

# Sergei Skripal discharged from hospital

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Former Russian/British double agent Sergei Skripal was discharged from hospital Friday, almost 11 weeks since he was found unconscious on a park bench in Salisbury. As with his daughter, Yulia, he was spirited away to a secret location under police guard.

The entire narrative concocted by the British government since the still unexplained events of March 4, blaming Russia for poisoning the Skripals with “Novichok,” the most toxic nerve agent ever created, has fallen apart seam by seam.

The Skripals have not been seen in public or been able to speak out freely on what happened to them. But both have made dramatic recoveries. Yulia was discharged five weeks ago, on April 6. The British government is refusing to allow even their own family members to see them, with Yulia’s cousin, Viktoria, twice denied a visa. Nor have Russian diplomatic personnel been allowed, contrary to international law, any contact with two Russian citizens. The Russian Embassy in London said of Sergei Skripal’s discharge, “In the absence of any evidence and an opportunity to meet Sergei and Julia Skripal in person and verify their condition, we will consider these actions of the British authorities as forcible detention or abduction of two Russian citizens.”

Speaking during a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin responded, “God grant him good health, if a military-grade poison had been used, the man would have died on the spot.”

*Sky News* reported that detectives are still questioning Skripal. “They want to know more about his regular train journeys to London, his trips abroad, and his monthly meetings with his alleged former MI6 handler in a Salisbury restaurant.”

The disappearing of Sergei Skripal occurred just days after it was confirmed that the UK government issued two D-Notices (Defence and Security Media Advisory

Notice), to prevent the media from identifying British intelligence service personnel Skripal was working with. Further evidence then emerged pointing to the alleged retired Sergei Skripal remaining active in anti-Russian intelligence work until very recently.

The Spinwatch web site revealed the content of both D-Notices over two articles published on May 8 and 10. These followed a March 6 piece by Russian opposition outlet *Meduza* identifying Pablo Miller as the MI6 agent in Tallinn who had recruited Skripal. The first D-Notice was issued within 24 hours of this being made public.

The second D-Notice was issued on March 14. This notice repeated concerns about identifying personnel, saying, “One of the reactions from the Russian authorities in response to the measures that the UK authorities have recently announced, may include the publication or broadcast of Sensitive Personal Information (SPI). Any publication or broadcast of SPI could identify personnel (and their family members) who work in sensitive positions.”

Miller is a long-time associate of former intelligence officer Christopher Steele, first in espionage in Russia and, later, in Steele’s private intelligence firm Orbis Business Intelligence.

Steele was responsible for the 2016 Trump-Russia dossier alleging misconduct and conspiracy between Donald Trump’s presidential campaign and Vladimir Putin’s Russian government. The WSWs explained, “If Miller and, by extension, Skripal himself were somehow involved in Orbis’ work on the highly-suspect Steele–Trump dossier, alongside representatives of British and possibly US intelligence, then all manner of motivations can be suggested for an attack on the ex-Russian spy and British double agent by forces other than Russia’s intelligence service, the FSB.”

A complaint media, which has dutifully maintained

that Russia organised an “attempted assassination” on British soil of a retired old man, complied with the D-Notices. But this was clearly not enough.

Last Monday, MI5 head Andrew Parker spoke in Berlin in the first public speech outside Britain by a serving head of the secret service. Referring to Russia 15 times, he told European security service leaders of Moscow’s “deliberate, targeted, malign activity intended to undermine our free, open and democratic societies.” Describing Russia as a “hostile actor” involved in “criminal thuggery”, he told journalists he would not reveal to Russia “what we know and what we don’t know” of the ongoing Skripal investigation. “The case has if anything got stronger since then [when Britain got the backing of 28 EU States for its anti-Russian claims], but I can’t explain why it is I say that today.”

What Parker was referring to was an article published the previous day in a Czech weekly newsmagazine *Respekt*, alleging that Skripal had met and helped to train spies in a number of European countries and assisted in anti-Russian intelligence warfare following his release from jail in Moscow in 2010.

*Respekt* reported that in 2012, Skripal travelled to Prague where, according to a Czech official, he met with officers from at least one of the nation’s intelligence services. Czech Foreign Minister Martin Stropnický said he believed Skripal’s visit had been useful, praising Britain’s “high quality information services” and that he would never expect them to “send some kind of problematic man.” A Czech official said Skripal’s visit was helpful enough for officials to have visited him several times afterwards.

As recently as 2016, Skripal was said to have visited Estonia to meet intelligence agents.

*Respekt* was founded in 1989, as the Stalinist regime was collapsing in Czechoslovakia. It has the closest connections to the intelligence agencies. Its first editor in chief, Jan Ruml, was the Minister of Interior between 1992 and 1997, while others involved also held important positions in the state apparatus.

Much of *Respekt*’s “investigative” work is based on information obtained from police sources. The Czech Republic was recently the place of origin for false claims that Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn was a spy of the Stalinist regime in the 1980s—lies that were used by his Labour right-wing opponents and the Tory

government to slander and discredit him.

The *Respekt* piece was seized on immediately by the *New York Times* and *Guardian*, the two newspapers who have played a key role as mouthpieces of the most anti-Russian wings of their respective ruling elites.

Finally, this was the answer to the question everyone had been asking: What on earth did Russia have to gain by killing the Skripals?

The *New York Times* headlined its May 14 piece, “Sergei Skripal Was Retired, but Still in the Spy Game. Is That Why He Was Poisoned?” The *Guardian*’s was similarly headlined, with a strapline, “Reported meetings between former Russian spy and several intelligence services in Europe may offer motive for poisoning.” It was authored by Ewen MacAskill, Robert Tait, and the *Guardian*’s anti-Russia specialist, Luke Harding.

Sergei Skripal may well have been involved in the activities as described by *Respekt*, the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*. But such has been the scale of lies disseminated by these frothing anti-Russian newspapers that their claims cannot be taken at face value.

Moreover, if true, then, as with the revelations concerning Pablo Miller, it is the UK government who are serial liars with their claim that Skripal was living in quiet retirement—just eight miles from Britain’s chemical weapons laboratory at Porton Down!

*The authors also recommend:*

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[2 May 2018]



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