

Remarks by the head of the Russian delegation, Permanent Representative of Russia to the OPCW, Ambassador Alexander Shulgin at the 59th session of the OPCW Executive Council, the Hague

April 18, 2018

Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by quoting the great thinker, Martin Luther: “A lie is like a snowball: the further you roll it the bigger it becomes.”

This wise dictum fully applies to politics. He who has embarked on the path of deceit has to lie again and again, think up explanations for discrepancies and engage in disinformation and deception. Every trick in the book is used to cover the tracks of a lie and conceal the truth.

Britain now finds itself on this slippery slope. This is made very clear by the so-called Skripal case, fabricated by the British authorities – an undisguised anti-Russian provocation backed up by an unprecedented propaganda campaign, which has been taken up by a group of countries, and culminating in an unprecedented expulsion of diplomats under a specious pretext. However, don’t pass this group off for the entire international community, it is far from that.

A month has passed since the British Prime Minister Theresa May leveled at Russia extremely serious accusations of alleged use of a chemical weapon. We had patiently waited for explanations hoping that our British colleagues would support their high-profile statements with facts that are at all coherent. We repeatedly offered to work together to investigate the events in Salisbury and requested information. In return, we heard arrogant demands that Russia should confess to having committed a crime.

Britain continues to pile on absolutely unsubstantiated charges, trotting out ever new and often incongruous theories of what had happened. British politicians and officials are unable to stop and continue to pour on more torrents of lies. London sabotages any attempts to conduct a truly objective investigation into the Salisbury incident together with Russian experts. They have imposed total secrecy, claiming that they are conducting their own investigation. And yet the “culprits” have already been named.

The reason why this is being done is clear. The British seek at all costs to conceal the true picture of what happened, to hide all evidence that could show their true colours. In short, they are playing for time. As time goes on it will become more difficult to sort out what really happened (or did not happen) in Salisbury.

A lie is always afraid of the truth because the truth is the most dreaded weapon against lies. Let us then turn to bare facts demonstrating how brazenly and crudely the British government is spreading insinuations concerning the Skripal case.

Lie № 1

Russia will not answer legitimate British questions conveyed on March 12 this year through the Russian Ambassador to the UK Alexander Yakovenko (repeated like a mantra by some of Britain's allies).

I have to remind you that the British side asked us to admit to one of the two theories it has concocted: either the poisoning of Sergey and Yulia Skripals was a deliberate Russian act, or Russia has lost control of its alleged arsenal of toxic agents. In spite of the brazen character of this ultimatum, we did not ignore it and instead gave an immediate and clear answer: Russia has nothing to do with the Salisbury chemical incident. These were the only questions Britain asked us.

Lie № 2

Britain is proceeding in strict accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Facts attest to the opposite. The Convention's Article IX prescribes that its member states hold bilateral consultations on any disputed issues, but we see that in reality Britain has evaded this provision and still refuses to work with us. As for the British ultimatum I have mentioned, conveyed through the Russian Ambassador, there is no way it can be seen as "an offer of cooperation" in the CWC sense or as "an inquiry for legal assistance."

We, for our part, on April 13, conveyed to the British side through the Technical Secretariat, under Clause 2 of Article IX, a list of legitimate questions we have on the Skripal case. We acted strictly in accordance with the Convention and expected our partners in London to act likewise. No answer has been forthcoming. Britain does not seem to notice the Convention and does not want to act in accordance with its provisions.

We saw London invent a new form of procedure – "independent verification by the OPCW Technical Secretariat of the findings of the British side." Let me stress: this is not in the Convention. It is a British invention. Instead of precisely following the Convention's provision, Britain is playing mind games with everyone.

Lie № 3

Russia refuses to cooperate to establish the truth.

In fact, the opposite is true. Russia is extremely interested – perhaps even more than any other country – in an honest, open and unbiased investigation of the Salisbury incident. We have repeatedly offered, asked for and demanded British cooperation in the investigation. We submitted to the 57th emergency session of the Executive Committee a draft resolution calling on Russia and Britain to establish such cooperation bringing in the Technical Secretariat. We said then and we confirm now that we are ready to cooperate with the OPCW and within the OPCW. Unfortunately, all our efforts run into the brick wall of London's total refusal to cooperate.

Lie № 4

Britain claims that Russia keeps endlessly proliferating new explanations of the Salisbury chemical incident in order to deflect the barrage of criticism for the alleged use of chemical weapons on British territory.

In reality, this is exactly what the British side is doing by having its “independent” media come up with ever new theories: poison in a suitcase, on a door handle, in a package of buckwheat, in a restaurant, in a bunch of flowers, in a car ventilation system, in perfume, etc.

Lie № 5

The Russian leadership allegedly declared that eliminating traitors abroad is the official policy of the Russian Federation.

This is slander and utter nonsense. Let them quote chapter and verse. Obviously, Britain will be unable to cite a single such statement because Russia's leaders have never said anything remotely like it.

Lie № 6

The conclusions of the Technical Secretariat experts after testing the samples recovered from the Skripal father and daughter, have confirmed that they were poisoned with an agent belonging to the Novichok family.

Our military experts are ready to share their assessments of what the Technical Secretariat report says concerning the results of the work of its group of experts in Britain.

