

New Evidence May Arise From Russian Suspect in Litvinenko Murder Case

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Former FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko.

One of two Russians accused of poisoning former KGB spy Alexander Litvinenko with a radioactive isotope in London in 2006 is willing to give evidence to a public inquiry, a lawyer for the inquiry said Thursday.

British authorities believe Kremlin critic Litvinenko was poisoned with green tea laced with polonium-210 at the Millennium Hotel in central London on Nov. 1 2006, during a meeting with the two men, Andrei Lugoyov and Dmitry Kovtun.

The Kremlin has always denied involvement, as have Lugoyov and Kovtun, whom Russia has refused to extradite.

Robin Tam, counsel for the public inquiry into Litvinenko's murder, told the inquiry that a man giving his name as Dmitry Kovtun had been in contact with the inquiry and said he was willing to give evidence by video link.

It was not yet clear on what terms Kovtun wished to give evidence and when it would happen, according to a transcript of Thursday's hearing circulated to media by inquiry staff.

"There are clearly a number of further steps that need to be taken regarding this matter," Tam told the inquiry.

"It is not yet apparent whether Mr Kovtun intends to instruct legal representatives. [A lawyer for the inquiry] has asked him to supply a detailed witness statement but has not yet received such a document," he said.

The fallout from Litvinenko's murder chilled Anglo-Russian relations to a post-Cold War low.

As ties improved, Britain rejected holding an inquiry in 2013. But with relations subsequently soured by the Ukraine crisis, the British government changed its mind last July.

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