radiation detected on board several British Airways jets could have been emitted by polonium-210, said a prominent Russian radiation expert.

"For a trace of polonium-210 to be left at some place, it needs to be either scattered or spilt if it exists in a dissolved state. However, this all is quite dangerous, primarily for those who could resort to such a step," Russian Chemical Security Union President Lev Fyodorov told Interfax Thursday.

Moreover, the radiation revealed on board the jets cannot be related to former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko's death in London, Fyodorov said.

"The radioactivity checks of British Airways planes by British special services are unlikely to produce any result in the investigation into Alexander Litvinenko's death," Fyodorov said.

"This is a purely propagandistic move. A careful examination can reveal radioactive traces not exceeding acceptable limits onboard any jet," he said.

MOSCOW. Nov 30 (Interfax) -- No radioactive contamination has been exposed in Moscow's Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports, Russia's chief sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko told Interfax late on Thursday.

"No traces of radioactive contamination has been found in the airports," he said.

According to Onishchenko, radioactive hygiene experts of the Federal Service of Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-being took about 500 probes of gamma emission and alpha particle stream density, as well as 30 smears to detect surface contamination in the two airports.

He also noted that apart from the airports, two aircraft of the Transaero air carrier and an aircraft of the Aeroflot company were examined.

"The gamma emission dose does not exceed natural limits and alpha particle stream density does not exceed background pollution levels in

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any of the tests," Onishchenko said.

The tests were taken in the most vulnerable places of the airport, namely at telescopic stairways, buses transporting passengers, border and customs control zones, waiting rooms and baggage release rooms. "Monitoring of the planes arriving from Great Britain will continue. The work is coordinated with the Transportation Ministry and the management of the Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports," he stressed.

Russia, UK may probe radioactive contamination of planes, offices jointly

MOSCOW. Nov 30 (Interfax) - Anatoly Safonov, the Russian president's envoy on the fight against terrorism, said he does not rule out that Russian and UK special services will join forces to investigate the contamination of airplanes and offices in the United Kingdom by radioactive substances.

"I think that the issue is lying on the surface. The Russian authorities have expressed their political will to cooperate in all aspects [of this case]," Safonov said in response to a question from Interfax on Thursday.

"Everyone will have to accomplish his share of scrupulous and important work" following the latest instances of contamination by radioactive substances, he said.

Special-purpose equipment should be installed at border crossing points to detect attempts to smuggle radioactive substances, the official said. "We in Russia have such equipment," he added.

"International partners and we registered several instances of radioactive substance smuggling" previously, Safonov said.

"The need [for such equipment] was underscored and steps were taken to develop unified equipment that would meet regional and international standards," the official said.

Earlier today, Safonov attended a global forum on government-business partnership in countering terrorism, which was organized at Russia's initiative put forward at the G8 summit in St. Petersburg.

AMMAN. Dec 1 (Interfax) - The United kingdom has no questions for Russia concerning the death of former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Officer Alexander Litvinenko, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"We do not understand everyday reminders of the investigation and of questions to Russia. There are none. I think Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Margaret Beckett has stated this clearly," he told journalists in Amman on Friday.

MOSCOW. Dec 1 (Interfax) - In 15 years there has not been a single failure in the Russian system of controlling the turnover of radioactive materials, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said.

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On Friday Vesti-24 channel aired part of Ivanov's exclusive interview with Al Jazeera in which he commented on the discovery of traces of radioactive polonium-210 in Britain, in particular in places that ex FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko had visited before being poisoned.

"Since Soviet times Russia has had quite effective systems of controlling radioactive materials and fuel, to say nothing of military- grade plutonium. There has not been a single fact in the past 15 years indicating that something would be wrong in this sphere in Russia. There have been speculation, but no facts," Ivanov said.

RUSSIA-POLONIUM-ORIGIN-EXPERTS

Russian expert dismisses Krasnoyarsk theory in Litvinenko case

MOSCOW. Dec 1 (Interfax) - Reports alleging that polonium-210 that was apparently used for killing Alexander Litvinenko was produced at a nuclear reactor in Russia's Krasnoyarsk territory reveal "glaring incompetence," a Russian expert has said.

