

DAWN STURGESS INQUIRY

OPEN WITNESS STATEMENT OF KEITH ASMAN MBE

I, Keith Asman MBE, will say as follows:

Introduction

1. I make this statement in response to the rule 9 request from the Independent Inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess ("the Inquiry") dated 26 June 2024 and received on 27 June 2024. I understand that I have previously been referred to in this Inquiry as VN513.
2. I would like to extend my personal condolences to the family of Ms Sturgess.
3. This statement has been produced following extensive review, by me, of documents which I created or made, as well as other contemporaneous records, throughout the overt investigation into the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal (Operation Wedana) and the overt investigation into the murder of Dawn Sturgess and the attempted murder of Charlie Rowley (Operation Read). On the basis of that review and my own recollections, I have provided instructions to the legal representatives for Operation Verbasco, the joint response of Counter-Terrorism Policing South East ("CTPSE") and SO15 to the Inquiry. They have drafted this statement reliant on those instructions; I have then reviewed the contents of the statement carefully to ensure that I am satisfied with its contents and wording. In any case where I was not so satisfied, I provided further instructions and ensured that the statement was true to the best of my knowledge and belief: this is my OPEN evidence and I take full responsibility for its contents.
4. Operation Verbasco, on behalf of CT policing, has engaged fully with the Inquiry and has made all potentially relevant material available to the Chair and his legal team. The extent to which relevant material requires to be protected by way of Restriction Orders has been the subject of detailed consideration and rulings by the Chair. Those rulings are reflected in this OPEN statement, and while I have sought to address as

much as necessary some matters which I consider it important to address can therefore only be included in the CLOSED version of this statement.

5. The events described in this statement took place around six years ago. I have some independent recall but inevitably, my memory for the details is not as good as it was nearer the time. I have been assisted by sight of contemporaneous documents, including notebooks, forensic team records and emails. As part of the investigations, where feasibly possible given the pace of the investigation and without a scribe, I recorded in a major incident report book or a notebook my actions and some of my thought processes. Where possible I tried to record the date and time of each entry. However, recording this information whilst tasking staff and taking phone calls was not always possible, therefore a number of the entries are just the headlines. Where appropriate, I have referred to such documents by their reference number in the Inquiry. Some documents I have had very frequent recourse to in writing this statement, and I have not identified every single occasion a matter is stated in them. These include my notebooks for Operation Wedana and my notebooks for Op Read (**INQ005537**, **INQ005664**, **INQ005665** and **INQ005666**). I was also assisted at the time and in preparing this statement by summary documents created by my team at my request. These went through various versions: the Inquiry has one for Operation Wedana dated 23 May 2018 at **INQ005677**, and one for Operation Read which was produced on or after 30 August 2018 at **INQ005675**. These are not the final versions, but provide a snapshot in time. A number of analytical products have been produced for Operation Verbasco in relation to the forensic response in Operations Wedana and Read which I exhibit to this statement as **Exhibit KA/1**.
6. I have read the Operation Verbasco Police Report ("the Police Report") dated June 2024. Where possible, I will cross-refer to the Police Report, which helpfully sets out a high-level narrative of the case. However, it is important to note that the Police Report was written with the benefit of hindsight. Matters were far less clear at the time. Moreover, an enormous amount of focus and effort was taken up with the practical and operational challenges we were facing (some of which I discuss further below).

Credentials and experience

7. I have recently retired as the head of CTPSE's Forensic Management Team ("FMT"), Media Viewing Team and Digital Investigations Team, having held this role since 2009. Until retirement, I was also the co-chair of the National Counter Terrorism Forensics Working Group since 2012, and was the UK Counter Terrorism Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear ("CBRN") forensic lead.

8. I was a police officer from 1978-2009, reaching the rank of Acting Detective Inspector. From 1996-2009, I worked in counter-terrorism, including as forensic coordinator or in charge of the forensic response for the 7/7 and 21/7 London Bombings (2005), the Litvinenko murder (2006), the liquid explosive airliner plot (2006), the Tiger Tiger nightclub bombing, and the Glasgow Airport attack (both 2007). In 2012, I assisted Sussex Police's forensic response to the death of Alexander Perepilichnyy and in 2013 I led the forensic response to the death of Boris Berezovsky.
9. I completed initial CBRN training in 1996, and subsequently my Counter Terrorism CBRN forensic training. I initially passed my Counter Terrorism Forensic Course in 1998. I completed various refresher and update courses between initial qualification in these fields and my retirement. This included courses on Counter Terrorism forensics run by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
10. I also worked on various international investigations, including giving evidence in the USA against Osama bin Laden and Abu Hamza and in connection with the 1998 US Embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya.
11. I was awarded an MBE in 2015 for services to policing.
12. I hold appropriate security clearances to see material where appropriate.

Role and team

13. As head of the FMT for CTPSE, in 2018 I was the leader of three teams: the Forensic Team, the Digital Investigations Team, and the Media Viewing Team. I was assisted by my deputy, VN530, who was also part of the Forensic Team.
14. As part of all three Teams' ordinary business, we trained, conducted table top and field exercises, and peer reviewed our capability with various national and international agencies in order to be able to respond effectively to a wide variety of CT incidents, including CBRN incidents. So far as possible in OPEN, I have set out some of the detail of that training and preparation below.
15. The Forensic Team was made up of police officers and civilian staff. The team included a forensic manager (VN530), crime scene investigators ("CSIs") including a senior CSI, a forensic investigator, a detective sergeant and detective constables. This includes dedicated exhibits officer(s) who produce scene and examination reports setting out the key activities and results from each scene. Within the Forensic Team, VN503 was the overarching forward deployed scene manager/forensic coordinator. They were

- responsible for everything to do with deployments at the front end. VN503 was assisted by Detective Constable VN535, and for Operation Read Detective Constable VN531.
16. VN534 was the senior CSI in the Forensic Team. He was also the CBRN tactical advisor, assisted by Detective Constable VN569. On a given day each of the members of the Forensic Team may have undertaken a specific alternative role i.e. the scene manager at a specific scene or part of an entry team into the contaminated scenes.
 17. The Forensic Team within CTPSE are responsible for the forensic response to any Counter Terrorism ("CT") incident within the CTPSE area of responsibility, but also as part of the CT network when required. The team are all trained in the traditional forensic response to bomb scene examination, searches, the forensic aspects of dealing with a prisoner, assessing and processing exhibits and subsequent submission into laboratories or internally for forensic examination. In addition to that they are also trained in responding to CBRN events, both at the scene and in the subsequent laboratory work. They are also trained as licensed search officers and in various aspects of disaster victim identification ("DVI").
 18. The Digital Investigation Team are responsible for forensic examination of all digital exhibits mainly comprising computer and mobile telephones but also will include items such as satellite navigation ("Sat Nav") systems, cameras and videos. A number of them are also CBRN trained to work in contaminated scenes. The unit comprises of one manager who at the time of these incidents was DC VN142 (as acting manager) together with digital examiners. DC VN142 reported directly to me. The Digital Investigation Team's priorities in these investigations were the examination of digital media and downloading CCTV product. They were able under my direction to call on assistance from SO15's National Digital Exploitation Service ("NDES").
 19. The Media Viewing Team are responsible for assessing material generated by the Digital Investigation Team, which will include items such as computer and mobile phone product together with occasionally any recovered Closed-Circuit Television ("CCTV") product. At the time of this incident the team was managed by VN162. But they were able to draw on external assistance throughout these investigations, primarily from within NDES. For this investigation the Media Viewing Team's priority was CCTV and they were directly tasked by DI VN127. This freed VN530 and me up to focus on the work of the Forensic Team and Digital Investigation Team.
 20. As well as my core team within CTPSE, I was able to, and did, draw on resource from across the CT Network and wider policing.

21. My role in these investigations was to devise a forensic strategy for the investigations, in conjunction with the Senior Investigating Officer ("SIO"), which for Operation Wedana was Detective Superintendent VN012, and for Operation Read was DCI Philip Murphy. I worked together with the relevant SIO to produce a forensic strategy and understanding of the way we would approach the scene examinations, recovery of all exhibits and subsequent laboratory examinations. From a day-to-day perspective I was ultimately responsible for ensuring scenes were prioritised, that resources and equipment were available, for liaison with DSTL, for safe operating practices at all venues, for briefing the rest of the investigative team on key forensic and digital activities, and for the welfare of staff deployed to the scenes taking into account any risk presented by direct, secondary or tertiary contamination.
22. During Operations Wedana and Read one of my key thoughts was always the impact of these investigations on the communities of Salisbury and Amesbury, and on the affected individuals. Uppermost in my mind was safety of the community and our staff and in parallel trying to reduce our footprint and the time that we were impacting on all those concerned, whilst ensuring that our investigations were thorough.
23. I had subject matter experts from whom I could seek advice: in particular, I was assisted by a search advisor from the National Crime Agency, a national police search advisor ("POLSA") from Wiltshire Police, VN939, and by a CBRN tactical advisor VN534 from my FMT. I am aware that in a forensic search strategy dated 6 July 2018 from Operation Read (**INQ005137**), the CBRN tactical advisor is named as VN533, and that this was repeated in an earlier version of the Police Report. VN533 had retired, as a Detective Inspector, from SO15's Forensic Team on 4 March 2018. They then returned to perform the role of scene manager at John Baker House in July 2018. They also occasionally performed similar duties at Muggleton Road. Although they would have been qualified to perform the role, they were never the CBRN Tactical Advisor in either investigation. I am not sure why the forensic search strategy names VN533 as CBRN Tactical Advisor other than simple human error at a very busy time. This had no impact on how the forensic search strategy was delivered.
24. In addition to reporting to the SIO, I would also brief other members of the investigation team, and the PIP4 officer who was providing the SIO with advice and support. For both operations, the PIP4 was Detective Chief Superintendent Kathryn Barnes, the Head of CTPSE.

Other organisations and relationships with them

25. I was also responsible for liaising directly with various other organisations or parts of CTP. Because of my role as national lead for CT CBRN forensics, I had good existing relationships with the Home Office (in particular, the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism ("OSCT"), now known as the Homeland Security Group), the Ministry of Defence ("MOD") including the Defence Science & Technology Laboratory ("DSTL"), the Atomic Weapons Establishment ("AWE") and the National CBRN Centre ("NCBRNC"). During the investigation, the FMT worked closely with DSTL, including a number of days when one member of DSTL staff was present in our office to facilitate communication between us, and we sent a CTPSE detective to DSTL to assist with liaison. I had direct access to senior scientific advisors and the operations room within DSTL whenever scientific support was required.
26. In the course of this investigation, I also worked with a wide range of other organisations. The principal ones were as follows:
- a. **Wiltshire Police**, the local police force, who were responsible for (among other things) consequence management within the local area. By this, I mean they were responsible for dealing with the consequences of these events where those fell outside the direct scope of the criminal investigations;
 - b. **Public Health England** ("PHE", now replaced by the UK Health Security Agency), who had responsibility for public health advice to the general public and civilian organisations outside central Government and policing.
 - c. **Wiltshire County Council** were the local authority for both Salisbury and Amesbury.
 - d. **The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** ("DEFRA"), who took the lead, in conjunction with the military, on the decontamination and remediation of scenes that had been handed over for consequence management.
 - e. **Salisbury District Hospital** is where all of the victims of novichok were treated.
 - f. The **Hazardous Area Response Team** ("HART") from **South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust** ("SWASFT"). As I describe below, they provided medical cover when our officers and staff, and the SRTs, went into CBRN environments.

- g. The **United Kingdom Intelligence Community** (the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service and Government Communications Headquarters) provided input to the investigations, generally via the SIO or PIP4.
 - h. The **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons** ("OPCW") is an international organisation that were invited in by the UK Government as an independent authority to conduct their own review which ultimately validated the UK response to a CBRN incident.
27. There were various multilateral groups set up to respond to these incidents. These included:
- a. The **Joint Operational Team** ("JOT", as described in the Police Report at para 98), which is where the police investigation shared information with, and received information from, UKIC. The JOT worked in conjunction with the **Executive Liaison Group** ("ELG"). They set the strategic direction of the enquiry. I did not attend ELG meetings and only attended JOT meetings on rare occasions.
 - b. The **Strategic Coordination Group** ("SCG"), chaired by Deputy Chief Constable Paul Mills of Wiltshire Police, which was responsible for local consequence management, including decontamination. It had representation from CTP (generally via DCS Barnes or her appointee), local authorities, the military, PHE, DEFRA and other agencies as deemed appropriate by the SCG chair.
 - c. A **Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell** ("STAC") and a **Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies** ("SAGE") provided support to the SCG. There was also the **Health and Emergency Response Cell** ("HERC").
 - d. The **Tactical Coordination Group** ("TCG") was responsible for delivering the policy decisions taken by the SCG.
28. From time to time I was invited to and attended SCG and TCG meetings. However, my primary responsibility was forensic support to the investigations, not consequence management. A representative of CTP attended both the SCG and TCG meetings, and they were generally my conduit to feed information to and receive it from the attendees. I did not attend STAC/SAGE/HERC meetings, but I tried to send someone from the Forensic Team to the STAC where possible depending on other tasks and resources.

29. I am now aware that as well as Operations Wedana and Read, CTP ran a covert investigation into these events, Operation Caterva, led by Detective Chief Inspector (now Commander) Dominic Murphy of SO15. The investigation became overt on 5 September 2018. Prior to that time, I was not aware of the details of Operation Caterva, although I became aware that there was a sensitive covert investigation.

