

The Dawn Sturges Inquiry

**Report into the death of Dawn Sturges
by The Rt Hon Lord Hughes of Ombersley**

December 2025

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by The Rt Hon Lord Hughes of Ombersley**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 26 of the Inquiries Act 2005

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 4 December 2025



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CORRECTION SLIP

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Correction:

On page 41, in paragraph 3.61

Text currently reads:

I am satisfied from the evidence that I heard and read from the emergency responders involved (including that a disciplinary investigation took place)²¹⁶ that this incident was entirely an accident.

Text should read:

I am satisfied from the evidence that I heard and read from the emergency responders involved (including that an incident investigation took place)²¹⁶ that this incident was entirely an accident.

Date of correction: 29 January 2026

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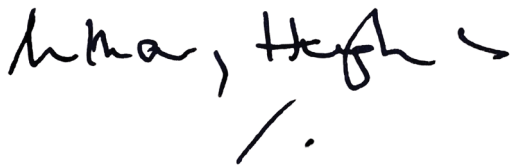
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Foreword

In March 2022, I was appointed Chair of the independent public Inquiry into the circumstances of the death of Dawn Sturgess, who died in Salisbury on 8 July 2018.

This is my report on the totality of the evidence, although of course (for reasons explained further in the report) sections of it cannot be made public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hughes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon Lord Hughes of Ombersley

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 On the morning of Saturday 30 June 2018, Dawn Sturgess collapsed at her partner's home in Amesbury, Wiltshire. She suffered a catastrophic cardiac arrest and consequent brain injury through lack of oxygen.¹ Despite prompt paramedic attendance at the scene and skilled paramedic and hospital care, the damage proved irreversible. Intensive care consultants concluded there was no choice but to discontinue artificial life support systems,² and she died on Sunday 8 July 2018. It had transpired by then that the cause of her collapse was exposure to a nerve agent identified as one of a class known as 'Novichoks'. Later on the same day that Dawn Sturgess collapsed, her partner became very ill as a result of exposure to the same nerve agent; he survived, albeit with lasting ill-effects.

1.2 Approximately four months earlier (on Sunday 4 March 2018), and about seven miles away from Amesbury, Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal had collapsed in the centre of Salisbury. They survived after long periods of unconsciousness and intensive hospital treatment. The cause of their collapses was exposure to the same Novichok nerve agent.

1.3 As is the case with all violent and unnatural deaths, an inquest was required into the death of Dawn Sturgess.³ Once the Inquest had started, it became clear that her death could not properly be understood without also investigating the earlier nerve agent event in Salisbury. There had been no other known instance of Novichok poisoning in the UK, nor has there been any since.

Dawn Sturgess

1.4 Dawn Sturgess was born on 18 June 1974 and so was 44 years old when she died on 8 July 2018. She had three children from previous relationships: a daughter, who was under 18 years old, and two grown-up sons. Dawn Sturgess was brought up in Salisbury and lived there almost all her life. In 2018, she was living there in supported hostel accommodation at John Baker House, where she had had a room since 2016.⁴ She was by then in a relationship with Charles (Charlie) Rowley, who had his own accommodation, initially in a different Salisbury hostel and, from May 2018, in a flat at 9 Muggleton Road, Amesbury.⁵ Dawn Sturgess was not working in 2018 but managed her own finances.⁶

¹ [Professor Guy Ruttly 5 November 2024 69/18-76/16; INQ005227_00035-00036](#) at paragraph 17

² [INQ004554_00002](#) at paragraphs 7–9

³ Sections 1 and 6 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/section/1>; <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/section/6>)

⁴ [INQ004389_00001-00002](#)

⁵ [INQ000813_00001](#); [INQ005982_00001](#) at paragraphs 2 and 3; [INQ005820_00042](#) at paragraphs 127 and 128

⁶ [INQ004388_00002](#)

1.5 Dawn Sturgess had longstanding personal difficulties with alcohol dependence and had told family members that she might have bipolar disorder, for which she was prescribed medication.⁷ Contrary to some inaccurate reports, she was not (unlike Charlie Rowley and some of their friends) a known user of prohibited drugs; indeed, the unanimous evidence of those who knew her is that she avoided them.⁸

1.6 Dawn Sturgess was in regular and affectionate contact with her parents and sisters, as well as with her children – particularly the youngest, who lived with Dawn’s parents. Dawn’s mother, Caroline Sturgess, said that Dawn had a particularly close bond with her daughter. Caroline Sturgess described Dawn as intelligent, funny, extremely selfless and very kind.⁹ Dawn’s personal difficulties had no impact on her exposure to the nerve agent or on her death.

Figure 1: Image of Dawn Sturgess



Source: Image of Dawn Sturgess provided by the Sturgess family (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Image-of-Dawn-Sturgess-updated.jpeg>)

⁷ [INQ004389_00003](#)

⁸ [Caroline Sturgess 15 October 2024 2/24-3/1](#); [INQ000813_00001](#); [INQ000884_00001](#); [INQ004529_00001](#); [INQ003114_00028](#)

⁹ [Caroline Sturgess 15 October 2024 2/1-2](#)

Sergei Skripal

1.7 Sergei Skripal is a former Russian soldier and intelligence officer who served in the GRU (the Russian military intelligence agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering).¹⁰ Public reporting indicates that, in 2006, he had been tried in a closed court in Russia on charges of espionage.¹¹ He had been convicted of treason¹² and imprisoned. Four years later, in 2010, he was one of a number of people who were the subject of a prisoner exchange involving, on the one hand, Russia, and, on the other, the USA and the UK.¹³ He was pardoned in Russia by the President of the Russian Federation¹⁴ (then Dmitry Medvedev) for the offences for which he had been convicted, and he was permitted by his home country to come to the UK to live.¹⁵ He had been living in Salisbury for several years before the nerve agent event of Sunday 4 March 2018.

Public inquiry

1.8 Most of the facts relating to the events surrounding both Sergei and Yulia Skripal's exposure to a nerve agent in Salisbury and Dawn Sturgess' death in Amesbury can be, and have been, investigated in public hearings, which I have held. But the use of a highly unusual nerve agent, together with the history of Sergei Skripal, meant that any inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess also inevitably involved the examination of a certain amount of security-sensitive material. A coroner is disabled from taking such material into account in arriving at conclusions, as any material subject to a successful application for public interest immunity (PII) is inadmissible at an inquest. Accordingly, the Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess was converted into a public inquiry, held according to the terms of the Inquiries Act 2005 (see Appendix 1 paragraphs A1.10 to A1.15 below).

1.9 The Right Honourable the Baroness Hallett DBE (who had been the Coroner for the Inquest) was appointed to chair the Inquiry into Dawn Sturgess' death. However, following her appointment as Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, she was unable to continue, and I took over on 9 March 2022. The Dawn Sturgess Inquiry was formally established on 17 March 2022. A public inquiry can examine and take into account security-sensitive material and must do so by way of closed hearings additional to its ordinary open ones.

1.10 The Inquiry's Terms of Reference reflect its origins as an inquest. They are as follows:

"1. Subject to paragraph 2 below, the Chair is to conduct an investigation into the death of Dawn Sturgess in order to:

- a) ascertain, in accordance with section 5(1) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 who the deceased was; how; when and where she came by her death; and the particulars (if any) required by the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 to be registered concerning the death;*

¹⁰ [INQ004679_00001](#); [INQ005744_00005](#)

¹¹ [INQ005820_00007](#) at paragraph 14; [INQ005781_00001](#)

¹² [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 76/6-9](#)

¹³ [INQ005781_00001](#); [INQ006086_00005](#) at paragraph 14

¹⁴ Note that here and throughout this report I refer to the Russian Federation by the shorthand 'Russia'.

¹⁵ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 76/6-12, 79/12-18](#); [INQ006086_00005](#) at paragraph 14; [INQ004679_00001](#)

b) *identify, so far as consistent with section 2 of the Inquiries Act 2005, where responsibility for the death lies; and*

c) *make such recommendations as may seem appropriate.*

2. *That investigation is to take into account the investigations which have already been conducted by the Coroner (Baroness Hallett).*¹⁶

1.11 Between October and December 2024, I held a series of public (open) hearings into the evidence relating to both the Salisbury and Amesbury events (see Appendix 1 paragraph A1.51 below). I heard oral evidence from 40 witnesses, and I also considered a large volume of documentary evidence, including publicly available material. This is my report on the facts of both the Salisbury and Amesbury events.

1.12 As anticipated, I also examined the relevant sensitive material and, in some cases, required the attendance of relevant witnesses in closed hearings. The conclusions set out in this report take account of that material. I include as part of this report a closed section which cannot be made available to the public, because of the damage which might be done to national security and the risk of harm which might be occasioned to some individuals if it were to be published. But it is necessary to make clear that I have not allowed any conclusion to be stated in my open report which is in any way inconsistent with evidence which I accepted only in closed sessions. Throughout the closed sessions I asked myself whether there was anything which I learned which caused any modification of provisional conclusions arrived at after the open sessions. If there was, that modification has been made. Also, when considering the closed material, I asked myself a number of additional questions, including some posed at my request in open sessions by the representatives of the family of Dawn Sturgess.¹⁷ Where answers to those questions can properly be arrived at and stated openly, this open and public report provides them.

1.13 So far as practicable, I shall endeavour to set out the events which I have examined in chronological order. It is necessary, however, to remember that some of the crucial actions which I shall explain were not apparent immediately but have been proved subsequently as a result of intensive, and extremely thorough, detective work, as well as by research into openly published material which would not have attracted general attention until after the events. Just as is commonplace in all investigations, criminal or otherwise, the evidence which is now assembled chronologically did not come to light in that order.

1.14 I have adopted the same approach to the standard of proof as was taken in previous public inquiries, notably by Dame Janet Smith in The Shipman Inquiry, by Sir William Gage in The Baha Mousa Inquiry, and by Sir Robert Owen in The Litvinenko Inquiry.¹⁸ Generally, if I state a fact, I have found it proved at least on the balance of probabilities, that is, to the ordinary civil standard adopted in UK courts. If I record that a fact is 'likely', that too means that it is more likely than not, thus established on the balance of probabilities. In some instances, I have been satisfied of a fact beyond that standard, to the level applied by

¹⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Terms of Reference (<https://www.dawnsturgess.independent-inquiry.uk/documents/terms-of-reference/>)

¹⁷ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess_2 December 2024 73/10-81/9](#)

¹⁸ *The Baha Mousa Public Inquiry Report*, Volume I, Part I, Chapter 6, page 23, paragraphs 1.114 and 1.115 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-baha-mousa-public-inquiry-report>); *The Litvinenko Inquiry: Report into the death of Alexander Litvinenko*, Part 2, page 10, paragraph 2.20 and Appendix 1, pages 261–262, paragraphs 120–122 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-litvinenko-inquiry-report-into-the-death-of-alexander-litvinenko>)

criminal courts, that is, beyond reasonable doubt. Where this is so, I will record that I am ‘sure’. Other expressions, such as that something is ‘possible’, do not represent findings of fact but are indications of my state of mind, case by case and according to context.

1.15 Although I have adopted these standards for the findings which I make, I should emphasise that it is not part of the function of this, or any other public inquiry, to convict anyone of any criminal offence or to adjudge someone civilly liable to another. Section 2 of the Inquiries Act 2005 makes it clear that an inquiry has no power to do either of those things.¹⁹ Any criminal or civil liability can only be determined by the courts of England and Wales with jurisdiction in the relevant field. Nor should an inquiry which is a conversion from an inquest make a finding of ‘unlawful killing’ where its findings identify those responsible; narrative findings are the correct approach.²⁰

1.16 I am not, however, inhibited from making findings of fact by the implications which those facts might have if criminal or civil liability were to be in issue in the appropriate court, and if they were there to be established.²¹ In adopting this approach, I have carefully considered submissions from the family of Dawn Sturgess,²² and I am satisfied that the narrative conclusions in the remaining parts of this report correctly set out my findings as to responsibility for the death of Dawn Sturgess.

¹⁹ s2(1) of the Inquiries Act 2005 provides that “*an inquiry panel is not to rule on, and has no power to determine, any person’s civil or criminal liability*”.

²⁰ *R (Evans) v Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner* [2010] EWCA 3478 (Admin); and see His Honour Judge Paul Matthews, *Jervis on Coroners*, 15th ed, (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 2024) paragraphs 13–57 and Jason Beer, *Public Inquiries*, (Oxford: OUP, 2011) paragraphs 2.128–2.145

²¹ s2(2) Inquiries Act 2005; and see *R (GS, a child) v HM Senior Coroner for Wiltshire and Swindon* [2020] EWHC 2007 (Admin)

²² The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family’s written closing statement, pages 42–46 at paragraphs 129–134 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

Part 2: Novichoks

2.1 The common feature of the two events described above in Part 1 was the use of a Novichok. Novichoks ('newcomers' in Russian) is a name given to a particular group of nerve agents.²³ 'Nerve agent' is a generic term for organophosphorus chemicals which have been developed (and in some cases used) as chemical weapons.²⁴ Nerve agents have been known since the middle of the 20th century.²⁵ Two which are comparatively well known are sarin and VX,²⁶ but there are many others.

2.2 A common feature of such organophosphate nerve agents is that they act by inhibiting essential enzymes in the body, acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase, which in turn are essential to maintaining the body's control of many of its vital automatic functions. Acetylcholine is a neurotransmitter, crucial to the transfer of messages critical to the working of the body. This neurotransmitter is kept under control by the two esterase enzymes, acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase. If the action of these esterase enzymes is inhibited, the body is subjected to an excess of the neurotransmitter, which leads to overstimulation of the nerves; this results in, amongst other effects, the slowing of the heart and paralysis of the respiratory centre in the brain, which can rapidly become fatal.²⁷

2.3 Such a nerve agent may get into the body by different routes – including ingestion, inhalation or simply by skin contact.²⁸ Very small quantities can have devastating effects. The lethal dose of an early nerve agent (VX) has been calculated to be about eight grains of sand on the skin.²⁹ The effect and time span depend to some extent on the manner of exposure, as well as on the level of dose and some factors personal to the patient.³⁰ Although some therapies can sometimes have success, there is no certain antidote, and some nerve agents produce irreversible cholinesterase inhibition.³¹ The expert evidence before me demonstrated that Novichoks are likely to be in this latter category, so that their effects are that much more difficult to counter.³²

2.4 If the use of a nerve agent of this type is suspected, it is possible to test for cholinesterase inhibition in the patient and, if such is present, that is an indicator (but not a definitive assurance) of likely nerve agent involvement. It is also possible, if the use of such a substance is in question, to test samples from the patient for the chemical products of it (biomarkers), whether generically for cholinesterase inhibiting agents or (at a specialist level) for known specific nerve agents.³³

²³ [FT49 31 October 2024 89/21-90/1](#); [INQ004691_00017](#)

²⁴ [INQ005923_00006](#) at paragraph 14

²⁵ [INQ004691_00003](#)

²⁶ [INQ005923_00011](#) at paragraph 27; [INQ005997_00011](#) at paragraph 39

²⁷ [FT49 31 October 2024 79/13-84/7](#); [Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 11/5-25, 19/21](#); [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 148/11-23](#); [INQ005923_00006](#) at paragraph 14; [INQ005994_00015](#); [INQ004691_00012-00013](#)

²⁸ [FT49 31 October 2024 112/3-8](#); [INQ004691_00011](#)

²⁹ [FT49 31 October 2024 93/22-94/24](#); [INQ005997_00002-00003](#) at paragraph 9

³⁰ [FT49 31 October 2024 109/23-123/12](#); [INQ005997_00002-00005](#) at paragraphs 7–15

³¹ [FT49 31 October 2024 95/6-105/2](#); [INQ005997_00005-00006](#) at paragraphs 16–21

³² [FT49 31 October 2024 84/12-86/7, 102/2-105/2](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 26/17-24](#); [INQ005997_00005-00006](#) at paragraphs 16–21

³³ [MK26 13 November 2024 80/23-83/19](#); [INQ005923_00011](#) at paragraph 27

2.5 It is necessary to say a little about the history of the production of Novichoks before considering whether Russia possessed them in 2018. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia inherited its chemical weapons capability. Some of the scientists who had been involved in this work, including research into nerve agents, made public their concerns that the programme had not been halted. One was Dr Vil Mirzayanov, an analytical chemist who had worked at the Moscow branch of GosNIIOKhT (the State Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology) from 1965 until January 1992, latterly as Chief of the Department of Counteraction against Foreign Technical Intelligence. Another was Dr Vladimir Uglev, who had worked as assistant to the developer of Novichoks. A third was Dr Lev Fyodorov, former professor of chemistry at an institute in Moscow, who was concerned about the possible environmental impact of such chemicals, in particular on the citizens of Moscow, via contamination of the air and/or watercourses.

