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Litvinenko Affidavit Says Russia's FSB Ordered Petukhov Murder

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Vladimir Petukhov

Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Open Russia foundation has published a statement reportedly signed by ex-spy Alexander Litvinenko in which he accused Russia's secret services of ordering the killing of the then-mayor of a Siberian oil town.

The document not only incriminates the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), but also provides new ammunition for those who deem recent charges against ex-tycoon Khodorkovsky unfounded and politically motivated.

Russian investigators have accused Khodorkovsky, the former head of oil giant Yukos who spent more than a decade in prison on tax evasion and embezzlement charges, of masterminding the 1998 murder of Vladimir Petukhov, then-mayor of Nefteyugansk, who had accused Yukos of underpaying taxes.

An affidavit in Litvinenko's name, drawn up in 2006 and published by Open Russia on Friday, blamed the murder on Russia's own secret services.

The statement said Litvinenko, while working for the FSB, had been assigned to conduct a check into the involvement of FSB employees in Petukhov's murder.

The investigation led him to a video recording reportedly showing FSB official Alexei Antropov handing over a bag containing $40,000 to a man and telling him to murder Petukhov. Litvinenko said he had passed on the video to his superiors at the time.

Open Russia said the copy of the affidavit had been handed to them by Eric Wolf, a spokesman for former Yukos co-owner Leonid Nevzlin — who was earlier convicted in absentia on several counts of conspiring to commit murder, including the killing of Petukhov.

Several months after signing the affidavit, Litvinenko died of poisoning after drinking tea laced with radioactive polonium-210 at a London hotel. A British inquiry into his death was made public on Thursday and confirmed Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun as having carried out the assassination, "probably" on the orders of President Vladimir Putin himself.

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