Working in a CBRN environment

30. I believe it is important to make clear the very particular limits and challenges of working in a CBRN environment. Entry into such environments is extremely hazardous: inadvertent contamination can be fatal. For that reason, entry into a CBRN environment is only done in appropriate PPE, by suitably trained individuals. There are limits on how long individuals can remain in that environment, even in PPE. The effect of PPE is generally to slow down and make more difficult even routine tasks such as opening doors or taking photographs. For example, it accentuates the effects of poor weather, because there is limited protection from the cold in cold weather, and at times, searches had to be delayed or concluded earlier than planned due to the weather conditions. During the enquiry as a result of deploying into CBRN scenes there were a number of staff who required medical treatment having been affected by hypothermia or heat exhaustion.
31. The planning for, recovery and examination of digital media (computers, phones and CCTV etc.) within a contaminated scene requires a completely different risk assessed approach to a conventional recovery. It requires an innovative approach and is significantly more time consuming. Likewise, the examination of contaminated digital media at DSTL requires the use of different methods and tools by the examiner.
32. Any interaction with items or material in a CBRN environment must be done cautiously and deliberately. Anything could be potentially contaminated. In the context of these investigations, we did not initially know what sort of agent had been used. Later, we had other challenges once the agent was identified as novichok which informed our choice of methods to detect the agent. Everything had to be swabbed and the swabs then conveyed to DSTL for testing. For clarity, I have below generally noted the results of swabs alongside the description of when and where they were taken, but it must be remembered that we did not receive (and therefore could not act on) this information instantaneously. We could not rule out the relevance of anything within the scene without it having been swabbed and profiled by DSTL. Therefore the multi-agency response had to be creative but very cognisant of the safety implications to working in such a hostile environment.

33. The combined effect of PPE, the risks of contamination, and the characteristics of novichok, along with the more common scene examination steps including planning, photography and seizing exhibits, meant that any work in CBRN environments in these investigations proceeded extremely slowly. I can give one straightforward example: a normal forensic post mortem by a Home Office registered pathologist would take 3 hours. The post mortem for Dawn Sturgess, which took place in CBRN conditions, took in excess of 11 hours.
34. Additionally, in the event that someone falls ill within a CBRN environment, there has to be a rescue recovery plan in place. This incorporates recovery (i.e. removing them from the environment), emergency undressing, decontamination and then medical aid. The ambulance service provides this capability through the HARTs which include paramedics who can enter into hostile environments wearing appropriate PPE. Without a HART on duty, entry into CBRN environments is generally too risky to conduct.
35. Even if the person in the environment is protected by PPE, there is a risk of contamination being brought out of the environment in which case it may harm or kill others. For that reason, there are protocols for safe undressing once an individual has left a CBRN environment. In this case, DSTL provided safe undressing support for the first few days, before this was taken over by uniformed police officers with appropriate equipment and training. The equipment and PPE that has come out of the CBRN environment has to be handled appropriately in accordance with CBRN safety protocols.
36. Additionally, in the context of this case, where the contaminated areas were unknown, from a very early stage we arranged for officers and staff entering CBRN scenes to have their blood tested after every entry into the most hazardous scenes, to identify any signs of exposure. Their results could be compared to their own baseline sample taken at an earlier stage, prior to scene entry.
37. Unsurprisingly, there is extensive training required for those entering CBRN environments. Forensic staff are trained in how to wear the PPE, operate in a CBRN environment, and safely undress post-tasking on their basic CBRN course.
38. After the basic course, officers and staff then attend a role-specific CT Forensic CBRN course, which equips them to be able to search and recover evidence. Officers and staff are not allowed into a scene unless they are current with their annual refresher training, wearing their kit correctly, wearing a suitable respirator, and they are a willing volunteer.

39. DSTL have Specialist Response Teams ("SRT"). A SRT comprises specialist scientists including chemists and biologists. The SRT provide safety and security advice to the FMT. They will also enter the CBRN scene, taking samples where required either for safety or for evidential purposes. The FMT are responsible for the preservation and recovery of forensic evidence. DSTL are then responsible for testing any samples taken to identify chemical or biological agents. They then provide us with the results, which can help to inform further decisions about work to be undertaken and/or be evidentially relevant to the SIO's lines of investigation.
40. Returning to Operations Wedana and Read, on a normal operating day we were constrained as to the number of scenes we could work on at any one time.
41. When coordinating searches in CBRN environments in these investigations, in consultation with the SIO and DSTL I would prioritise and finalise areas to be searched and the exhibits to be recovered or swabbed in that specific premise or area on a daily basis. This would be based on value to the investigation and/or a specific exhibit's ability to mitigate any ongoing threat or importantly assist with clinical treatment. Once this was complete the forward deployed forensic coordinator would be advised and they would brief an entry team as to the specific requirements. A risk assessment for that specific entry would be completed prior to entry into the premises by DSTL. Within the premises police would be responsible for ensuring those requirements were carried out whilst the DSTL SRT would be responsible for swabbing mitigation, recovery of hazardous materials and manufacturing paraphernalia and advising from a safety perspective on the conduct of the activity. Entries would be terminated either on completion of the mission or due to safety factors. The team would then leave the contaminated environment. On the basis that all exhibits will potentially be contaminated, the recovery process includes significant record photography. Having left the premises with the exhibited evidence they then go through a decontamination and undressing process whilst also facilitating the movement of the potentially contaminated evidence from the "dirty/hot" zone through to a warm zone, moving the product through a process referred to as cross-cordon transfer, from the warm zone into the cold zone, which is uncontaminated. This process means we are able to take suitably packaged contaminated exhibits from the scene to a laboratory for examination together with a National Network Laboratories ("NNL") submission form which would identify the specific exhibits and the reason for examination. This was the general process adopted for searching CBRN environments in both Wedana and Read.

42. We were conscious of our overall footprint within Salisbury and, later, Amesbury. For safety reasons, we sometimes had to increase our footprint to incorporate waste and toilets and operating tents, but we also looked to review cordons to see if we could reduce the impact on businesses and local residents. We sought to reduce cordon sizes where possible and consulted with the SCG and PHE from a safety perspective. There is always a fine balance between our desire to ensure safety for residents and our staff, whilst also having empathy and not wanting to disrupt the lives and daily activity of Salisbury's and Amesbury's residents whilst maintaining operational and investigative momentum. We were as considerate to the residents as we possibly could be whilst safely progressing the investigation.

Operation Wedana

Immediate response to Skripal attack

43. In this section, I set out a timeline of key events within Operation Wedana, the response to the Salisbury poisonings. This is very much an overview: the early weeks in particular were exceptionally busy, with various challenges and situations to confront that I have not included here. I have sought not to duplicate matters set out in section D of the Police Report, which should be referred to for an overview of this period.
44. I was typically working significantly extended hours, and on occasion seven days a week. Within my working life, this period was comparable to the responses to the 7/7 Bombings and the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. As set out above, there were a large number of meetings instituted, often on a daily basis, both within CTP and with external agencies: I tried to make sure I attended only those where my presence was absolutely essential such as the SIO's daily investigative brief, but also that I had insight into what was occurring in other forums such as the SCG and TCG via the CT liaison officer.
45. On the morning of 5 March 2018, having started my shift at 08.00, I became aware of an incident in Salisbury while I was working from home. VN530 telephoned me with outline details of an incident in Salisbury: I then travelled on blue lights to the CTPSE headquarters. On arrival, I received a briefing from DSupt VN012, DCS Barnes and DI VN104, whom I understood was the SIO at that stage. I was briefed that there had been a suspected poisoning of two Russian individuals Sergei and Yulia Skripal (father and daughter). I was told that on Sunday 4 March 2018, they had been taken ill in The Maltings, in Salisbury and found on a bench. The initial response was from local police one of whom was a CBRN Tactical Advisor, and from paramedics and members of the public, one of whom had a military medical association. The Skripals were transported

to Salisbury District Hospital having been given initial medical treatment by the paramedics. Subsequent enquiries identified their home address as 47 Christie Miller Road, Salisbury, SP2 7EN. I was advised that in the early hours of the following morning, 5 March 2018, DS Nick Bailey and two other officers including VN005 had entered 47 Christie Miller Road in some PPE carrying a body worn camera borrowed from PC Olly Bell, which was subsequently returned to him. The purpose of the visit, I understood, was to ensure there were no other victims, suicide note or explanation as to the cause of their medical condition. This entry was subsequently identified as spreading the agent around the address which significantly delayed us in identifying the location where novichok was initially deposited (which was often referred to in the investigation as 'ground zero'). However in policing terms I respect and understand the rationale for their entry into the house, given the possibility of crucial evidence such as a suicide note or even further casualties. I was advised that Yulia Skripal was visiting her father having flown in to the UK from Russia on Saturday 3 March 2018. I was advised that a number of interim actions had been put in place by DI VN104 involving identifying the location of vehicles, clothing and mobile phones for subsequent recovery.

46. Based on experience of dealing with previous CBRN incidents – in particular, my work on the investigation into the death of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 – my recommendation was that in order to identify where Sergei and Yulia Skripal had been poisoned we would need to work back from their last known location to find the first area that was contaminated and subsequently a series of clean areas before that. This would enable us to identify the point at which they were contaminated. In addition following advice and historic experience my initial areas of enquiry were to preserve and obtain clothing, obtain medical samples of blood and urine of those affected, and the medical and clinical history for Yulia and Sergei Skripal, and for samples to be taken to DSTL for examination. I was also concerned to obtain a sample of vomit that I understood had been seized from the scene, to recover a suspected ampoule (vape) that a person who had subsequently reported falling unwell had picked up and placed into a bin in The Maltings, and to swab sample the bench in the Maltings of Salisbury. I also wanted to examine the Skripals' BMW car, and home address, and digital devices including mobile phones. I was told that key scenes such as the home address, the car, and The Maltings had been identified and cordoned by Wiltshire police to preserve the integrity of the scenes, and that the Fire and Rescue Service had placed a tent over the bench in The Maltings to protect it from inclement weather.

47. At approximately 1545 hrs, I asked VN530 to stand up the DSTL SRT, while the appropriate Military Aid to the Civil Authorities ("MACA") approval was gained from the MOD (which was received quickly). I was also liaising with Public Health England, DSTL and SDH, trying to find out as much information as possible about the condition of the Skripals as well as to get samples and ensure that any immediate risk to the public was mitigated.
48. At around 1745 hrs, there was a further briefing where additional information was made available about how the Skripals had been found and what they had been doing previously. This identified that they had been in Zizzi's restaurant for approximately an hour and a quarter earlier that day, and prior to that in The Mill public house. This meant that those locations potentially posed an immediate risk to public safety, and DSupt VN012 sought my views on whether they should remain open. I advised that they should not, and this was done, as well as further information being gathered from both about where exactly the Skripals had sat and what they had done (in particular, what they had eaten, as I was concerned to work out whether they had ingested any harmful substance).
49. After all necessary safety precautions and risk assessments had been done, and the MACA approval arrived, by 1900 hrs a joint team from the CTPSE FMT and DSTL SRT was able to enter The Maltings in appropriate PPE to recover the ampoule from the bin and swab the bench. At this stage, we had no idea what we were dealing with: we did not even have confirmation that this was a CBRN event, but had to take all the necessary precautions.
50. The bench and ampoule later tested negative for novichok. The sample of vomit recovered from the scene tested negative for the whole agent, although I understood from what DSTL advised me that this did not rule out it having been present but broken down by normal digestion.
51. Throughout the evening, further information was coming in which indicated that (1) this was not a radiological or nuclear attack; and (2) as the Skripals had eaten and drunk different things at Zizzi's, and had meals which many other people had also ordered without reporting unwell, the food at Zizzi's was unlikely to be the source. DCS Barnes directed that no one was to enter any scenes without her or the SIO's authority, and I began to formulate a plan for scene entry with DSTL in relation to four separate CBRN scenes: the Skripals' home address, the car, Zizzi's and the Mill.
52. I finished my tour of duty at midnight. By that stage, there were at least 10 potentially CBRN contaminated crime scenes which were secured, requiring prioritisation, search

strategies and examination by specialist CT CBRN trained officers. They were: Sergei and Yulia Skripal, the home address, the bench, Zizzi's, The Mill, the car, Salisbury Ambulance Station and a number of police vehicles and ambulances.

53. Some three and a half hours later, on 6 March 2018, just before 4am, MK26 at DSTL – whom I knew well – telephoned me to give me an early indication that blood samples indicated exposure to a chemical that was most likely a pesticide, insecticide or nerve agent. Later that morning, I was given an indication by DSTL that the most likely delivery route was through the skin, oral, or inhalation. At 8:45am I was then updated by MK26 that they were reasonably certain it was an 'unusual' nerve agent DSTL provided scientific advice around the delivery methods, pathological response to and appearance of nerve agent. DSTL and I discussed how we could detect this. We also had to reappraise our PPE to ensure that it provided adequate protection, and develop protocols for officers and staff to have their blood baseline tested. On leaving the scenes dependant on the level of contamination the staff had further blood tests which were compared to the baseline.
54. At some point on 6 March – I do not recall when – I was informed that DS Bailey was also unwell with similar symptoms. This was a major concern: it was not immediately apparent how or when he had become contaminated. I understood that DS Bailey had attended the bench at the Maltings, gone through Sergei Skripal's wallet, attended the hospital to sort out blood and urine samples and attended the home address. It also presented serious consequence management issues, in that his home address could also be the subject of secondary or tertiary contamination. However, this did not make his address a crime scene in my view and therefore it was dealt with as consequence management by Wiltshire Police.
55. Throughout the day, information was coming in rapidly and arrangements were being made for us to start to enter scenes with SRT, with HART available outside. I was responsible for conducting generic overarching risk assessments for the searching of crime scenes based on scientific advice and entry specific risk assessments and relevant control measures. The first scenes to be entered were Zizzi's and the Mill public house, consistent with working back from the point the Skripals fell ill to identify the source of the poison. Alongside this operational activity, the various multilateral groups I discussed above were being stood up, and plans were being made for consequence management, decontamination of scenes and so on.
56. I was informed about the grave of Sergei Skripal's son, which was in the London Road cemetery in Salisbury and where new flowers and a plastic dog had been identified

that may be relevant to our investigation. This was another scene that required consideration, but at this point, based on the information I had, was not my priority.