A number of British newspapers earlier reported that polonium-210 used for poisoning Litvinenko could have been produced in Zelenogorsk or Zheleznogorsk in Krasnoyarsk territory.

"There are no nuclear reactors in Zelenogorsk; as for Zheleznogorsk, there are plutonium reactors there, which are used simply as a heat source for the town and have never been used for irradiating bismuth to obtain polonium-210," an expert from a Russian microparticle analysis laboratory incorporated into the International Atomic Energy Agency structure told Interfax on Friday.

"Moreover, to stop further speculations on this score, I can say that the only Russian reactor used for irradiating bismuth for obtaining polonium-210 was stopped two years ago," he said.

"To carry out the only export contract, irradiated bismuth from which polonium can be obtained is currently taken from a depot," he said.

Asked whether polonium-210 figuring in the so-called Litvinenko case could have been produced in Russia in theory, the expert said, "Polonium-210 has not been used in Russia anywhere at all for decades because of its relative instability [its half-life period is 138 days]. And we export only 8 grams [of polonium-210] a month to the U.S." "I have no doubts that 8 grams a month are shipped, in line with a contract, namely to an American company," he said.

RUSSIA-RADIATION-MATERIALS-CONTROL

Russian radioactive materials control system is effective - minister

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RUSSIA-MINISTRY-LITVINENKO-UK-2

UK has no questions for Russia concerning Litvinenko case - Lavrov (Part 2)

AMMAN. Dec 1 (Interfax) - The United kingdom has no questions for Russia concerning the death of former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Officer Alexander Litvinenko, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"We do not understand everyday reminders of the investigation and of questions to Russia. There are none. I think Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Margaret Beckett has stated this clearly," he told journalists in Amman on Friday.

"The president stated in public at the Russia-EU summit in Helsinki that should any request be received, we will consider it swiftly and in detail. I confirmed in my contacts with Beckett that we are waiting for specific requests. Finishing our meeting today,. Beckett said that she will be forced to tell journalists that she again reminded me of the issue during the conversation," the minister said.

"I asked whether British investigators have prepared specific requests and the answer was negative. Such questions have yet to be prepared. Now it is the UK's turn," Lavrov said.

Lavrov also met with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Friday. Asked whether the assistance to Scotland Yard to probe the death of Litvinenko was discussed, the minister said that Rice "did not touch upon the issue."

RUSSIA-MINISTRY-LITVINENKO-UK

UK has no questions for Russia concerning Litvinenko case - Lavrov

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Ivanov dismisses Russian secret services' involvement in Litvinenko death

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MOSCOW. Dec 2 (Interfax) - Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov has dismissed allegations that Russian special services could be behind former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko's death and confirmed that Russia is willing to provide all necessary assistance in investigating this case.

"From the logical viewpoint and from the 'who-benefits' viewpoint, I can't see reasons for the speculations actively being disseminated by the Western press alleging that this might be the KGB's or the FSB's long arms and that Litvinenko knew very much as a prominent spy, which is absolutely untrue," Ivanov said in an interview with al-Jazeera, broadcast by Vesti-24 television on Saturday.

"There should definitely be a careful and objective investigation. I am sure that it will be conducted, and Russia is willing to render any assistance in this connection," he said.

RUSSIA-DEFENSE-MINISTER-LITVINENKO

Ivanov dismisses Russian secret services' involvement in Litvinenko death

MOSCOW. Dec 2 (Interfax) - Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov has dismissed allegations that Russian special services could be behind former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko's death and confirmed that Russia is willing to provide all necessary assistance in investigating this case.

"From the logical viewpoint and from the 'who-benefits' viewpoint, I can't see reasons for the speculations actively being disseminated by the Western press alleging that this might be the KGB's or the FSB's long arms and that Litvinenko knew very much as a prominent spy, which is absolutely untrue," Ivanov said in an interview with al-Jazeera, broadcast by Vesti-24 television on Saturday.

"There should definitely be a careful and objective investigation. I am sure that it will be conducted, and Russia is willing to render any assistance in this connection," he said.

BRUSSELS. Dec 4 (Interfax) - The politicization of the situation surrounding the death of former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko may damage Russian-British relations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"It is unacceptable to make officials involved in speculations. This of course damages our relations," the minister said.

