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U.S. and U.K. Developed 'Novichok' Nerve Agent Linked to Ex-Spy's Poisoning, Russian Official Claims

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Suzanne Plunkett / Reuters

The potent nerve agent linked to the poisoning of a Russian ex-spy in Britain may have been developed in the U.S. and the U.K. rather than Russia, a senior Russian has said.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said Friday that it was "overwhelmingly likely" that Russia's President Vladimir Putin directed the March 4 poisoning of former military intelligence officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury. Britain has said that the weapon used in the attempted murder was believed to be from the Novichok family of nerve agents, which were reportedly first developed by the Soviet military.

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"There has never been a ‘Novichok’ research project conducted in Russia," Alexander Shulgin, Russia's representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, told state television on Friday.

"But in the West, some countries carried out such research, which they called 'Novichok, for some reason," Shulgin told the hosts of the Rossia-1 television channel.

The official singled out both the U.K. and the U.S. as countries where the Novichok-class agent was reportedly developed, adding that it “may very well be that the substance used [in Skripal’s poisoning] may have come from the stocks” of the two Western countries.

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