

# Britain Names Third Russian Behind Skripal Poisoning

By [AFP](#)

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A sweeping clean-up operation was carried out in the British city of Salisbury following the 2018 poison attack. **Andrew Matthews / PA Images / TASS**

British police on Tuesday said there was enough evidence to charge a third Russian man with the Novichok poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in the English city of Salisbury in 2018.

Counter-terrorism detectives said prosecutors had reviewed the evidence against a man identified as Sergey Fedotov for him to be charged with conspiracy to murder, attempted murder, causing grievous bodily harm, and possession and use of a chemical weapon.

Skripal and his daughter were left fighting for their lives after the attack, which soured diplomatic ties between Britain and Russia that were already strained by the 2006 radiation poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko.

The former KGB agent accused President Vladimir Putin of orchestrating the attack in a letter made public after his death.

Europe's top rights court ruled that Russia was responsible in a judgment on Tuesday, prompting a denial from Moscow.

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A police officer investigating the Skripal case was also left seriously ill, while a local Salisbury woman who came into contact with the weapons-grade substance later died.

Two other men have previously been identified as suspects in the poisoning. All three are said to be members of Russia's GRU military intelligence service.

The head of special crime and counter-terrorism at the Crown Prosecution Service, Nick Price, said specialist prosecutors had reviewed the evidence against the third suspect, who is also known as Denis Sergeev.

They "have concluded that there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and that it is clearly in the public interest to charge Sergey Fedotov," he added.

But he said there would be no request for him to be handed over to the British authorities, as Russia does not allow the extradition of its nationals.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's official spokesman told reporters the foreign office would raise the issue with the Russian ambassador.

### **'GRU major general'**

The announcement comes after the investigative group Bellingcat linked a Russian GRU officer named Denis Sergeev both to the attack on the Skripals and to an attempted poisoning in Bulgaria.

Sofia later charged a Russian of the same name.

London in September 2018 issued European arrest warrants for two Russians with the attempted killing of the Skripals, releasing security camera footage and identifying them as Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, while saying these were likely to be aliases.

They were later officially identified as Russian military intelligence officers Anatoly Chepiga and Alexander Mishkin.

In February 2019, Bellingcat reported that a third Russian military intelligence officer was in the U.K. at the same time as the other two suspects, naming him as Denis Sergeev, a high-ranking officer in GRU.

"The involvement of a GRU major general would indicate the unusually high importance of the operation," Bellingcat wrote in its joint analysis with the BBC.

The BBC found that Sergeev used messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram to

communicate with both the two Russians in Salisbury and his Moscow commander.

Bellingcat said Sergeev's Moscow contact was using an unregistered mobile phone card that "does not produce a regular 'footprint' left by regular numbers."

### **'Not a rogue operation'**

The BBC's Russian Service separately reported that Sergeev and his wife "listed the address of the GRU training academy as their own home on an official registry."

The Salisbury attack, the first offensive use of chemical weapons in Europe since World War II, caused an international outcry and prompted a mass expulsion of Russian diplomats by Western nations.

The British government said it believes the attack was sanctioned by the Kremlin — a charge that has been strongly denied by the Russian government.

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"This was not a rogue operation. Only the Russian state had the technical means, experience, and motive to carry out this attack," Johnson's spokesman said.

Both Chepiga and Mishkin are now the subject of EU sanctions.

Bellingcat in 2019 said that Sergeev may also have been involved in an attempted poisoning in Bulgaria in 2015 of Emiliyan Gebrev, an arms manufacturer.

It said Sergeev travelled from Sofia to Istanbul and then on to Moscow in the evening of the day Gebrev was poisoned.

Bulgaria in 2020 charged three Russians in their absence with attempted murder of Gebrev, his son and his company manager.

Sofia City Prosecutor's Office named one as Sergey Fedotov, born in 1973 and also known as Denis Sergeev.

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