2.6 These, and other scientists, revealed that, in the 1970s, GosNIIOKhT had conducted a secret research programme (FOLIANT) into a new class of nerve agents which were labelled 'Novichoks' or 'Newcomers'. Many analogues were reportedly synthesised in the period up to 1990, although only a handful were taken through to acceptance testing. Although, in 1980, the Soviet Union claimed to have halted chemical weapons production, it had not, it was said, done so, but rather had conferred on the head of GosNIIOKhT the highest available civilian honour, the Order of Lenin. Russia, as the successor state to the Soviet Union, thus came into possession of Novichoks.³⁴

2.7 The production and use of chemical weapons has been governed by an international multilateral treaty since the 1990s. The Chemical Weapons Convention (full title: The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction)³⁵ was drafted and adopted in 1992, opened for signature in January 1993 and came into force on 29 April 1997. Some 193 states (including the UK and Russia) are parties which have undertaken to be governed by it.³⁶

2.8 The Convention is administered by an international body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is based at The Hague, Netherlands.³⁷ The OPCW maintains international technical teams which can be deployed to analyse and report on questions relating to chemical weapons. It has a tightly drawn list of approved laboratories in different countries where strictly controlled work in support of its technical teams, or otherwise as tasked by the OPCW, can be undertaken. The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) at Porton Down, near Salisbury, contains within it one such laboratory and the only one in the UK, the Chemical and Biological Analysis and Attribution Capability (CBAAC).³⁸

³⁴ FT49 31 October 2024 87/19-93/4; INQ004691_00015-00018; INQ005146_00008-00016

³⁵ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW): Chemical Weapons Convention (<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention>)

³⁶ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW): History (<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/history>); OPCW Basics (<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/opcw-basics>)

³⁷ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons: Article VIII The Organization (<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-viii-organization>)

³⁸ MK26 13 November 2024 14/8-16/1

2.9 All state parties are bound by the Convention to the destruction of chemical weapons,³⁹ including nerve agents, except for strictly limited protective or peaceful purposes.⁴⁰ As part of the regulatory system of the Convention, it lists in Schedules, updated from time to time, particular toxins and precursor chemicals which are either altogether outlawed or subjected to graded restrictions.⁴¹

2.10 The Convention entered into force in 1997. Russia (which acceded to the Convention on 5 November of that year) was required to declare whether it owned or possessed any chemical weapons, and thereafter verifiably to destroy them.⁴² Russia did not include Novichoks in its declaration under the Convention.⁴³ I am sure that Russia's declaration under the Convention was incomplete and that it possessed Novichoks in 1997 and continued to do so until at least 2018. There is no reason to doubt the information made widely public by Drs Mirzayanov, Uglev and Fyodorov many years before the events which concern this Inquiry. In his letter of 13 April 2018 to the Secretary-General of NATO, Sir Mark Sedwill (then National Security Adviser, HM Government) confirmed that this open-source reporting was not only "*credible*", but consistent with intelligence which showed that Russia continued to produce and stockpile small quantities of Novichoks in the 2000s.⁴⁴ This is an issue which I considered specifically in closed session; the closed material adds further support to my conclusions.

2.11 Turning to the Novichok deployed in Salisbury in 2018, as set out above at paragraph 2.1, the term 'Novichok' refers to a group of nerve agents. A number of specific Novichoks have been described by their creators and identified by research in different countries. In scientific communities, there has been limited circulation of their exact chemical structure and the precursor materials from which they can be made. I shall abstain from setting out these scientific specifications, since it is in nobody's interest that further efforts to make Novichoks, whether amateur or otherwise, should receive any assistance. Dstl was able to confirm, and an expert witness from that laboratory gave evidence before me, that the particular Novichok used on Sergei and Yulia Skripal was definitively identified.⁴⁵ For the avoidance of doubt, this is a further issue on which I heard closed evidence.

2.12 Moreover, within days of the poisoning of the Skripals on Sunday 4 March 2018, the UK government made a formal request for the independent international assistance of the OPCW via its technical team.⁴⁶ A technical team of independent experts instructed by the OPCW came to Salisbury between 19 and 23 March and tested samples taken from both the three patients – Sergei Skripal, Yulia Skripal and Detective Sergeant (DS) Nick Bailey (one of the police officers poisoned by secondary contamination when he attended the Skripals' home) – and from various contaminated scenes.⁴⁷ Independent tests were then

³⁹ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons: Article I General Obligations (<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-i>)

⁴⁰ Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons: Article VI Activities Not Prohibited Under this Convention (<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-vi-activities-not-prohibited-under-convention>)

⁴¹ MK26 13 November 2024 55/10-20

⁴² INQ006103_00002 at paragraphs 5–8

⁴³ Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 39/23-40/24; INQ006103_00003 at paragraphs 10 and 11

⁴⁴ INQ003070_0002

⁴⁵ MK26 13 November 2024 27/19-24

⁴⁶ MK26 13 November 2024 110/22-113/6; INQ002995_00001 at paragraph 1

⁴⁷ MK26 13 November 2024 110/22-114/7; INQ002995_00001 at paragraphs 2–5

arranged by the OPCW at different approved laboratories in other countries.⁴⁸ The OPCW teams were able to confirm from those tests the findings of Dstl that the specific Novichok identified was present, and also that it was of high purity, i.e. with an almost complete absence of impurities.⁴⁹

2.13 Four months later, after the poisoning of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley in June 2018, the UK government made a similar request to the OPCW.⁵⁰ Once again, an independent team visited the UK, from 15 to 18 July, and again on 13 August.⁵¹ It collected samples from both patients (blood from Charlie Rowley and post-mortem samples from Dawn Sturgess), and it also took samples from a bottle found at Charlie Rowley's flat.⁵²

2.14 Once again, independent testing at two different foreign laboratories showed that the specific Novichok identified by the UK laboratory was indeed present, in each case (for Dawn Sturgess, Charlie Rowley and the bottle).⁵³ Moreover, the OPCW confirmed that this was the same type of Novichok as had been used in Salisbury on the Skripals.⁵⁴ Lastly, the testing showed that the bottle contained Novichok that was 97–98% pure, that is to say, it was considered a "*neat agent of high purity*".⁵⁵

2.15 The high level of purity found by both the UK and OPCW experts means that, although a modern, well-equipped chemical laboratory could perhaps make such a nerve agent, it would be very difficult for this to be done to that level of purity, nor in any event safely, without the kind of facilities which a state might have.⁵⁶

2.16 It is telling enough that the Novichok used in Salisbury and Amesbury was of the same specific type.⁵⁷ Additionally, although the OPCW laboratories, working to strict time limits, did not attempt definitive batch analysis, subsequent further testing in the UK, over the lengthier time involved in such work, was able to establish that the samples from the two events were highly likely to be from the same batch.⁵⁸

2.17 On the basis of all the evidence that I have received (open and closed, including the evidence of use (see Parts 3 and 4 below)), I am sure that the Novichok deployed in Salisbury was from the same batch as that found in Amesbury, that it was produced by a state rather than by non-state actors, and that that state was Russia.

⁴⁸ [INQ002995_00001](#) at paragraph 6

⁴⁹ [MK26 13 November 2024 114/12-116/4](#); [INQ002995_00002](#) at paragraphs 8–12

⁵⁰ [INQ002993_00001](#) at paragraph 1

⁵¹ [MK26 13 November 2024 174/20-23](#); [INQ002993_00001](#) at paragraph 2

⁵² [MK26 13 November 2024 175/3-176/10](#); [INQ002993_00001-00002](#) at paragraphs 4, 5 and 9

⁵³ [INQ002993_00002](#) at paragraphs 8, 10 and 11

⁵⁴ [INQ002993_00002](#) at paragraph 11

⁵⁵ [INQ002993_00002](#) at paragraph 10

⁵⁶ [MK26 13 November 2024 39/14-22, 44/2-46/6](#)

⁵⁷ [MK26 13 November 2024 119/19-120/2](#)

⁵⁸ [MK26 13 November 2024 41/17-42/1, 178/18-180/13](#); [INQ005923_00024](#) at paragraph 48

Part 3: The Salisbury event

Chapter 1: Sergei and Yulia Skripal, Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 March 2018

3.1 It proved unsafe for me to require Sergei or Yulia Skripal to attend the open hearings to give oral evidence. There having already been one very serious attack on Sergei Skripal, albeit unsuccessful, to require either of them to attend would carry disproportionate risks to Sergei himself, to anyone, such as Yulia, associated with him, and to those who would have to arrange to produce them.⁵⁹ I have taken fully into consideration what they have said in numerous interviews and in written statements (including statements they both provided addressing questions put to them by the Inquiry,⁶⁰ many of which had initially been raised by the Sturgess family). Since I have not heard their evidence in person, I have been astute to look for support (or lack of it) from independent sources.

3.2 Sergei Skripal came to live in the UK under the prisoner exchange in 2010 and moved to Salisbury shortly afterwards, where he lived under his own name. Since September 2011, he had lived at 47 Christie Miller Road (No. 47), a cul-de-sac in a residential area about a mile and a half to the west of the city centre.⁶¹

⁵⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Sergei and Yulia Skripal Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-09-23-DSI-Ruling-on-Sergei-and-Yulia-Skripal.pdf>)

⁶⁰ [INQ006086](#); [INQ006087](#)

⁶¹ [INQ004679_00001-0002](#)



3.3 Sergei Skripal lived at No. 47 with his wife, Liudmilla,⁶² until she died in 2012. As was to be expected, he had family and friends in Russia, with whom he was in contact. His mother remained there until she died. Principally, he had a son, Alexander (Sasha), and a daughter, Yulia. Both his son and daughter visited him from time to time in Salisbury. Sasha Skripal lived there with him for some time prior to returning to Russia, where he died in July 2017. Yulia Skripal had also lived with her father in Salisbury at one time, but, in early 2018, she was living in Russia.⁶³

3.4 Sergei Skripal lived fairly quietly but was known casually and, in some cases, socially by some of his neighbours. Two of them, Ross and Maureen Cassidy, were former next-door neighbours from when he had lived in a different but nearby house on Devizes Road, Salisbury.⁶⁴

3.5 On Saturday 3 March 2018, Yulia Skripal flew from Moscow on a pre-arranged visit to her father. He travelled to London Heathrow Airport to meet her. He had a car of his own (a burgundy BMW), but there was snow on the roads, and for that reason his friends Ross and Maureen Cassidy, who had a pickup truck more suited to the conditions, drove him to and from the airport, bringing Yulia back with them to Salisbury.⁶⁵

3.6 The movements of those four people could be reconstructed afterwards, partly from their own recollections, but also through independent confirmation. A closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera in India Avenue, adjacent to Christie Miller Road, registered the pickup truck on its outward journey as well as after its return to the area, although the internal clock of the CCTV camera was about 1 hour and 22 minutes fast.⁶⁶ CCTV records show that the party left Christie Miller Road in the early afternoon that Saturday at about 13:00, met Yulia Skripal off her flight at Heathrow at about 16:35 (the plane had arrived some time earlier), and returned to Christie Miller Road at about 18:06.⁶⁷

3.7 The mobile phones used by both Sergei and Yulia Skripal could be tracked for their general location by the records of the masts by which they had connected to mobile phone networks ('cell siting'). Yulia's mobile phone recorded contact with the home Wi-Fi at No. 47 at 18:10.⁶⁸

3.8 It is relevant that there had been some neighbourly planning for the Cassidys' son to help Sergei Skripal with some plumbing in the near future. To check what was needed and where, when the party got back to No. 47, not only Sergei and Yulia Skripal, but also Maureen Cassidy, got out of the car and went into the house through the front door.⁶⁹ Maureen Cassidy closed the front door on leaving shortly afterwards.⁷⁰ The Cassidys

⁶² As with other Russian names, including Sergei (Sergey), the spelling of Liudmilla varies.

⁶³ [INQ004679_00001-0002](#); [INQ006086_00005](#) at paragraph 15

⁶⁴ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 5/24-6/25, 12/4-13/2](#); [INQ004679_00001](#)

⁶⁵ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 17/22-19/25, 21/6-19](#); [INQ005287_00001-00002](#); [INQ004679_00002](#)

⁶⁶ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 23/8-25](#); [INQ005819_00048](#); [INQ005694_00003-00004](#) at paragraph 7

⁶⁷ [INQ005694_00003-00005](#) at paragraphs 7–16

⁶⁸ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 85/3-21](#); [INQ005247_00018](#) at paragraph 5.4

⁶⁹ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 38/17-41/24](#); [INQ005283_00011](#)

⁷⁰ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 93/6-7, 94/5-19](#); [INQ005998_00001](#); [INQ004475_00001](#)

went on to have dinner at a public house.⁷¹ The Skripals remained in the house for the rest of the evening and night.⁷² Both Sergei and Yulia Skripal were online on their computers until about 23:00.⁷³

3.9 The Skripals' plan for the following day, Sunday 4 March, was to go into Salisbury city centre at about lunchtime. They intended to have a drink at The Bishops Mill public house and go for a late lunch at Zizzi restaurant nearby (see the map at Figure 2 above).⁷⁴ They followed this plan.

3.10 After the poisoning, a well-meaning member of the public thought he had seen Sergei Skripal's car in another part of Salisbury, on the A30, near the cemetery where Liudmilla Skripal is buried; however, this was later shown to be a mistake.⁷⁵ Both Sergei and Yulia Skripal confirm that they remained at home until leaving to follow the intended plan for lunch, and the use of their devices at Christie Miller Road confirms that they were there throughout the morning.⁷⁶ Erroneous sightings of people who have been the subject of publicity are not unusual.⁷⁷

3.11 A possibly less well-meaning suggestion was made after the event to the effect that the Skripals' phones were switched off for three or four hours that morning, carrying the implication that they were elsewhere.⁷⁸ This is not so.⁷⁹ In addition to the statements of the Skripals,⁸⁰ the evidence demonstrated that there is no question of their being anywhere other than at home: Sergei Skripal's computer and landline, and Yulia Skripal's computer and mobile phone, were used during the morning.⁸¹ There is no evidence of anyone else having been in the property or having access to any of these devices.

3.12 The Skripals left No. 47 at about 13:30 on Sunday 4 March, in Sergei Skripal's BMW car, which passed the CCTV camera in India Avenue at 13:33 and another at 13:35 when driving down Devizes Road en route to the city centre.⁸² The car was parked in the multi-storey car park near to Sainsbury's supermarket, where it was later found with a ticket timed at 13:43.⁸³

3.13 The Skripals paused by the river footbridge to feed the ducks, and CCTV images show that Sergei passed bread for the ducks to a boy on the bank.⁸⁴ Counter Terrorism Policing subsequently traced the boy and two friends who were with him, as it became clear that Sergei Skripal's hands were contaminated with Novichok at this point.⁸⁵ Although there were reports that all three of the boys had been ill for a day or two after this, when

⁷¹ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 41/22-2, 43/24-44/2; INQ005283_00011](#)

⁷² [INQ004679_00002; INQ005287_00003](#)

⁷³ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 101/7-102/1; INQ005247_00019](#)

⁷⁴ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 110/20-112/22; INQ004676_00004; INQ005761_00015, 00018-00019; INQ005819_00014](#)

⁷⁵ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 139/1-140/6; INQ004576_00023; INQ005775_00004](#)

⁷⁶ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 102/3-108/14; INQ006086_00004-00005](#) at paragraph 13; [INQ006087_00005](#) at paragraph 13; [INQ005247_00020-00023](#)

⁷⁷ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 140/8-141/6](#)

⁷⁸ [INQ004881_00024; INQ004576_00023](#)

⁷⁹ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 141/7-19, 143/17-144/6, 145/19-22](#)

⁸⁰ [INQ006086_00004](#) at paragraph 11; [INQ006087_00004](#) at paragraph 11

⁸¹ [INQ005247_00020-00023; INQ005775_00003-00007](#)

⁸² [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 122/3-124/17; INQ005819_00067](#)

⁸³ [INQ005820_00024](#) at paragraph 62

⁸⁴ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 125/2-12; INQ005819_00069](#)

⁸⁵ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 125/13-22](#)

they were tested several weeks later, they were found not to have been contaminated, at least not at the time of testing.⁸⁶ Given the evidence I heard regarding the toxicity of even tiny amounts of Novichok and its transmission through skin contact, as well as other routes (see Part 2 above), it may well be a matter of luck that the boy who took the bread from Sergei Skripal was not more gravely affected.