57. The swabs taken from both Zizzi's and the Mill subsequently identified evidence of contamination when assessed by DSTL: at Zizzi's, there was contamination on the table and chairs where the Skripals sat, and at very low levels on the door handle to the street; at The Mill, there was contamination on tables and chairs. However, none of the readings were at levels that could be interpreted as gross contamination so it was unlikely that they were the source of the poison. Even once we had reached this conclusion, until such time we were sure the Skripals were not subject of any surveillance I suggested that we retain the scene in case we needed to do any fingerprint or DNA work on any tables or infrastructure that may have been used by any state-sponsored surveillance operatives that may have been responsible for the attack.
58. The following day, 7 March 2018, the focus of the search for the source of the poison shifted somewhat in the light of these findings, towards 47 Christie Miller Road and Sergei Skripal's vehicle. We also wanted to examine the house for any evidence which might help us understand the movements and backgrounds of the Skripals. I had discussions with both DSupt VN012 and MK26 from DSTL with regards to what our priorities should be for swabbing or recovery in the property. At an early stage I became aware of the SIO's initial hypothesis as to what had happened to Yulia and Sergei Skripal, which was that they were subject of:
- a. Food poisoning or inadvertent poisoning; or
 - b. Joint suicide; or
 - c. They were victims of a criminal act; or
 - d. They were the victims of a state-sponsored act.
59. Our standard response to similar such incidents would be the recovery of digital media (phones, computers etc.) which might allude to their activities and their mindset. In addition, we had discussed what might assist the investigation and as we did not know how it occurred at this stage, I suggested, after the digital media we look for either an obviously new gift presented by Yulia Skripal to her father and wrappings from that gift in the refuse bins and targeted her personal effects i.e. toiletry bag, make up bag, suitcase in case she had intentionally or inadvertently contaminated Sergei Skripal. My thought process was that she may have been stopped leaving Russia and either pressurised into hurting her father and contaminating herself in the process, or that a potential gift had been swapped or contaminated without her knowledge whilst in

transit. That was the initial mission for the entry teams. This was discussed with the SIO and DSTL before being actioned.

60. My deputy, VN530, drew up a Forensic Search Strategy for properties in Salisbury (INQ005238). I would not necessarily have seen and approved it before it was finalised, because I trusted VN530 to do this work to a high standard. I agree with its contents, save that it erroneously refers to VN530 as the Forensic Coordinator. I expect that VN530 used a template from a previous investigation where VN530 carried out this role. I confirm that I was the Forensic Coordinator and VN530 was the Deputy Forensic Coordinator for Operation Wedana.
61. A forensic search strategy is prepared on behalf of the senior investigating officer by a forensic supervisor, usually the forensic coordinator for an investigation. It manages expectations of all parties involved, in particular ensuring the SIO's (who ultimately owns the strategy) needs are being met. It is a document which briefly outlines the background to the enquiry, the overarching purpose of entering the premises, dress codes for people entering the premises, the level of forensic examination and what is being searched for. At the start of an investigation generic strategies and risk assessments can be used to inform dynamic risk and search strategies. As the investigation matures, a bespoke forensic search strategy can be set for particular scenes or tasks. More to the point, operatives entering these CBRN scenes were set specific missions when entering key locations, therefore a bespoke full forensic strategy was not feasible due to the fast pace of the enquiry and not necessary as the staff have a specific task to complete. All the operatives were trained and exercised in CBRN scenarios and familiar with what the expectations were of them.
62. Parallel to the early stages of scene management, my digital team who are trained to work in the containment laboratory alongside DSTL staff had started to examine Yulia Skripal's mobile phone which she had had with her when she was taken ill.
63. At this stage, all work was still being done on the basis that we were dealing with a nerve agent. My recollection is that I was not briefed about the existence of novichok until 12 March 2018, when it was mentioned in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister. I was however given sufficient information about nerve agents that I and my team could plan and conduct our work safely and effectively. While for clarity I will refer to novichok within this statement, it should be borne in mind that I do not believe that I was aware of this name until 12 March 2018.
64. During the course of the day, considerable work was done around risk assessments for entering 47 Christie Miller Road, which was the priority scene at that stage, and

identifying safe working practices. At some stage during the course of this day I was made aware that PC Olly Bell, who had loaned his body worn camera to the entry team, had developed what I was told was myosis, a potential symptom of novichok exposure, and had presented at hospital for further examination.

65. There were a number of other developments throughout the day. A significant one was that it was identified that PC Bell's body worn video camera was probably inside a police vehicle parked at the hospital. This was potentially significant evidence that could assist with the search for the poison, but was likely to be contaminated and therefore had to be approached carefully. Body worn video footage from the Maltings had been downloaded onto a Wiltshire Police server, prior to the risk of contamination being identified, and so could be recovered. We also obtained a floor plan of 47 Christie Miller Road from a previous owner.
66. Another development on 7 March was that the SIO declared that this was an attempted murder investigation involving the use of nerve agent.
67. I received advice from both DSTL and PHE about the possibilities of cross-contamination, in particular the risk to officers taking witness statements from persons who may have been affected or handling exhibits. Generally, the risk of secondary or tertiary contamination at this point was said to be remote. It was also getting quite late for symptoms to be reported if there were police officers who had, for example, dealt with the Skripals at the Maltings who had been contaminated. Due to the risk of contamination, two ambulances and an ambulance station were taken out of commission. Due to the significant impact and risk to the local community of this action, they were made priority scenes for examination so they could be cleared and reopened. This was a competing demand against 47 Christie Miller Road, the Maltings, the other vehicles, the Mill and Zizzi's.
68. Late in the evening, the first entry by CTP staff and the SRT to 47 Christie Miller Road took place, focused on recovering three digital devices and producing a scene plan. They also identified targets for examination on further entries to the house. There was no swabbing of 47 Christie Miller Road on this occasion.
69. This was the first of very many entries to 47 Christie Miller Road in full CBRN conditions. Entries took place on most days between 7 March and 11 May 2018, sometimes more than once a day. I do not propose to set out details of each and every entry, the items seized or the findings, although am happy and able to do so if it would assist the Inquiry. **Exhibit KA/1** provides an overview of the forensic activity throughout Operation Wedana, and **INQ005677** sets out the most significant searches and

forensic examinations that took place as part of this investigation as at 23 May 2018. The individual searches were described in my notebooks and forensic management logs, and the individual swab results are recorded in **INQ006050**. However, I will highlight key findings from those entries as I set out how the investigation developed. In the first few days, the priority was recovering electronic devices and swabbing to identify contamination.

70. During the early stages of the enquiry (although I cannot recall when), I had a meeting with PHE during which we discussed how with the SIO's authority we might be able to assist them in identifying the individuals who had been at Zizzi's restaurant or The Mill public house, so PHE could track and trace them to make sure they were not unwell.
71. On 8 March, DSTL provided further information about the swabs from the Mill public house, including that there was contamination on the chairs and table where the Skripals sat. Early interpretation was that there were medium levels of contamination by comparison to those taken elsewhere. At that point, in answer to questions posed by me, DSTL provided advice on the deployment of the poison which indicated that the route between the Mill and Zizzi's, and onwards to the Maltings, may be contaminated. This was an issue for consequence management, and I referred it to the STAC. Throughout the day, there was considerable discussion as to who held responsibility for decontamination and remediation. I understand that this was resolved by others.
72. Especially in the early stages of the investigation, I found myself repeatedly being drawn into issues which were consequence management issues on the basis of historical relationships with CBRN experts. I felt that unless I was careful, I would be drawn into such issues to the detriment of my forensic role. I therefore wrote a policy entry on this, and advised the SIO that we needed to ensure:
 - a. If it was a crime scene, all aspects of the examination were the responsibility of the FMT. Post examination, the scene was to be handed over to Wiltshire Police for consequence management.
 - b. If it was contamination which was not a crime scene or pertinent to the investigation, it was an issue for Wiltshire Police for consequence management.
 - c. If it was unknown, there would be discussion between myself and the deputy SIO to determine whether it was to be treated as a crime scene or not.

73. I was informed by PHE that DS Bailey was doing very well and was conscious, but would need weeks of treatment, and that there was a very high probability that PC Bell had had a low dose and was displaying some symptoms to his eye, but should recover without treatment. There were twenty people in hospital who were possible victims.
74. I was informed that the identification of the agent as a nerve agent was confirmed and was unequivocal. Again, I was not given its name at this point, although this did not make any material difference to the work being undertaken.
75. The priority scenes at this stage were 47 Christie Miller Road and Sergei Skripal's car (a BMW with registration HD09WAO). CCTV enquiries had revealed that Yulia and Sergei Skripal had arrived in Salisbury in the BMW which had been parked in the Sainsbury's car park from where it had been recovered on 5 March 2018 in forensic PPE by VN939 (following a cursory search) to the ground floor where a recovery company lifted it and took it to a private storage garage for examination. VN939 has described their actions in **INQ004627** and **INQ005013**. That also raised issues of secondary or tertiary contamination, since it had been moved after the point the Skripals fell ill. The car was externally examined that afternoon. Internal examination had to wait, as it was riskier to carry out investigations within a confined space. Swabs from the car subsequently revealed that there was contamination by novichok.
76. In the evening, there was a second entry to 47 Christie Miller Road. This was the first to take swabs from inside the property. Subsequently these revealed that there was contamination by novichok inside the address.
77. At some point after 2100 I spoke to DI VN104 who told me that Yulia Skripal had woken in hospital and had been spoken to by a medical professional, who had asked a series of questions. She was asked to blink a number of times dependant on whether the answer to the question was yes or no. Yulia Skripal was asked:
- Do you remember what happened – blinked yes
 - Did you take anything at home – blinked no
 - Do you remember being poisoned – blinked yes
 - Do you remember being sprayed – blinked yes
 - Were you sprayed at home – blinked no
 - Were you sprayed at the restaurant – blinked yes
 - Do you know the person that sprayed you

78. At this point Yulia Skripal was described as being emotional and fell unconscious. I made notes of my conversation with DI VN104 in one of my notebooks, and in addition this information was confirmed to me in writing the next morning.
79. The information she provided about being sprayed at the restaurant was seemingly inconsistent with the presence of novichok at the Mill public house and 47 Christie Miller Road. On hearing this, I personally wondered whether Yulia Skripal knew more about it than she had alluded to and therefore whilst being fully cognisant of the SIO's hypothesis and the need to be open-minded continued to prioritise her property.
80. On 9 March 2018, at 0430, I was advised that swabs had revealed high levels of contamination, to the point that there were safety concerns. These related to the car door handle, particularly in relation to the driver's door which was the highest reading so far. The car keys were also contaminated. I enquired as to whether we could prioritise the inside of the BMW and was advised on the grounds of safety it would need significant planning and that this would need to be managed at DSTL as a special case: in essence, the risk to searchers was greater when they were entering a confined space. The car was moved to DSTL safely where it could be examined using specialist facilities to reduce the risk to searchers. At this point, the SIO's next priority for swabbing was the Skripal family graves in London Road cemetery. Resources were re-tasked to deal with the graves.
81. I was advised by MK26 that, although it was not concrete, their thinking was that exposure was through the skin and not food because the vomit was possibly negative for contamination, and there were high levels of novichok where hands were, such as car door handles. MK26 did not think that the Skripals were contaminated in the restaurant which was a view shared by DSupt VN012. I agreed with this view, notwithstanding the 'blink interview'.
82. The level of contamination from the car, and particularly the car keys which had been held at Bourne Hill Police Station, led to real concerns about public health and the health and safety of users of Bourne Hill. These issues were referred to STAC, including potentially the evacuation of the police station, and whether there were other areas in Salisbury which should be closed down and/or decontaminated. We also referred a question about the car park: we were concerned that if it was pay-and-display, either the machine itself or coinage used in it might have become contaminated and that this could be a vector for further casualties. By 12 March 2018, it had been identified that any coinage would be back in general circulation, and swabs

had been taken from the ticket machine itself. The swabs subsequently identified no evidence of contamination.

83. We were also alive to the possibility that some or all of the contamination of the car was a result of cross-contamination (for example, by someone touching a contaminated car door handle and then touching another point on the car), and were seeking to ascertain whether we could identify any contamination on the PPE worn by DS Bailey and his colleagues.
84. In terms of identifying the source of the poison, it was also important to identify clean sites from earlier in the timeframe. To that end, on more than one occasion I suggested looking at the plane which Yulia Skripal had travelled together with her landing card and the vehicle from which she had travelled from the airport. We began to work on identifying the plane on which Yulia Skripal had travelled to the UK, and her landing card, and on examining the car belonging to Ross Cassidy which he had used to pick up Yulia Skripal from Heathrow, with Sergei Skripal travelling as a passenger. I am not aware if the plane or the landing card were ever examined: by the time it became apparent that we had not yet recovered the landing card, we had other information relating to Ross Cassidy's vehicle and Yulia Skripal's passport, discussed below, which made this of less significance.
85. Later that day, the grave sites of Alexander Skripal (son of Sergei Skripal) and Ljudmila Skripal (wife of Sergei Skripal) at the cemetery were searched. Swabs taken from those sites (which were approximately 100m apart) on 10 March 2018 subsequently revealed that they were not contaminated. On the same day, I was advised in the SIO's meeting from CCTV inquiries that Sergei and Yulia Skripal had not visited the cemetery after 0900 on Sunday 4 March, with a further CCTV review back to 1500 on Saturday 3 March ongoing.
86. On Sunday 11 March and Monday 12 March, work continued on various scenes, including two entries to the Mill to recover CCTV to assist in monitoring the Skripals' movements while there and those of any other person who might be relevant to the investigation, and subsequently to conduct swabbing based on the review of the CCTV recovered on the first entry. Some of the swabs subsequently indicated contamination by novichok, in particular from the floor of table 26 and 27, the top of table 26 and chair 6. We also received advice from DSTL that the closure of Bourne Hill police station was recommended due to potential for contamination there.
87. I was informed by VN530 that MK26 advised that Sergei Skripal's hands had been swabbed and showed high levels of novichok, similar to the car door handle. I had

further discussions with MK26 who advised that the swabs of his hands provided limited information and could have been the result of cross-contamination from elsewhere. MK26 thought that it was possible that these showed the primary source, but they thought it was somewhere else. They also said that spray was the quickest, and poisoning through the skin was consistent with the timings, although the vehicle tests will inform them better.

