

# Pure: Ten Points I Just Can't Believe About the Official Skripal Narrative 412

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<https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2019/03/pure-ten-points-i-just-cant-believe-about-the-official-skripal-narrative/>

I still do not know what happened in the Skripal saga, which perhaps might more respectfully be termed the Sturgess saga. I cannot believe the Russian account of Boshirov and Petrov, because if those were their real identities, those identities would have been firmly established and displayed by now. But that does not mean they attempted to kill the Skripals, and there are many key elements to the official British account which are also simply incredible.

Governments play dark games, and a dark game was played out in Salisbury which involved at least the British state, Russian agents (possibly on behalf of the state), Orbis Intelligence and the BBC. Anybody who believes it is simple to identify the “good guys” and the “bad guys” in this situation is a fool. When it comes to state actors and the intelligence services, frequently there are no “good guys”, as I personally witnessed from the inside over torture, extraordinary rendition and the illegal invasion of Iraq. But in the face of a massive media campaign to validate the British government story about the Skripals, here are ten of the things I do not believe in the official account:

## 1) PURE

This was the point that led me to return to the subject of the Skripals, even though it has brought me more abuse than I had received in my 15 year career as a whistleblower.

A few months ago, I was in truth demoralised by the amount of abuse I was receiving about the collapse of the Russian identity story of Boshirov and Petrov. I had never claimed the poisoning, if any, was not carried out by Russians, only that there were many other possibilities. I understood the case against the Russian state is still far from established, whoever Boshirov and Petrov really are, and I did not (and do not) accept Bellingcat's conjectures and dodgy evidence as conclusive identification. But I did not enjoy at all the constant online taunts, and therefore was not inclined to take the subject further.

It is in this mood that I received more information from my original FCO source, who had told me, correctly, that Porton Down could not and **would not attest** that the “novichok” sample was made in Russia, and explained that the formulation “of a type developed by Russia” was an agreed Whitehall line to cover this up.

She wanted to explain to me that the British government was pulling a similar trick over the use of the word “pure”. The OPCW report **had concluded** that the sample provided to them by the British government was “of high purity” with an “almost complete absence of impurities”. This had been spun by the British government as evidence that the novichok was “military grade” and could only be produced by a state.

But actually that is not what the OPCW technical experts were attempting to signal. The sample provided to the OPCW had allegedly been swabbed from the Skripals' door handle. It had been on that door handle for several days before it was allegedly discovered there. In that time it had been contacted allegedly by the hands of the Skripals and of DC Bailey, and the gloves of numerous investigators. It had of course been exposed to whatever film of dirt or dust was on the door handle. It had been exposed to whatever pollution was in the rain and whatever dust and pollen was blowing around. In these circumstances, it is incredible that the sample provided “had an almost complete absence of impurities”.

A sample cannot have a complete absence of impurities after being on a used doorknob, outdoors, for several days. The sample provided was, on the contrary, straight out of a laboratory.

The government's contention that "almost complete absence of impurities" meant "military grade" was complete nonsense. There is no such thing as "military grade" novichok. It has never been issued to any military, anywhere. The novichok programme was designed to produce an organo-phosphate poison which could quickly be knocked up from readily available commercial ingredients. It was not part of an actual defence industry manufacturing programme.

There is a final problem with the "of high purity" angle. First we had the Theresa May story that the "novichok" was extremely deadly, many times more deadly than VX, in minute traces. Then, when the Skripals did not die, it was explained to us that this was because it had degraded in the rain. This was famously put forward by **Dan Kaszeta**, formerly of US Intelligence and the White House and self-proclaimed chemical weapons expert – which expertise has been **strenuously denied** by real experts.

What we did not know then, but we do know now, is that Kaszeta was secretly **being paid** to produce this propaganda by the British government via the Integrity Initiative.

So the first thing I cannot believe is that the British government produced a sample with an "almost complete absence of impurities" from several days on the Skripals' doorknob. Nor can I believe that if "extremely pure" the substance therefore was not fatal to the Skripals.

## 2) Raising the Roof

Three days ago Sky News had an outside broadcast from the front of the Skripals' house in Salisbury, where they explained that the roof had been removed and replaced due to contamination with "novichok".

