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New Traces of Polonium-210

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According to WikiLeaks, on Dec. 7, 2006 — two weeks after the poisoning death in London of former Federal Security Service agent Alexander Litvinenko — Russian special presidential representative Anatoly Safonov dined in Paris with U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Henry Crumpton and said Russian intelligence had observed individuals moving radioactive materials into London prior to Litvinenko's murder.

But the problem with telling lies is that those who lie often get tripped up by telling different stories at different times.

Russian intelligence set up surveillance of individuals who were transporting polonium into London. According to British police, those individuals were Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun.

If Russian agents were indeed tracking Lugovoi, why is he now a State Duma deputy?

If the British are lying and somebody else brought the polonium into the country, why doesn't

the Prosecutor General's Office provide evidence showing who exactly Russian intelligence agents were monitoring in London?

Lugovoi is a former security officer and former head of security for the ORT television station, which in the 1990s was owned by billionaire Boris Berezovsky, who now lives in exile in London. Let's suppose that Lugovoi really was recruited by his former intelligence colleagues specifically to run this operation. It would be difficult to pinpoint with any certainty exactly when he was recruited. Perhaps at Litvinenko's request, Lugovoi carried some materials overseas that compromised a high-ranking Russian official.

Let's also suppose that the Russian plans were not limited to poisoning Litvinenko but also to poison Berezovsky and Chechen insurgent leader Akhmed Zakayev, also exiled in London. The plan would be simple: If British doctors were unable to explain the deaths, it would instill fear into the hearts of Russia's enemies that they, too, would one day incur an inexplicable, painful death.

Or else, if traces of the polonium were found, Russian intelligence would announce that Zakayev, Litvinenko and Berezovsky, along with their accomplice Lugovoi, were making a "dirty bomb" for Chechen separatists and toss in as proof the results of the surveillance of Lugovoi in London and his "posthumous letter."

Let us further suppose that playing the role in this game of traitor, double agent, executioner and victim, Lugovoi had no difficulty foreseeing how things would develop and that he was not at all thrilled about having to author a "posthumous letter."

Realizing that the ax was about to fall on him, too, Lugovoi on Nov. 24, 2006, the day after Litvinenko's death, gave an interview to the Times of London and then gave numerous interviews to Ekho Moskvy and other media outlets. That made it difficult, if not impossible, to quickly and quietly remove Lugovoi from the picture.

In the end, the authorities tried to save face. They gave Lugovoi a seat in the Duma with the Liberal Democratic Party and tolerated nauseating press conferences where he claimed Berezovsky was recruited by British intelligence.

The only remaining proof that there ever was a different game plan — to accuse Berezovsky, Zakayev, Litvinenko and Lugovoi of smuggling polonium — is the statement made by Safonov and posted on WikiLeaks that Russia intelligence had been monitoring individuals who had brought radioactive materials into London prior to Litvinenko's death.

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