

Litvinenko Lawyer Accuses U.K., Russia of Cover-Up

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — A lawyer for the family of former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko accused the British and Russian governments Tuesday of trying to stymie a long-delayed inquest into his poisoning death.

The allegations of a cover-up came at a London court hearing where British media organizations challenged a government bid to hold parts of the inquest in secret for security reasons. In Britain, inquests are held to determine the facts whenever someone dies violently, unexpectedly or in disputed circumstances.

Ben Emmerson, the lawyer for Litvinenko's widow, Marina, said the government's quest for secrecy was delaying proceedings, and he suggested that foreign policy — namely trade relations — could be at the heart of the matter.

“We know nothing about why these applications are being made, and we are dancing in the

dark,” he told coroner Robert Owen. “This is beginning to look like you’re being steamrollered by two states acting in collaboration with each other.”

British government lawyer Neil Sheldon said “the disclosure of the material in question would pose a real risk to the public interest.” Emmerson, who said the inquest is “shaping up to be a stain on British justice,” called the government’s arguments for secrecy absurd.

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