I cannot believe that a gel, allegedly smeared or painted onto the doorknob, migrated upwards to get into the roof of a two storey house, in such a manner that the roof had to be destroyed, but the house inbetween did not. As the MSM never questions the official narrative, there has never been an official answer as to how the gel got from the doorknob to the roof. Remember that traces of the "novichok" were allegedly found in a hotel room in Poplar, which is still in use as a hotel room and did not have to be destroyed, and an entire bottle of it was allegedly found in Charlie Rowley's house, which has not had to be destroyed. Novichok was found in Zizzi's restaurant, which did not have to be destroyed.

So we are talking about novichok in threatening quantities – more than the traces allegedly found in the hotel in Poplar – being in the Skripals' roof. How could this happen?

As I said in the onset, I do not know what happened, I only know what I do not believe. There are theories that Skripal and his daughter might themselves have been involved with novichok in some way. On the face of it, its presence in their roof might support that theory.

The second thing I do not believe is that the Skripals' roof became contaminated by gel on their doorknob so that the roof had to be destroyed, whereas no other affected properties, nor the rest of the Skripals' house, had to be destroyed.

## 3) Nursing Care

The very first person to discover the Skripals ill on a park bench in Salisbury **just happened to be** the Chief Nurse of the British Army, who chanced to be walking past them on her way back from a birthday party. How lucky was that? The odds are about the same as the chance of my vacuum cleaner breaking down just before James Dyson knocks at my door to ask for directions. There are very few people indeed in the UK trained to give nursing care to victims of chemical weapon attack, and of all the people who might have walked past, it just happened to be the most senior of them!

The government is always trying to get good publicity for its armed forces, and you would think that the heroic role of its off-duty personnel in saving random poisoned Russian double agents they just happened to chance across, would have been proclaimed as a triumph for the British military. Yet it was kept secret for ten months. We were not told about the involvement of Colonel Alison McCourt until January of this year, when it came out by accident. Swollen with maternal pride, Col. McCourt nominated her daughter for an award from the local radio station for her role in helping give first aid to the Skripals, and young Abigail revealed her mother's identity on local radio – and the fact her mother was there "with her" administering first aid.

Even then, the compliant MSM played along, with [the Guardian](#) and [Sky News](#) both among those running stories emphasising entirely the Enid Blyton narrative of “plucky teenager saves the Skripals”, and scarcely mentioning the Army’s Chief Nurse who was looking after the Skripals “with little Abigail”.

I want to emphasise again that Col. Alison McCourt is not the chief nurse of a particular unit or hospital, she is the Chief Nurse of the entire British Army. Her presence was kept entirely quiet by the media for ten months, when all sorts of stories were run in the MSM about who the first responders were – various doctors and police officers being mentioned.

If you believe that it is coincidence that the Chief Nurse of the British Army was the first person to discover the Skripals ill, you are a credulous fool. And why was it kept quiet?

#### **4) Remarkable Metabolisms**

This has been noted many times, but no satisfactory answer has ever been given. The official story is that the Skripals were poisoned by their door handle, but then well enough to go out to a pub, feed some ducks, and have a big lunch in Zizzi’s, before being instantly stricken and disabled, both at precisely the same time.

The Skripals were of very different ages, genders and weights. That an agent which took hours to act but then kicks in with immediate disabling effect, so they could not call for help, would affect two such entirely different metabolisms at precisely the same time, has never been satisfactorily explained. Dosage would have an effect and of course the doorknob method would give an uncontrolled dosage.

But that the two different random dosages were such that they affected each of these two very different people at just the same moment, so that neither could call for help, is an extreme coincidence. It is almost as unlikely as the person who walks by next being the Chief Nurse of the British Army.

#### **5) 11 Days**

After the poisoning of Charlie Rowley and Dawn Sturgess, the Police cordoned off Charlie Rowley’s home and began a search for “Novichok”, in an attitude of extreme urgency because it was believed this poison was out amidst the public. They were specifically searching for a small phial of liquid. Yet it took 11 days of the search before they allegedly discovered the “novichok” in a perfume bottle sitting in plain sight on the kitchen counter – and only after they had discovered the clue of the perfume bottle package in the bin the day before, after ten days of search.