MOSCOW. Dec 5 (Interfax) - The Russian Federal Penitentiary Service does not plan to allow former officer of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Mikhail Trepashkin, who is serving a prison term for divulging state secrets, to contact British investigators from Scotland Yard.

"The Federal Penitentiary Service will not allow a person convicted for divulging state secrets to remain a source of information for

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representatives of foreign special services," Federal Penitentiary Service spokesman Alexander Sidorov told Interfax on Tuesday. Earlier, lawyers for Trepashkin, who was sentenced in May 2004 to four years in prison, announced that their client is ready to testify to Scotland Yard in the case of former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko. "He [Trepashkin] says that he possesses information that may shed light on the murder. And he is ready to speak out," Yelena Liptser, a lawyer for Trepashkin, said. Trepashkin is serving his four-year sentence in a Nizhny Tagil penal colony since 2004.

MOSCOW. Dec 5 (Interfax) - The "radioactive trace" in the poisoning and death of former Russian special services officer Alexander Litvinenko will in no way affect the reputation of Russia's nuclear power sector, former Russian atomic energy minister Yevgeny Adamov said in an interview with the Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper published on Tuesday.

Litvinenko died in London in late November presumably after being poisoned by radioactive polonium-210.

"It will have no effect at all, because if one presumes that Litvinenko was actually poisoned by polonium-210, one will have great difficulty getting this polonium in our industry. The answer is very simple: our industry has long had a routine approach to keeping records, controlling and storing any radioactive materials. That is why it is far easier to produce it outside the atomic energy sector," he said.

"Let us order bismuth, which is a totally accessible metal, over the Internet. Now we will have to take a piece of this bismuth and go to geologists, who have laboratories with neutron sources that are in no way connected to a reactor. If you throw this bismuth inside them, you will get polonium-210. This is how you can receive it," Adamov said.

"All these episodes with sushi bars and airplanes are absolute nonsense. This hysteria strongly resembles the Chernobyl situation. And it may do the same amount of harm. It is a situation in which people get sick and die from fear, not from exposure to radiation. A large number of people would have died, if there had been some considerable amounts of polonium. It is a very powerful poison. Polonium is a substance that can easily become an aerosol," the ex-minister said.

MOSCOW. Dec 5 (Interfax) - The leadership of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office met on Tuesday with investigators from Scotland Yard who arrived in Moscow yesterday.

"The parties outlined the main areas for cooperation and expressed readiness for constructive cooperation. Representatives of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office stated once again that Moscow is interested in an objective investigation of the circumstances surrounding Alexander Litvinenko's murder," a representative of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office told Interfax.

MOSCOW. Dec 5 (Interfax) - Prosecutor General Yury Chaika has promised to do his utmost to help British investigators probing the death of former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko.

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"We will do our utmost to help our British colleagues," he told a Tuesday news conference in Moscow.

MOSCOW. Dec 5 (Interfax-AVN) - Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov argued on Tuesday that the theory that former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died of poisoning in London last month, fell victim to an FSB conspiracy held no water.

"I can't see any reason for the current active speculation in the Western press that it was the long arm of the KGB or FSB, that Litvinenko knew very much as a prominent intelligence agent, which is utterly untrue. At that time, he worked at the organized crime department. That department was set up at the FSB in the mid 90s. They were recruiting outsiders and, as far as I can remember, Litvinenko was recruited into that FSB department from the convoy forces of the Interior Ministry," Ivanov told the Greek daily Eleftherotypia.

MOSCOW. Dec 7 (Interfax) - The investigation into the death of former Federal Security Service officer Alexander Litvinenko being conducted by UK detectives in Russia is not affecting the quality of Russian-UK relations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told journalists on Thursday.

"The inquiry by Scotland Yard is not affecting our political relations," he said.

UK DETECTIVE WORK IN RUSSIA NOT AFFECTING BILATERAL RELATIONS - LAVROV

MOSCOW. Dec 7 (Interfax) - The investigation into the death of former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko being conducted by UK detectives in Russia is not affecting the quality of Russian-UK relations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told journalists on Thursday.