For now I can say just one thing: the claim that the Technical Secretariat has confirmed that the chemical points to its Russian origin is a brazen lie. The report never once mentions Novichok and the OPCW does not contain such a notion. Nor is there any confirmation in the Technical Secretariat's report of a "Russian trail" in the chemical substance found in Salisbury.

In spite of this the British authorities immediately leaked "fake news" to the world media to the effect that the OPCW allegedly had confirmed that the Skripals had been poisoned by Novichok, apparently only developed in the USSR and Russia, hence Moscow is the culprit. This shows how the conclusions have been tampered with in the report made by the Technical Secretariat.

Lie № 7

Novichok is a Soviet invention and it could only have been produced in Russia.

It is worth recalling that Novichok is a Western name of a group of toxic agents that were developed in many countries, including in Great Britain. The British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson confirmed in a recent interview that there were samples of the substance at the Porton Down lab in Great Britain. Generally, we have quite a few questions we'd like to ask this lab. It would be interesting to know how it determined that the Skripals had been poisoned by the Novichok-type nerve gas. Any reasonable person knows that this can only be established if you have the precursor with which the chemical found can be compared. This suggests that the lab has stocks of Novichok and perhaps antidotes that were used to treat the Skripals.

Russia has never done any research and development under a programme called Novichok. I repeat: there has never been such a programme with that name. During the Soviet times, as of the 1970s not only Soviet but also British and American scientists were developing new types of nerve agents. One instance is the notorious VX nerve gas. During the 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR, Western intelligence services took out of Russia a group of chemical scientists together with their research papers. Western specialists set about studying the research material thoroughly and used it as a starting point for work in this sphere. They achieved some success which became known to the public.

We are well aware that Novichok-type nerve gas was produced in a number of countries. Unlike our Western partners who roll their eyes and say that they know something others don't, and add that this is classified information they cannot share, we work differently. We use open sources. On December 1, 2015, the US Patent and Trademark Office asked the Russian patent agency to verify the patentability of a product invented by American researcher T.Rubin. Here is the document (shown on screen).

The invention is a bullet with a special cavity for storing various types of toxic agents. A lethal effect is achieved due to the impact of the toxic substance on a human body. To put it simply,

the ammunition is in the jurisdiction area of the CPCW. The bullet is provided with binary components which interact with each other on impact. And this is what we read on page 11 of the official US document: "At least one of the active substances may be selected from nerve agents including... tabun (GA), sarin (GB), soman (GD), cyclosarin (GF), and VG, ...VM, VR, VX, and [attention!] Novichok agents."

In other words, the document confirms that Novichok-type nerve agents were not only produced but were also patented in the USA as chemical weapons. This didn't happen such a very long time ago. It was a patent dated December 1, 2015.

Moreover, if the word "Novichok" is put in the search engine of the digital source google.patents.com you can find over 140 patents issued by the United States, related to the use as well as the protection from exposure to the toxic agent Novichok.

These are the real facts and not just idle talk, and this is our answer to those who shamelessly declare that the USSR and Russia possessed and produced Novichok-type nerve agents.

Lie № 8

One of the victims, Yulia Skripal, a Russian citizen, allegedly avoids contact with her relatives and has turned down Russian consular help.

The British authorities are hiding Yulia Skripal from the media as well as from the public. Her whereabouts are unknown. Russian representatives as well as her relatives are denied access to her (the British authorities have refused to issue her cousin Viktoria an entry visa). She is unable to return back to Russia for medical purposes and treatment.

The above-mentioned circumstances attest that the Russian citizen Yulia Skripal is effectively a hostage of the British authorities and is being forcibly detained on British soil and is being exposed to psychological pressure.

I have cited only a few examples of how the British authorities engage in misinformation and open lying. I could go on citing other instances, but I think I should stop. Characteristically, Britain does not bother to retract any of its claims in spite of the fact that they absolutely don't hold any water.

I have no doubt that we are going to see more fake news planted, pseudo leaks to the media as well as insults from British officials aimed at us. But no real proof will be offered.

Great Britain is demonstrating its refusal to cooperate earnestly in investigating this murky affair. This convinces us that the British do not want the truth. They cannot afford to let it come out into the open.

The Technical Secretariat report on the findings of British experts prompts a number of questions and calls for a further detailed study, including with the British side. Any specialist understands that any final conclusions can only be made when the chemical material and spectral analysis of the above-mentioned samples are before their very eyes. But the Technical Secretariat made this material available only to London.

We stress: Russia will not take at face value any conclusions concerning the “Skripal case” until a simple condition is met: Russian experts are given access to the victims and the above-mentioned OPCW test results and all the real information on the incident at London’s disposal.

We have weighty reasons to believe that all this is a crude provocation against the Russian Federation on the part of the British secret services. If the British side continues to refuse to cooperate with us, this would merely confirm what we are already confident about that this is really the case.

Mr Chairman,

One cannot help but recall the following saying: lies are not a method of justification, but a method of protection. On April 16, we heard another strange statement: G7 calls on Russia to answer Britain’s legitimate questions concerning the “Skripal case.” We consider this as our response.

By the same token we would like to hear from the British side the answers to numerous and specific questions from the Russian Federation that deal with the Salisbury case. We would also appreciate if G7 representatives explained to us why their countries, based on fake information, unleashed a diplomatic war against Russia.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

We request that this statement be distributed as an official document of the emergency session of the OPCW Executive Council.

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