3.14 From the river footbridge, the Skripals went to both intended destinations, first The Bishops Mill at about 13:45⁸⁷ and then Zizzi, a little over half an hour later.⁸⁸

3.15 Zizzi was crowded, and the service consequently slow, so in the end the Skripals left having taken only their starter course.⁸⁹ From there, they walked back across the river footbridge by The Maltings. As they did so, they were both overcome with symptoms of the poisoning, and shortly after they sat down on a bench on the walkway outside the retailer Superdrug at about 15:45, they became seriously unwell.⁹⁰

3.16 The Skripals were found on the bench by public-spirited passers-by who went to their aid. Amongst them was, fortunately, an off-duty paediatric intensive care consultant, Dr Helen Ord, who was in Salisbury with her partner.⁹¹ Equally fortunately, another passer-by was Alison McCourt, an experienced accident and emergency nurse who was then Chief Nursing Officer of the British Army. She was also off-duty. She and her husband were on a day out with their teenage children.⁹²

3.17 Neither of the Skripals was able to communicate. Yulia Skripal, on whom Dr Ord concentrated, was struggling to breathe at all⁹³ and was in a semi-rigid position, half sitting, half lying on the bench;⁹⁴ she had lost control of her bowels,⁹⁵ had vomited,⁹⁶ was having seizures⁹⁷ and was completely unresponsive.⁹⁸ Sergei Skripal was in considerable distress, “*chanting*” incomprehensibly,⁹⁹ and he too vomited copiously.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁶ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 125/22-126/1; INQ006056_00021](#) at paragraph 97

⁸⁷ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 126/8-15, 127/3-19; INQ005819_00069, 00086](#)

⁸⁸ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 133/5-16; INQ005819_00071, 00087](#)

⁸⁹ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 130/12-131/8; INQ004679_00003; INQ004676_00005; INQ005287_00004](#)

⁹⁰ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 135/21-24; INQ005819_00073; INQ005694_00016](#) at paragraphs 74 and 75

⁹¹ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 20/20-21/14; INQ004477_00001](#)

⁹² [Alison McCourt \(read\) 29 October 2024 4/5-24; INQ004476_00001; INQ006137_00001](#) at paragraphs 5 and 6

⁹³ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 29/11-30/22](#)

⁹⁴ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 24/11-24](#)

⁹⁵ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 28/1-7](#)

⁹⁶ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 28/7-9](#)

⁹⁷ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 23/13-24/11, 27/20-28/11](#)

⁹⁸ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 27/20, 34/7-12](#)

⁹⁹ [Alison McCourt \(read\) 29 October 2024 6/8-16](#)

¹⁰⁰ [Alison McCourt \(read\) 29 October 2024 6/23-24, 11/7; Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 35/22-36/25](#)

3.18 Other passers-by made emergency telephone calls,¹⁰¹ and paramedics from the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT),¹⁰² the Wiltshire Air Ambulance Unit¹⁰³ and local officers of Wiltshire Police¹⁰⁴ were soon on the scene. Much of their attention to the Skripals was recorded on police body-worn cameras.¹⁰⁵ Dr Ord had managed by a jaw thrust¹⁰⁶ to help Yulia to achieve some breathing,¹⁰⁷ and the paramedics were able to insert an airway management device.¹⁰⁸ The two patients were taken to Salisbury District Hospital in separate ambulances at about 17:00.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 33/5-11, 23/13-24; INQ004957; INQ005981_00010-00011](#)

¹⁰² [Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 6/14-7/22; Lisa Wood 30 October 2024 83/15-85/24; INQ004478_00001-00002; INQ004936_00001-00002; INQ005015_00001-00002; INQ004933_00001; INQ004932_00001-00003; INQ004962](#)

¹⁰³ [INQ004931_00001-00003; INQ004599_00001-00003](#)

¹⁰⁴ [PC Collins 29 October 2024 55/23-56/4; INQ004923_00001; INQ004945_00002; INQ004966_00001; INQ005682_00001-00002](#)

¹⁰⁵ [INQ004966_00001; INQ004973_00006; INQ005264_00001-00002; INQ005694_00017-00020](#) at paragraphs 77–98; for perhaps obvious reasons, the distressing and intrusive body-worn video footage has not been made public.

¹⁰⁶ The jaw thrust manoeuvre is a first aid technique used to open the airway by displacing the jaw forward.

¹⁰⁷ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 30/23-32/11, 35/16-19; Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 9/25-10/5](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Dr Helen Ord 29 October 2024 41/2-49/18; Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 14/1-17, 20/11-22/17, 26/4-22, 27/5-12, 29/11-22](#)

¹⁰⁹ [INQ005694_00020-00021](#) at paragraph 98; [INQ004911_00001](#)

Chapter 2: Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov

3.19 On Friday 2 March 2018, three Russian travellers had flown into London from Moscow. They were travelling under the names of Alexander Petrov, Ruslan Boshirov and Sergey Fedotov,¹¹⁰ and had travel documents in those names.¹¹¹ All were false names (aliases).¹¹² As is now amply demonstrated – and I am sure of it – their true names were, respectively, Aleksandr Mishkin (Petrov), Anatoliy Chepiga (Boshirov) and Denis Sergeev (Fedotov). I shall refer to them throughout this report by the aliases under which they travelled, which is consistent with the approach taken by all at the open hearings.

3.20 Petrov and Boshirov travelled together on flight SU2588 from Moscow to London Gatwick Airport.¹¹³ They were recorded by parallel cameras in adjacent arrival lanes at 16:22.¹¹⁴ On this occasion, Fedotov, who had travelled previously either with or at the same time as Petrov to different destinations (see paragraph 3.38 below), flew separately, on flight SU2580. He flew not into Gatwick but into London Heathrow Airport, arriving at about 11:00.¹¹⁵ Prior bookings had been made for all three, at two separate hotels.¹¹⁶ Petrov and Boshirov went to stay at the Citystay Hotel in Bow, east London.¹¹⁷ Fedotov went to stay at the Dolphin Hotel, Norfolk Square, in Paddington, central London.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 19/12-14, 20/7-17](#)

¹¹¹ [INQ005819_00140](#)

¹¹² [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 18/14-19/1](#)

¹¹³ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 20/7-17, 32/3-21; INQ005124_00004-00005, 00007-00008, 00019, 00023; INQ005820_00011](#) at paragraph 31

¹¹⁴ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 40/16-43/1; INQ005819_00017; INQ005876_00001;](#)

¹¹⁵ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 20/14; INQ005820_00010](#) at paragraph 28; [INQ005874_00001; INQ005819_00017](#)

¹¹⁶ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 43/2-6; INQ005819_00017](#)

¹¹⁷ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 43/19-44/5; INQ004480_00001](#)

¹¹⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 43/7-18; INQ004437_00003-00004](#)



3.21 It has been possible to demonstrate some of the activities of all three men after arrival in the UK.¹¹⁹ Each of them had provided a mobile telephone number, either as part of previous visa applications or, in one case, as part of a previous hotel booking (see paragraph 3.43 below),¹²⁰ and for some of the time those telephones were active.¹²¹ Some of their movements can be shown to have been captured by CCTV cameras, subsequently extensively trawled.¹²²

Alexander Petrov

3.22 The photograph on the passport used by Petrov matches the photograph on the genuine passport of Mishkin. Further, it shows the same date of birth: 13 July 1979. Both identities also share the same patronymic (middle) name – Evgenyevich. Fourthly, both passports show the same region, Arkhangelsk Oblast, as the place of birth, although different towns are specified.¹²³

¹¹⁹ [INQ005820_00010-00011](#) paragraphs 29 and 32; [INQ005819_00018-00025](#)

¹²⁰ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 21/16-22/17, 25/15-26/18, 28/18-30/1, 65/11-22, 70/17-22; INQ004445_00027, 00031](#) (Petrov: mobile number ending in 8100); [INQ005933_00044](#) (Boshirov: mobile number ending in 2550); [INQ004447_00016, 00020](#) (Fedotov: mobile number ending in 8270)

¹²¹ [INQ005840](#) (Petrov: mobile number ending in 8100); [INQ005898](#) (Boshirov: mobile number ending in 2550); [INQ005885](#) (Fedotov: mobile number ending in 8270); [INQ005886](#) (Fedotov: mobile number ending in 8270); [INQ005852](#) (Fedotov: mobile number ending in 8270)

¹²² [INQ005820_00010-00025; INQ005874; INQ005876](#)

¹²³ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 73/3-74/19, 81/19-84/7; INQ005820_00062-00063](#) at paragraphs 195–197; [INQ005819_00126; INQ004445_00027; INQ005849_00029](#)

Figure 4: Alexander Petrov assessed as being Aleksandr Mishkin

FORENSIC SERVICES DESIGN STUDIO DCC-FM-202-V1	FINAL: AUDIT INTERPRETATION OF THE EVIDENCE MO4 FORENSIC SERVICES	JOB NO: 028488, INQUIRY INTO THE DEATH OF DAWN STURGESS_00724_V1 ©MPS, OFFICIAL SENSITIVE	OPERATION: VERBASCO	ORIGINAL CONTENT SOURCED FROM: OPERATION VERBASCO	TITLE: ALEXANDER PETROV ASSESSED AS BEING ALEKSANDR MISHKIN	126
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Passport



Source: [INQ005819_00126](#)

3.23 Petrov had made previous applications for visas to the Swedish authorities in 2014, to the Dutch authorities in 2016, and to the UK authorities in 2016 and 2017. These relied on demonstrably false documents. For the Swedish application in January 2014, he submitted a certificate purporting to have been issued by a company called Mitel, certifying that he had been employed by them since March 2012 as a manager at 45,000 roubles per month. To the Dutch in 2016, he provided what purported to be a certificate issued by a different company, Akvatchnika Engineering, asserting that he had been employed by them as a marketing executive since October 2013 at 60,000 roubles per month. To the UK authorities in 2017, he supplied what purported to be a certificate issued by a third company, Didek Trade Liability Company, and this said that he had been employed by them since March 2015 at 135,000 roubles per month.¹²⁴ Those mutually inconsistent employment histories must be false.

3.24 Similarly, Petrov's two UK visa applications recorded different details for his parents. That of 2016 gave his father's name as Ivan, born in Arkhangelsk, and his mother's as Tatiana, born in Vologda, but the 2017 application reverses the places of birth and gives his father's name as Evgeni.¹²⁵ The inversion of the places of birth might be a simple error, but the difference in the name of his father is unlikely to be; moreover, the patronymic of both Petrov and the real Mishkin, Evgenyevich, is consistent with his father being called Evgeni.

3.25 Further, Petrov's visa application to the Dutch relied on a stamped and signed letter apparently issued by Sberbank Russia, but this showed an identical account number, and even an identical balance down to the kopek, to a similar document submitted by Boshirov, also to the Dutch, at the same time.¹²⁶ Those bank certificates must be false. The explanation cannot be a cutting and pasting error, because the terms of the letters differ as to a number of details, such as the format of the name and address of the bank, and the alleged date the accounts were opened.

3.26 As will be seen in paragraph 3.59 below, the UK authorities later accused Petrov and Boshirov, in those names, of conducting the attack on Sergei Skripal. Both men subsequently gave a recorded interview to the RT news channel (formerly 'Russia Today') in which they denied being responsible for the attack and gave an account of innocent cultural tourism in Salisbury.¹²⁷ In response to the publication of this interview online, a number of people made open internet statements to the effect that they recognised Petrov from the interview as bearing close resemblance to Aleksandr Mishkin, whom they knew. Such statements were made at a time when the name Mishkin had not publicly been attributed to Petrov.¹²⁸ It has not been possible for me to investigate the reliability of these statements nor of their authors, and I do not therefore rely on them. At most, they cast no doubt on the identification of Petrov as Mishkin.

¹²⁴ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 68/8-72/7; INQ005820_00063-00064](#) at paragraph 200; [INQ005819_00127](#)

¹²⁵ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 65/18-68/6; INQ005820_00063](#) at paragraph 197; [INQ004446_00007; INQ004445_00033-00034](#)

¹²⁶ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 37/22-40/20, 72/11-72/24; INQ005820_00061-00062, 00064](#) at paragraphs 193 and 201; [INQ005819_00124; INQ005849_00055, 00111; INQ005931_00024, 00044](#)
¹²⁷ [INQ004175](#)

¹²⁸ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 88/1-7; INQ005820_00063](#) at paragraph 199; [INQ005515_00001-00002; INQ005516_00010](#)

Ruslan Boshirov

3.27 In his UK visa application, Boshirov identified his mother as Tatiana, with a date of birth in 1954, born in Romanovka, Amur Oblast. He identified his father as Timur Boshirov, with a date of birth in 1953, born in the same place. Western Union records show that, on various dates in 2011, a person using the name Ruslan Boshirov made a series of money transfers to Vladimir Maksimovich Chepiga, with the same 1953 date of birth as Boshirov's father as was given in the visa application. The pay agent for these transfers was MTS Bank, Zeyskaya Ulitsa 173A, Blagoveshchensk. Blagoveshchensk is the location of a Russian military school, the Far Eastern Higher Military Command School, known as DVOKU, which is publicly acknowledged, with its own website.¹²⁹

3.28 Open-source records show that the Russian military school (DVOKU) shows some of its present or past members both on an honours board and by a display of photographs. One of those honorands is Anatoliy Vladimirovich Chepiga, who was awarded the honour of 'Hero of the Russian Federation' sometime between 7 September 2013 and April 2016. The photograph bears a strong resemblance to Boshirov, and the patronymic is consistent with his father being the Vladimir Chepiga to whom the Western Union payments were made. Unusually, there is no detailed citation of the basis of his award, simply a bare statement that it was made by presidential decree.¹³⁰

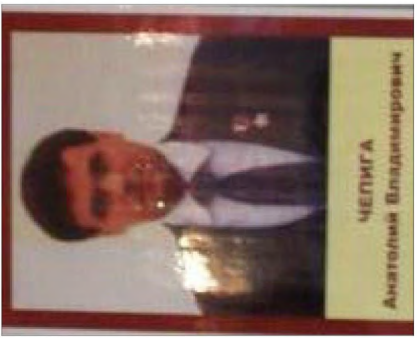
¹²⁹ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 50/5-55/19](#); [INQ005820_00059-00060](#) at paragraphs 186–188; [INQ005819_00121_00133](#); [INQ004444_00007_00014](#); [INQ004443_00028](#); [INQ004585_00007](#); [INQ004462_00001](#); [INQ005892_00001](#)

¹³⁰ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 44/8-50/4_108/4-113/11](#); [INQ005820_00059-00060_00067](#) at paragraphs 188 and 212; [INQ005819_00125_00134-00135](#); [INQ004636_00001](#); [INQ005779_00001-00005](#); [INQ005844_00002_00006](#); [INQ006051_00004-00005](#) at paragraphs 2.1.3–2.1.5

Figure 5: Ruslan Boshirov assessed as being Anatoliy Chepiga

FORENSIC SERVICES DISPATCHED DCC-PA-202-31	FINAL NOTED INTERPRETATION OF THE EVIDENCE MOI FORENSIC SERVICES	LOS AN CAMPUS INQUIRY INTO THE DEATH OF DAWN STURGESSE, 00/24-31 CMPS, OFFICIAL SENSITIVE	OPERATION VERBASCED	ORIGINAL CONTENT SOURCED FROM: OPERATION VERBASCED	TITLE RUSLAN BOSHIROV ASSESSED AS BEING ANATOLIY CHEPIGA	125
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Comparison images

BOSHIROV AT A WEDDING	1	BOSHIROV AT GATWICK AIRPORT	2	VISA APPLICATION PHOTO	3
					
PHOTO OF BOSHIROV ON RUSSIA TODAY (RT) INTERVIEW	4	PHOTO OF BOSHIROV IN THE GRU	5		
					

Source: [INQ005819_00125](#)

3.29 Unit 29155 is a publicly reported unit of the GRU. Open reporting identifies its commander in 2017–18 as General Andrey Averyanov.¹³¹ In July 2017, General Averyanov's daughter was married at a hotel on Senezh Lake, north-west of Moscow. Open-source published images of the wedding show that Boshirov attended the wedding.¹³² The table plan lists Alexei Chepiga and also apparently his wife; it does not show the attendance of anyone with the name of Boshirov.¹³³ It does suggest the attendance of an Alexander Petrov, but that is not evidence that Mishkin was present; the name may not be uncommon and, if he had been present, there would be no obvious reason to use his alias. I am entirely satisfied that 'Petrov' is an alias for Mishkin.