"The inquiry by Scotland Yard is not affecting our political relations," he said.

Lavrov, however, declined to comment on London's position on the issue and urged that the "Litvinenko case" not be politicized.

"Attempts to spark a publicity campaign around this case and to turn it into a political sensation have been bogged down, including attempts by serious UK media outlets," the minister said.

"We are still committed to contributing to the investigation," he said.

The Russian authorities agreed to allow UK detectives to visit Russia as soon as they received such a request, he said.

Litvinenko died in London in late November after being poisoned by radioactive polonium-210.

A team of UK detectives arrived in Moscow at the beginning of this week to investigate the ex-FSB officer's death.

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Putin "third-term party" blamed for Litvinenko death in new current affairs show

The Litvinenko affair was inter alia the focus of a new weekly current affairs programme, which was launched on 8 December as a joint project between RTVI Russian satellite TV abroad and Russian Ekho Moskvyy radio. It is in the form of a simultaneous broadcast by both the media organizations. Veteran broadcaster Yevgeniy Kiselev, formerly of NTV, is the host of the "Vlast" (Power) programme.

From the data of a phone-in, later on in the programme, over 80 per cent blamed the "third-term party" - those intent on the prolongation of Putin's rule - for the recent high-profile murders. Under 20 per cent blamed Russia's enemies abroad.

The programme began with an outline of its aims, which are, broadly, to analyse the situation regarding political power in Russia in view of the future events that are to dictate Russia's future course: the parliamentary and presidential elections, in 2007 and 2008 respectively.

Will Putin keep his word and "not clutch at power and change the constitution to suit his own ends"? And, if he goes, who will succeed him? These were the questions that were posed by Kiselev as the focus of the series.

"Soon it will be seven years since Putin began to build his much-vaunted vertical chain of command, with everything that is under way in Russia more and more about one man, Russia's president, and with more and more power concentrated in his hands," Kiselev remarked, in comments which reflected his view on the matter.

Litvinenko affair

An approximately 7-minute overview of the developments associated with the Litvinenko case, from an RTVI correspondent, followed, with reference to The Times (which said that Litvinenko was likely to have been poisoned at the Millennium Hotel in London). The reception the UK detectives were given in Moscow "was, to put it mildly, cool", the report in particular remarked. Whoever the perpetrator, Russia's and personally Putin's reputation in the West has been damaged, it summed up.

Quizzed by the host, Dmitriy Oreshkin (of the influential analytical group Merkator) underlined the gravity of the situation.

"To a Western mind, this is a catastrophe," as a radioactive substance is discovered in "the cradle of parliamentary democracy", which is treated as "an attack", as Oreshkin put it.

Familiar ground was covered in respect of the usual suspects, such as whether it was an act by Russia's enemies abroad or by those intent on or even, conversely (as voiced by Oreshkin), opposed to Putin's third term or to those who favour it. However, no real evidence exists, Oreshkin summed up.

Be that as it may, Oreshkin added, Putin "is indirectly to blame", if only for the way the Russian special services "have disgraced themselves": At the very least, they should have prevented it.

In a vote from the data of a phone-in, Kiselev announced that over 80 per cent blamed the "third-term party" for the high-profile murders, and under 20 per cent blamed Russia's enemies abroad.

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Yavlinskiy remarks

Among other political proceedings discussed in the second part of the programme (after news on the half-hour), leader of the Yabloko liberal political party Grigoriy Yavlinskiy's reported comments on recent high-profile murders as the real manifestations of extremism, at a meeting with President Vladimir Putin earlier this week, were viewed through the prism of similarly harsh words from Mikhail Khodorkovskiy at a similar meeting with Putin shortly before his arrest. It was an "unexpectedly strongly-worded" statement from Grigoriy Yavlinskiy, Kiselev thought.

A quote from Yavlinskiy was read out, as follows: "It is those behind the lawlessness that are the extremists today, in an atmosphere in which the real evil goes unpunished."

"Any kind of nationalist propaganda, attacks by skinheads, the tendency towards self-isolation in Russia which has gained currency in certain circles, regular killings related to corruption, the killing of political opponents, whoever they are, of those in power - and, by the way, the circumstances of the suspicious death in London are very similar to those of the death of [MP and newspaper editor] Yuriy Shchekochikhin - all these are manifestations of the most dangerous kind of extremism."