The bottle was out of its packaging and “novichok”, of which the tiniest amount is deadly, had been squirted out of its nozzle at least twice, by both Rowley and Sturgess, and possibly more often. The exterior of the bottle/nozzle was therefore contaminated. Yet the house, unlike the Skripals’ roof space, has not had to be destroyed.

I do not believe it took the Police eleven days to find the very thing they were looking for, in plain sight as exactly the small bottle of liquid sought, on a kitchen bench. What else was happening?

#### **6) Mark Urban/Pablo Miller**

The BBC’s “Diplomatic Editor” is a regular conduit for the security services. He fronted much of the BBC’s original coverage of the Skripal story. Yet he concealed from the viewers the fact that he had been in regular contact with Sergei Skripal for months before the alleged poisoning, and had held several meetings with Skripal.

This is extraordinary behaviour. It was the biggest news story in the world, and news organisations, including the BBC, were scrambling to fill in the Skripals’ back story. Yet the journalist who had the inside info on the world’s biggest news story, and was actually reporting on it, kept that knowledge to himself. Why? Urban was not only passing up a career defining opportunity, it was unethical of him to continually report on the story without revealing to the viewers his extensive contacts with Skripal.

The British government had two immediate reactions to the Skripal incident. Within the first 48 hours, it blamed Russia, and it slapped a D(SMA) notice banning all media mention of Skripal’s MI6 handler, Pablo Miller. By yet another one of those extraordinary coincidences, Miller and Urban know each other well, having both been [officers together](#) in the Royal Tank Regiment, of the same rank and joining the Regiment the same year.

I have sent the following questions to Mark Urban, repeatedly. There has been no response:

To: [mark.urban@bbc.co.uk](mailto:mark.urban@bbc.co.uk)

Dear Mark,

As you may know, I am a journalist working in alternative media, a member of the NUJ, as well as a former British Ambassador. I am researching the Skripal case.

I wish to ask you the following questions.

- 1) When the Skripals were first poisoned, it was the largest news story in the entire World and you were uniquely positioned having held several meetings with Sergei Skripal the previous year. Yet faced with what should have been a massive career break, you withheld that unique information on a major story from the public for four months. Why?
- 2)  
2) You were an officer in the Royal Tank Regiment together with Skripal's MI6 handler, Pablo Miller, who also lived in Salisbury. Have you maintained friendship with Miller over the years and how often do you communicate?
- 3)  
3) When you met Skripal in Salisbury, was Miller present all or part of the time, or did you meet Miller separately?
- 4)  
4) Was the BBC aware of your meetings with Miller and/or Skripal at the time?
- 5)  
5) When, four months later, you told the world about your meetings with Skripal after the Rowley/Sturgess incident, you said you had met him to research a book. Yet the only forthcoming book by you advertised is on the Skripal attack. What was the subject of your discussions with Skripal?
- 6)  
6) Pablo Miller worked for Orbis Intelligence. Do you know if Miller contributed to the Christopher Steele dossier on Trump/Russia?
- 7)  
7) Did you discuss the Trump dossier with Skripal and/or Miller?
- 8)  
8) Do you know whether Skripal contributed to the Trump dossier?
- 9)  
9) In your Newsnight piece following the Rowley/Sturgess incident, you stated that security service sources had told you that Yulia Skripal's telephone may have been bugged. Since January 2017, how many security service briefings or discussions have you had on any of the matter above.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Craig Murray

The lack of openness of Urban in refusing to answer these questions, and the role played by the BBC and the MSM in general in marching in unquestioning lockstep with the British government narrative, plus the "coincidence" of Urban's relationship with Pablo Miller, give further reason for scepticism of the official narrative.

## **7 Four Months**

The official narrative insists that Boshirov and Petrov brought “novichok” into the country; that minute quantities could kill; that they disposed of the novichok that did kill Dawn Sturgess. It must therefore have been of the highest priority to inform the public of the movements of the suspects and the possible locations where deadly traces of “novichok” must be lurking.