¹³¹ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 56/13-57/10, 61/12-62/5; INQ005820_00066-00067](#) at paragraphs 209–211; [INQ005792_00001, 00010, 00015; INQ005791_00001](#)

¹³² [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 57/19-60/20; INQ005820_00061](#) at paragraph 191; [INQ005819_00131; INQ005888_00001; INQ005891_00001; INQ005844_00007-00008](#)

¹³³ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 61/6-11](#)

Figure 6: Links to the GRU

FORENSIC SERVICES DESIGN STUDIO DCC-FM-202_v1	FINAL NOTO INTERPRETATION OF THE EVIDENCE MOI FORENSIC SERVICES	JOB ID: 028498_NOTOIRY INTO THE DEATH OF DAWN STURGESSE_040724_V1 ©MPS_OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE	OPERATION: VERBASCO	ORIGINAL CONTENT SOURCED FROM: OPERATION VERBASCO	TITLE: LINKS TO THE GRU (GLAVNOYE RAZVEDUYATELNOYE UPRAVLENIE)	131
Ruslan BOSHIROV The Wedding of Andrey AVERYANOV's Daughter Photographs Blue boxes added Lij Op VERBASCO for illustrative purposes, to show Anatoliy CHERIGA & Galina CHERIGA 's names in Cyrillic. Blue circles added by Op VERBASCO for illustrative purposes, to show Anatoliy CHERIGA.						
TABLE PLAN OF WEDDING GUESTS 1						
2						
3						
4						

Source: [INQ005819_00131](#)

3.30 As part of his Swedish visa applications, Petrov provided a bank statement from VTB Bank. This chronicles numerous transactions in the region of Khimki, in north-west Moscow, which is where both Unit 29155 and the GRU training conservatory are situated.¹³⁴

3.31 Like Petrov, Boshirov submitted with previous visa applications documents which can only be false. For his visa application to the UK authorities in 2017, Boshirov relied on a certificate purporting to show that he had been employed by Energoforsazh since 1 September 2011, whilst to the Dutch authorities he submitted ‘certificates’ dated 29 March and 23 August 2016 asserting that he was employed by Service VIP Ltd as a systems administrator and had been since 1 March 2012.¹³⁵ Service VIP Ltd (email: gb@svip.ru) had also provided documentary evidence to the Swedish authorities in 2014 confirming that Petrov and Fedotov had booked accommodation at the Hotel Attache in Stockholm.¹³⁶

Sergey Fedotov

3.32 An open-source interview with Captain Denis Sergeev from about 1999 contains a photograph of him which resembles a younger Fedotov.¹³⁷ Fedotov had also supplied employment details on visa applications which are mutually inconsistent, and must be false. In 2014, in an application to the Swedish authorities, he relied on a certificate purportedly issued by Mitel (the same company as put forward by Petrov (see paragraph 3.23 above)) stating that he had worked there since 24 October 2011 at 57,000 roubles per month. However, on four applications to the UK in 2015, 2016 and 2017, he stated that he was a senior project manager with LLC Evrostil; he provided a certificate dated 7 August 2017 purporting to be issued by that company and stating that he had been with it since 14 February 2011.¹³⁸

3.33 In 2016, Fedotov stayed at the Castleton Hotel in Sussex Gardens, London, between 25 and 31 March. At much the same time, a person called Elena Baranova stayed at the same hotel, having stated on her visa application that she expected to be there from 7 to 12 March 2016.¹³⁹ On her visa application, she recorded her parents as Vyacheslav Sergeev, born in 1944 in Chapayevsk, Samara Oblast, and Tamara Sergeeva, born in 1942 in Samara Oblast. The visa application made in the name of Fedotov in January 2017 recorded his father as Vyacheslav and his mother as Tamara, in each case with the same year and place of birth as those recorded in Elena Baranova’s application; the only difference is that Fedotov gave his parents’ surnames as Fedotov and Fedotova.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 113/13-115/15; INQ005820_00067-00068](#) at paragraph 213; [INQ005819_00136-00137](#)

¹³⁵ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 33/17-37/17; INQ005820_00061](#) at paragraph 192; [INQ004443_00015; INQ005819_00122](#)

¹³⁶ [INQ005846_00015; INQ005819_00123](#)

¹³⁷ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 105/4-106/9; INQ005820_000066](#) at paragraph 207; [INQ005819_00130; INQ005911_00001](#)

¹³⁸ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 98/16-100/25; INQ005820_00066](#) at paragraph 208; [INQ005819_00129; INQ005847_00011; INQ004447_00028](#)

¹³⁹ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 104/7-24; INQ005820_00065](#) at paragraph 206; [INQ005933_00043-00044](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 101/14-103/15; INQ005820_00065](#) at paragraphs 204 and 205; [INQ004448_00008; INQ005845_00008](#)

3.34 Whether Fedotov and Elena Baranova stayed at the same hotel in Sussex Gardens at the same time or on slightly different dates, the identical parental names given by two people who used the same hotel cannot be a coincidence. A likely explanation is that Elena Baranova is the sister of Fedotov, and he has adopted the not uncommon practice when making a false declaration of using as much of the truth as he could; there is less likely to be an error that way.¹⁴¹ What it does demonstrate is support for the conclusion, which I reach, that Fedotov is an alias and that Sergeev is his true surname.

Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov – passports

3.35 Passports issued in 2011 to the three Russian subjects in their false names show that they were issued quite close together: Boshirov's (number 643258090) on 2 December 2011; Petrov's (number 643258115) on 21 December 2011; and Fedotov's (number 643258060) on 18 October 2011. There was a similar pattern when passports were issued to the three men in 2016: Boshirov's (number 654341294) was issued on 28 July 2016; Petrov's (654341297) on 2 August 2016; and Fedotov's (number 653453915) on 15 June 2016.¹⁴²

3.36 These are consistent with, but not conclusive of, the passports being issued in coordination as they might be if this was being managed by the GRU for its own officers. The 2011 issues were all by the same office, as were the 2016 ones, but it is not safe to conclude that only intelligence or military officers might have passports issued en bloc.

Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov – previous travel

3.37 It is clear that all three men had travelled extensively in the past, sometimes in combination, and that they had at times adopted unusual routes, such as might be consistent with trying to avoid attention or their association being noticed.

3.38 In January 2014, Petrov and Fedotov flew together from Moscow to Prague, where they stayed in the same hotel.¹⁴³ In June 2014, Petrov flew from Moscow to Milan but booked a stay in Geneva for a week (from 7 to 14 June).¹⁴⁴ Seventeen days later (1 July), Fedotov followed the same route to Geneva via Milan.¹⁴⁵ Two days after Fedotov had left, Petrov and Boshirov also went to Geneva via Milan (on 18 July), and they changed hotels in Geneva part-way through a stay of about ten days.¹⁴⁶ In October 2014, Petrov and Boshirov travelled together from Moscow to Prague and Ostrava, Czech Republic.¹⁴⁷ In November 2014, Fedotov flew from Moscow to Paris but booked a stay in Geneva.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 103/16-104/6; INQ005820_00064-00065](#) at paragraph 203

¹⁴² [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 120/14-124/10; INQ005820_00069](#) at paragraphs 216 and 217; [INQ005819_00140-00141](#)

¹⁴³ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 128/20-129/2; INQ005820_00072; INQ005819_00155](#)

¹⁴⁴ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 130/24-133/20; INQ005820_00073; INQ005819_00155](#)

¹⁴⁵ [INQ005820_00073; INQ005819_00155](#)

¹⁴⁶ [INQ005820_00073-00074; INQ005819_00155](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 129/3-130/23; INQ005820_00074; INQ005819_00156; INQ005914_00014-00015](#)

¹⁴⁸ [INQ005820_00075; INQ005819_00156](#)

3.39 In September 2016, Boshirov and Petrov booked successive (but not overlapping) stays at the same hotel in Frankfurt, where Petrov also booked a stay at the end of November.¹⁴⁹ At the beginning of December 2016, Petrov and Boshirov travelled together from Paris to London by train, where Petrov booked a stay at the Citystay Hotel in Bow, east London (where they also stayed in March 2018). They returned to Moscow via Paris on 6 December 2016.¹⁵⁰

3.40 In September 2017, Petrov and Boshirov flew together from Moscow to Paris. During that time, Petrov was booked to stay at the same hotel in Frankfurt where they had each stayed on separate occasions the previous year.¹⁵¹ Both Petrov and Boshirov flew back from Paris to Moscow. In October 2017, Petrov and Boshirov flew together from Moscow to Paris. During that time, Petrov was booked to stay at a hotel in Geneva. Overlapping with the last four days of that booking there (into early November 2017), Fedotov was also in Geneva, but booked into a different hotel. Petrov and Boshirov flew back to Moscow from Geneva.¹⁵² In late 2017, Petrov and Boshirov made UK visa applications within two days of one another, both specifying arrival in London on 1 December 2017, but different hotels as their destinations.¹⁵³ In December 2017, all three were in Geneva but in different hotels and for different, but overlapping, stays.¹⁵⁴

3.41 It is plain that these three visitors to the UK in March 2018 were associates. Their nearly simultaneous arrival in London on Friday 2 March 2018 cannot have been a coincidence.

¹⁴⁹ [INQ005820_00077-00078](#); [INQ005819_00157](#)

¹⁵⁰ [INQ005820_00078](#); [INQ005819_00157](#)

¹⁵¹ [INQ005820_00080](#); [INQ005819_00158](#)

¹⁵² [INQ005820_00081](#); [INQ005819_00158](#)

¹⁵³ [INQ004445_00027_00031](#); [INQ004443_00022_00026](#)

¹⁵⁴ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 136/18-137/7](#); [INQ005820_00081](#)

Chapter 3: Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov: Movements from Friday 2 to Sunday 4 March 2018

3.42 Fedotov had provided a mobile telephone number in four visa applications made to the UK (ending in 8270).¹⁵⁵ The general area where he was in March 2018 could therefore be tracked, when the phone was switched on, by cell siting.¹⁵⁶ That shows that, on arrival on Friday 2 March 2018, he travelled by London Underground from London Heathrow Airport to Earl's Court, and then to Paddington, central London, where he had booked a room at the Dolphin Hotel, Norfolk Square. He was in the Paddington area by about 12:35 and still there at 14:40 and 16:08.¹⁵⁷

3.43 Petrov and Boshirov had similarly provided mobile telephone numbers in visa applications (ending in 8100, in 2777 and in 2168).¹⁵⁸ Boshirov had supplied an additional mobile number (ending in 2550), which he used on the weekend in question, when making a hotel booking in Geneva in December 2017.¹⁵⁹ Cell siting shows that, on Friday 2 March 2018, these two men travelled from London Gatwick Airport into London. A room at the Citystay Hotel in Bow, east London, had been booked the previous day by Petrov. The phones in use by both men cell sited in the east London area by about 19:10, and they checked in to the hotel together at about 19:30.¹⁶⁰

3.44 The next day, Saturday 3 March, Petrov and Boshirov caught a train from London Waterloo station to Salisbury. They can be seen at the arrivals barrier in Salisbury station at 14:26.¹⁶¹ There had been a train which left Waterloo at 12:50 and arrived in Salisbury at 14:20.¹⁶² The phone used by Petrov cell sited in the Waterloo area from about 11:40 until 11:50, before the pair left London.¹⁶³ From then on, the phones used by both men did not register with any mast until about 18:06, when they were on their way back to London.¹⁶⁴ From CCTV stills, the men appear to be consulting their phones when in Salisbury, so the most likely explanation of the absence of cell siting is that the phones were switched off

¹⁵⁵ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 21/16-22/17; INQ005820_00010](#) at paragraph 29; [INQ004450_00001; INQ004449_00001; INQ004447_00016](#)

¹⁵⁶ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 47/1-53/22; INQ005820_00010](#) at paragraph 29

¹⁵⁷ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 53/23-60/11; INQ005820_00010-00011](#) at paragraph 30; [INQ005819_00018-00020; INQ005852_00001-00002, 00004; INQ005885_00001-00003](#)

¹⁵⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 63/10-65/6; INQ005820_00011](#) at paragraph 32; [INQ004445_00027, 00031; INQ005849_00045; INQ004443_00022, 00026; INQ004444_00001, 00005](#)

¹⁵⁹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 65/7-71/10; INQ005820_00011](#) at paragraph 32; [INQ005933_00043-00044](#)

¹⁶⁰ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 71/11-84/9; INQ005820_00011-00012](#) at paragraphs 31–34; [INQ005819_00021-00025; INQ004480_00001; INQ005898_00001-00002; INQ005840_00001-0007](#)
¹⁶¹ [INQ005819_00037](#)

¹⁶² [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 95/1-98/11; INQ006121_00001-00002](#)

¹⁶³ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 89/22-90/17; INQ005819_00028](#)

¹⁶⁴ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 98/16-99/9; INQ005820_00014](#) at paragraphs 43 and 44

from network connections whilst still able to display stored content, such as perhaps a map application or photograph.¹⁶⁵ That is a tradecraft precaution consistent with their being on operational business and not wishing cell siting to be possible.¹⁶⁶

3.45 The phone used by Fedotov cell sited in the area of his hotel in Paddington in the first part of the morning of Saturday 3 March.¹⁶⁷ However, from about 11:40 until about 12:35, it registered with masts in the vicinity of London Waterloo station.¹⁶⁸ That would be at the time when Petrov and Boshirov were at Waterloo station, en route to Salisbury.¹⁶⁹ By 13:55, Fedotov's phone was back in the Paddington area.¹⁷⁰ It is plainly possible that the three men met before two of them caught the train to Salisbury.¹⁷¹

3.46 The centre of Salisbury lies just to the east of the station. The residential area which includes Christie Miller Road, the home of Sergei Skripal, is about half to three-quarters of a mile in the opposite direction, west of the station (see the map at Figure 2 above).¹⁷² Some of the movements of Petrov and Boshirov were caught on CCTV cameras. Some of the voluminous CCTV product had been erased by the time the lengthy task of examining it for the suspects could be undertaken, and it is not surprising that not every possible frame could be recovered.¹⁷³ Those that survive are ample to provide clear evidence of where these two men went.

3.47 On this day and the next (Sunday 4 March), Petrov and Boshirov made four trips on foot from the station in Salisbury.

¹⁶⁵ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 104/15-106/1; INQ005820_00014-00015](#) at paragraphs 43–45; [INQ005819_00038](#)

¹⁶⁶ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 99/16-24](#)

¹⁶⁷ [INQ005819_00030](#)

¹⁶⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 90/25-92/1; INQ005819_00030-00031](#)

¹⁶⁹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 92/2-17](#)

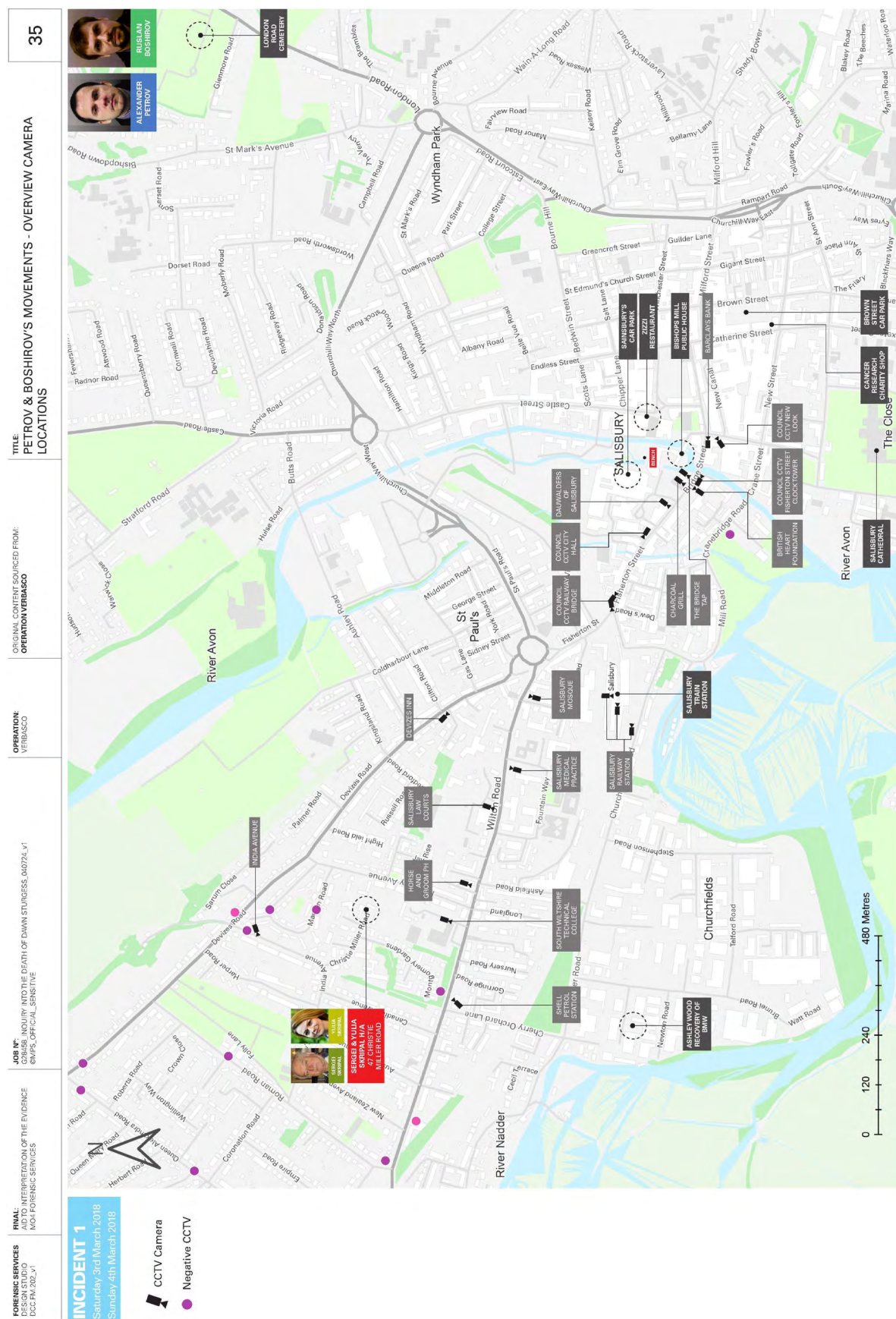
¹⁷⁰ [INQ005820_00014](#) at paragraph 42; [INQ005819_00031](#)

¹⁷¹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 92/17-93/19; INQ005820_00013-00014](#) at paragraphs 38–41

¹⁷² [INQ005819_00014](#)

¹⁷³ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 100/1-25; INQ005820_00012](#) at paragraphs 35 and 36

Figure 7: Movements of Petrov and Boshirov – overview of camera locations



Source: INQ005819_00035

Saturday 3 March 2018: Trip 1

3.48 Petrov and Boshirov left Salisbury station, walked to St Paul's roundabout and then turned west, away from the city centre. They walked along Wilton Road towards the area where Sergei Skripal lived, before crossing that road, doubling back and heading (also westwards) along the adjacent main route, Devizes Road.¹⁷⁴ At 14:50 they turned left into India Avenue, which gives access to Christie Miller Road.¹⁷⁵ About 20 minutes later, they re-appeared on Wilton Road, now heading back towards the station.¹⁷⁶ They crossed the station car park in the direction of Churchfields Road, then returned to the station entrance by about 15:26.¹⁷⁷ They had thus had the opportunity to reconnoitre Sergei Skripal's house and its immediate environment.¹⁷⁸ Trip 1 had taken a minute or two longer than an hour.

