



*And must have whiskey  
Oh, you know why*

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**March 12, 2018**

## Theresa May's "45 Minutes" Moment

Today the British government made some dubious assertions about ~~Saddam's chemical weapons~~ the poisoning of its double agent Sergej Skripal.



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The British Prime Minister Theresa May claimed (saved tweet) in Parliament that:

- Sergej Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a military grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.
- The nerve agent was part of a group of agents known as 'Novichok'.
- Russia has previously produced the agent and would still be capable of doing so.
- Russia has a record of conducting state sponsored assassinations.
- The British government assesses that Russia views some defectors as legitimate targets.

- The British government concluded that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the act against Sergej and Yulia Skripal.

May went on to claim that:

- This was either a direct act by the Russian State against the United Kingdom or
- the Russian government lost control of the nerve agent and let it fall into the hands of others.

I find all of the above claims not only dubious but laughable. Here are some facts:

Novichok, 'newcomers' in English, are a zoo of chemical warfare agents that were developed in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 80s. Some of the 'newcomers' are said to be highly toxic.

#### ■ New and Alternative Technology: Fourth-Generation Nerve Agents

##### Novichok

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russia apparently produced several new agents that were made of chemicals not controlled by the Chemical Weapons Convention. In late 1992, a Russian chemist, Val Mirzaganov, stated that a military research institute in Moscow had developed a new binary nerve agent more potent than VX called **Novichok** (loosely translated in Russian as "newcomer"). He was subsequently arrested by the Russian Security Service for disclosing state secrets.<sup>66</sup> The status of this research is unknown.

The first Russian binary agent, **Novichok-5**, was derived from Vgas. A test batch of 5 to 10 metric tons was produced at a pilot-scale plant in Volgograd and field-tested at the chemical warfare testing ground at Nukus.

The Russian Federation Science Center State Research Institute of Organic Chemistry and Technology (**GosNIIOKhT**) developed a second binary form of Substance 33 that has no established name, but which Mirzaganov called **Novichok-8**. It also was tested at Nukus and adopted as a chemical warfare agent in 1990. Mirzaganov stated that the organization developed a third binary agent called **Novichok-7**, which has a similar volatility to sarin but is about 10 times as effective. It was produced in experimental quantities (tens of tons) in Shikhan, as well as Volgograd. Two additional binary nerve agents, **Novichok-8** and **Novichok-9**, were under development but were never produced.

The program that developed the **Novichok** agents was called **Foliant** by the Russians. Some open-source data about **Novichok** agents reveal the following:

- These agents, referenced by a variety of code names including Substance 33, A-230, A-232, A-234, **Novichok-5**, and **Novichok-7**, are designed to be deployed as binary munitions.
- These chemicals are at least as toxic and persistent as the most lethal nerve agent, VX, and some are reported to be 10 times as toxic.

- The **Novichok** agents apparently do not owe their toxicity to being an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor, at least according to Mirzaganov. They may inhibit acetylcholinesterase, but this may be only a minor or secondary effect. (This means that our conventional antidotes may be ineffective.)

- The **Novichok** agents are thought to be far more difficult to detect during manufacturing and far easier to manufacture covertly, because they can be made with common chemicals in relatively simple pesticide factories. In the words of Val Mirzaganov regarding the agent, "The weapon's originality lies in the simplicity of its components, which are used in civilian industry and which cannot, therefore, be regulated by international experts."

- The **Novichok** agents may have been seen again to Iraq by Russian sources. The agent may have accounted for strange readings on US chemical weapons detectors that were labeled as spurious or bogus readings. This may indicate that current detection equipment may not be able to reliably detect the **Novichok** agents.

- The disabling effects of the **Novichok** agents, as described by Russian scientists, may include permanent neurotoxicity.

- Finally, unlike VX, which can be defected quickly with injectable antidotes, the **Novichok** agents are at least as resistant to treatment as sarin.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, as with Vgas, the **Novichok** agents (or scientists who know how to manufacture them) may well be available to a terrorist at the right price. Considering that detection and treatment of these agents are not well established, the **Novichok** agents would prove to be quite problematic if used as a weapon of terrorism. The ability to manufacture them free of controls makes them quite appealing to terrorists. **Table 1-5** lists known open-source information regarding these agents.

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The existence of these chemical agents was disclosed in 1992. Russia joined the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction* in 1997. It has since (unlike the U.S.) destroyed all left over stocks from the Soviet Union's chemical weapon program. It does not produce chemical weapons.

These agents and their formulas are not an exclusively Russian knowledge or product:

One of the key manufacturing sites was the Soviet State Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology (**GosNIIOKhT**) **in Nukus, Uzbekistan**. Small, experimental batches of the weapons may have been tested on the nearby Ustyurt plateau. It may also have been tested in a research centre in Krasnoarmeysk near Moscow. **Since its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has been working with the government of the United States** to dismantle and decontaminate the sites where the Novichok agents and other chemical weapons were tested and developed.

The formulas for the various Novichok agents are not a Russian secret. The U.S. and the UK surely know how to make these. The agents are said to be made from simple components used in civil industrial processes. (To qualify any agent as "military grade" is by the way nonsense. Many chemical agents used in civil process are also incredibly deadly.) The *Porton Down* chemical weapon laboratory of the British military is only some 8 miles away from Salisbury where the Skripals were allegedly poisoned. The British government claims that Porton Down identified the agent allegedly used on the Skripals. The laboratory is

surely also capable of producing such stuff, just like similar laboratories in other countries are able to do.

Now lets counter May's claims:

- Novichok agents are claimed to be up to 10 times as toxic as VX. One drop of VX can kill a person. If the Skripals were poisoned with such an highly effective agent how come they are still alive?
- The Soviet Union, not Russia, developed such agents. The main work was done in Uzbekistan. The U.S. [helped to dismantled](#) the laboratory.
- Russia is likely able to re-produce such agents but so are many, many other countries.
- What is Russia's "record of state sponsored assassinations"? The British investigation which claimed that "Russia" was somehow involved in the death of MI6 agent Litvinenko is [highly dubious](#). I am not aware of any other cases. There is a long standing protocol [to never bother spies](#) that have been exchanged in a spy-swap.
- If Russia sees "some defectors" as legitimate targets why does it not immediately kill them? Skripal was living openly in the UK since 2010. Why would Russia kill him at all and why now?

Given the above it is absurd to conclude that it is "highly likely" that Russia was responsible. If someone is run-over by a BMW is it "highly likely" that the German government is responsible for it?

The real likeliness for that is just as high as the likeliness that Saddam could [hit the UK with a chemical weapon missile within 45 minutes](#). That was a fraudulent claim another British government once made.

May's claims today are just as believable as the all nonsense Tony Blair said about Saddam or as the show U.S. Secretary of State Powell delivered in front of the UN Security Council.



via [@Propagandaschau](#) - [bigger](#)

More likely is an [involvement of Skripal in the Steele dossier](#) and the CIA/MI6 operation against Donald Trump. Was he assailed because he threatened to talk about it?

Posted by b on March 12, 2018 at 19:41 UTC | [Permalink](#)

## Comments