88. We were also planning for entry into the marked police car KN67, ^{Pers}~~onal~~ which was believed to contain PC Bell's body worn video camera, and potentially also a red hospital clinical waste bag which it was thought may contain Sergei and Yulia Skripal's clothing. It was believed that the driver of this police vehicle was in the process of recovering their clothing from the hospital at the time it became apparent that we were dealing with a nerve agent poisoning so the police vehicle and its contents were abandoned on the grounds of safety. It was subsequently moved to DSTL. The search did not succeed in recovering the Skripals' clothing, but a body worn video camera was recovered from a clinical waste sack, amongst other items. Subsequent swabs of the body worn video camera identified evidence of contamination.
89. As a demonstration of the challenges of working in a CBRN environment, the interior search of a vehicle, to a relatively superficial level (i.e. to find medium to large items which had not been deliberately concealed), would usually be relatively quick. In this case, it took far longer, factoring in planning and preparation, risk assessment, donning PPE, carrying out the search, recovery of items, and then safe undressing.
90. After it was recovered, the body worn video camera then had to be downloaded at DSTL as it was contaminated.
91. It is worth noting that by this point, five days after the CTP investigation began, there were already over 300 exhibits, including individual swabs. Almost half of the exhibits were contaminated or potentially contaminated by novichok. We had 25 different CBRN scenes to consider, including the three principal victims. We also had 20 vehicles (mostly but not solely emergency services vehicles) which were potentially contaminated as a result of the immediate actions prior to it being apparent this was a CBRN incident. Each scene represented a possible source of risk to the public, and we had not yet identified the source of the poison.
92. For context, historically over the previous five or six years when I was responsible for the cadre of police personnel trained to work in the containment labs at DSTL, we had worked on a limited number of exhibits at one time. At some point, to significantly increase the complexity of the exercises we increased the number of exhibits, which

placed additional burden on the coordinators to prioritise sequential examinations to meet the urgent needs of the senior investigating officers. We and DSTL were now seeking to manage a number of exhibits far in excess of this. The number of contaminated scenes and number of contaminated exhibits were very significant which caused added complexity.

93. It was at some point on this day, following the Prime Minister's speech to the House of Commons, that I became aware for the first time that the nerve agent we were dealing with was novichok.
94. On Tuesday 13 March, it was identified from CCTV that the Skripals had been in contact with railings in The Maltings in Salisbury when feeding swans prior to going to Zizzi's. This had not previously been known to the investigation, so no cordon was in place covering this area. This led to a need for a further cordon at that site and targeted swabbing, given the risk that members of the public may have come into contact with the railings subsequently. DSTL's advice was that we could swab the railings in situ rather than remove them to DSTL. We also became aware from CCTV that Sergei Skripal, while feeding the waterfowl, had passed bread to three children. Establishing the likelihood of contamination at this point was therefore urgent, and initial swabbing of the railings took place the same day. Subsequent examination identified no evidence of contamination on the railings.
95. There was also an entry into the Skripals' car which had been moved to DSTL. A number of swabs were taken from inside the car as per the forensic strategy and a satellite navigation system recovered to try to identify the car movements. The swabs subsequently identified evidence of contamination inside the car, with some swabs (such as the driver's seat belt buckle) at a high or very high level.
96. On 14 March 2018, I had a meeting with DSTL which set priorities for future lines of inquiry. For example, further swabbing was to take place at the graves, the home address and the car. In relation to Christie Miller Road, the priorities included swabbing the front door, among other tasks. I was also informed about the involvement of OPCW from this point on.
97. While I reiterate that I am not describing every single CBRN entry to every single scene, it is worth mentioning that a further entry to the Skripals' car took place this day for further internal swabbing. Two of the forensic scene examiners had to be treated by paramedics after coming out of decontamination, one of whom presented with symptoms including being very cold and shaky and slightly confused. A second similar incident took place the following day after an officer's respirator began to fog up; he

was also assessed by paramedics. While I do not believe that these incidents reflected exposure to novichok, this could not be ruled out at the time, and illustrates both the actual and perceived risks being taken on by searchers.

98. I was asked whether we could reduce the cordon sizes at the cemetery. I recall that this was around Mother's Day and we were concerned that people would not be able to visit their mothers' graves. We sought to expedite this, but we needed to consult with PHE first from a safety perspective.
99. I also explored the possibility of searching the Cassidys' car, and recovery of exhibits including Yulia Skripal's passport, landing card and suitcase. This was still part of the effort to identify the earliest contaminated site, in the context of having information indicating that both the car and the house were contaminated. The identification of a clean site – such as the Cassidys' car, in which they had both travelled on 3 March – would give us a point to work forward from. Similarly, knowing whether Yulia Skripal's passport, landing card and suitcase were clean would assist with when she may have been contaminated, and whether she had a witting or unwitting role in bringing the novichok into the UK.
100. On 16 March 2018, swabs were taken from the exterior front door handle and around the front door of 47 Christie Miller Road. I was on leave that day. On 17 March 2018, DSTL informed us that the results of the examination on the swabs were that the front door at 47 Christie Miller Road was the probable initial source of poisoning. The readings from the swabs were significantly higher than those taken from the car and it was suggested that, due to the inclement weather, the levels could have been significantly higher previously. This was in effect the identification of ground zero, although DSTL did not formally confirm that they were treating the front door as ground zero until 20 March 2018. The door and door frame were to be removed and recovered to give us the best opportunity to identify fingerprints and DNA of offenders. It was also far safer to do these treatments in containment at DSTL as opposed to the open environment at Christie Miller Road. While this left some loose ends (such as what the source of the contamination within the address was) and did not give us a point in time when the contamination occurred, this now gave us a clear location to work forwards and backwards from.
101. On 18 March 2018, I discussed the body worn camera footage from PC Bell's camera with MK26. We agreed that we needed to ascertain whether the positive results within 47 Christie Miller Road were at least in part the result of cross-contamination.

102. We also discussed the front door results: I was informed that there were very high levels of novichok despite the inclement weather. There was also a risk that contamination at this level could permeate gloves worn as part of PPE. Later that day, I was also informed that the driveway and our equipment tent were contaminated, albeit the latter at low levels. This meant that searching activity at 47 Christie Miller Road had to stop at 9.30pm that day. As a result of the contamination the majority of our footprint at 47 Christie Miller Road had to be relocated and/or destroyed as they were highly likely to be contaminated. This meant throughout the day activity within the premises would have been very limited and the recovery of the door/frame was not completed until the following day. We also began to encounter serious weather difficulties from snow and ice.
103. We also discussed the risks in relation to environmental conditions. On 27 March 2018, I arranged to have drains swabbed, and no contamination was identified.
104. Now that the likely ground zero had been identified, it enabled a much more focused approach to the question of when and how the contamination occurred. On 19 March 2018 the CCTV team began to conduct a "boxing in" exercise. In effect what this meant was, they had identified CCTV cameras in diverse locations in the vicinity of 47 Christie Miller Road. The intention was to evidence all persons of interest within a specific time parameter entering and leaving this area.
105. Another priority at this point was therefore an examination of the Cassidy's car, to ascertain whether the contamination took place before or after the evening of 3 March 2018. The vehicle was recovered later on 19 March, and swabs were taken on 20 March which subsequently revealed no evidence of contamination indicating that when the Skripals travelled in the vehicle on the evening of 3 March, they were not contaminated with a nerve agent.
106. At this time, there was substantial work ongoing in relation to the OPCW's visit, in order to facilitate the scene examinations and retrieval of samples it required without causing issues around safety or cross-contamination. This required further deployment of staff to scenes. The front door was recovered to DSTL on 22 March 2018.
107. We always approach all scenes and the need for cordon placement with a degree of empathy for the residents affected by it. Clearly as this was a CBRN scene, not only were we looking to protect the forensic integrity of our scene, but the cordons also needed to cover the safety of the general public and our staff. Whilst we had done everything possible to minimise our footprint we were also dealing with substantial and understandable pressure from the local community to reduce or hand back scenes.

This was a particular issue around the graveyard and at Christie Miller Road. The cemetery was returned to Wiltshire Police for consequence management on 20 March. We sought to reconfigure our infrastructure at Christie Miller Road on the grounds of safety (new safe undressing and egress infrastructure) but to do so in a way which would minimise the impact on neighbours. I was also asked whether the cars within the cordon near the Mill public house could be returned to their owners; I could not see how we could allow people to enter an area which may be contaminated. However, we were working to safely hand back the Maltings to the people of Salisbury by Easter.

- 108. By 21 March 2018, we had seized 1156 exhibits, of which 407 potentially contaminated exhibits (including swabs) were at DSTL. This was significantly more CBRN exhibits than we had anticipated.
- 109. A draft forensic strategy was prepared in the event that there was a fatal outcome for either Yulia or Sergei Skripal.
- 110. On 22 March 2018, we submitted to DSTL the PPE worn by the three Wiltshire Police officers who entered 47 Christie Miller Road on 5 March 2018. This had been seized by VN005 on 5 March 2018, placed into the rear of a police car, and taken to Bourne Hill Police Station, where it was then placed into the temporary holding store before being taken to DSTL. The delay in obtaining and swabbing it was linked to the subsequent risk of contamination identified from Bourne Hill Police Station. On testing, there was evidence of contamination on swabs from seven of the eight individual gloves recovered, two of the three face masks, and all three sets of goggles. I should add that I had expected that we would recover at least twelve gloves, i.e. six pairs, on the basis of three officers from Wiltshire Police having entered the property, each wearing two sets of gloves. The fact that we recovered eight gloves suggests that one person used two pairs, and the others wore one pair each.

Evolution of response to Skripal attack

- 111. From this point onwards, we began to develop and put into effect a search plan for the area around Christie Miller Road. This is dealt with in the Police Report at paragraphs 103 to 109. I consider this below, but it is important to note that this activity was running alongside all of the other lines of forensic investigation I am describing in this section.
- 112. Based on the investigative hypothesis at that stage, we were able to prioritise some forensic work within 47 Christie Miller Road.
- 113. My notes show that on this day, we were also continuing to make efforts to access digital devices belonging to the Skripals, were reviewing CCTV footage, recovering the

bench from the Maltings, conducting a re-entry to The Mill public house to obtain 3D mapping of the interior of the property, conducting further entries to 47 Christie Miller Road and dealing with issues relating to statements and logbooks that had potentially been contaminated by DS Bailey but which had then been taken to the CTPSE Major Incident Room. This was alongside a steady routine of meetings and updates both within the investigation and with the various multi-lateral bodies involved in consequence management. I include this detail to demonstrate the pace with which we were working across a variety of different strands of the investigation – not forgetting we still did not know what we were looking for. At the time, without the benefit of hindsight, it was not clear which of these were most likely to produce results either from a criminal investigative perspective, or in relation to public safety.

114. Each of these strands required resources to move it forward: committing more resources to one strand meant that fewer resources were available for other strands taking into account the number of trained individuals and supporting resources. We constantly had to rebalance our priorities based on resources, risk and potential benefits. Ultimately these decisions were taken by DSupt VN012 as SIO, but I took many decisions relating to forensics (including searching), and where the SIO's decision was required, VN012 relied heavily on my advice as well as on the advice of specialists such as search advisors.
115. The strands of activity I have discussed in the previous paragraph all continued over the following week or so, with the addition of further searches of Zizzi's. By 31 March 2018, we were looking to hand Zizzi's and The Mill over to consequence management, although an issue over remote access to CCTV at The Mill delayed the handover (the owners denied that they had remote access to the CCTV so we were concerned that the remote access may have been on behalf of a hostile foreign state, in which case they would have access to significant information about our CBRN response. It subsequently transpired that the Mill's landlord did have remote access to his CCTV system). On 31 March 2018, we started to get information from Yulia Skripal who provided information on her arrival to 47 Christie Miller Road, their actions that evening, and the following morning going out to the Mill and Zizzi's, which helped us to construct a more detailed timeline of events and enabled us to target further searches and swabbing. The account also corroborated some of the investigation and forensic findings to date.