¹⁷⁴ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 101/13-103/21; INQ005820_00016; INQ005819_00036-00037](#)

¹⁷⁵ [INQ005820_00016; INQ005819_00038](#)

¹⁷⁶ [INQ005820_00017](#)

¹⁷⁷ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 110/14-20; INQ005820_00017; INQ005819_00039](#)

¹⁷⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 106/14-111/11](#)

Figure 8: Trip 1, Saturday 3 March 2018 – Boshirov and Petrov’s movements



Source: [INQ005819_000036](#)

Saturday 3 March 2018: Trip 2

3.49 More or less immediately, the two men left the station again. At 15:27, they walked to St Paul's roundabout, and set off again westwards, again along Wilton Road, and this time staying on it, rather than diverting to Devizes Road. They reached a point near the junction with Highbury Avenue, which gives access to Christie Miller Road from the direction opposite to the Trip 1 approach via India Avenue.¹⁷⁹ They re-appeared back on Wilton Road about 15 minutes later and a little further out of the city, near the Shell petrol station, thus having had a further opportunity to survey the area around the Skripals' home, and the access routes to it from both north and south.¹⁸⁰ From there, they went back to Salisbury station, arriving by 16:07, where they remained until about 16:36.¹⁸¹ Trip 2 had taken about 40 minutes. In due course, in their RT interview, the two men, whilst asserting that they had visited Salisbury as tourists, mentioned that they had spent some time at the station, having a cup of coffee (see paragraph 3.109 below).¹⁸²

In London, early evening, Saturday 3 March 2018

3.50 Petrov and Boshirov arrived back at London Waterloo station at about 18:25. Their phones, which had not cell sited since leaving Waterloo for Salisbury earlier in the day, re-established contact with the network on their way back, in the general area of Raynes Park, south-west London, through which their train would have passed.¹⁸³ Cell siting of the phone used by Petrov indicates that, by just before 20:00, they were back in the area of the Citystay Hotel in Bow, east London.¹⁸⁴

3.51 First, however, the phones used by both of them cell sited in the area of Bond Street, in central London, beginning at about 18:37.¹⁸⁵ The Boshirov phone registered in that area for about half an hour.¹⁸⁶ It is a real possibility (no more) that that was a convenient location to meet Fedotov,¹⁸⁷ whose phone had cell sited in the Paddington area from about 16:00 until about 18:15.¹⁸⁸ There is no other obvious reason why Petrov and Boshirov should divert to the Bond Street area between Waterloo and Bow,¹⁸⁹ although in their later RT interview they were at some pains to add the otherwise tangential information that they had gone shopping in Oxford Street.¹⁹⁰ The evidence does not indicate any direct telephone call between Fedotov on the one hand and either of the Salisbury visitors on the other, so a meeting might have been an alternative way of updating one another.

¹⁷⁹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 113/3-115/22; INQ005820_00017; INQ005819_00040-00041](#)

¹⁸⁰ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 117/7-118/18; INQ005820_00017; INQ005819_00042](#)

¹⁸¹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 118/19-119/1, 119/23-120/8; INQ005820_00018; INQ005819_00042-00043](#)

¹⁸² [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 121/9-122/3; INQ004175_00004](#)

¹⁸³ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 123/1-21; INQ005898_00002-00003; INQ005840_00010-00012](#)

¹⁸⁴ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 130/9-15; INQ005820_00018](#) at paragraph 49; [INQ005819_00046; INQ005840_00012; INQ005898_00003](#)

¹⁸⁵ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 124/1-21; INQ005820_00018](#) at paragraph 48; [INQ005819_00044-00046](#)

¹⁸⁶ [INQ005898_00003](#)

¹⁸⁷ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 126/6-128/6; INQ005819_00047](#)

¹⁸⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 124/22-126/5; INQ005820_00018](#) at paragraph 48; [INQ005819_00044](#)

¹⁸⁹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 128/7-129/21; INQ005820_00018](#) at paragraph 49; [INQ005819_00046](#)

¹⁹⁰ [INQ004175_00014](#)

Sunday 4 March 2018: Trip 3

3.52 Petrov and Boshirov checked out of the Citystay Hotel in Bow the next morning and travelled again by train from London Waterloo station to Salisbury, where they can be seen emerging from the station at 11:45.¹⁹¹ Once again, neither of their phones connected to the network whilst they were in Salisbury.¹⁹² They walked westwards along Wilton Road and were captured on CCTV at 12:00 as far west as the Shell petrol station, near the junction with Canadian Avenue, from which point access to Christie Miller Road is straightforward.¹⁹³ Sixteen minutes later, at 12:16, they were seen by the camera of a passing bus on Devizes Road, heading back on foot eastwards towards the city. The intervening period would have afforded them an opportunity to visit Sergei Skripal's house.¹⁹⁴

3.53 This time, they did not return to the station. A second bus camera recorded them at 12:31 a little beyond the station turning, in Fisherton Street, and turning right down Water Lane in the general direction of Queen Elizabeth Gardens and, beyond that, the cathedral.¹⁹⁵ They are not seen on cameras until about 33 minutes later, at 13:04, when they were in the High Street, heading north. They turned into Bridge Street and headed back along Fisherton Street in the direction of the station.¹⁹⁶

3.54 On this trip, the two men had with them a rucksack, which they had not had with them the previous day.¹⁹⁷ Boshirov carried it initially, but at some time during the 33 minutes when they are not seen on cameras, it was swapped from him to Petrov.¹⁹⁸ I do not think that it is legitimate to draw any firm conclusion from the transfer of the rucksack. There might have been a number of reasons for it, including (but not limited to) there having been occasion to access the bag or its contents.

Sunday 4 March 2018: Trip 4

3.55 Within four or five minutes of the end of Trip 3 (see paragraph 3.53 above), the two men were seen on Wilton Road, near the Salisbury Mosque, heading west in the direction of Christie Miller Road, having passed the station access.¹⁹⁹ They passed a camera by the Horse & Groom public house at 13:23²⁰⁰ and are then lost from view until they re-appear

¹⁹¹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 141/22-149/11; INQ005820_00019](#) at paragraph 53; [INQ005819_00049, 00051; INQ005876_00004](#)

¹⁹² [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 142/3-143/7; INQ005820_00020](#) at paragraph 55

¹⁹³ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 150/18-151/12; INQ005820_00021; INQ005819_00050; INQ005819_00051, 00054-00055](#)

¹⁹⁴ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 151/13-18, 153/24-154/12; INQ005820_00021; INQ005819_00056](#)

¹⁹⁵ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 151/19-152/7; INQ005820_00021; INQ005819_00057](#)

¹⁹⁶ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 152/13-18; INQ005820_00022; INQ005819_00057-00059](#)

¹⁹⁷ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 104/5-14, 149/9-11; INQ005819_00037; INQ005819_00051](#)

¹⁹⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 166/13-16; INQ005820_00019](#) at paragraph 53; [INQ005820_00022; INQ005819_00057](#)

¹⁹⁹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 168/16-169/13; INQ005820_00022; INQ005819_00061-00062](#)

²⁰⁰ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 169/14-18, 172/10-21; INQ005820_00022; INQ005819_00063](#)

on Devizes Road some 17 minutes later, at 13:40,²⁰¹ by now heading back towards the city. There was clearly an opportunity to pass, or visit, or view Sergei Skripal's house in that intervening 17 minutes.²⁰²

3.56 The camera in Devizes Road that Petrov and Boshirov walked past at 13:40 had been passed just five minutes earlier by the Skripals, who were travelling in Sergei's car and heading into Salisbury city centre for lunch (see paragraph 3.12 above).²⁰³ It follows that the two men might have been in a position to see the departure of the Skripals from their home.²⁰⁴

3.57 Whilst the Skripals drove into Salisbury city centre, where they were soon suffering from the effects of exposure to the Novichok, Petrov and Boshirov passed through the barrier at Salisbury station at 13:48 and returned by train to London Waterloo station.²⁰⁵ The phone used by Boshirov briefly cell sited in the Waterloo area just before 17:00.²⁰⁶ By 19:00, both men were at London Heathrow Airport, where they caught a flight to Moscow at 22:30.²⁰⁷

3.58 Fedotov had flown home to Moscow from Heathrow on that same day, Sunday 4 March. He had been at Heathrow at 12:00, not far off the same time that Petrov and Boshirov arrived at Salisbury from London Waterloo.²⁰⁸

3.59 Subsequently, these three men have been charged by the Crown Prosecution Service with offences arising from the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury.²⁰⁹ Early on in the Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, the original coroner (David Ridley, HM Senior Coroner for Wiltshire and Swindon) directed that those then charged, Petrov and Boshirov, should be made Interested Persons and notified of arrangements for them to participate. No attempt to participate was ever made by either. Letters written to them care of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in London, in January and February 2021, received no reply at all. Nor have they ever made any attempt to become Core Participants in the Inquiry (see Appendix 1 paragraphs A1.9 and A1.20 below).

²⁰¹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 169/19-23, 172/4-7, 172/22-25; INQ005820_00022; INQ005819_00063](#)

²⁰² [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 173/1-22; INQ005820_00022; INQ005819_00061, 00063](#)

²⁰³ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 173/23-176/16; INQ005819_00063, 00067](#)

²⁰⁴ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 176/17-25; INQ005820_00023-00024](#) at paragraphs 59–61

²⁰⁵ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 178/13-180/19; INQ005820_00024](#) at paragraphs 61–65; [INQ005819_00064; INQ006121_00003-00004](#)

²⁰⁶ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 180/20-181/23; INQ005819_00077; INQ005898_00004](#)

²⁰⁷ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 181/24-183/10, 186/18-22; INQ005820_00024-00025](#) at paragraph 65; [INQ005819_00078-00079; INQ005912_00015; INQ004466_00002](#)

²⁰⁸ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 140/11-141/4; INQ005820_00019](#) at paragraph 52; [INQ005819_00052-00053; INQ005874_00001](#)

²⁰⁹ [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 10/4-19; INQ005820_00008](#) at paragraphs 20 and 21

Chapter 4: The injuries to Sergei and Yulia Skripal

3.60 I have already described at paragraph 3.17 above the initial condition of Sergei and Yulia Skripal when they were found on the bench in The Maltings. A cordon to protect them and the scene was rapidly established by the first police officer who attended and was there within about three minutes of receiving the call.²¹⁰ Paramedics quickly arrived and helped attend to them.²¹¹ The paramedics' priority was, of course, to maintain life, rather than to attempt detailed diagnosis, but the most likely cause as it appeared at the time was an opiate overdose, as suggested by symptoms such as pinpoint pupils.²¹²

3.61 The paramedic most closely concerned with Sergei Skripal (Lisa Wood) administered an injection of naloxone, which is a counter to opiates, and which is carried by paramedics.²¹³ It did not achieve a detectable effect, but that is not a definitive exclusion of opiate use.²¹⁴ Once Sergei Skripal was placed in one of the ambulances, a second paramedic (Karl Bulpitt) administered a further injection, which he intended to be naloxone, for the same reason. There was a mix-up of vials when a bag was knocked over as a result of an emergency attempt to clear Sergei Skripal's airway when he vomited again, and the injection actually given was of atropine.²¹⁵ I am satisfied from the evidence that I heard and read from the emergency responders involved (including that a disciplinary investigation took place)²¹⁶ that this incident was entirely an accident. Atropine can be of value as a limited counter to organophosphate poisoning, so this accidental injection can have done no harm, and may have done some good.²¹⁷

3.62 For her part, Yulia Skripal was struggling to breathe at all, but the insertion of an airway management device (see paragraph 3.18 above) and the administration of oxygen helped. On arrival at Salisbury District Hospital, both patients were deeply comatose, with Yulia Skripal in significantly the worse condition. Neither could breathe unaided, and both were experiencing multiple organ dysfunction and profound compromise of the central and peripheral nervous systems. Both were admitted immediately to the intensive care unit and remained there under invasive medical and nursing care for many weeks. For much of their time in hospital, they were maintained in a coma.²¹⁸

²¹⁰ [PC Collins 29 October 2024 55/24-56/4, 65/12-21, 70/6-14, 83/23-86/1; INQ004923_00001-00002; INQ004945_00001-00003](#)

²¹¹ [Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 5/2-7/5; Lisa Wood 30 October 2024 82/25-84/7; INQ004478_00001; INQ004936_00002](#)

²¹² [Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 10/18-11/18; Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 112/4-114, 121/20-123/4, 131/19-132/25; INQ004945_00002; INQ005942_00030](#) at paragraphs 3.39 and 3.40; [INQ004599_00005](#)

²¹³ [Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 20/1-11, 23/22-24/7; Lisa Wood 30 October 2024 94/17-25; Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 110/16-25; INQ004478_00002; INQ004936_00002-00004](#)

²¹⁴ [Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 24/8-25/2; Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 145/5-15, 189/11-190/2; Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 147/10-148/1](#)

²¹⁵ [Lisa Wood 30 October 2024 100/14-102/8; INQ004932_00005-00006](#)

²¹⁶ [INQ006058_00025](#) at paragraph 126

²¹⁷ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 142/23-143/20; INQ005942_00032](#) at paragraphs 3.44 and 3.45

²¹⁸ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 123/12-139/2; INQ004479_00002-00003; INQ005990_00002-00003](#) at paragraphs 5–9; [INQ006126_00002-00003, 00005-00006; INQ005544_00003-00004, 00014, 00016](#)

3.63 At the hospital, the initial working diagnosis was of opiate poisoning, which was the obvious first hypothesis. Many of the symptoms of opiate poisoning are similar to organophosphate poisoning, which is much less often encountered. Salisbury had at the time experienced a considerable level of recreational opiate abuse and consequent poisoning, not infrequently manifesting itself in the central area where the Skripals were found.²¹⁹

3.64 There was of course no experience of nerve agents and no likely opportunity for accidental exposure to organophosphates. However, Sergei Skripal's wallet was found in his pocket, from which his driving licence yielded his name. Yulia Skripal was carrying a Russian mobile telephone. By that first Sunday evening (4 March 2018), a simple open-source internet search of Sergei Skripal's name had revealed to Wiltshire Police something of his history as a former Russian intelligence officer, convicted in Russia, and the subject of a prisoner exchange.²²⁰

3.65 Armed with this information, Detective Inspector (DI) Ben Mant, the Senior Investigating Officer overnight, and Detective Sergeant (DS) Nick Bailey went to the hospital. They spoke to Dr Stephen Cockroft, the intensive care consultant at Salisbury District Hospital who was treating the Skripals, who had himself reached the same results from a similar internet search. The treatment of Sergei and Yulia Skripal was informed by the result of their online research (see paragraph 3.68 below).²²¹ Although, as will be seen below in Part 6 Chapter 3, there was no record of Sergei Skripal's name on Wiltshire Police records, and an enquiry to the regional counter terrorism intelligence unit (part of Counter Terrorism Policing) did not yield anything to help with the likely cause of the Skripals' condition, the information from the open-source search was therefore available at the hospital.

3.66 Meanwhile, a Wiltshire Police officer with CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) training (VN005) was on duty. Consulted originally for the possibility of exposure to powerful opiates such as fentanyl, he had, by the evening of Sunday 4 March, appreciated that there was a possibility of some form of CBRN attack, quite likely organophosphate poisoning; he also considered radiation poisoning.²²² As a result, the on-call duty superintendent, Detective Superintendent (DSU) Tim Corner, had a number of telephone calls that night with scientific advisers, whose opinions generally discounted radiation but did not at that stage add to the possibility of organophosphate poisoning.²²³ Thus, by the middle of that Sunday night, the possibility that the Skripals' illness was the result of a CBRN attack of some kind was actively considered.

²¹⁹ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 145/5-15, 158/6-12; Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 4/15-5/19, 7/3-9; INQ005990_00002-00003](#) at paragraph 9

²²⁰ [PC Collins 29 October 2024 87/12-19, 88/11-20, 100/11-101/15; Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 149/7-11, 150/3-11, 155/17-156/1; Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 15/15-17, 21/18-21; INQ005669_00002, 00004, 00006, 00008](#)

²²¹ [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 20/23-22/1; DS Bailey 7 November 2024 67/8-68/5; DI Mant 11 November 2024 52/5-53/24; INQ005130_00010; INQ005669_00008](#)

²²² [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 21/1-23/12; VN005 12 November 2024 146/7-156/3; INQ005264_00001-00002; INQ005944_00001-00006](#)

²²³ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 36/21-37/21; INQ006163_00009](#) at paragraphs 38–40

3.67 One of the doctors in the accident and emergency department (Dr Paul Russell, Consultant in Medical Microbiology and Virology), had had some CBRN training.²²⁴ Though not directly responsible for the management of either patient,²²⁵ he was therefore consulted on Monday 5 March, when a possible CBRN incident was declared. He was able both to advise on precautionary protective clothing for hospital staff and to speak to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).²²⁶

3.68 By Monday 5 March, the combination of the information about Sergei Skripal with the persistence of some symptoms, such as low blood pressure, profoundly low temperature and the absence of reflexes, meant that the doctors were considering opiate and organophosphate poisoning as well as other CBRN events.²²⁷ Arrangements were made for cholinesterase tests to be carried out, and in due course they confirmed inhibition of the enzyme in both patients.²²⁸ As explained above in Part 2 (see paragraph 2.12), further tests demonstrated Novichok poisoning. Antidote treatment involved the administration of atropine sulphate, hyoscine hydrobromide and pralidoxime chloride.²²⁹ The treating clinicians were considerably supported by a close working liaison with experts at Dstl.²³⁰

3.69 It is clear that, without the very high level of care they received at Salisbury District Hospital, the Skripals would not have survived. Yulia Skripal remained in hospital until 9 April 2018 (a little over four weeks) and Sergei Skripal until 16 May (a little over ten weeks).²³¹ They were very nearly killed, and the injury done to them, short of that, was enormous.