Yet there was at least a four month gap between the police searching the Poplar hotel where Boshirov and Petrov were staying, allegedly discovering traces of novichok in the hotel room, and the police informing the hotel management, let alone the public, of the discovery. That is four months in which a cleaner might have fatally stumbled across more novichok in the hotel. Four months in which another guest in the same hotel might have had something lurking in their bag which they had picked up. Four months in which there might have been a container of novichok sitting in a hedge near the hotel. Yet for four months the police did not think any of this was urgent enough to tell anybody.

The astonishing thing is that it was a full three months after the death of Dawn Sturgess before the hotel were informed, the public were informed, or the pictures of “Boshirov” and “Petrov” in Salisbury released. There could be no clearer indication that the authorities did not actually believe that any threat from residual novichok was connected to the movements of Boshirov and Petrov.

Similarly the metadata on the famous CCTV images of Boshirov and Petrov in Salisbury, published in September by the Met Police, showed that all the stills were prepared by the Met on the morning of 9 May – a full four months before they were released to the public. But this makes no sense at all. Why wait a full four months for people’s memories to fade before issuing an appeal to the public for information? This makes no sense at all from an investigation viewpoint. It makes even less sense from a public health viewpoint.

If the authorities were genuinely worried about the possible presence of deadly novichok, and wished to track it down, why one earth would you wait for four months before you published the images showing the faces and clothing and the whereabouts of the people you believe were distributing it?

The only possible conclusion from the amazing four month delays both in informing the hotel, and in revealing the Boshirov and Petrov CCTV footage to the public, is that the Metropolitan Police did not actually believe there was a public health danger that the two had left a trail of novichok. Were the official story true, this extraordinary failure to take timely action in a public health emergency may have contributed to the death of Dawn Sturgess.

The metadata shows Police processed all the Salisbury CCTV images of Boshirov and Petrov a month before Charlie Rowley picked up the perfume. The authorities claim the CCTV images show they could have been to the charity bin to dump the novichok. Which begs the question, if the Police really believed they had CCTV of the movements of the men with the novichok, why did they not subsequently exhaustively search everywhere the CCTV shows they could have been, including that charity bin?

The far more probable conclusion appears to be that the lack of urgency is explained by the fact that the link between Boshirov and Petrov and “novichok” is a narrative those involved in the investigation do not take seriously.

## **8 The Bungling Spies**

There are elements of the accepted narrative of Boshirov and Petrov’s movements that do not make sense. As the excellent local Salisbury blog the Blogmire points out, the CCTV footage shows Boshirov and Petrov, after they had allegedly coated the door handle with novichok, returning towards the railway station but walking straight past it, into the centre of Salisbury (and missing their first getaway train in the process). They then wander around Salisbury apparently aimlessly, famously window shopping which is caught on CCTV, and according to the official narrative disposing of the used but inexplicably still cellophane-sealed perfume/novichok in a charity donation bin, having walked past numerous potential disposal sites en route including the railway embankment and the bins at the Shell garage.

But the really interesting thing, highlighted by the blogmire, is that the closest CCTV ever caught them to the Skripals’ house is fully 500 metres, at the Shell garage, walking along the opposite side of the road from the turning to the Skripals. There is a second CCTV camera at the garage which would have caught them crossing

the road and turning down towards the Skripals' house, but no such video or still image – potentially the most important of all the CCTV footage – has ever been released.

However the 500 metres is not the closest the CCTV places the agents to the Skripals. From 13.45 to 13.48, on their saunter into town, Boshirov and Petrov were caught on CCTV at Dawaulders coinshop a maximum of 200 metres away from the Skripals, who at the same time were at Avon Playground. The bin at Avon playground became, over two days in the immediate aftermath of the Skripal “attack”, the scene of extremely intensive investigation. Yet the Boshirov and Petrov excursion – during their getaway from attempted murder – into Salisbury town centre has been treated as entirely pointless and unimportant by the official story.

Finally, the behaviour of Boshirov and Petrov in the early hours before the attack makes no sense whatsoever. On the one hand we are told these are highly trained, experienced and senior GRU agents; on the other hand, we are told they were partying in their room all night, drawing attention to themselves with loud noise, smoking weed and entertaining a prostitute in the room in which they were storing, and perhaps creating, the “novichok”.

