

Skripal Gambit Blows Up in May's Face, Trump Moves Ahead on Diplomatic Fronts

by Harley Schlanger

April 6—If the intent of the absurd charges flung at Russian President Putin—by Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May and her Foreign Minister Boris Johnson—was to drive a wedge between U.S. President Trump and Russian President Putin, it has failed miserably. May not only accused Putin's intelligence operatives of poisoning former Russian spy and British double agent Sergey Skripal and his daughter Yulia, but demanded that governments accept her accusations and join Britain in imposing sharp penalties against Russia. While the United States, fourteen EU nations, and six other governments went along with May, expelling more than 130 Russian diplomats, the British were not pleased, as many governments, including some which did expel Russian diplomats, expressed doubts about the lack of evidence to prove the charges, and President Trump repeatedly refused to blame Putin, though his government did expel diplomats.

When it was subsequently announced that the Trump administration will allow the Russians expelled from the United States to be replaced by others, and that Russia would reciprocate, demonstrating that the expulsions were at best a token gesture, it added to the British sense that they were being betrayed by Trump.

Doubts about May's and Johnson's charges proved to be prophetic, with the April 3 announcement by Gary Aitkenhead, Chief Executive of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), the British chemical warfare research center at the Porton Down science park, that the investigating team was unable to determine where the chemical agent used against the Skripals came from, and specifically, that they could not prove it came from Russia. The *London*

Times was forced to admit that Aitkenhead's report "risks undermining the international coalition against Moscow."

The *Guardian*, which had been one of the more aggressive media outlets in its attacks on Moscow (and in promoting the Russiagate narrative against Trump and Putin), complained that UK officials were "thrown on the defensive" by Aitkenhead's report, while British opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn went even further, essentially accusing Johnson of lying. He said that Johnson has "egg on his face," and has "serious questions to answer," given that Johnson told German television—as well as anyone else who would listen—that Porton Down had assured him "categorically" that Russia was the source of the Novichok chemical agent deployed against the Skripals. Corbyn said that Johnson "seems to have completely exceeded the information he had been given, and told the world, in categorical terms what he believed had happened, and it's not backed up by the evidence he claimed to have gotten from Porton Down."

That the Brits lied, in pursuit of an anti-Putin, anti-Trump agenda, is no surprise to readers of *EIR*, and to supporters of the LaRouche movement, which has long documented the sordid history of war provocations coming from the defenders of the British empire. In the last fifteen years, the British government and its intelligence officials have been caught in repeated lies to promote regime-change wars, beginning with Tony Blair's lying dossier alleging that Iraq's President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction that could land in London within 45 minutes of being launched. That dossier, produced under the direction of MI6 head Sir Richard Dearlove, was used by the Bush-Cheney administration to justify the 2003 inva-

sion and destruction of Iraq, which resulted in more than a million deaths and the launching of ISIS. The same networks lied that Syrian President Assad had used chemical weapons against his own people, while they and their Obama administration allies were busy arming the “rebels” in Syria, and covering up *their* use of chemical weapons.

The same Dearlove has been exposed as playing a key role in the distribution of the fraudulent “dodgy dossier” produced by one of his protégés, “ex”-MI6 agent Christopher Steele, which has been at the center of regime-change operations against U.S. President Trump. It should be noted that there is a Steele connection to the Skripal case, as he was a key operative on the Russia Desk of MI6 when Skripal was functioning as a double agent. Skripal’s recruiter, former MI6 agent Pablo Miller, according to the *Telegraph*, was working then for Steele’s firm, Orbis Business Intelligence, leading to speculation that perhaps Skripal may have been involved in some way in producing the Steele dossier, and that’s why he was targeted, not by the Russians, but by the British!

Trump’s Diplomatic Agenda

As the British effort to use the Skripal affair was unfolding, with demands that Russia be punished, President Trump made a high-profile phone call to Putin on March 21, to congratulate him on his re-election. The U.S. media highlighted the story that Trump aides had specifically advised him *not* to congratulate Putin, and demanded that press secretary Sarah Sanders explain why Trump did not question Putin about Putin’s alleged involvement in poisoning Skripal. What Sanders reported shocked the anti-Trumpers in the media: Not only had Trump not confronted Putin, but he invited him to meet in the “not-distant future.”

In a campaign-style rally several days later in Ohio, Trump reiterated his oft-stated position that he believes it is better to have good relations with Russia. He said it again on April 3, in a press appearance with the presidents of three Baltic states saying, “we want to be able to get along with Russia. Getting along with Russia is a good thing, not a bad thing.” He said this while flanked by presidents who have been warning that their countries might be targets of “Russian aggression”!

At the same time, Trump followed up his announcement, from earlier in the week, that he intends to remove

all U.S. troops from Syria. “I want to get out,” he said. “I want to bring our troops back home.” The “primary mission” of our presence in Syria was the defeat of the Islamic State, which he said is “almost completed.” Left unsaid by the President, but obvious to all, is that the main work done to defeat ISIS was done by the forces of the Syrian government, backed primarily by Russia.

Under Trump, U.S. military forces operating against ISIS have engaged in regular consultation with the Russians. His announcement that it is time to pull U.S. troops out of Syria completely conforms with his campaign pledge that, under his presidency, U.S. soldiers would not die in regime-change wars and U.S. taxpayers would not pay trillions of dollars to interfere in the sovereign affairs of other nations. This pledge was in direct opposition to what his opponent, Hillary Clinton, said. Clinton said she would enforce “no-fly zones” in Syria, which could have led to military conflict with Russian forces there. It is one of the reasons that the “Deep State”—the pro-war grouping of U.S. intelligence operatives closely aligned with the British—has been so feverishly engaged in trying to remove Trump. Among the top officials deployed against Trump has been Obama’s national security team, including former CIA Director John Brennan, former FBI Director James Comey, former Director of National Security and Russophobe James Clapper, and former President Barack Obama himself. All are now being investigated, by Congress and the Justice Department, for their role in coordinating the attacks on the Trump presidency with Steele and British intelligence.

In addition to his plan to meet soon with Putin, Trump is involved in ongoing discussions on trade and economic relations with China’s President Xi Jinping, as well as on the prospects for an upcoming summit with North Korea’s Kim Jong-un, and he will meet soon with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

This schedule makes clear that British-directed operations against him, such as the Russiagate investigation and the Skripal case, have not deterred Trump from his stated intent to reverse the paradigm of the Bush and Obama years, when the United States functioned, in full collaboration with the Brits, as though it were the world’s only power, capable of dictating terms to all, and carrying out provocations against Russia and China.