²²⁴ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 2/24-4/25; INQ005990_00001](#) at paragraphs 1–4

²²⁵ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 9/15-10/8](#)

²²⁶ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 14/25-18/21; INQ005990_00003](#) at paragraphs 11 and 12

²²⁷ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 143/15-150/23](#)

²²⁸ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 155/1-10, 161/23-162/12; INQ004479_00002](#) at paragraph 8; [INQ004691_00041; INQ005990_00003-00004](#) at paragraphs 15 and 16

²²⁹ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 160/13-161/5; INQ004409_00001](#) at paragraph 6

²³⁰ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 160/2-12, 161/6-22; INQ004479_00002](#) at paragraph 9; [INQ004691_00040](#)

²³¹ [INQ004479_00003](#) at paragraph 11

Chapter 5: The injuries to others

3.70 By about 21:00 on Sunday 4 March 2018, the acute condition of the Skripals combined with the information which was now known about Sergei Skripal through internet searching meant that Wiltshire Police had a potential major incident on their hands. Police officers could see Sergei Skripal's BMW car where it was in the multi-storey car park, with nobody in it. However, nobody knew the state of affairs inside Sergei Skripal's house at 47 Christie Miller Road.

3.71 A key was obtained from a neighbour and a police guard placed outside,²³² but there was the real possibility that inside there might be someone incapacitated, and/or a dangerous (unidentified) substance which constituted a risk to others, and/or evidence which might explain what had happened. At about 02:00 on the morning of Monday 5 March, Wiltshire Police resolved to enter the house to check. The object was not to conduct a full search but to find any other person, dangerous substance or obvious evidential material.²³³ That was a reasonable, indeed sensible, decision to make; there were obvious dangers in not knowing anything about what the house might yield.

3.72 A question I have considered is whether the risks of the search were properly contemplated and appropriate precautions taken. DI Mant gave evidence that he was "reassured" by and "took great comfort" from DSU Corner's confirmation that the local counter terrorism intelligence unit ('Special Branch' as it continued to be colloquially known) had no information to share regarding the Skripals and was not expressing an interest.²³⁴ There was in fact Counter Terrorism Policing information which was found and was not reported to DSU Corner, namely that Sergei Skripal may be a retired GRU officer, which I address further in Part 6 Chapter 3 below, but this was known to Wiltshire Police from the open-source searches.

3.73 As it was, VN005 told DI Mant that the Skripals were exhibiting seven out of 12 symptoms of nerve agent poisoning.²³⁵ DSU Corner had been reassured by scientists that the incident did not appear to be radiation poisoning; he had not been given any reassurance that it was not nerve agent poisoning.²³⁶ It is clear then that VN005's concerns were not given the emphasis they might have been. However, given Wiltshire Police were aware of the internet searches which suggested Sergei Skripal's history as a Russian intelligence officer who had been convicted and the subject of a prisoner exchange (see paragraph 3.64 above), they were working on the basis that this could be a CBRN incident. The CBRN-trained VN005 advised that the available personal protective equipment (PPE) was suitable for entry to the house.²³⁷ I am not satisfied that, without the benefit of hindsight, greater precautions would have been taken, had there been more emphasis on the likelihood that the Skripals were suffering from exposure to a nerve agent.

²³² [DI Mant 11 November 2024 31/1-8, 57/15-22; INQ005669_00005](#)

²³³ [DCC Mills 7 November 2024 130/3-20, 135/17-24; DI Mant 11 November 2024 37/22-39/24, 42/5-22; INQ006163_00010](#) at paragraph 41; [INQ005669_00010](#)

²³⁴ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 17/11-20/16; INQ005669_00004; INQ006163_00008-00009](#) at paragraph 36

²³⁵ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 14/16-16/23; VN005 12 November 2024 163/11-165/14; INQ005669_00003; INQ005264_00002; INQ005958_00016](#)

²³⁶ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 31/19-38/3; INQ005669_00006; INQ006163_00009](#) at paragraphs 39 and 40

²³⁷ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 67/9-23; VN005 12 November 2024 171/2-11](#)

3.74 Three police officers, wearing protective suits, goggles, gloves, masks and overshoes, entered the house, whilst a fourth, who was the outside guard, remained in place.²³⁸ One of the officers was VN005.²³⁹ There proved, fortunately, to be no one else in the house, and nothing of significance presented itself.²⁴⁰

3.75 But in the following two days, one of those who went inside and who had opened the front door, DS Bailey, became seriously ill, having become contaminated with the same Novichok.²⁴¹ This appears most likely to have occurred when his goggles steamed up and he pushed them upwards, leading to momentary contact between his gloved hand, which had touched the front door, and either his face or the inside surface of the goggles.²⁴² As a result, DS Bailey had to be admitted to intensive care. He remained there, subject to intravenous drug treatment and with a very uncertain future, for some 16 days.²⁴³ He made a substantial physical recovery, but it seems clear that he still carries some of the after-effects of his exposure to the Novichok and of the intensive media interest which accompanied it.²⁴⁴ There is no doubt – and this is clear from his oral evidence – that DS Bailey has suffered very considerably from his experiences.

3.76 Police Constable (PC) Oliver Bell, who had been the guard posted outside Sergei Skripal's house and who attended the entry of the three officers who went into it in the middle of the night of Sunday/Monday, did not himself go inside. However, he became significantly affected within about 15 minutes after the entry team left him. His only contact with that team had been to lend them his body-worn video camera and torch, and to retrieve those items from them when they emerged from the house, but that appears to have been enough to contaminate him.²⁴⁵ He experienced twitching and pain in one eye, its pupil became pinpoint in size and unreactive, and his head was fuzzy. He was sensibly taken that night to the hospital, where he was actively decontaminated. Although not detained, he had to return to the hospital for testing on five subsequent days. Unsurprisingly, in common with DS Bailey, the impact on him and his family was considerable; as more became generally known about the event, they had to live with the knowledge that he had been exposed to a very dangerous nerve agent.²⁴⁶

3.77 VN005, another who went into the house, also experienced a complete loss of sensation in a finger for several days afterwards.²⁴⁷ There were physical and psychological effects also upon Alison McCourt (see paragraph 3.16 above) and her daughter.²⁴⁸

²³⁸ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 57/3-58/11](#); [VN005 12 November 2024 170/6-19](#); [INQ006117_00035](#) at paragraph 154; [INQ005669_00009-00010](#); [INQ004472_00003-00008](#); [INQ005264_00003](#)

²³⁹ [VN005 12 November 2024 140/19-23, 144/8-10](#); [INQ005264_00003-00004](#)

²⁴⁰ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 62/8-11](#)

²⁴¹ [DS Bailey 7 November 2024 56/22-57/1, 74/1-83/19](#); [INQ005130_00008, 00013-00014](#); [INQ004178_00013-00014](#); [INQ005820_00031](#) at paragraphs 90–93

²⁴² [DS Bailey 7 November 2024 64/9-21, 85/5-86/5](#); [VN005 12 November 2024 177/4-180/3](#)

²⁴³ [INQ005820_00031](#) at paragraph 92; [INQ004631_00001](#)

²⁴⁴ [DS Bailey 7 November 2024 4/7-15](#)

²⁴⁵ [DS Bailey 7 November 2024 54/25-56/21, 64/25-66/1](#); [DI Mant 11 November 2024 58/12-60/3, 67/24-69/20](#); [VN005 12 November 2024 172/13-173/9, 175/5-15, 182/25-184/1](#); [INQ004472_00004-00009](#); [INQ005263_00003](#)

²⁴⁶ [INQ004472_00008-00013](#); [INQ005820_00031](#) at paragraph 94

²⁴⁷ [VN005 12 November 2024 186/22-189/13](#); [INQ005265_00001-00002](#)

²⁴⁸ [INQ004476_00005](#)

3.78 The evidence of the collateral injuries to DS Bailey, PC Bell and others provides a good illustration of the power of the Novichok to cause substantial harm even to those who only had quite tangential contact with it, even when the PPE discipline was good. These exposures came in the 12 hours or so immediately after the collapse of the Skripals, when little or nothing was known about the substance involved.

3.79 At a different level, most of those who were unexpectedly involved in attending to the Skripals or in the subsequent investigation had to cope with isolation and with having to wash or surrender their clothing, and often that of their families. One had the experience of the abrupt removal of the family car, some days later, for precautionary safety reasons.

3.80 The potential for damage up to and including death amongst innocent people unconnected to the Skripals ought not to be underestimated. It is a signal indicator of the recklessness involved in the sudden and completely unexpected use of a Novichok in an attack on a single target. In the end, it is a mark of the management of the various scenes – the house, the pub and the restaurant, Sergei Skripal's car, and the bench area where Sergei and Yulia Skripal became unwell being only the more obvious amongst them – by Wiltshire Police, advised by public health professionals and by Counter Terrorism Policing, that the potentially very large incidence of contamination and injury was kept to the minimum that it was – until the Amesbury event on Saturday 30 June 2018, with which I shall deal in Part 4 below.

Chapter 6: Delivery of the Novichok

3.81 It is a not uncommon feature of inquiries such as this that, by the time they can take place, there has been a large volume of public coverage of allegations, assumptions and theories as to what happened. In this case, there have been public statements on behalf of the UK government since at least 13 April 2018 that the Novichok was delivered to Sergei and Yulia Skripal via the front-door handle of the house at 47 Christie Miller Road. That was said by Sir Mark Sedwill (then National Security Adviser, HM Government) in a letter dated 13 April 2018 to the Secretary-General of NATO.²⁴⁹

3.82 It was not, however, the role of Sir Mark Sedwill in that letter to set out the evidential basis for this statement, and he did not do so. Although the assertion may well have passed by now into the realm of common public assumption, at least in the UK, that is not the same as examining the evidence. It has been my task to examine the evidence, and I have done so without making any assumption that the assertion is supported by it. As this chapter will show, I have concluded that the evidence does in fact more than sufficiently support it.

3.83 In examining how the evidence relevant to this assertion emerged, it is necessary to remember that those faced with the sudden and wholly unexpected collapse of the Skripals had initially very little to go on. At first, the symptoms looked like opiate poisoning. By the evening of the day of the poisoning, Sunday 4 March 2018, the public information about Sergei Skripal's history raised the real possibility of an attack on him, but that attack might have been one of many different kinds. A major incident had been declared, and a Counter Terrorism Policing investigation was established on Monday 5 March.²⁵⁰ Not until about 04:00 on the morning of Tuesday 6 March was it known that testing (as distinct from medical hypothesising) strongly suggested organophosphate or similar poisoning, because of the acetylcholinesterase inhibition.²⁵¹ Still, those charged with the investigation did not know beyond speculation what the poison was, who might have administered it, or how.

3.84 At the outset, it was necessary to consider the possibilities of accident, self-administration, domestic criminal activity and hostile foreign intervention, to name but some.²⁵² Neither Sergei nor Yulia Skripal could be asked what had happened or what their movements had been. The reconstruction of events, summarised above in Chapters 1 and 3 and here, had to proceed alongside anxious attempts to protect the public from an obvious risk of contamination from unknown sources and directions, and to avoid increasing the public danger by occasioning panic and consequent well-intentioned but distracting reports of what would turn out to be baseless concerns.

3.85 When the movements of the Skripals could be reconstructed, the places where they had been were all considered as possible sources of the poison. All those places had to be sampled and tested, and those who had been there at relevant times traced. Testing for a form of poison which was soon known to have been a nerve agent is necessarily attended by a great deal of unusual process designed to avoid cross-contamination and any escape

²⁴⁹ [INQ003070_00001-00003](#)

²⁵⁰ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 51/12-18; INQ006056_00011](#) at paragraph 48; [INQ005820_00004](#) at paragraph 4

²⁵¹ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 52/21-53/14; INQ006140_00014](#) at paragraph 53; [INQ006056_00014-00015](#) at paragraph 67; [INQ005923_00011-00012](#) at paragraphs 27 and 28

²⁵² [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 59/2-7; INQ006140_00015](#) at paragraph 58; [INQ006056_000014](#) at paragraph 65

of harmful material, and to protect the people on whom the duty of examination falls, both at the scene tested and at the testing laboratory afterwards. All that makes the business very much slower than it otherwise would be.²⁵³

3.86 Further, the means of exposure to the poison could not be known. It might have been ingested (swallowed), inhaled or absorbed after contact with a contaminated source. On the evidence I heard, the time from contamination to injurious effect varies significantly according to the method of contamination as well as other factors.²⁵⁴ That meant that conclusions as to the likely place of contamination could not and cannot safely be reached solely by calculating time backwards from the collapse.

3.87 When a patient is under heavy sedation in intensive care, to the point of what is effectively an induced coma, as both Sergei and Yulia Skripal were, it is a routine medical step occasionally to arrange a ‘sedation hold’. The sedation is temporarily reduced, allowing the patient to recover not full consciousness, but a substantial measure of it. The purpose is to enable the doctors to make a more reliable assessment of any underlying damage, particularly neurological, than can be achieved whilst heavy sedation masks the patient’s responses.²⁵⁵

3.88 On Thursday 8 March, this procedure was adopted in relation to Yulia Skripal. Dr Cockroft, one of the intensive care consultants, was on duty and was called unexpectedly to her bedside by a nurse, because, although it was not he who had directed the sedation hold, she seemed to be waking up sooner than anticipated. Dr Cockroft had some knowledge of her, because he had also been on duty when she was admitted the previous Sunday. He found her conscious, which pleased and surprised him, having seen her condition on admission, but also disturbed. In an attempt to reassure her, he began a conversation with her about what had happened. As well as reassuring her, he also asked her whether she had been attacked, and in particular whether she had been sprayed. It is unclear what reaction, if any, this produced. A note in Yulia Skripal’s medical records suggests she appeared to assent to the suggestion that she had been sprayed. This is also suggested by the statement of a nurse who entered the room as the question was being asked. However, Dr Cockroft’s evidence was simply that she nodded or shook her head from time to time before the re-sedation took hold, but not that she positively agreed or disagreed with the questions asked.²⁵⁶

3.89 The incident led to an internal hospital disagreement²⁵⁷ as to the propriety of asking questions (indeed, leading questions) of a patient who might have been the target of a murderous attack, and where there was a live police investigation and where the patient was heavily sedated. While this Inquiry is not concerned with hospital discipline, in my view, the questioning was clearly inappropriate. Materially for the Inquiry, the exchange

²⁵³ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2026 75/23-76/14](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 58/16-72/11](#); [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 33/21-36/15](#); [INQ006056_00020](#) at paragraph 94b–f; [INQ005923_00004-00005](#) at paragraphs 11–13; [INQ006140_00008-00011](#) at paragraphs 30–42

²⁵⁴ [FT49 31 October 2024 112/4-116/21](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 33/21-35/8](#); [INQ005997_00002-00003](#) at paragraphs 9 and 10; [INQ005923_00006](#) at paragraph 15

²⁵⁵ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 176/14-19](#); [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 29/21-30/3](#)

²⁵⁶ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 176/5-177/5](#); [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 29/18-20, 31/13-34/12, 36/21-25](#); [INQ004608_00001-00007](#); [INQ005937_00001](#) at paragraphs 1–4; [INQ004594_00001-00002](#); [INQ006170_00001](#); [INQ004611_00004](#)

²⁵⁷ [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 34/14-37/25](#); [INQ005937_00001-00002](#) at paragraphs 5–9; [INQ006160_00001-00003](#) at paragraphs 7–14

under sedation provides no reliable evidence at all about how Yulia Skripal was exposed to the Novichok. When, in due course, she was able properly to be interviewed, she made it clear that she did not know how she came to be exposed to the Novichok.²⁵⁸

3.90 A small vial of liquid found near the bench and handed in by a member of the public contained no trace of Novichok.²⁵⁹ A good deal of time was spent examining the Sainsbury's car park ticket machine, which the Skripals had evidently used, and attempting to isolate any contaminated coin, but in the end no relevant traces were found.²⁶⁰ Those can accordingly be ruled out as sources of the exposure. No traces were found at the cemetery where Liudmilla Skripal's grave lay, and near which, according to an erroneous report, Sergei Skripal's car had allegedly been sighted on the morning of Sunday 4 March (see paragraph 3.10 above).²⁶¹

3.91 Sampling was undertaken at the restaurant, Zizzi, and at The Bishops Mill public house. At both places, some traces of nerve agent were found, but not at a level to make it likely that a near-fatal exposure had occurred there.²⁶² Sergei Skripal's car demonstrated higher levels of contamination, especially on the outside driver's door handle and the steering wheel.²⁶³ That meant that it was, and is, a better candidate than either the restaurant or the public house for the place of exposure; however, the conclusion of the expert evidence which I heard is that the levels were not high enough, particularly when those levels were contrasted with the higher ones later found on the front-door handle of No. 47.²⁶⁴

3.92 Sampling at No. 47 was undertaken over several days (starting on 9 March 2018), after the house had been examined for other evidence, such as digital devices.²⁶⁵ The sampling showed, once all the results are compared, first, that, although there were traces at a comparatively low level in some of the rooms in the house, there was evidence of greater contamination near the inside of the front door.²⁶⁶ When, pursuing that indication, the sampling was, on 16 March 2018, concentrated on the outside of that door, that revealed much the highest level of contamination found anywhere in the investigation. Chiefly, this was in the area of the lever-style external door handle.²⁶⁷ That was despite

²⁵⁸ [INQ005765_00017](#)

²⁵⁹ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 46/16-47/20, 49/16-50/10; INQ006140_00012-00013](#) at paragraphs 46, 49 and 50; [INQ005677_00004](#)

²⁶⁰ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 58/7-59/18; INQ006056_000019-00020](#) at paragraph 92; [INQ006140_00020-00021](#) at paragraph 82; [INQ005677_00012](#)

²⁶¹ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 55/5-58/3; Keith Asman 14 November 2024 79/20-80/7; INQ006056_00018-00019](#) at paragraphs 82 and 91; [INQ006140_00021](#) at paragraph 85

²⁶² [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 33/18-35/23, 39/22-46/2; Keith Asman 14 November 2024 56/5-23; INQ006056_00018](#) at paragraph 82; [INQ005923_00013-00014](#) at paragraph 30; [INQ006140_00015](#) at paragraph 57; [INQ005819_00086-00087; INQ005153_00010-00011; INQ006050_00008, 00010](#)

²⁶³ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 48/4-51/23; MK26 13 November 2024 97/2-102/11; INQ006140_00020, 00023](#) at paragraphs 80 and 95; [INQ005923_00014-00015](#) at paragraphs 31 and 32; [INQ005677_00005; INQ005153_00004-00006](#)

²⁶⁴ [MK26 13 November 2024 187/12-188/22; INQ005923_00017-00018](#) at paragraph 36

²⁶⁵ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 36/1-38/14, 70/23-72/5; Keith Asman 14 November 2024 58/12-60/1, 70/6-14; INQ006056_00019](#) at paragraph 88; [INQ006140_00015-00018](#) at paragraphs 58, 59, 68 and 69; [INQ005668_00002; INQ006141_00005-00007](#)

²⁶⁶ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 63/14-68/15, 70/23-73/14; INQ005153_00001-00003; INQ006050_00017](#)

²⁶⁷ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 80/9-23, 87/24-89/4; INQ006056_00022](#) at paragraphs 98 and 99; [INQ005668_00017; INQ005153_00012; INQ005923_00015-00016](#) at paragraph 33

the fact that, by then, the outside of the front door had been exposed to the changeable weather for about a fortnight, as well as to the comings and goings of suitably clad forensic science teams.²⁶⁸ These levels were far higher than anywhere else, including the car.