The idea that, before an extremely delicate murder operation involving handling a poison, a tiny accident with which would kill them, professionals would stay up all night and drink heavily and take drugs is a nonsense. Apart from the obvious effect on their own metabolisms, they were risking authorities being called because of the noise and a search being instituted because of the drugs.

That they did this while in possession of the novichok and hours before they made the attack, is something I simply do not believe.

## **9 The Skripals' Movements**

Until the narrative changed to Boshirov and Petrov arriving in Salisbury just before lunchtime and painting the doorknob, the official story had been that the Skripals left home around 9am and had not returned. They had both switched off their mobile phones, an interesting and still unexplained point. As you would expect in a city as covered in CCTV as Salisbury, their early morning journey was easily traced and the position of their car at various times was given by the police.

Yet no evidence of their return journey has ever been offered. There is now a tiny window between Boshirov and Petrov arriving, painting the doorknob apparently with the Skripals now inexplicably back inside their home, and the Skripals leaving again by car, so quickly after the doorknob painting that they catch up with Boshirov and Petrov – or certainly being no more than 200 metres from them in Salisbury City Centre. There is undoubtedly a huge amount of CCTV video of the Skripals' movements which has never been released. For example, the parents of one of the boys who Sergei was chatting with while feeding the ducks, was shown “clear” footage by the Police of the Skripals at the pond, yet this has never been released. This however is the moment at which the evidence puts Boshirov and Petrov at the closest to them. What does the concealed CCTV of the Skripals with the ducks show?

Why has so little detail of the Skripals' movements that day been released? What do all the withheld CCTV images of the Skripals in Salisbury show?

## **10 The Sealed Bottle**

Only in the last couple of days have the police finally admitted there is a real problem with the fact that Charlie Rowley insists that the perfume bottle was fully sealed, and the cellophane difficult to remove, when he discovered it. Why the charity collection bin had not been emptied for three months has never been explained either. Rowley's recollection is supported by the fact that the entire packaging was discovered by the police in his bin – why would Boshirov and Petrov have been carrying the cellophane around with them if they had opened the package? Why – and how – would they reseal it outdoors in Salisbury before dumping it?

Furthermore, there was a gap of three months between the police finding the perfume bottle, and the police releasing details of the brand and photos of it, despite the fact the police believed there could be more out there. Again the news management agenda totally belies the official narrative of the need to protect the public in a public health emergency.

This part of the narrative is plainly nonsense.

## **Bonus Point – The Integrity Initiative**

The Integrity Initiative specifically paid Dan Kazeta to publish articles on the Skripal case. In the weekly collections of social media postings the Integrity Initiative sent to the FCO to show its activity, over 80% were about the Skripals.

Governments do not institute secret campaigns to put out covert propaganda in order to tell the truth. The Integrity Initiative, with secret FCO and MOD sourced subsidies to MSM figures to put out the government narrative, is very plainly a disinformation exercise. More bluntly, if the Integrity Initiative is promoting it, you know it is not true.

Most sinister of all is the Skripal Group convened by the Integrity Initiative. This group includes Pablo Miller, Skripal's MI6 handler, and senior representatives of Porton Down, the BBC, the CIA, the FCO and the MOD. Even if all the other ludicrously weak points in the government narrative did not exist, the Integrity Initiative activity in itself would lead me to understand the British government is concealing something important.

## **Conclusion**

I do not know what happened in Salisbury. Plainly spy games were being played between Russia and the UK, quite likely linked to the Skripals and/or the NATO chemical weapons exercise then taking place on Salisbury Plain yet another one of those astonishing coincidences.

What I do know is that major planks of the UK government narrative simply do not stand up to scrutiny.

Plainly the Russian authorities have lied about the identity of Boshirov and Petrov. What is astonishing is the alacrity with which the MSM and the political elite have rallied around the childish logical fallacy that because the Russian Government has lied, therefore the British Government must be telling the truth. It is abundantly plain to me that both governments are lying, and the spy games being played out that day were very much more complicated than a pointless revenge attack on the Skripals.

I do not believe the British Government. I have given you the key points where the official narrative completely fails to stand up. These are by no means exhaustive, and I much look forward to reading your own views.