116. Between 3 and 5 April, searches of the shared front garden area of 45 and 47 Christie Miller Road were conducted. These were full CBRN searches, rather than part of the open area searches.
117. Over the following weeks, alongside the open area searches, substantial further work took place at 47 Christie Miller Road, Zizzi's, The Mill, Bourne Hill police station and DSTL. We were trying to hand scenes back to Wiltshire Police for consequence management, so that the impact on the community could be kept to a minimum. Zizzi's was handed back on 8 April 2018, and The Mill on 4 May 2018 (the delay being down to the issues over remote access to CCTV). We also dealt with the substantial number of vehicles which had been moved to DSTL as a result of potential cross-contamination, as well as a large volume of material removed from Bourne Hill police station.
118. I also discussed with MK26 the properties and possible method of deployment of novichok.
119. The swabbing at 47 Christie Miller Road concluded on 16 April 2018. We now had a good insight into the levels of contamination inside the house, which was important both for the investigation and to inform the level of PPE the forensic teams in conjunction with DSTL would need to wear whilst conducting a detailed evidential search of the property. These evidential searches and other forensic activity by police (such as removal and recovery of the front door frame) continued until 11 June 2018. A forensic search strategy specifically for 47 Christie Miler Road was produced on 15 April 2018 (INQ005945), as well as the primary forensic search strategy being updated (INQ005238).
120. This activity in the house continued even though we had identified the front door as ground zero for a number of reasons including the following. First, because the focus on the house to date had been on ascertaining what was contaminated and to what level, we had not yet conducted evidential searches. Second, given the contamination in the house, we needed to examine how it might have come about. Third, we needed to establish a motive for the attack on the Skripals, and evidence from Sergei Skripal's personal life would assist with that. In particular, we were seeking to recover any material that would shed light on Sergei Skripal's background and recent activities. Fourth, it was possible that surveillance devices within the house might be found, which would help us to establish both motive and the method of attack, and provide other additional lines of investigation.

121. Either VN530 or I was in regular – generally daily – contact with DSTL (I was on annual leave from 11-29 April 2018, during which period VN530 covered my duties). A significant strand of work was preparing for and carrying out the removal and subsequent forensic examination of the highly contaminated front door of 47 Christie Miller Road, which was extremely high risk. We were keen to identify any DNA or fingerprints which might assist in identifying individuals or placing a known individual or individuals at the scene. A fingerprint was identified, but this came back to a local handyman who was subsequently interviewed. Sergei Skripal subsequently confirmed that this individual had recently been invited into the address (on the basis that it is Russian custom to invite people inside rather than converse on the doorstep), which was consistent with the account given at interview. The handyman was therefore eliminated from the investigation.
122. There was also substantial ongoing digital and CCTV work.

Outcome of swabbing

123. The key outcomes from the swabbing conducted on Operation Wedana as at 23 May 2018 are referred to in **INQ005677**.

Open area searches

124. It was only when ground zero was confirmed that we had any parameters to enable us to physically search for the weapon, although we still did not know what it looked like or whether it had been left at or near the scene. Prior to that, any searching would have been totally speculative. We did however have the area around 47 Christie Miller Road cordoned off and under police control as an obvious precaution (although residents and other legitimate visitors were still allowed access). Between 17 March and 22 March 2018, the focus was on searching and swabbing the Cassidy's car to identify a last clean point, the recovery of the door for traditional forensic examination – which could have identified suspects – as well as liaison with the OPCW. Work on Sunday 18 March 2018 was also heavily disrupted due to the snowy weather.
125. Around 22 March 2018, shortly after DSTL confirmed that the front door was regarded as the source of the poison on 20 March, more focussed planning for searching the open areas and gardens near 47 Christie Miller Road began with consideration being given as to how this should be conducted. This became a topic of discussion at a meeting with DSupt VN012 on 24 March 2018. My thought process at that time was that there would have been a grossly contaminated weapon used to commit the offence and it may have been desirable to hide or dispose of it in window boxes, potted

plants or a significant hedge that I could see in the imagery outside 47 Christie Miller Road, or in the drain or any drains that might be directly outside the property. I asked that these areas be searched, my rationale being in case the material had ended up in these areas due to environmental conditions or because it had been hidden there, and as a consequence caused any risk of harm to the public or environmental impact.

126. I hasten to say at this stage we had absolutely no idea where we should be searching or what we were searching for, or what it might look like. An analogy used at the time was that this investigation *"was like looking for a needle in a haystack, although in this case, we didn't know where the haystack was and we didn't know what the needle looked like"*. In fact, this was not quite accurate; the reality was that we did not even know whether there was a 'needle' at all. With all of the competing demands, whilst we could work on conjecture, we needed to be directed by the evidence or properly provenanced intelligence that was available.
127. There was discussion around searching the wider area in general terms, and I highlighted this should be the responsibility of a police search advisor (POLSA) working directly to me as the forensic coordinator and the SIO. As well as looking for a potential vessel or other item which might have contained the agent, we were also speculatively looking for discarded PPE. A POLSA would be responsible for overseeing the planning and execution of a search in a designated area, the process would involve planning, briefings, risk assessments, strategy documents and on a specific mission a tasking sheet identifying the task, the staff, identifying any finds and where appropriate accompanied by a map.
128. On 26 March 2018, I spoke with the POLSA VN939, the SIO and DSTL regarding how we might conduct a wider search. My initial intention was to search the alleyways and open areas proximate to Christie Miller Road. This was referred to as the 'Phase 1' search in case the suspects had discarded the item used to place the agent on the door. A map of the different phases of searches is within **Exhibit KA/1**.
129. Having attended our office for a briefing VN939 went to the vicinity of 47 Christie Miller Road to scope what that search may look like and identify any potential issues. Following that we had further conversations, in which we discussed what we may be looking for, the PPE to be worn by the search officers, and how they may safely search these open areas.
130. As far as the item was concerned it was decided the size was more than likely small, man-made, and out of place at that location. There was an assumption that it might carry liquid and in general terms if it looked like litter for want of better words it was

probably litter. PPE was based on the fact that the team would be looking for this evidence but not physically handling it. The intention was that they would find something, mark and photograph its location, but not handle it. The search therefore did not need to be conducted in full CBRN PPE. This would also assist with maintaining public confidence. My deputy, VN530, set out the broad parameters of this search in an email to VN939 on 26 March 2018 (INQ004588).

131. This Phase 1 search commenced on 27 March 2018, in parallel with searches and swabbing of the drains and hedges at 47 Christie Miller Road, and areas at the front of the house, as part of the continued searches of the property. Swabs of the drains and of the flower pots and baskets subsequently identified no evidence of contamination, although some external swabs (such as of the driveway, hose reel, electric meter box and three household wheelie bins) did identify evidence of contamination. One hedge on Christie Miller Road was too dense to physically search so it was taken down, resulting in complaints from a neighbour.
132. The POLSA team were briefed, tasked and deployed to conduct searching of a number of public areas adjacent to Christie Miller Road. A waste bin within the search area was opened and sifted, with nothing of interest found. The Phase 1 search took until 29 March 2018. Although a number of items were identified and recovered in the Phase 1 search, and then all swabbed and examined by DSTL, none of them when forensically examined displayed any evidence of contamination. I can set out the results of the Phase 1 searches in tabular form:

Item recovered	Date found	Location found	Result of forensic testing
Small plastic bottle containing liquid	27 March 2018	Footpath behind 47CMR	No evidence of contamination
Glass bottle	27 March 2018	Footpath behind 47CMR	No evidence of contamination
Grey plastic tube	27 March 2018	Private driveway adjacent to footpath	No evidence of contamination
Opaque plastic tube	27 March 2018	Private driveway adjacent to footpath	No evidence of contamination

133. We also began planning for further searches of private property – specifically gardens – around Christie Miller Road. This emanated from the need to understand whether the suspects may have discarded something over a fence into the surrounding gardens. The Inquiry will appreciate that police officers cannot simply enter private property for the purpose of a search without either consent from the owner or a lawful power to do so.
134. On 29 March 2018, I attended a meeting chaired by DSupt VN012 which was to discuss search parameters linked to the investigation. Also present were DCI Dominic Murphy, a police search specialist advisor from the National Crime Agency (“NCA”), VN939 (the POLSA from Wiltshire), VN530 and VN503, together with other officers and staff to ensure we could leave the meeting with a high degree of assurance that we were giving it the best response.
135. The meeting was opened by the SIO briefing the NCA search advisor and VN939 on the investigation to date, covering in turn:
- a. The bench and the Maltings
 - b. Zizzi's restaurant
 - c. The Mill public house
 - d. The BMW
 - e. Christie Miller Road and then the front door
136. He highlighted these searches were a matter of due diligence: a vessel could be there or not; it could contain a liquid or not, and we did not know what the container might look like. The advisor from the NCA was there to advise us based on his experience what the likelihood of it being there was from a criminal mindset perspective. One of DSupt VN012's initial questions was – would the container have been discarded or taken away? VN012 highlighted this was for public confidence and health as much as it was for part of the investigation. VN012 identified it was his responsibility to decide the parameters and that this was a challenging area. VN012 highlighted he needed to measure public perception versus causing public concern unnecessarily. With respect to the gardens in Christie Miller Road, VN012 asked whether we needed to do it.
137. Once the door handle was identified as ground zero, MI5 provided assessment with regards to the most likely ingress and egress routes to Christie Miller Road. At this

point, MI5 could not inform the police's search strategy by reference to the suspects' movements. This included assessment as to what the suspects may have done with any operational items. This was shared with the NCA search advisor and PS VN939. This was discussed and while an aid to our thinking, it did not assist with how to target or focus our searches. We were already searching bins, bushes and drains within the search area for the investigation.

138. I was not privy to any further assessments from MI5 as regards the likely container or containers, if any, used in the Skripal poisonings or anything about if/where they may have been discarded or whether it was taken away versus discarded.
139. The NCA advisor, using a marked-up version of the Phase 1 search map, highlighted that path A was gated and had not been searched and that open area B was private land and had not been searched, and also said area C needed a total cut back. I recall this was due to weeds and vegetation. I highlighted that open area C had been started but on Wednesday 28 March I had expanded the parameters so that the search covered up to six feet from the pathway. The NCA advisor made the point that although a thorough search would concern neighbours, if we did not do enough there was a risk that somebody might get hurt.
140. As set out in the Police Report at paragraph 106, the search advisors provided three hypotheses as to where the suspects may have discarded the novichok (if they had done so at all) on the basis of their experience in criminal investigations. These were:
 - a. In the immediate vicinity of the attack site (the door of the house).
 - b. At the points the offenders were out of the line of sight of the house.
 - c. At the points where the offenders could have changed their mode of transport, such as the cross-section between footpaths and roads.
141. During the meeting, we also covered questions such as how far it could be thrown, what else we were looking for beyond the weapon (such as discarded PPE), what PPE needed to be worn, and what was needed to address public concern. Practically speaking, it was suggested a full search could not start until next Tuesday due to the bank holiday weekend, but there was an interim risk, so it was recommended that we did the public areas. I recommended we did the park first and the question was raised whether kids would have been purposefully targeted. The SIO and POLSA agreed that we should search the park, which was estimated to take two days. The park was to be closed. We also discussed how to approach the issue of private gardens abutting the alleyways and roads in the area, given the risk that an item could have been thrown or dropped into them. We discussed how we would deal with any recoveries. I asked if

public messaging was sufficient to date and have a note in regards to a statement to the effect of "We will be operating in your area, if you see anything don't touch it, ring us and inform."

142. After the decision on search parameters, we discussed and agreed the logistical, technical and inter-agency arrangements (particularly with DSTL) for the searches, including those that were to take place over the bank holiday weekend. A particular concern was how we explained our activity to members of the public.
143. VN939, having been briefed, provided search strategies on 31 March 2018 which reflected the decisions made at the planning meeting. This included setting the search parameters for acceptance by the SIO, although I had particularly provided input to him on the rationale relating to the search of the play area. This was partly based on advice from the NCA advisor and partly based on my own personal concern as to the consequences of a child finding the item used to deliver the nerve agent. It is also adjacent to a footpath and within dropping or throwing distance. I detailed that although I feel it is unlikely that a contaminated item would be discarded in a play area, the consequences would be catastrophic and on balance of potential consequences the search was necessary.
144. These open area searches were not conducted in full PPE. Searchers wore face masks and gloves based on scientific advice. The searches took place only when there was scientific support from DSTL (to assess any finds) and medical support from HART available. The HART cover was placed between the open area search and the full CBRN searches taking place at 47 Christie Miller Road so as to provide support to both.
145. This Phase 2 search including the park, public footpath, open public areas and gardens around Christie Miller Road continued over the following four weeks, only concluding on 25 April 2018. A map of the total area which was searched is within **KA/1**. It more than covers what MI5 had suggested were the preferred ingress/egress routes. The storm drains and gullies in the vicinity were also searched. Although a number of finds were made and safely recovered, none of them displayed any evidence of novichok contamination. Again, I can set out the results in tabular form:

Item recovered	Date found	Location found	Result of forensic testing

Glove	4 April 2018	Footpath at end of Montgomery Gardens	No evidence of contamination
White plastic bottle	4 April 2018	Footpath at end of Montgomery Gardens	No evidence of contamination
Syringe	8 April 2018	Grass verge area adjacent to the pavement on Montgomery Road close to the junction with Christie Miller Road	No evidence of contamination
Black glove	9 April 2018	Rear of Pemberton Lodge	No evidence of contamination
Pair of black marigold-style glove	10 April 2018	In a side alleyway by 86 Wilton Road	No evidence of contamination

146. I received regular updates on the open area searches, and from time to time provided direction (Some of this is recorded in **INQ005668**). For example, on 2 April 2018 I responded to emails that VN503 and I initially received the previous day from VN939 asking if the scene barriers seen at the fire station could be used for Tuesday's search. VN939 updated that there had been no searches over the weekend, that the intention for the following day would be to clear the play park, the boundary, and to finish the open area at the rear of 47 Christie Miller Road, then to move on to the rear gardens. The following day I was asked whether it was sufficient just to look over the fences into gardens; I advised it was not sufficient and that the searches of the gardens needed to be done physically, and also jointly with residents so that they could indicate anything which might be out of place or unfamiliar (while not being involved directly in any searching). We also discussed dress states and identified the future taskings. The same day, 3 April 2018, I also received a series of emails from VN939 updating me in regards to the open area searches and the likely amount of time for completion and

resources available for activity to continue. I requested if it was feasible for them to start the search of gardens adjoining the footpaths as I had secured both scientific and medical support.