3.93 The expert evidence before me concluded, and I accept, that this, together with the absence of comparatively high readings anywhere else, points firmly to the outside of the front door, and especially its lever handle, being the source of the exposure of the Skripals to Novichok.²⁶⁹ As will be seen later (see paragraph 4.68 below), the Novichok recovered after the Amesbury event of Saturday 30 June 2018 was in the form of a viscous liquid,²⁷⁰ such as might readily be applied to a lever handle of this type. Moreover, that recovered Novichok was contained in a bottle with an applicator attachment, which would have made the delivery of the nerve agent to a surface such as the lever door handle a feasible endeavour and would have afforded a degree of distance from the dangerous poison for whoever was applying it.²⁷¹

3.94 The careful sampling at 47 Christie Miller Road also provides clear evidence of **when** the Novichok must have been applied to the external front-door lever handle.

3.95 Sergei Skripal's account of his movements on returning from Heathrow airport on the evening of Saturday 3 March 2018, after collecting Yulia, included the information that he had:

- a. administered his diabetic medicine in the evening;²⁷²
- b. used the downstairs lavatory;²⁷³
- c. used the upstairs bathroom in the evening and overnight;²⁷⁴
- d. switched on the television downstairs, using the remote control;²⁷⁵ and
- e. used his bedside light that evening.²⁷⁶

3.96 Additionally, there was clear evidence that:

- a. Sergei Skripal had used his mobile telephone on the trip to Heathrow;²⁷⁷
- b. when the party got home, he had carried Yulia's suitcase up to the bedroom which she occupied;²⁷⁸ and

²⁶⁸ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 89/5-91/5; INQ006056_00022](#) at paragraph 100

²⁶⁹ [MK26 13 November 2024 102/12-109/1, 173/6-23; INQ005923_00016-00018, 00023-00024](#) at paragraphs 34–36 and 46

²⁷⁰ [INQ005820_00006](#) at paragraph 11

²⁷¹ [MK26 13 November 2024 122/2-22, 143/13-22, 147/5-148/6; Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 155/7-19; INQ005923_00009-00010](#) at paragraph 23; [INQ006056_00030](#) at paragraph 138; [INQ005133_00011; INQ005126_00006](#)

²⁷² [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 156/25-157/12; INQ005751_00002](#)

²⁷³ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 97/11; INQ005750_00004-00005](#)

²⁷⁴ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 100/5-100/17; INQ005751_00010, 00014](#)

²⁷⁵ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 97/25-98/18; INQ005750_00006-00007](#)

²⁷⁶ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 100/1-17; INQ005750_00004](#)

²⁷⁷ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 28/21-31/3; INQ005774_00002; INQ006086_00003-00004](#) at paragraph 10

²⁷⁸ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 87/12-21, 91/18-22; INQ005760_00023, 00025; INQ004676_00003](#)

- c. when the party got back from Heathrow, Maureen Cassidy had gone into the house with the Skripals, and she had, when leaving shortly afterwards, operated the front-door handle.²⁷⁹

3.97 The sampling evidence established that there was no trace of Novichok on:

- a. Sergei Skripal's diabetes monitor, which he could be expected to have used when taking his medication, and which had a tissue next to it with blood on it, indicating recent use;²⁸⁰
- b. the flush handle of the downstairs lavatory;²⁸¹
- c. anything in the upstairs bathroom, including the light pull;²⁸²
- d. the television remote control;²⁸³
- e. Sergei Skripal's bedside light switch;²⁸⁴ and
- f. Yulia Skripal's suitcase in her bedroom.²⁸⁵

3.98 Further:

- a. Maureen Cassidy experienced no symptoms at all, such as she would have been likely to suffer if she had touched the door handle when it was heavily contaminated with Novichok; and
- b. tests on the Cassidys' pickup truck were also negative, including the seat into which Maureen Cassidy immediately sat after leaving the house, and the seat belt she would have used.²⁸⁶

3.99 By contrast, the clear recollection of both Sergei and Yulia Skripal is that, when they set off for Salisbury city centre on Sunday 4 March soon after 13:30, Sergei went ahead to turn the car around and used the door handle to shut the door as he left, whilst Yulia, joining him a few minutes later, also operated the door handle to lock up.²⁸⁷

3.100 The expert evidence concluded that the sampling results indicated that the exposure of the Skripals to Novichok occurred as a result of contact with the heavily contaminated external front-door lever handle, and that that Novichok must have been applied to the door handle sometime after 18:00 on Saturday evening (3 March) and

²⁷⁹ [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 39/3-43/20](#); [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 86/3-95/8](#); [INQ004475_00001](#); [INQ005998_00001](#)

²⁸⁰ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 122/20-123/13, 126/12-127/5](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 77/16-22](#); [INQ006050_00017](#)

²⁸¹ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 125/12-19](#); [INQ006050_00023](#)

²⁸² [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 124/1-125/11](#); [INQ006050_00023](#)

²⁸³ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 123/23-25](#); [INQ005153_00001](#); [INQ006050_00017](#)

²⁸⁴ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 128/23-129/7](#); [INQ006050_00017](#)

²⁸⁵ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 124/16-22, 129/12-16](#); [INQ005153_00002](#); [INQ006050_00017](#)

²⁸⁶ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 94/20-95/20](#); [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 96/10-99/3](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 109/11-110/3, 188/23-189/11](#); [INQ006056_00022-00023](#) at paragraph 102; [INQ005998_00001](#); [INQ005677_00013](#)

²⁸⁷ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 107/16-108/14, 110/6-121/10](#); [INQ006056_00025](#) at paragraph 113; [INQ004679_00003](#); [INQ005287_00003](#); [INQ004676_00004](#); [INQ005761_00015-00018](#); [INQ005768_00030-00031](#); [INQ005752_00006-00007](#); [INQ005819_00088](#)

before they left to go into Salisbury city centre at about 13:30 on Sunday 4 March.²⁸⁸ No one had gone out for the rest of Saturday evening, nor on Sunday morning, until then.²⁸⁹ That conclusion is compelling.

3.101 Petrov and Boshirov had the opportunity to apply the Novichok to the door handle between those times. There was a plain opportunity to do so during Trip 3 (see paragraph 3.52 above), during the 16 minutes between being on camera at the Shell petrol station and re-appearing on Devizes Road. There might have been another opportunity during Trip 4 (see paragraph 3.55 above), but this would have been much more restricted for time.

3.102 The question of whether Counter Terrorism Policing obtained DNA and fingerprints from No. 47 was explored in the open hearings.²⁹⁰ At the request of the family of Dawn Sturgess, I enquired in closed hearings whether further detail was available. From that, I am able to conclude that there has been nothing further relating to DNA and fingerprint testing of value to the investigation to date.

3.103 I consider below in Part 5 the totality of the evidence relevant to the questions of whether the attack on the Skripals can confidently be attributed to Petrov and Boshirov and, separately, whether Russian state responsibility is or is not established.

3.104 Sampling was also carried out at the Citystay Hotel in Bow, east London, in early May 2018.²⁹¹ It revealed small traces, at very low levels, of the specific Novichok found elsewhere, left behind in the room which Petrov and Boshirov had occupied: on a window latch and the basin in the ensuite bathroom.²⁹² In the course of laboratory testing of the swabs from these two locations, a routine cross-check revealed a low level of Novichok contamination on the outside of the shaker in which those swabs were agitated to extract their contents.²⁹³

3.105 It is always at least a possibility, however unusual, that equipment in a laboratory can pick up very low levels of contamination; that is why the routine checks are made. This finding, however, therefore raised the question of whether the readings given by those swabs could be attributable to such laboratory cross-contamination. The expert evidence, however, demonstrated that there was no route which could have been taken by contamination from the outside of the shaker (where some was found) into the swabs, because those swabs were inside glass jars sealed shut with a plastic sealing material, and in turn inside the shaker. I accept that evidence and find that it is more likely that, although some very low level of cross-contamination had occurred to the outside of the shaker, that was the result of some separate event, and what was on the swabs from the hotel room was reliably original Novichok.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁸ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 95/25-96/17, 108/15-109/11; Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 94/22-99/17; MK26 13 November 2024 105/14-110/3, 128/13-21, 187/12-190/1; INQ006056_00022-00023](#) at paragraphs 100–102; [INQ005923_00015-00017](#) at paragraphs 33–35

²⁸⁹ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 101/7-108/14; INQ006086_00004-00005](#) at paragraph 13; [INQ006087_00005](#) at paragraph 13; [INQ005247_00018-00023; INQ005775_00003-00007](#)

²⁹⁰ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 86/12-88/14; INQ006140_00029](#) at paragraph 121

²⁹¹ [MK26 13 November 2024 153/13-22, 156/9-157/3](#)

²⁹² [MK26 13 November 2024 154/4-6, 157/4-159/7; INQ005923_00019-00022](#) at paragraphs 38–40; [INQ006056_00045](#) at paragraph 206

²⁹³ [MK26 13 November 2024 159/8-22; INQ005923_00020-00021](#) at paragraph 40

²⁹⁴ [MK26 13 November 2024 159/23-165/2; INQ005923_00020-00021](#) at paragraph 40

3.106 These traces in the hotel room cannot have been left there after the morning of Sunday 4 March, since the two men did not go back to this hotel after leaving Salisbury that day (see paragraph 3.57 above). Since there is no plausible source of contamination anywhere other than Sergei Skripal's house on Sunday, only Petrov and Boshirov can be the source of the traces in the hotel. Moreover, the traces at the hotel provide compelling evidence linking these men to the Novichok **before** it was placed in Salisbury.

Chapter 7: Alternative narratives

RT interview

3.107 On 13 September 2018, the RT news channel broadcast an interview with Petrov and Boshirov.²⁹⁵ At this stage, Counter Terrorism Policing had publicised the allegation that those two men had been responsible for delivering Novichok to Sergei Skripal's house and had included some, but by no means all, of the stills from CCTV cameras which showed them both in London and in Salisbury. There had, at that stage, been no publication of the true identities of the men, nor of the routes they had taken on their four walkabout trips in Salisbury (see paragraphs 3.48 to 3.57 above).²⁹⁶

3.108 The two men told the interviewer that Petrov and Boshirov were their true names.²⁹⁷ They said that they had come forward because of the publicity which was, they said, turning their lives upside down to the extent that they did not feel they could go out into the street. It appears from what the interviewer said that President Putin had made a public appeal to them, on the day of the interview, to come forward.²⁹⁸

3.109 Their account was that they had come to London as tourists and with the plan to visit Salisbury, Stonehenge and Old Sarum. They said that, although they had travelled to Salisbury on Saturday 3 March, their plans had been frustrated by snow and they had stayed only a short time, variously described as 30 minutes to an hour or a little more, including about 40 minutes having coffee at the station.²⁹⁹ They had returned to London and had done some shopping in Oxford Street.³⁰⁰

3.110 They reported that, on Sunday 4 March, the snow had melted, so they returned to Salisbury, but this time sleet curtailed their visit and, although they visited a park and a coffee shop, and saw the cathedral, they did not stay long.³⁰¹ They said that they had never heard of Sergei Skripal and did not know whether or not they had been anywhere near his home.³⁰² They had no connection to the GRU but were in business together as suppliers of supplements, health foods and the like to athletes and those interested in fitness.³⁰³ They described the suggestion that they had taken Novichok to Salisbury as absurd.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁵ [INQ004175](#); [INQ005843](#)

²⁹⁶ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 5/5-24/13](#); [INQ004464_00001-00006](#)

²⁹⁷ [INQ004175_00001](#)

²⁹⁸ [INQ004175_00007-00009](#)

²⁹⁹ [INQ004175_00002-00004](#)

³⁰⁰ [INQ004175_00014](#)

³⁰¹ [INQ004175_00004-00006](#)

³⁰² [INQ004175_00006](#)

³⁰³ [INQ004175_00010-00011](#)

³⁰⁴ [INQ004175_00006](#)

3.111 Some of this account fitted with what were then the known facts, as it might be expected to do, whether true or false. In some respects, however, it must be false,³⁰⁵ not to say ludicrous:

- a. They made the four separate trips described (see paragraphs 3.48 to 3.57 above) on the two days in Salisbury, each starting in the opposite direction to the city centre, and each taking them to the vicinity of Christie Miller Road. This, which had not been made public at that stage, is wholly inconsistent with visiting Salisbury to see the tourist sights.³⁰⁶
- b. The assertion that they worked together in a small business is inconsistent with the varied employment records on which their several visa applications had relied (see paragraphs 3.23, 3.31 and 3.32 above).³⁰⁷
- c. There was a small and unnecessary falsehood by way of explanation for what were then thought to be CCTV pictures of them in the same arrival lane at London Gatwick Airport: they said that they always went through customs together, whereas in fact they were in adjacent lanes, as the camera identifications show (see paragraph 3.20 above).³⁰⁸ It was quite unnecessary to explain these photographs, but the Russian response to the accusation against them had already asserted that the evidence must have been faked because they were shown in the same corridor at the same time.
- d. Above all, for the reasons set out above in Chapter 2, Petrov and Boshirov were not their true names, and both had demonstrable links to the GRU.³⁰⁹

3.112 It may well be that neither these two men, nor those to whom they answered, ever expected this account to be accepted; it seems to be more consistent with making a formal denial for public purposes, which only the credulous would be likely to take seriously.

Responses from the Russian Embassy

3.113 When public accusations of Russian state responsibility for the attack on the Skripals were made in the UK by, amongst others, the Prime Minister (then Theresa May),³¹⁰ the Foreign Secretary (then Boris Johnson) and the National Security Adviser (then Sir Mark Sedwill),³¹¹ followed by charges brought by the Crown Prosecution Service against Petrov, Boshirov, and later Fedotov (see paragraph 3.59 above),³¹² responses were from time to time issued through the Russian Embassy. These included *Salisbury: Unanswered Questions* (4 March 2019),³¹³ *Salisbury: Two Years of Unanswered Questions* (4 March 2020)³¹⁴ and *Salisbury: Five Years of Unanswered Questions* (March 2023).³¹⁵ They firmly deny that there was any connection between Russia and the attack on the Skripals. To a large extent, they repeat the same material, so it is convenient to consider

³⁰⁵ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 24/14-23](#)

³⁰⁶ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 24/24-29/1](#)

³⁰⁷ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 29/2-21](#)

³⁰⁸ [INQ004175_00014-00015](#)

³⁰⁹ [Commander Murphy 20 November 2024 31/21-32/6](#)

³¹⁰ [INQ002997](#)

³¹¹ [INQ003070](#)

³¹² [Commander Murphy 19 November 2024 10/4-19](#); [INQ005820_00008](#) at paragraphs 20 and 21

³¹³ [INQ004577](#)

³¹⁴ [INQ004174](#)

³¹⁵ [INQ004576](#)

them collectively. These responses suggest an alternative explanation for what occurred, and they advance reasons for rejecting the attribution of responsibility to Russia made by the UK authorities. Both elements of these responses merit proper analysis and consideration.

