

UK security review exposes militarist agenda behind Russian Novichok allegations

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5 April 2018

The essential political purpose of the hysterical campaign led by Britain's Conservative government blaming Russia for the poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, is made clear by the publication of the latest National Security Capability Review.

The document, in preparation since 2015, outlines a new "Fusion Doctrine" in which government, the military and security services, corporations, the BBC and other media, charities and NGOs are to be wielded together in a unified security strategy directed against Russia and other unnamed "state actors."

The government of Russian President Vladimir Putin is repeatedly identified as number one on Britain's hit list, centred on the unfounded and increasingly untenable allegations that the alleged attempted assassination of the Skripals brings the "well established pattern of Russian State aggression" onto British soil.

Prime Minister Theresa May introduces the review with reference to a "reckless act of aggression on the streets of Salisbury: attempted murder using an illegal chemical weapon, amounting to an unlawful use of force against the UK."

The report states: "The indiscriminate and reckless use of a military-grade nerve agent on British soil was an unlawful use of force by the Russian State." This is then linked with "Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea," its fomenting of "conflict in the Donbas," its support for the Assad regime in Syria, its violations of European airspace, and its "sustained campaign of cyber espionage and disruption, including meddling in elections."

No evidence is offered to substantiate this charge sheet. Nor is mention made of how the United States, UK and European Union organised an anti-Russian, fascist-led coup in Ukraine, deployed massive troop formations on Russia's border, backed extremist Islamists against the Syrian government and interfered in countless elections

around the globe.

May's introduction, defining the Fusion Strategy as the "use of all our capabilities; from economic levers, through cutting-edge military resources to our wider diplomatic and cultural influence on the world's stage" to "project our global influence," has distinct echoes of the Nazi policy of *Gleichschaltung*—total control and coordination over all aspects of society, from the economy and trade associations to the media, culture and education.

"For modern deterrence," the report states, "we use the full range of capabilities available to us." It speaks of "collaborative programmes with industry and academia." The section "Global Britain," focused in part on preserving free trade, makes special reference to the BBC World Service as a key instrument of UK "soft power."

The review confirms that the UK's warmongering against Russia is an attempt by the bourgeoisie to overcome the global economic decline of British imperialism that has been made apparent in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum. Britain leaving the European Union threatens to severely undermine its global economic and political standing, which, in turn, is exacerbating social tensions in a country already among the most unequal in the world.

To deal with these external and internal threats, the bourgeoisie is ever more reliant on the country's network of military alliances, armed forces and secret services.

Central to efforts to arrest British imperialism's decline is the need to re-involve President Donald Trump's more unilateralist United States in NATO and Europe and reestablish the so-called US-UK "special relationship."

The review stresses, "The United States continues to be our single most important international partner," that "NATO remains the cornerstone of our security posture" and that Britain "remain[s] unconditionally committed to Europe's security."

It outlines a strategy of London acting as the linchpin of

the campaign waged by powerful sections of America's military and security apparatus for stepped-up aggression against Russia, while using this alliance, together with the UK's military, security and nuclear capabilities, to pressure the European powers for a favourable post-Brexit economic and political settlement.

In moving against Russia, Britain hopes to draw the European powers behind it through NATO.

Repeated reference is made to Russia's "flagrant breach of international obligations," to the UK and EU's "commitment to upholding and renewing the rules-based international system," and to "the renewed emphasis in NATO on deterrence and collective defence."

The UK will, moreover, "continue to build on our military cooperation with the US, not just through NATO but through combined operations in the Gulf [the war in Syria] and elsewhere," combining this with a "commitment to cooperate with the French" and a deepened relationship with Germany.

Perhaps the most sinister passage is the review's reference to the "heart" of NATO being "the security guarantee contained in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, that an attack on any one member 'shall be considered an attack against them all.'" The document goes on to stress, "We reaffirm our unconditional commitment to collective defence and security through NATO."

There are unnerving parallels with the position of British imperialism under Labour leader Tony Blair. Then, Britain maintained its "special relationship" with the US by campaigning across the world for the illegal invasion of Iraq. Today, however, the crisis of world capitalism is so far advanced that the fate of not just one country, or even one region, is involved. Unlike Iraq, Russia does possess weapons of mass destruction.

The review reeks of militarist jingoism: "We are the only major western country to invest both 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in defence and 0.7 percent of gross national income (GNI) in international development."

The government remains committed to "grow defence spending by at least 0.5 percent above inflation each year to 2020/21," to "increase counter-terrorism spending by 30 percent," and to "grow the Single Intelligence Account budget by 18 percent in real terms."

Spending will support "Royal Navy maritime deployments as part of Standing NATO Maritime Groups and the vital RAF role in Air Policing operations in Central Europe and the Baltic," as well as the Army's

"leading role on the ground in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence operation in the Baltic States and Poland."

In addition, the review predicts that "The Asia-Pacific region is likely to become more important to us in the years ahead."

Plans are outlined for a Joint Force "capable of addressing state and non-state threats both alongside other nations and on our own," which will include a maritime task group centred on a Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carrier with F35 Lightning combat aircraft; a land division with three brigades including a new Strike force; an air group of combat, transport and surveillance aircraft and a Special Forces task group.

The escalating drive towards militarism and war will inevitably provoke substantial political opposition in the working class, which is why the lies over Skripal are being used to befoul the political atmosphere with anti-Russian rhetoric and talk of a growing threat to national security. The review repeatedly references protecting "our way of life," amid warnings of active terror networks and other threats to be combated on the Internet and social media.

All the time, however, the bourgeoisie only further discredits itself. The moves against Russia are being made based on even flimsier accusations than those against Saddam Hussein. In place of the infamous intelligence ("dodgy") dossier, the population has been presented with claims of an unidentified, unverified nerve agent, a succession of stories as to how that agent was delivered, and two miraculous recoveries from a supposedly deadly weapons-grade toxin.

Many have reacted with profound skepticism to the Skripal story and associated provocations precisely because the collapse of the lies over Iraq has left a political legacy of ingrained hostility to such war propaganda. The exposure of the militarist agenda underlying the "Russian Novichok" narrative will again move millions into struggle against the predatory ambitions of the British ruling class.



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