147. On 4 April 2018, the open area searches continued from the children's play area and were extended to the paths leading to Wilton Road. Subsequent to this the search teams commenced the task of searching and checking the rear gardens to the properties abutting that path. There were two finds, as described above.
148. VN939 produced maps outlining the finds on 28 March 2018 and those found on 4 April. He outlined areas to be searched based on the meeting with the NCA search advisor and subsequent meetings between VN530 and myself. These were laid out on maps and after the initial map, which highlighted the whole area, he produced a map of the drains and gullies to be searched and eventually produced a map breaking the overall search area into gridded areas. His initial reporting was produced in a document which was a search summary for the week commencing 2 April 2018 which identified the locations of recoveries to date, and identified all proximate gullies and how they worked.
149. A residents' meeting also took place this day, led by DI VN320 of CTPSE, around the hedge, open area and garden searches. The residents were told that it was anticipated the open area and gardens search would take approximately seven to 10 days and that the house would take a further three to four weeks to complete. This reflects the considerable pressure we were under to conclude our forensic taskings in the area.
150. From time to time, police inquiries produced specific taskings for searches in the vicinity of 47 Christie Miller Road. When these arose, I discussed them with VN939 and the investigation team and they were actioned. None of these resulted in any finds of significance to the investigation.
151. During the course of 5 April 2018 the POLSA searches continued in the area of Christie Miller Road, including the search of gardens backing onto pathways and the houses of Christie Miller Road itself. There was a request from VN939 for as many properties as possible to be visited by the investigations teams in order to advise them of our intentions so that the search work in the gardens could take place at the weekend when occupiers were more than likely to be home. The waste ground search within the identified area had yet to commence. VN939 also recommended the search of a small number of additional rear gardens which backed onto the path in a similar manner to those already being conducted which I agreed to. The proposed new area is shown on page 2 of **INQ005271**.

152. The following day, 6 April 2018, the POLSA search continued in Christie Miller Road including gardens backing onto the pathways and those in Christie Miller Road itself and the area of waste land behind Christie Miller Road has been fully searched with no additional finds. House to house teams were completing house to house enquiries to enable the POLSA to complete their work. At 17:26 I received an email from VN939 advising that VN939 had stood down the search officers on the grounds that they were physically exhausted and the nearest HART was too far away. I shared VN939's concerns and remedied the issue for the following day.
153. On 7 April 2018, I passed on information in the interest of safety that in one of the gardens, although it was overgrown, was a quantity of asbestos. I subsequently discussed with VN939 the extent of the search of the waste ground. This included the likelihood of the suspect movements including certain areas, given how dense and difficult underfoot it was and its limited accessibility. We also took into account that further movement away from the direct egress route risked exposure to CCTV. The search parameters were set as Christie Miller Road to India Avenue plus the drains within 10 yards of the junctions with Highbury Avenue and alley, Christie Miller Road and India Avenue to the alley with Wilton Road. I also added Christie Miller Road cul-de-sac up to Nightingale Walk which I advised VN939 of. The new search parameters were agreed by the Deputy SIO DI VN104, who also extended the house-to-house advice to residents.
154. This was followed by an email received from VN939 at 16:54 with an attachment detailing the agreed extended search assessment. During the course of the day the police search team continued the searches within the set parameter focussing on the gardens backing onto the path and alleyways around the Christie Miller Road area.
155. Although I was on a rest day on 8 April 2018, I can see from documentary records (including **INQ005668**, p.43) that the focus of activity was on the open area search and the home address.
156. I can see that throughout the course of the day the open area search in the vicinity of Christie Miller Road continued in particular the gardens backing onto the alleyways, the gardens of the houses in Christie Miller Road itself and the garden areas. A syringe was found during the open area search, as recorded in the table above. In addition the forensic search of the front gardens and the bush at 47 Christie Miller Road continued. Also, during the day preliminary work was started with respect to planning the search of road gullies and drains.

157. On Monday 9 April 2018 I prepared for and attended the SIO's investigative meeting. The key headlines were that despite increasing the open area search area it was almost complete, there had been a couple of small finds including the syringe, but thanks to the work done by the house-to-house enquiry team the search officers were able to start searching gardens. The search of the bush at the front of 47 Christie Miller Road was completed. The focus of activity that day was to be the open area search and the search of a rubble sack in the front garden of 41 Christie Miller Road in case anything had been deposited after the event. The SIO was advised discussions needed to take place regarding drain searching in the open area search area, which was subsequently completed.
158. The POLSA search continued in the open areas in the vicinity of Christie Miller Road during which a black plastic/nitrile glove was recovered as described in the table above. At this point the main area of the agreed search parameters for the open area searches had been completed and only calls to addresses where occupiers have not been home and where gardens still needed searching was outstanding.
159. On 10 April 2018, during the course of the day the police search teams continued with their searching and all gardens with the exception of one had now been searched. This was to be subject of further investigation in order to identify the owners. The only outstanding area for search was the drains, which was still to be resolved. During the course of the day there were two gloves recovered as described in the table above.
160. I was on leave from 11-29 April 2018, but have reviewed the relevant documentation (including **INQ005668**). I gave VN530 as my deputy a full briefing before I left. On 11 April 2018, it was identified that the play area proximate to Christie Miller Road had been cleared and that this could be handed back to Wiltshire Police. Open area searches did not take place on 11-14 April due to other commitments. On 14 April 2018, VN939 sent a couple of emails to VN530 and I, providing a search assessment update which included the garden searches that required completing and highlighting the search parameters as VN939 understood them for the gullies and drains to be searched with the agreement of the SIO. On 18 April 2018, VN939 asked for clarification on the searching of storm water sewers.
161. From the notes of the scene manager for 18 April, it appears local residents were upset regarding the number of police vehicles present, people walking on their gardens without permission, and the extent of the cordons being too wide. This was briefed to all officers on the scene to be mindful of the neighbourhood concerns. However, an

- attempt to reduce and refine the cordons led to media intrusion, which appears to have been resolved by an extra police officer being deployed to manage the cordons.
162. The drains and gullies, as well as any outstanding open areas, were searched on 23-24 April 2018. On 23 April, the focus was searching drains and gullies by the search team and POLSA. Approximately 50% of the drains were checked including the one immediately adjacent to the driveway of 47 Christie Miller Road. Two of the outstanding rear gardens were searched and no recoveries were made. The search of the remaining wet and dry drains was completed the following day, with no recoveries made.
163. On 25 April 2018, the SIO was updated that the drain and gulley searches had been completed. As nothing had been found, and the open area and garden searches were virtually completed, the search officers were released back to their parent forces. On my return to work on 30 April, I was briefed on everything that had taken place in my absence as regards open area searches (and all other forensic strands of work). The final results from testing of finds from the open area searches were provided to us by DSTL on or around 21 May 2018.
164. There were a couple of outstanding open area search taskings, relating to a shed adjacent to the fence of 47 Christie Miller Road and one garden which had not been searched due to issues around gaining the owner's consent. On 2 May 2018, VN530 directed VN939 that an open area team search of the shed was not required. Instead, this was carried out in CBRN conditions over 3-4 May 2018 by the forensic team involved in searching 47 Christie Miller Road and its garden.
165. We also carried out CBRN searches of the rear garden of 47 Christie Miller Road, although this was not to the same degree as to the front garden, but in the same manner as other rear gardens had been searched by the open area team. The rationale for this was that if there was a weapon or other evidence that had been discarded, it was more likely to have been in the vicinity of the front door rather than the perpetrator or perpetrators gaining access to the rear garden to discard it, which would have increased the risks to them of both contamination and discovery.
166. There was no basis at this stage for any wider search area to be set. We had already expanded the search area from the immediate vicinity of 47 Christie Miller Road to a significant area surrounding it. It was still uncertain what we were looking for, or if there was in fact anything to look for at all. Any further searching was to be done on an intelligence-led basis.

167. Given the impact of searching on the local community, the fact that we had already searched a wider area than that set by the SIO and DCI Dominic Murphy, and the resources this exercise took, both from the police and from partner agencies such as HART and DSTL, I believe that the open area searches we undertook were reasonable and proportionate. Expanding the search area based on the information available to me and still not knowing what we were looking for to cover a wider area of Salisbury would have been wholly speculative and involve an enormous amount of resources which could have been better deployed elsewhere.
168. Based on the direction I was being given by the SIO and other experts regards confining our searches to areas where there were reasonable grounds to search, together with the massive additional disruption to the residents and businesses of Salisbury my view is that the search parameters for an unknown object were reasonable. We expanded the search parameters several times. If we had further expanded them based on the information available to Operation Wedana it would have been speculative, and I do not believe that it would have been likely to have made a difference. A speculative search in an unknown direction of a wider area of Salisbury would have taken months or longer, and resulted in a very significant number of samples being provided for testing by DSTL.

My knowledge of Operation Caterva

169. At some point during the course of the investigation, I was asked to task some of my crime scene investigators to do some work at DSTL. I was not briefed on what they were doing on the basis of 'need to know'. This is not an uncommon occurrence in investigations of this nature. Given my experience of investigations of this sort, I developed over time a sense that there was something further underway to which I was not privy. I approached DSupt VN012 to ask him whether there was any further information that I needed to know. I was briefed to a limited extent on Operation Caterva.

Operation Read

Immediate response

170. I first became aware of a further incident on the evening of 3 July 2018, when DCS Barnes telephoned me to inform me that two individuals who lived in Amesbury were in hospital in Salisbury. Their bloods had been taken and examined at DSTL and the initial assessment was it was the same poison used for the Skripals. I was informed that they were in an induced coma. I was asked to attend a Gold group meeting on

behalf of the command at Wiltshire Police Headquarters in Devizes in an hour. I was told that they had been admitted to hospital on Saturday, and that they were both known drug users. (I now understand that this initial information from Wiltshire Police was not accurate as regards Dawn Sturgess: it had no impact on the way I approached this investigation.) We had some indication of their recent movements, which included both of their home addresses (a flat in Muggleton Road in Amesbury for the male and Cedar Room, John Baker House in Salisbury for the female) and Queen Elizabeth Gardens in Salisbury. We also had some indication of with whom they had associated in the past few days, with three named males identified.

171. The female had been taken ill quickly on Saturday morning, with a male falling ill in the afternoon. Both had been admitted to hospital on Saturday. I was told that the female had suffered a cardiac arrest, with the initial diagnosis being a drugs overdose before her symptoms developed further. Initial test results from DSTL received on Tuesday suggested novichok poisoning. It had also been identified that the male (who I now know to be Charlie Rowley) and the female (who I now know to be Dawn Sturgess) had very different levels of narcotics in their blood samples, which suggested that their condition was not related to use of drugs.
172. The investigation had initially been handled by Wiltshire Police. Once DSTL had identified the possibility that novichok was involved, they asked Wiltshire Police to inform us in Counter-Terrorism Policing.
173. At this stage, there were two hypotheses. The first was that they had found and handled the vessel used in the attack on the Skripals. The second was that there had been a further attack. The first hypothesis was later updated to include the possibility that they had become inadvertently exposed to a contaminated scene, as well as the vessel.
174. I arrived at Wiltshire Police headquarters in Devizes at 21:00 and prepared for the Gold meeting, having rung my forensic manager VN530 on route and asked them to staff six potentially contaminated scenes (i.e. the three individuals, the hospital, the home address, and any vehicle). At the Gold meeting, more information was shared about the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley falling ill, their background (including their addresses), and their recent movements and associations, as well as their current medical conditions. There was a significant increase in the number of potential scenes, which meant that extensive prioritisation would be required. After the meeting, I was sent a copy of the briefing notes by the Wiltshire Police briefing officer.

175. The following morning, I briefed DCI Philip Murphy, who subsequently became the SIO. A number of different lines of activity were stood up, with support from DSTL's SRTs as previously. As in the early stages of Operation Wedana, it was important for us to confirm what agent had been used, identify the source of the poisoning by time and location, to prevent further contamination or cross-contamination, and to ensure the safety of the public and the investigation teams.
176. By the early evening of 4 July 2018, DSTL had confirmed that both Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley had been exposed to novichok, as suspected. Potential scenes had been identified and cordoned, with planning underway for how they would be entered and searched, both for swabbing and evidential searching. Some potential scenes had been identified as non-evidential, such as the three emergency services vehicles involved and the Baptist Church which Charlie Rowley had visited after Dawn Sturgess became unwell. These were earmarked for being dealt with by consequence management.
177. Early on 5 July 2018, we clarified that the scenes which we wanted to examine were Muggleton Road, John Baker House, and Queen Elizabeth Gardens, as well as further tests on Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley themselves, and their personal property such as keys. Those scenes were secured throughout the day, and planning for entry and search of them undertaken. Given the known history of drug use by some of those involved, as well as the fact that one of the casualties was known to have PD we had to make plans for the possibility of recovering syringes during searches, which required some testing and risk assessment. Clearly a needle stick injury with a novichok contaminated syringe could have led to serious illness or fatality to one of my forensic staff.
178. Although there were some infrastructure challenges linked with splitting our operations between Amesbury and Salisbury, which were resolved throughout 4-5 July 2018, CTP and DSTL SRT were ready to enter scenes from late on 5 July 2018. Unfortunately, the initial entries scheduled on 5 July 2018 could not take place due to factors outside CTP's control. I and my team continued to work significantly extended hours.
179. The following day, 6 July, a forensic search strategy was drawn up for the Cedar Room and 9 Muggleton Road (**INQ005137**). However, as we were preparing our first entry to the CBRN environment in 9 Muggleton Road, temperatures within the safe undressing tent reached 31 degrees. We were advised by the SRT that the risk of entry to the property was too high. There was a brief delay while air conditioning was installed in the safe undressing tent. The first entry to 9 Muggleton Road and John Baker House

took place later that day, taking key swabs as well as photos and video of the scenes which enabled further planning. These led to priorities being set for Muggleton Road of swabbing handles and zipper of Dawn Sturgess' bag, the handles of a 'bag for life' seen within the premises, and the bedroom door, wardrobe and other doors. Most of these items were swabbed on a subsequent entry on the same day.