Curbs on free speech and political parties were among the reasons listed by Yavlinskiy, in Kiselev's account. The failure of the Russian state to commit itself to European values is also relevant in respect of the rise of extremism in Russia, Yavlinskiy thought.

Kiselev contrasted Yavlinskiy's remarks with what he saw as the official attitude to the matter: "Clearly, those in power consider those that criticize them to be extremists first and foremost." It was brave of Yavlinskiy to contradict that, Kiselev thought.

Putin successor

Putin's possible successors were discussed with Oreshkin. Russian Railways chief Vladimir Yakunin was thought to be a "strong candidate". His "brilliant" command of English (through his postings as second and then first secretary of the Soviet mission to the UN) was highlighted, as was his prominence within the St Petersburg circle.

The naming of either Sergey Ivanov or Dmitriy Medvedev as Putin's possible successors are no more than a diversionary tactic, Oreshkin thought. The presidential campaign will not begin in earnest until six months before the polls, he suggested.

Further on Yakunin, Oreshkin thought that he would be a good candidate to continue the Putin line once in power, "certainly to begin with", although the future is less certain, to the extent that Yakunin "may seem to the president's closest entourage to be too much of a hardliner".

Tomsk mayor

In the final segment of the programme, a report sought a connection between the arrest of the mayor of Tomsk, Aleksandr Makarov, and the city's outspoken TV, "which is not afraid to air news of Khodorkovskiy and dares to compare Putin with Caligula".

A presenter for the TV station saw a "possible political component" in the case, with Makarov among the informal leaders of a mayoral protest movement following attempts to limit the powers of municipal leaders and cancel their election, she said.

Ekho Moskvyy radio, Moscow, in Russian 1700 gmt 8 Dec 06

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Spy veterans deny involvement in Litvinenko murder

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Excerpt from report by Rossiya TV's external service on 10 December

[Presenter] Last week Scotland Yard has reclassified the Litvinenko case from "suspicious death" to "murder" with a proviso that the motives, methods and executors remain unknown. The British trust their police to such a degree that leading London TV channels drew immediately an unequivocal conclusion: if the police are saying this is murder it must be so. All other scenarios should be discarded as conspiracy theories, for instance, that Litvinenko could have been engaged in trafficking radioactive substances. The Russian Chief Prosecutor's Office too has said that the victim was poisoned by radionuclide's. Moscow, however, continues to ponder alternative versions. Andrey Medvedev has looked into reservations and contradictions in this story.

[Correspondent] Mystery seems to have enveloped everything in this story. Even Litvinenko's funeral caused a lot of confusion. [Passage omitted]

Russian specialists are continuing to develop an alternative theory: Litvinenko was not stalked [by a poison-carrying agent] but, on the contrary, he himself was carrying a hazardous cargo and contaminated everything around him.

[Georgiy Kaurov, director of microparticles analysis lab (within the IAEA)] This is a textbook case of violation of safety rules by Litvinenko himself through ignorance. In all probability, he showed off the polonium-210 he had, wanted to make money from this, to get paid for this polonium. And while demonstrating this silvery powder - or polonium salts but I believe that it was real polonium - he licked it somehow, and that was that.

[Correspondent] This theory is confirmed partly by the fact that yet another witness, Dmitriy Kovtun, who, together with Lugovoy, had spoken with Litvinenko on the same evening of 1 November is now in a Moscow hospital and has similar poisoning symptoms. Traces of polonium have been found in a flat in Hamburg where Kovtun lived. No traces have been found in the plane, however, that took him to Moscow.

The theory that Litvinenko was engaged in trafficking radioactive substances seems quite probable if we look at his life style in the last few months. [Boris] Berezovskiy had stopped supporting him. Litvinenko even worked part time as chauffeur to [Chechen exile] Akhmed Zakayev. The former spy was desperate for money. It's not ruled out that he not simply sold polonium but was a member of a criminal group which was developing a dirty nuclear bomb. Talk about terrorists trying to develop such a bomb started long ago. In the 40s a mixture of beryllium and polonium, precisely, was used in the igniting device in Soviet and US bombs.

