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Britain Announces Well-Timed Litvinenko Inquiry in Open Snub to Russia

By The Moscow Times

July 22, 2014



Former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko.

Britain is planning to hold a public inquiry into the death of former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko while in exile in Britain, news agencies reported Tuesday.

Home Secretary Theresa May confirmed that the public inquiry will be held, Reuters reported. The inquiry will open the way for an investigation of whether the Russian government was behind the murder.

"It is more than seven years since Mr. Litvinenko's death, and I very much hope that this inquiry will be of some comfort to his widow," May said in a statement.

An inquest was already held into Litvinenko's death by a coroner in London in 2011, but the British government submitted a request for possible involvement of the Russian

government and British intelligence officials to be excluded, citing a threat to national security.

The reversal of the decision comes amid a tense situation between Russia and Britain over the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Following the crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in eastern Ukraine, British Prime Minister David Cameron threatened imposing severe sanctions on Russia if it fails to cooperate in the investigation of the crash.

Litvinenko died under murky circumstances in London in 2006 after drinking tea poisoned with rare radioactive isotope polonium-210.

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