180. A further entry to John Baker House was made which swabbed external and internal communal door handles, along with the internal doors of Dawn Sturgess' premises.
181. Given what had been achieved that day, and in particular the photography from the premises, I was able to set further priorities for the next day's swabbing and recovery of items. This pattern continued over the following days, identifying a significant number of contamination points within 9 Muggleton Road, but no indications of contamination at John Baker House.
182. At this early stage of the investigation, while there was considerable experience to be drawn upon from Operation Wedana, some working protocols were still being established. An example of this is that at some point on this day, PHE asked that CTP consider seizing any sharps bins from Boots Chemist. They were also making suggestions for the level of PPE that CTP officers needed to be equipped with: I reiterated that we took our safety advice from DSTL and that I was not comfortable deploying CTP staff in PPE other than that which DSTL recommended. DSTL were also not prepared to examine the Boots sharps bin, on the grounds of risk to staff, which was a view I and the Deputy SIO agreed with.
183. On 7 July, a red van, VRN LG05 Per, was identified in the timeline, after Dawn Sturgess was admitted to hospital. An associate had visited Charlie Rowley and they went to Amesbury. Part of that trip was a lift in what became known as 'Ben's red van'. Inquiries were made which identified it as belonging to 'Ben's brother' and that it had subsequently been sold. Later that day, it was traced to an address in Durrington, and plans were made to recover it with military assistance.
184. Also on 7 July, as a result of other enquiries, the bus on which Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley had travelled from Salisbury to Amesbury was identified. Both vehicles were recovered on 8 July 2018 and were treated as potential CBRN scenes.
185. Sadly, later on 8 July 2018, I was informed that Dawn Sturgess had passed away. This was obviously devastating news to all those on the investigation, although given the updates we had been receiving from those responsible for her care was not unexpected by this stage.

186. From my perspective, Dawn Sturgess' death had a number of consequences. First, it converted the investigation into a murder investigation. Second, it meant that arrangements would need to be made to deal with her body, which unfortunately posed a CBRN risk. Third, it increased the number of strands of forensic investigation for which I was responsible. Over the following days, there were significant developments in each of these strands. For clarity, I will deal with the most significant of these separately below, although they were all running concurrently at the time.

The post mortem

187. From at least 22 March 2018 onwards, there had been substantial planning between CTP, DSTL, and PHE about how to handle any fatality as a result of novichok poisoning. That included how any post mortem investigation would be carried out. Because of the risk to the public and to professionals associated with this vital investigative task, it was appropriate for the forensic pathologist, PHE, DSTL, the STAC, the mortuary manager and CTP to be involved in this planning, alongside staff at Salisbury District Hospital and the Coroner. While this planning was not ultimately utilised in respect of the Skripals, this work was then developed and used within Operation Read. These plans were then put into effect, to ensure that Dawn Sturgess' body could be moved safely to a mortuary where a post mortem examination in CBRN conditions could be carried out. At all times, everyone involved in the planning for this complex operation sought to be respectful of Dawn Sturgess, and kept the importance of maintaining her dignity well in mind. The move from Salisbury District Hospital to the mortuary took place on 9 July 2018.
188. From 9-16 July 2018, very significant work was undertaken about arrangements for the post mortem, including identification and tasking of appropriately trained forensic pathologists, arrangements for the inclusion of OPCW staff, setting up video recording live feed at the mortuary to reduce the numbers who needed to be present in the room, and establishing, risk assessing, and putting in place the various measures required for the post mortem to take place in CBRN conditions. Detailed rehearsals and reviews took place to ensure that this activity could be conducted safely and effectively.
189. The post mortem itself took place on 17-18 July 2018, with Professor Guy Rutty as the lead pathologist. His expectation was that the effect of it being undertaken with various additional measures to ensure everyone's safety in place would mean that it took around 5 hours to complete. For comparison, a normal forensic post mortem would take in the region of 3 hours. In fact, the process took from 1.45pm on 17 July to 01.02am on 18 July 2018, or just over 11 hours. It was a physically demanding and

exhausting effort for those involved, who had to spend many hours in CBRN PPE while conducting detailed and technical work. They took breaks as necessary to recover, and during those periods other necessary forensic activity such as fingerprinting and photography took place. Even so, the list of samples to be taken had to be reviewed and reduced due to the degradation of the pathologists and the team.

190. Following the post mortem and the submission of all relevant samples, I and the investigation team continued to engage with the mortuary and the funeral directors in relation to her cremation. Her family's wishes were taken into account at every stage, and, as far as possible consistent with the risk to public safety, were given effect to, though sadly it was not always possible to do so. Her funeral and cremation ultimately took place on 30 July 2018.
191. Although I was briefed on the outcome of the post mortem and the tests done on samples recovered as a result of it, I understand that the Inquiry will hear from Professor Rutty directly. He is far better qualified to assist in the Inquiry on his findings than I am.
192. I was involved, in October-November 2019, in coordinating requests for information to Prof Rutty and T92L at DSTL by HM Senior Coroner about the medical treatment given to Dawn Sturgess, and any material differences to the treatment given to Charlie Rowley. Some of these discussions are recorded in **INQ005229**, **INQ005231**, and **INQ005152**. I also recall that at an earlier stage I was asked to assist in obtaining documents in order to enable Prof Rutty to complete his report, and did so.
193. The only other involvement I had with any medical treatment for Dawn Sturgess was that I arranged for appropriate medical samples to be taken for criminal investigative/evidential purposes. This was in conjunction with, and subject to the agreement of, her treating physicians: if they had told us that this was medically inappropriate or inadvisable, it would not have happened.
194. For the avoidance of doubt, other than as set out above, I had no involvement in the medical treatment given to Dawn Sturgess before her passing: that was at all times a matter for her treating clinicians.

The bus and Ben's red van

195. As mentioned above, the bus and Ben's red van were seized on 8 July 2018.
196. As regards the bus, swabs taken later that day from the area where Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley had sat (based on CCTV) showed no evidence of contamination.

As regards Ben's red van, swabs were taken on 9 July 2018. They identified evidence of contamination on the passenger side exterior door handle, the passenger side interior, gear stick and steering wheel. The levels were indicative of a low-level transfer of material following secondary or tertiary contamination, consistent with Charlie Rowley travelling in the vehicle.

197. The fact that John Baker House and the bus were negative on all swabs and Muggleton Road and Ben's red van were positive indicated that the poisoning started at Muggleton Road and therefore, following risk assessments by DSTL, John Baker House was reduced from being a full CBRN search. Some precautions (in the form of respirator, gloves and a protective suit) were still required to minimise any risk to searchers.

The searches at 9 Muggleton Road and the recovery and identification of the vessel

198. By 10 July 2018, we had a clear timeline for the movement of Charlie Rowley and Dawn Sturgess over the days leading up to them each being taken ill. We knew that they were in Queen Elizabeth Gardens on Friday 29 June, had then gone to John Baker House, and then moved from there to 9 Muggleton Road by bus. Since we were by this point relatively sure that neither John Baker House nor the bus were contaminated, it appeared most likely that the location of the contamination was 9 Muggleton Road. The sequence of events within that address however remained unclear given that Dawn Sturgess had passed away and Charlie Rowley remained in a coma, although there were initial indications that the bathroom was a possible source of the contamination given the number of positive swabs recovered from it.
199. We also had a good picture of Charlie Rowley's movements after Dawn Sturgess had become unwell but before he did so: these locations were principally being dealt with by consequence management.
200. Later on 10 July, an entry into 9 Muggleton Road recovered packaging from a rubbish bag in the kitchen that looked like a box for Premier Jour Nina Ricci perfume. Subsequent inquiries confirmed that this packaging was counterfeit. Swabs taken from it identified evidence of contamination. Its examination continued the following day, in DSTL, and included record photography, swabbing, DNA and fingerprint preservation. The sequence of examinations and tests had to be very carefully considered to avoid both cross-contamination or rendering subsequent testing (either repeat testing, or different kinds of tests) less effective or even wholly ineffective.

201. This examination was paused when a bottle that looked like a Nina Ricci bottle was identified during a search at 9 Muggleton Road in late morning of 11 July 2018. It was not the target of the search, but was noticed on a worktop to the right of the kitchen sink. The initial description of it was that it appeared to be pump action with a long nozzle, which appeared inconsistent with what would normally be expected for a perfume bottle. The bottle contained some yellow-coloured liquid. There was writing on the bottle that appeared to say 'Nina Ricci' and 'Ajour'. At this stage, it did not appear that it would have fitted within the box recovered the previous day. It was not recovered by those who noticed it, but they reported it as a potential vessel. Following scientific advice and additional risk assessments, it was recovered on a subsequent entry to 9 Muggleton Road later that day, and conveyed to DSTL for testing. Again, this had to be very carefully planned both to ensure the maximum recovery of evidence and also the safety of all involved. The initial testing of the bottle included a visual examination, chemical swabs, DNA swabs, fingerprinting, the recovery of any particulate matter or debris from around the nozzle, and decanting of the liquid inside. There is a photograph of the bottle and the applicator, which appears to be after it was decanted and dismantled, at **INQ004563**.
202. Following the initial testing of the bottle described above, DSTL provided advice on the amount of novichok and the number of lethal doses in the bottle. DSTL expressed the view that it was the same substance as had been used in the attack on the Skripals in March, although at this early stage it was not entirely clear to me what level of confidence this view was at. It shortly became clear that they had a very high level of confidence that it was the same substance at a high level of purity, but that it was not yet clear whether it was from the same batch. The decanted liquid was split into further smaller samples to allow further analytical chemistry to take place.
203. Again, subsequent inquiries, in particular with the parent company for Nina Ricci, confirmed that the bottle was counterfeit. I was not directly involved in those inquiries, but became aware of the result of them. The suspicion that the bottle was counterfeit was raised very quickly. I have now seen (though am not sure that I did at the time) a trace summary dated 10 July 2018 (**INQ004987**) which identifies that the 'Premier Jour' perfume did not seem common in the UK, and that the 5.5ml bottle size was most associated with Russia. The suspicion that the bottle was counterfeit was subsequently confirmed by Puig, the parent company for Nina Ricci (**INQ005821** and **INQ004491**).
204. On the same day, it became apparent that Charlie Rowley's trousers, particularly his back left-hand pocket, were contaminated to a very high level (**INQ005529, p.9**). This

suggested he had either sat in something or potentially had the contaminated item in his pocket. However, we knew that the readings from the van in which he had travelled later that day, particularly the seat he had been in, were very low, which was reassuring to some degree from the perspective of further cross-contamination.

205. On 13 July 2018, Charlie Rowley was interviewed for the first time. This gave us our first direct indication of the sequence of events in the house. I recorded what I was told about his interview on pages 31 and 32 of **INQ005665**. He stated he found a black box and at Muggleton Road he had opened it, it was a bottle and white spray wrapped in plastic wrapping, separately one container, one top, which he had opened with scissors and a wooden handled knife, during the course of which he had spilt some on his hands which he had then washed.
206. There were further entries into 9 Muggleton Road on this date (which recovered, amongst other things, a pair of men's underpants from the bathroom floor which when tested showed evidence of contamination), and further work continued on the bottle at DSTL.
207. On 14 July 2018, Charlie Rowley provided further information about what he said had occurred. I have recorded what I was told about what he said on pages 38 to 40 of **INQ005665**. He said that he brought it in on the Friday, he did not know where from, and then he showed it to Dawn Sturgess at 10:00 on the Saturday. He said it was a black cardboard box, with a moulded interior and it was placed inside. He said the applicator and the bottle were separate and that the bottle was sealed in plastic wrapping. He considered scissors, but used a wooden handled knife. Dawn tried to do the applicator but could not. He then tried, got it on and in the process got some on his hands. He said he washed his hands with pump soap by the sink. I made a note of a question for myself about whether washing might delay or mitigate the effect. Dawn Sturgess put it on her wrists which she rubbed together and smells it and 15 minutes later she was ill. The same day, one of the entries into 9 Muggleton Road recovered cellophane wrappings from the bed and three knives from the sink area. The knives subsequently tested positive for contamination. A subsequent entry bagged the taps as a safety measure given Charlie Rowley's account. The next day, swabs of both the kitchen taps, tap spout and soap were taken, and all subsequently tested positive for contamination.
208. Over the next few days, various swabs and items were recovered from the property, and forensic examination work continued at DSTL on material that had been recovered, including the kitchen bin and various rubbish, which had been recovered

on 12 July. There were also detailed searches of the bins both inside 9 Muggleton Road and in the outbuilding bin store. On 16 July 2018, my staff working at DSTL reported that finger marks had been identified on the bottle, but they were insufficient quality for any comparison work. I made further inquiries with the forensics directorate of the Metropolitan Police Service to see if they were able to carry out comparison checks in any event, but on 20 July 2018 I was informed that there was insufficient ridge detail.

209. The searching and exploitation work was increasingly informed by information from Charlie Rowley. For example, on 19 July 2018 information was passed to the forensic team about the bottle being sealed in a rigid plastic moulded tray with an applicator, and that it had been difficult to assemble the bottle and the nozzle. This led to a change in priorities by the SIO on the examinations within DSTL, with the focus moving from the bottle to the packaging. In the course of the examination of material recovered from 9 Muggleton Road, particularly the bins, packaging was identified which was considered potentially consistent with Charlie Rowley's description. This was tested and analysed. It was found to be heavily contaminated with novichok.
210. Over the following months, I and my team (in particular, VN534) worked with DSTL to ascertain how the analysis of this heavily contaminated packaging could be taken forward: some of the emails about this are contained within **INQ005231, pp9-13 and 19-23**. Ultimately, Adam Wilson of Cellmark Forensic Services was instructed to review high-quality photographs taken at DSTL. He had input into which photographs were required. He sets out his findings in **INQ004503**, dated 24 January 2020. They were not wholly conclusive, but they were consistent with at least some of the packaging having had heat seals applied post-manufacture by a heat-sealing device which produces a single textured heat seal. I understand that he will be giving evidence at the Inquiry: he is better placed to explain his conclusions in detail than I am.