[Kaurov] Knowing this, they can develop such a bomb or, rather, a fuse. And since they are developing a fuse, then there must be the device itself.

[Correspondent] A device to explode?

[Kaurov] A device to explode. So our spies - and not only our but the spies of the whole world - should think where this is being manufactured, in England, the US or Russia.

[Correspondent] And for whom.

[Kaurov] And for whom.

[Correspondent] The Russian fund "Honour and Dignity" has been waiting for the Scotland Yard investigators all last week. Two newspapers, the Italian Panorama and the British Daily Telegraph quoted sources in the special services as saying that Litvinenko's murder was instigated by Valentin Velichko, head of a fund which unites former spies and diplomats. But former spies have not received even a phone call. Now the veterans

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are going to sue the newspapers and claim that they understand who is behind these accusations.

[Valentin Velichko, president of the "Honour and Dignity" fund] Since our honour and dignity, the main motto of our fund, have been tarnished, we are even keener on getting to the bottom of it. I think, however, that even if the special services find the real executors, this will not be made public. But we are waiting to receive Scotland Yard people and are ready to talk to them. Unfortunately, they are showing no interest in us.

[Correspondent] Valentin Velichko believes that it's no coincidence that his organization was singled out. There are many associations of veterans in Russia but the incumbent president served precisely in the intelligence, and any Western resident knows this.

[Velichko] The goal was to spread a lie and then look what will happen.

[Correspondent] The main thing was that it should include Russians and intelligence veterans.

[Velichko] Absolutely. Russians, intelligence veterans, special services and the old guard of Chekists [state security staffers] who allegedly feel out of place in present-day democratic Russia. They are pursuing their own goals, compiling hit lists and so on - these ravings don't merit any comment. [Passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Whether Litvinenko had converted to Islam is yet another riddle. Berezovskiy is saying he was a baptized Christian while Akhmed Zakayev, on the contrary, is proudly telling everyone that the former officer had met a Muslim imam before death and allegedly asked to be reburied in the Caucasus. Incidentally, this information was first reported by a Chechen rebel web site.

It's not difficult to understand why Berezovskiy is so cautious. After last year's terrorist acts in London many Britons react nervously, shall we say, to the words "Islam" and "shahid". Even PM Tony Blair had to tackle this problem. In his latest speech he said that ethnic minorities must integrate into British society and adopt the values of freedom, democracy and rule of law whilst extremists must be denied entry to the kingdom. The Brits have started thinking about who is coming to their country, for what reason and with what intentions and this is only one of the possible indirect results of the Litvinenko affair. [Passage omitted]

RTR Planeta TV, Moscow, in Russian 1700 gmt 10 Dec 06

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Prosecutors want to question London emigrants on Litvinenko case

Excerpt from report by Russian news agency RIA Novosti

Moscow, 10 December: Investigators from the Russian Prosecutor-General's Office intend to travel to London in order to question businessman Boris Berezovskiy and Chechen separatist envoy Akhmed Zakayev on the Litvinenko case.

The Sunday Times today quoted a source close to the investigation as saying that "we will insist that Berezovskiy and Zakayev should be questioned. Both of them knew Litvinenko, so they may have important information".

In particular, the Russian investigators would like to find out what kind of relations Berezovskiy allegedly had with another witness in the case, [Russian] businessman Andrey Lugovoy.

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So far RIA failed to obtain an official comment from the Prosecutor-General's Office.
[Passage omitted]

RIA Novosti, Moscow, in Russian 0736 gmt 10 Dec 06

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RUSSIA-LITVINENKO-WITNESS-QUESTIONING-2

Sokolenko questioned in Litvinenko case (Part 2)

MOSCOW. Dec 15 (Interfax) - Detectives of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office have questioned security firm director Vyacheslav Sokolenko as a witness in the investigation into the poisoning and death of former Russian Federal Security Service officer Alexander Litvinenko. Visiting UK police officers attended the questioning, which continued for more than four hours, a source close to the inquiry told Interfax.

Sokolenko answered several dozen questions prepared by UK detectives in advance, the source said. Representatives of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office handled the questioning.

"Thus, the entire list of witnesses - ten people or so - the UK authorities asked the Prosecutor General's Office to question has been exhausted. All witnesses have been questioned," the source said. However, a spokesman for the Prosecutor General's Office declined to comment on Sokolenko's questioning.

RUSSIA-LITVINENKO-INVESTIGATION

Litvinenko case damages Lugovoi's reputation

MOSCOW. Dec 17 (Interfax) - Businessman Andrei Lugovoi, a witness into the death of former officer of Russian special services Alexander Litvinenko, considers himself as the injured party.

"This is hard from the moral point of view. In any case, my family, myself and my reputation were damaged, I consider myself as the injured party, despite opinion of Scotland Yard on the issue," Lugovoi said in an interview with the Vesti Nedeli program of the Rossiya channel on Sunday.

Another witness in the case, Dmitry Kovtun, a Russian citizen, stated once again he was poisoned before a meeting with Litvinenko in London's Millennium Hotel on November 1. "We meet with Litvinenko on October 16 - 17 in London. We visited companies then. I have only one theory, I could have got poisoned through Litvinenko," Kovtun said, adding that his health is a satisfactory. "My health is a subject to an investigation," Kovtun said.

Investigators from Russia, Germany and the United Kingdom are involved in investigating the Litvinenko case.

Investigators of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office interrogated some nine - ten witnesses who had any links with Litvinenko in the presence of Scotland Yard officers, who came to Moscow. Friends

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and business partners of Litvinenko, including Lugovoi, Kovtun and Vyacheslav Sokolenko, are among those interrogated. Lugovoi and Kovtun were one of the last people to meet with Litvinenko in London, who felt sick then, and died later. Currently, Lugovoi and Kovtun are staying in hospital where they are examined with a view of radioactive poisoning.

RUSSIA-LITVINENKO-WITNESS

Litvinenko was in dire need of money before death - Lugovoi

MOSCOW. Dec 19 (Interfax-AVN) - Former Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko was in a complex financial situation over the past few months before his death, businessman Andrei Lugovoi, who was questioned as a witness in the Litvinenko case, said in an interview published in the Izvestia newspaper on Tuesday.

"He told me that his allowance had been cut threefold in summer. He even named the figure: 1,500 pounds. A janitor receives more than 2,000 pounds in England. I can tell you for sure that he was extremely worried about money. It was a decisive matter for him," he said.

Lugovoi said he had known Litvinenko for about a decade, but their relationship had been perfunctory.

Lugovoi said Litvinenko had called him about a year before, having heard about his successful security business in Russia. When Lugovoi came to London, Litvinenko linked him with several companies.

"These are very solid security firms," Lugovoi said, adding that his first visit to London took place in December 2005.

The businessman said the ex-FSB officer acted as a middleman and was interested only in commissions from deals.

"His participation in this business was not on the agenda.

Generally speaking, he arranged all this because of money," Lugovoi said.

Lugovoi said he has had no business contacts with entrepreneur Boris Berezovsky, who resides in London, over the past five years. "Our contacts were very rare. They had nothing to do with business," he said.

RUSSIA-POLONIUM-ROSTEKHNADZOR

Pulikovsky rules out polonium leak from Russian enterprises

MOSCOW. Dec 20 (Interfax) - A check conducted by the Russian environmental, technological and nuclear watchdog (Rostekhnadzor) has not revealed any leak of radioactive polonium from Russian enterprises and facilities, Rostekhnadzor head Konstantin Pulikovsky told an Interfax news conference on Wednesday.

"Any leak of polonium from all facilities under our control is categorically ruled out. We conducted a check as soon as radioactive contamination by polonium-210 was reported. No leak was detected," he said.

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RUSSIA-PROSECUTORS-ZAKAYEV-EXTRADITION

Warrant for Zakayev's extradition mulled in Russia - Deputy Prosecutor

ROSTOV-ON-DON. Dec 20 (Interfax) - The extradition of Chechen separatist envoy Akhmed Zakayev, who resides in London, is being decided by the Russian Prosecutor General Office, Deputy Prosecutor General Ivan Sydoruk said.