Other traditional forensic investigations

211. Throughout the course of both the investigations various finger marks and DNA swabs were obtained. These were likely to be contaminated with novichok and therefore could not be submitted to forensic service providers for forensic examination. The finger marks could be interpreted through photographing them and then carrying out traditional comparison work and searching. This DNA work was carried out and remains ongoing to use this for elimination purposes or suspect comparison.
212. On the 24 and 25 July 2019 meetings took place between forensic leads and the various SIOs to ensure everybody understood what forensic work had been

undertaken and what work was outstanding. It was agreed the only further work to be done was in relation to the DNA (as set out above), an examination of the pockets of Charlie's jackets (discussed below), and work at DSTL on the packaging to see what could feasibly fit within the packaging and the box.

The searches of Queen Elizabeth Gardens

213. Planning for searching at Queen Elizabeth Gardens began on or around 10 July 2018, with the physical searching beginning on 18 July. The searching was primarily led by VN530, with advice from VN939 as police search advisor. It involved both a physical search of the open areas in the Gardens, and swabbing of any locations where the vessel might have been hidden. There were no finds or traces of contamination in any of them.
214. On 17 July 2018 it was identified that the public toilets and a number of other areas around Queen Elizabeth Gardens would also require swabbing. These searches took place over the following days. On 19 July 2018, specific items were recovered from within Queen Elizabeth Gardens, such as a pair of nitrile gloves found in a flowerbed, discarded perfume packaging and a nail varnish bottle found at the base of a tree. The toilet block in Queen Elizabeth Gardens was swabbed on 20 July 2018. Cable ties and a bike chain were also recovered from two benches inside the Gardens. Subsequent testing indicated evidence of contamination on some of the swabs within both the men's and ladies' cubicles in the toilet block, and on one cable tie from one of the benches.
215. Over the following few days, I caused inquiries to be made as to what the cable ties had been used for. One theory was that they may have been used to hold 'wet paint' signs, but Salisbury Council ultimately informed us that they were most likely to have been used to hold memorial flowers in place.
216. Further testing at Queen Elizabeth Gardens took place over the following days. On 21 July 2018, swabs were taken of five benches (including the one to which the cable tie which had previously tested positive had been attached, referred to as 'bench 1') and the disabled toilet. Bench 1 identified evidence of contamination. The other benches and the disabled toilet all had no evidence of contamination. However, it should be noted that the control swab also tested positive on this occasion. On 30 July, additional swabs were taken from the mens' toilet block (27 swabs), womens' toilet block (22), disabled toilet block (8), and bench 1 (3). A single swab from the floor of a cubicle in the men's toilet block identified evidence of contamination; all of the other swabs were negative. The positive swab was positive at a very low level.

217. As well as testing and swabbing, open area searches were being conducted under the supervision of VN939. On 23 July 2018, I was advised that VN939 had discounted eight possible hide locations within the Gardens, but that there was one hole of note near the toilet block in a partially decomposed old railway sleeper. Nothing was found when it was searched. The open area searches in the Gardens recovered occasional items of interest, but these were all ultimately discounted as not relevant to the investigation. Queen Elizabeth Gardens was handed back to Wiltshire Police on 3 August 2018.
218. Subsequently, in January 2019, I was provided with DSTL's full analytical results from the swabbing within the Queen Elizabeth Gardens' toilets. 85 samples were taken, of which only five were positive. Those five were above the limit of detection, but below the level at which they could be quantified.
219. In my view, the forensic results from Queen Elizabeth Gardens are best described as inconclusive, although MK26 would be the best person to comment on this. The very low readings could be explained in a number of possible ways. It is possible that the suspects may have made use of the area in March 2018, leading to very low levels of contamination there more than four months later. Equally, it could reflect cross-contamination from a member of the public who had been contaminated at a very low level in Zizzi's, The Mill or The Maltings. As regards Bench 1, the positive control swab means it is difficult to draw any conclusions. I do not believe that the results themselves point towards or against any of these possibilities, which therefore need to be assessed against all of the other evidence available.

The searches of areas where the vessel may have been found by Charlie Rowley

220. Charlie Rowley was re-interviewed on 1 August 2018. For the first time, he told police that he had found the Premier Jour Nina Ricci box containing the bottle at the rear of the Cancer Research Charity Shop at 79 Catherine Street, Salisbury, SP1 2DH, between Brown Street and Ivy Street, in a waste bin (INQ003112). He put it in the front pocket of a grey hooded zip up jacket. In total four jackets were recovered from 9 Muggleton Road. The pockets of a jacket which matched Charlie Rowley's account of what he was wearing when he found the bottle were removed and swabbed to try and identify whether the item had any exterior contamination indicative of previous use. The pockets had high levels of contamination which was more consistent with Charlie Rowley having post-contamination contact with them, and less consistent with the swabs taken from the packaging found in the kitchen.

221. Planning began for recovery of the bins the next day. On 2 August 2018, two large grey Veolia wheelie-bins were recovered from the rear of the Cancer Research shop (**INQ005698**). They were taken to DSTL, where in due course each bin, and its contents, were examined on 30 August 2018. Multiple swabs were taken of the bins, which indicated no evidence of contamination. Since the bins were emptied up to twice a week, this was not especially surprising.
222. I am aware that Operation Read made inquiries into various reports of earlier sightings of a perfume bottle, as well as enquiries of charity shops and waste collection services. Such inquiries were not part of my role, although I did from time to time discuss them with the SIO. I recall, for example, suggesting that the staff at the Cancer Research shop should be interviewed in relation to the bins outside, and being assured by the SIO that this task was in hand. I have now seen **INQ000806**, **INQ000818**, **INQ000817**, **INQ000824** and **INQ000726** which show that this was followed up but did not lead to any clear evidence in relation to the bottle.
223. I have also been shown **INQ005151**, an email chain concerning information I received from MK26 regarding the possibility of train companies passing unclaimed lost property to charity shops. As the email chain shows, I passed this on to the SIO to action. I am not sure what the result of any inquiries into this were, but it strikes me as a highly speculative (though ingenious) connection to make. If the inquiries had led to anything, I would have expected to be made aware.

Other searches and consequence management

224. I have dealt above with some of the other searches undertaken for investigative purposes as part of Operation Read, in particular the bus on which Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley travelled from Salisbury to Amesbury, and the red van in which Charlie Rowley was a passenger after Dawn Sturgess fell ill. At various times, the SIO and I considered whether there were other scenes which ought to be searched, in particular the places to which Charlie Rowley had travelled after leaving 9 Muggleton Road but before he fell ill himself. However, once it was established that he had been contaminated prior to that point, there was no investigative purpose to searching those potential scenes: any signs of contamination there would not help to prove or disprove any other hypotheses. As such, these scenes, which included Boots Chemist, an ATM in Amesbury, and the Baptist Church where Charlie Rowley attended a fete, were left in the responsibility of the Strategic Coordination Group and Wiltshire Police to conduct decontamination and consequence management as necessary.

Hypotheses relating to the attack

225. I have been asked about police hypotheses relating to the bottle found at 9 Muggleton Road and its use by the suspects (in particular, whether it was the same bottle as used in the attack on the Skripals), and about where and when Charlie Rowley could have found the bottle.
226. I would stress that these are my own thoughts and observations, no more. I cannot claim to know exactly what happened, and others may have different views which are just as cogent or reasonable or consistent with the evidence. I was not the SIO for these investigations, and there may be material which I was not privy to at the time or which I am not aware of now. Nor do I have a scientific qualification or the same expertise as DSTL in interpreting the scientific results. But I consider I have sufficient knowledge to express some views on these questions subject to those caveats.
227. As regards the bottle and its use by the suspects, I believe that the suspects approached the front door of 47 Christie Miller Road and sprayed the novichok, most likely, directly to the front door handle. When the Skripals left, one shortly after the other, they each independently closed the door behind them, coming into contact with the novichok on their hands. That is consistent with the very high levels on the front door handle, on the most likely touchpoints within Sergei Skripal's car, and on each of their hands. The contamination of the Mill and Zizzi's was as a result of secondary contamination from the Skripals.
228. The contamination within 47 Christie Miller Road was, in my view, extremely likely to have been a result of the initial Wiltshire Police officers who entered the address touching the front door handle and then contaminating various points inside. This would also be consistent with DS Bailey and (to a lesser extent) PC Bell becoming unwell, with PC Bell's contamination being via his body worn video camera that was taken into the house, handled by the entry team, and then returned to him. Some of the contamination inside the address may have been tertiary cross-contamination. The contamination at Bourne Hill Police Station was either secondary or tertiary cross-contamination from the Wiltshire Police entry team.
229. I have now read **INQ005548**, though was not aware of it at the time. I am not sure of its provenance and do not feel able to comment on it. From my reading of it, it appears not to have been generated by the investigation, but provided by a well-meaning member of the public.

230. Returning to the bottle, I believe that once the suspects left 47 Christie Miller Road, they dismantled its component parts and placed them within plastic packaging which they heat sealed using a portable heat sealer. They did this at a time and place that cannot be ascertained (certainly not from the forensic evidence). They then either placed it in an unknown location to be collected by a third party (for re-use, removal or disposal), or disposed of it.
231. My personal view based on the fact the bins are emptied twice weekly is that Charlie Rowley either found the bottle in the vicinity of the Cancer Research bins at some stage close to the date of the attack on the Skripals, or it was placed there more recently by a third party. Either way, he then forgot he had it until the morning of 30 June 2018. Both options would be consistent with his recollection of recovering it from the Cancer Research bins, and with the fact that (from the Police Report's summary of CCTV) he was in that vicinity both shortly after the attack on the Skripals, and in the days leading up to 29 June. However, I cannot rule out the possibility that he could have recovered the bottle at another unknown location and unknown point in time. The forensic work on his jackets did not assist with when he recovered the bottle (by comparison to what he recalled wearing or was seen wearing on CCTV). For Charlie Rowley to have recovered the bottle by chance from where it was directly or indirectly deposited is consistent with the fact that to the best of my knowledge we never found any sort of connection between Dawn Sturgess or Charlie Rowley and the Skripals, or anything suggesting that Dawn Sturgess or Charlie Rowley might have been targeted in this way.
232. I have read **INQ005274**, although was not aware of it at the time. I agree with the assessment that it is a realistic possibility that Charlie Rowley is either mistaken in his recollection of when he found it, or it was found and then disposed of by a third party at some point shortly before 27 June 2018. I cannot say which is more likely. I would stress however that this is not a topic which the forensic evidence can assist with and the SIO may be able to bring a different perspective.
233. I do think that it is likely that the bottle found by Charlie Rowley was what was used in the attack on the Skripals. The amount of liquid missing from the bottle could be consistent with use on the Skripals' front door, the spillage by Charlie during assembly and the subsequent use by Dawn Sturgess. The apparent heat-sealing of the packaging suggests that post use it was placed in the plastic pouch and re-sealed. The presence of novichok inside the box and packaging, including the cap, also suggests that it had previously been used although this could also have occurred when Charlie

Rowley opened the packaging. I had on previous occasions asked if scientific analysis could be done on the swabs from the Skripal attack (door and personal swabs) and compared to the novichok recovered in the bottle and whilst I was advised the weather may impact on any outcomes, DSTL advised that the substances recovered in the two incidents were very similar. The exact detail of this work would be known by MK26, and although this work was initially instigated for Operations Wedana and Read the output was sensitive and I believe it was shared with the Caterva enquiry.

234. I have read the report of VN136, an intelligence analyst from CTPSE, (a gist of which has been produced, **INQ005734**), which I was aware of at the time as I passed a copy to MK26 for them to comment on. I have also now read the questions VN136 put to DSTL and the answers VN136 received (**INQ005154**), which I had not seen at the time. I am not an intelligence analyst and do not feel qualified to comment on the methodology VN136 adopted. The majority of VN136's general findings accord with my own view (save as to degree of likelihood).

Conclusions & reflections

235. I have reflected extensively on this case over the past six years. It remains a deeply shocking one. The willingness of the Russian state to make use of a deadly chemical weapon against a British citizen on British territory is outrageous. Moreover, given the nature of the weapon used, and the way in which it was deployed, there was an extremely high risk of it causing significantly more casualties amongst the general population, as tragically it did to Dawn Sturgess.
236. The CTP investigations had the safety of the public as a primary goal. The search for the poison, in particular, was extensively resourced and planned, and I am confident that if the bottle had been discarded anywhere near Christie Miller Road, we would have found it. Unsurprisingly, I have considered at length whether there was anything which we could realistically have done with the information that was available to me – either at the time or, less helpfully, with the benefit of hindsight – that might have changed the outcome for Dawn Sturgess. I do not believe that there was. Of course, there were lessons learnt from these investigations which will help CTP in future investigations of similar incidents or investigations (and an extensive debriefing and lessons learned programme was carried out in relation to both the Salisbury and Amesbury poisonings), but I cannot see how any of these changes might have prevented Dawn Sturgess' tragic death had it been implemented earlier. Sole responsibility for her death, in my view, belongs to those who brought a chemical

weapon into the UK and chose to use it for their violent purposes, with no regard for the appalling consequences of their criminal acts.

237. I hope that this statement is helpful to the Inquiry. I am fully committed to assisting the Inquiry in its work.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: _____

Personal Data

Dated: 23rd October 2024.