"We have sent relevant documents to the prosecutor general,"

Sydoruk told the press.

The case of Zakayev will be further investigated, he said.

"We reversed our decision to suspend the investigation after we uncovered new circumstances," Sydoruk said.

RUSSIA-FOREIGN-MINISTER-LITVINENKO-WEST

Western media biased in coverage of Litvinenko's death - Lavrov (Part 2)

MOSCOW. Dec 20 (Interfax) - The Western media's coverage of the circumstances surrounding ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko's death is evidence of a biased attitude toward Russia, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"The recent developments connected with Litvinenko's death indicate that the media is capable of talking about and playing with anything,"

Lavrov said at a news conference in Moscow on Wednesday.

Western media filled their reports about the case with questionable facts and with information from questionable witnesses, he said.

"At the same time, known facts, which are available in Russia, as well, remain outside the reports," Lavrov said.

"We have been witnessing explicit efforts to picture Russia solely in dark colors. Biased judgments very often prevail," said Lavrov.

RUSSIA-FOREIGN-MINISTER-LITVINENKO-WEST

Western media biased in coverage of Litvinenko death - Lavrov

MOSCOW. Dec 20 (Interfax) - The Western media's coverage of the circumstances surrounding ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko's death is evidence of a biased toward Russia, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

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RUSSIA-SVR-LITVINENKO

Litvinenko's death might have been provocation against Russia - Lebedev

MOSCOW. Dec 20 (Interfax) - Sergei Lebedev, the director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, has reiterated that his agency has nothing to do with the poisoning and death of former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Alexander Litvinenko.

"As far as this issue is concerned, I can be totally straightforward: he and the Foreign Intelligence Service have absolutely

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nothing to do with each other. That is why all these rumors claiming that the intelligence service sent him to the West, or sent him into eternity are complete nonsense," Lebedev said in an interview published in the Komsomolskaya Gazeta newspaper on Wednesday.

"There are grounds to suggest that Litvinenko was eliminated in order to stage a political provocation against Russia. One of the persons involved in this case, whose name is known to everyone, said in London recently: 'My goal is to discredit the current government and the president personally. I will make my objective a reality'," he said. Rumors that the Foreign Intelligence Service is allegedly "hunting traitors abroad" are just a "myth", Lebedev said.

"It is a myth. The Foreign Intelligence Service has never been involved in any 'wet job'. Units that used various 'daggers' were disbanded back in the 1950s," he said.

Commenting on the detention of an allegedly "Russian spy" in Canada, Lebedev said, "the man who was arrested there had a fake Canadian birth certificate."

"For instance, in the U.S., some 70,000 people with fake passports are arrested and deported every year. But they are not accused of involvement with intelligence services. It is unclear why people suddenly began talking about 'a spy from the Foreign Intelligence Service' in this situation," he said.

Asked to comment on the progress of the investigation into the murder of the Russian embassy's employees in Iraq, Lebedev said, "It is an exceptionally sensitive matter." "The Foreign Intelligence Service is using all its specific possibilities to help the National Anti-Terrorist Committee and investigative bodies. In addition, we are working in close cooperation with representatives of the coalition forces in Iraq itself.

U.S. troops constitute their core. They bear the brunt of the responsibility for general security in that country," he said.

"There is already a better understanding of how this tragedy happened. But drawing up final conclusions will take time," Lebedev said.

Sergei Ivanov - interview published by the Russian newspaper Trud on 22 December

"A person's death is always a tragedy, all the more so a violent death. But I am frankly surprised by the excitement surrounding Litvinenko's death. Let's not fantasize and let's look at the facts. Polonium-210, with which the former FSB agent was allegedly poisoned, is manufactured only at one enterprise in Russia - at the Avangard plant, but then again, in strictly limited quantities. I think that it is understood that the cost of each gram of this isotope is far from cheap. And why would the intelligence services spend millions in order to send to kingdom come a former rank-and-file agent, whose absurd accusations against them have already long since ceased to be taken seriously? What is more, to make a spectacle of that?

The question is something else. Who stands to gain from that? Let's not make wild guesses and let's wait to hear what the British detectives and experts say.

Russia will continue to actively assist them in the investigation."

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