3.114 The core assertion in these documents is that the Salisbury event was “a *blatant provocation by the British authorities aimed at discrediting Russia*”.³¹⁶ Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov suggested in March 2018 that the reason for staging such a “provocation” might be “*the difficult situation with Brexit and the desire to keep leading positions internationally*”.³¹⁷ To this, the Russian ambassador added in 2021 the proposition that Russia was “*facing a multi-staged operation, designed by a very talented dramatist*”, and then, in 2023, the conclusion that the Salisbury allegations “*were supposed to be an initial, testing exercise for a large-scale smear operation aimed at presenting Russia as an enemy*”.³¹⁸ In other words, the question which has to be asked is whether the Salisbury event may have been staged by the British in order to make a false accusation against Russia.

3.115 The Russian responses considered in this report direct attention to several factors which they suggest should lead to this conclusion. Two complaints, which were that the visa applications of Petrov and Boshirov and the movements of the two men had not been disclosed,³¹⁹ need no further discussion, because that information is now public, was part of the evidence before me, and is reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 above.

3.116 Yet more of the Russian narratives are simply wrong – for example, the assertions that Sergei Skripal’s car was in the London Road area on the morning of Sunday 4 March 2018 and that Sergei and Yulia Skripal’s mobile phones were switched off for three or four hours (see paragraph 3.11 above). One or two are patently designed to induce the UK authorities to reveal confidential intelligence, and those I have had to deal with in closed hearings.

3.117 Some of the assertions made, however, deserve fuller analysis:

- a. A BBC report of 4 June 2018 mentioned that Dstl does produce small amounts of chemical and biological agents for research, to help develop effective medical counter-measures and to test systems.³²⁰ Similarly, in interviews, Dstl’s then chief executive did not deny that Novichok could be, or was, produced there.³²¹
- b. There is said to be no satisfactory explanation for the “*extraordinary coincidence*” of the presence of Alison McCourt, Chief Nursing Officer of the British Army, at the scene of the Skripals’ collapse, and the fact that this was not publicised until January 2019.³²²
- c. There is said to be no satisfactory explanation for the presence at Salisbury District Hospital at the time of the admission of the Skripals of “*staff trained to deal with nerve agent poisonings*”.³²³

³¹⁶ [INQ004577_00008](#); [INQ004576_0006](#)

³¹⁷ [INQ004577_00010-00011](#)

³¹⁸ [INQ004576_00017](#)

³¹⁹ [INQ004577_00030-00031](#); [INQ004174_00017-00018](#); [INQ004576_00023-00025](#)

³²⁰ [INQ004576_00016](#)

³²¹ [INQ004577_00025](#); [INQ004576_00019](#)

³²² [INQ004577_00031](#); [INQ004576_00025](#)

³²³ [INQ004577_00031](#); [INQ004576_00025](#)

- d. It is said that, in an article published on 8 April 2018, the then Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, misrepresented or misinterpreted remarks made in 2010 by Vladimir Putin, who was Prime Minister at the time, saying that he had made a televised threat that “traitors” would “kick the bucket” and “choke”, whereas in fact Mr Putin had said that Russia did not use assassination, whilst “traitors” would “kick the bucket” of their own accord and “choke” on their “thirty pieces of silver”.³²⁴
- e. In the same article, the then Foreign Secretary was said to have misrepresented or misinterpreted Russian law in saying that it “allows the assassination of ‘extremists’ overseas”, whereas in fact it was asserted that the law permits only the sending of formations of armed forces to combat terrorists and their bases abroad.³²⁵
- f. Russian requests for consular access to the Skripals were not granted.³²⁶
- g. Russian requests for access to samples from the patients or elsewhere were not granted.³²⁷
- h. It was obvious that there must have been a CCTV camera recording Sergei Skripal’s house, but its product had not been made available.³²⁸
- i. There was an inexplicable lack of adverse reaction in any of those who attended to the Skripals at the bench.³²⁹
- j. There was no explanation for the fact that the Skripals collapsed more or less simultaneously despite being of different physical characteristics, including build, age and gender.³³⁰

3.118 I will address these below in paragraph 3.121 but first note that criticisms are also advanced in the Russian responses of the level of detail included in the published Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reports.³³¹ Those must speak for themselves. Only the OPCW can decide what is and what is not included in such reports. Unless it is suggested that the OPCW is itself complicit in an accusation against Russia which it knows to be false (and this is not asserted), it is difficult to see that such criticisms advance the resolution of the question here considered.

3.119 Elsewhere, however, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has asserted that one of the laboratories to which the OPCW sent the Salisbury samples had detected the presence of a chemical not found in Russian nerve agents.³³² This was investigated in evidence before me.³³³ It proceeds on a misunderstanding. As confirmed by Marc-Michael Blum, Head of the OPCW laboratory at the time, all substances sent out by the OPCW for laboratory examination have included in them a tracking chemical, in this case a cholinesterase inhibitor precursor called BZ.³³⁴ Detection of that substance is not an

³²⁴ [INQ004577_00025-00026; INQ004576_00019-00020](#)

³²⁵ [INQ004577_00026; INQ004576_00020-00021](#)

³²⁶ [INQ004577_00038; INQ004576_00031](#)

³²⁷ [INQ004577_00007-00008, 00042; INQ004576_00006, 00035](#)

³²⁸ [INQ004577_00030; INQ004576_00024](#)

³²⁹ [INQ004577_00028; INQ004576_00022](#)

³³⁰ [INQ004577_00028; INQ004576_00022](#)

³³¹ [INQ004577_00032-00033; INQ004576_00026-00027](#)

³³² [INQ005100_00001](#)

³³³ [MK26 13 November 2024 202/2-206/15](#)

³³⁴ [INQ004425_00004-00006, 00072, 00075-00076](#)

indication contradicting the conclusions stated by the OPCW and the laboratories which it used, that the samples taken in Salisbury contained the specific Novichok identified by Dstl, and no additional chemical was in fact detected.³³⁵

3.120 Contentions similar to some of those listed at paragraph 3.117 above have from time to time also been advanced in various media postings. Those amount simply to comments, chiefly uninformed. Events of this startling nature are always apt to generate such comment, and sometimes imaginative theories. Having heard and read extensive open and closed evidence, I find that no analysis beyond what is set out here is called for.

3.121 I now return to the matters listed at paragraph 3.117 above, which merit further discussion:

- a. **Availability of nerve agent.** The Chemical Weapons Convention expressly permits by Article II(9)(b) the possession of chemical weapon-type material for the purposes of protection against the use of toxic chemicals or chemical weapons.³³⁶ It would be legitimate (and wholly unsurprising) if limited quantities were held in defence and security laboratories internationally, precisely and only for the purpose of making effective any reaction to malicious use by others; indeed, some might think it part of the duty to protect a nation's citizens or servicepeople for that to be done. So, purely for the purposes of considering the argument advanced for the alternative narrative, I have considered the theoretical possibility that the nerve agent was available in the UK.
- b. **'Coincidence' of Alison McCourt's presence.** Alison McCourt lived near Salisbury in March 2018.³³⁷ There is no reason whatsoever why she should not have been in the city with her husband and children on the day in question and, given her training, every reason why she should go to the assistance of the Skripals.³³⁸ I am satisfied that that is what happened. It is also extremely improbable that, if there had been some kind of orchestrated event involving her and a very dangerous poison, she would have involved her husband and children in close proximity to it.³³⁹ I see nothing remotely extraordinary about her presence, nor about the fact that she did not seek publicity afterwards. On the contrary, it is to be recorded that, once there was publicity, in particular after her daughter was nominated for public service recognition for what she also did to help, that unwanted publicity, plus the injury which she and her daughter sustained (see paragraph 3.77 above), did lasting damage to the family's health, including that of Alison McCourt.³⁴⁰ Years later, she was – as clearly shown by medical evidence submitted to me – at risk of further harm if required to give evidence in person, and so I excused her from doing so, even though it is always preferable to hear a witness in person if possible.³⁴¹

³³⁵ [MK26 13 November 2024 202/25-204/25](#)

³³⁶ [MK26 13 November 2024 46/9-47/17](#); [INQ005105_00001](#); the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 'Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction', Article II, paragraph 9(b) (<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-ii-definitions-and-criteria>)

³³⁷ [INQ006137_00001](#) at paragraph 6

³³⁸ [INQ004476_00001-00002](#); [INQ006137_00001](#) at paragraph 5

³³⁹ [INQ006137_00002](#) at paragraph 11

³⁴⁰ [INQ004476_00005](#); [INQ006137_00002](#) at paragraphs 10, 14 and 16

³⁴¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Alison McCourt Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-10-23-DSI-Ruling-Alison-McCourt-evidence.pdf>)

- c. **Availability of trained medical staff.** I do not find it surprising for any national health service which prepares for a full range of emergencies to have at least limited access to CBRN expertise. The proximity of Salisbury District Hospital to Dstl made this more likely. In March 2018, the hospital had access to relevant expertise. Notwithstanding this, I do note the initial diagnosis was opiate poisoning (see paragraph 3.63 above):
- i. Wiltshire Police were able to deploy one officer with general CBRN training, who was aware from literature (but not of course from personal experience) of possible signs of organophosphate poisoning, as well as being alert to the possibility of radiation poisoning (following the attack on Alexander Litvinenko) and other forms of attack.³⁴²
 - ii. Amongst the medical staff, there was a range of medical interest and experience, as would be expected. The hospital had on its staff the microbiologist described at paragraph 3.67 above (Dr Russell), who had CBRN training; he was aware of the likely reaction to organophosphate poisoning.³⁴³ On Sunday 4 March, he raised with Dr Cockroft (who had the care of the patients, whereas he had not) the possibility of nerve agent poisoning, but he did not press him about it. Later, he used his contacts at Dstl to ensure proper liaison, and he discussed the cases with both Dr Cockroft and later Dr James Haslam, the intensive care consultant responsible for the Skripals' care from Monday 5 March onwards.³⁴⁴
 - iii. Dr Cockroft, who was the consultant initially responsible for the Skripals on Sunday night/Monday morning, had an interest in pharmacology, having taken a degree in that subject in the past. He had a particular interest in poisoning via synthetic opiates and, accordingly, considered that as a possibility in these patients. He was also aware, through literature, of organophosphate poisoning in agricultural contexts in India and the Far East.³⁴⁵
 - iv. Dr Haslam had no particular CBRN or other relevant training. He had some knowledge of organophosphate poisoning from studying for exams in the past but had no personal experience of it. He was, as time went on, alerted to some features of the patients' condition which did not seem entirely to fit with opiate poisoning and, as he said in evidence, he conducted his own research into organophosphate poisoning.³⁴⁶
 - v. There was a healthy debate amongst the doctors about what the cause of the Skripals' acute condition was. The picture does credit to the scientific curiosity of the doctors, but it is far removed from there being a pre-arranged team of nerve agent experts assembled to deal with the Skripals after a staged contamination.
- d. **Mr Putin's public remarks.** This point is correct. Mr Putin's public remarks in 2010 about 'traitors' did not amount to an assertion that they would be or should be assassinated (see further analysis below in Part 6 Chapter 1). They were contemptuous of those so described and suggested that they would come to a bad ending, but the words used did not carry the implication put upon them by the then Foreign Secretary's interpretation, which overstates matters. I do not, however, given the conclusions

³⁴² [VN005 12 November 2024 153/20-155/5; INQ005265_00001](#)

³⁴³ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 2/24-5/25; INQ005990_00001](#) at paragraphs 1–4

³⁴⁴ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 18/22-24/25; INQ005990_00003-00004](#) at paragraphs 13 and 15

³⁴⁵ [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 24/18-25/24, 39/8-16](#)

³⁴⁶ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 143/21-144/3, 146/11-150/20, 152/12-14](#)

expressed below in paragraphs 3.123 and 3.124, consider that analysis of the terms of Mr Putin's remarks provides any help at all on whether the Salisbury event was staged by the UK.

- e. **Russian law.** This point is partly correct. The Russian law in question does not in terms authorise assassination, but it does rather more than permit the sending of 'formations of the armed forces'. It authorises the President to permit the deployment of "*sub-divisions of special operations federal security service organs*" against terrorists and/or their bases outside Russia, "*in order to eliminate a threat to the security of the Russian Federation*".³⁴⁷ It is plainly possible that that could be taken to include a strike against an individual regarded by the Russian authorities as a threat to the country's security. But again, I do not consider that close interpretation of the terms of foreign legislation, nor of the Foreign Secretary's non-lawyer's comments upon it, assist in the resolution of the question whether the Salisbury event was staged by the UK.
- f. **Consular assistance.** All the evidence shows that neither Sergei nor Yulia Skripal wished to avail themselves of consular assistance from Russia. That was particularly true of Yulia, who said so publicly, soon after recovering sufficiently to be discharged from hospital.³⁴⁸ Sergei remained in intensive care at that time, but the idea that he wanted consular assistance from those who had convicted and imprisoned him is fanciful. It may be that, in addition to the right of foreign nationals to seek consular help, consular officers have the right to ask to give it, but not against the wishes of the national.
- g. **Russian access to the laboratory samples.** Given that there were, at the least, grounds for suspecting Russian involvement in the poisoning of the Skripals, it is not surprising that access to the samples, which would entail the possibility of interference with or misrepresentation of them, should not be given. The best evidence of the information to be derived from the samples is the independent analysis of them by the OPCW.
- h. **CCTV.** There was no CCTV outside (or inside) the Skripals' home.³⁴⁹
- i. **Lack of adverse reaction in emergency responders.** I have set out above in Chapter 5 the serious injury suffered by DS Bailey, and the lesser but significant ones suffered by PC Bell, Alison McCourt and her daughter, and VN005. The expert evidence explained that secondary contamination from proximity to a person who had been exposed to the nerve agent would not be expected to produce a similar reaction; the risk of person-to-person spread is much less than the hazard of contact by the first person with the poison.³⁵⁰
- j. **Differing effect on Sergei and Yulia Skripal.** The expert evidence demonstrated that the reactions of Sergei and Yulia Skripal to the exposure to the Novichok would be expected to be affected by variables such as the level of dose (probably greater for Sergei, who used the front-door handle first); difference in weight (leading to more rapid and worse effects for the lighter Yulia); the administration of atropine to Sergei

³⁴⁷ Federal Law No 153-FZ of 27 July 2006, Article 9.1, page 10 (Translation from Russian available at: <https://policehumanrightsresources.org/content/uploads/2016/08/Federal-Law-on-Federal-Security-Service-Russia-1995.pdf?x18231>)

³⁴⁸ [INQ005820_00040](#) at paragraph 122; [INQ005257_00002](#)

³⁴⁹ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 154/2-155/9](#); [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 95/22-96/6](#); [INQ006086_00008](#) at paragraph 27e

³⁵⁰ [FT49 31 October 2024 132/1-134/3](#)

but not to Yulia; and other factors affecting the rate at which different bodies metabolise an intruding substance.³⁵¹ The reaction of the two people when first affected was not in any event identical; when seen at the bench, Yulia had lost consciousness and was struggling to breathe, whereas Sergei was conscious but inarticulate.

3.122 I should add for completeness of alternative narratives worthy of analysis – although this is not mentioned in any of the Russian response documents – that, on the return journey from London Heathrow Airport on Saturday 3 March, the Cassidys noticed police cars on the motorway and wondered if they were perhaps keeping station with them.³⁵² Some may since have been tempted to conclude that this might be an indication of official monitoring of the movements of the Skripals and thus in some way consistent with a staged attack. This sighting was fully investigated and found to be an entirely unconnected police operation by a different force dealing with prisoners being moved from one custody suite to another. It was unrelated to any of the persons involved in the Salisbury event.³⁵³

3.123 Taking the above issues fully into account, I here confront directly the question whether the Salisbury event could have been staged by the UK as a device for discrediting Russia. It is necessary to think about what a staged event, if it had taken place, would have had to entail:

- a. If any such staged process took place, that would mean that those who staged it must have taken advantage of the fortuitous arrival in the UK of two Russian travellers to blame Russian hands for the attack.
- b. Even if the UK authorities could have known in advance that these convenient scapegoats were coming to the UK, there is no suggested way in which any plan of theirs to visit Salisbury could have been known before the morning of Saturday 3 March. Until it was known that they were going there, the contrived target of any staged attack (i.e. Sergei Skripal) could not have been settled upon.
- c. Even if one assumes (without evidence) that the men were under surveillance, it would have to follow that the UK authorities decided on Saturday, when the men got rail tickets for travel to Salisbury, to stage a false attack on Sergei Skripal. At that time, he was shortly to be en route to London Heathrow Airport to meet his daughter.
- d. If a false attack were going to be staged, by applying Novichok to the front-door handle or otherwise, then in practice it would have to happen that day, for there was no possible way for the UK authorities to know that the two men would return to Salisbury on Sunday 4 March; they themselves say that they did not decide until the Saturday to do that, and there can be no suggestion that they told anyone in authority or did anything which would indicate such a plan. Time was accordingly absurdly short.
- e. More crucially, all the evidence summarised above (in Chapters 1 and 6) shows that the Novichok was **not** put on the front-door handle on Saturday and rather not until Sunday, nor did the Skripals suffer any adverse effects until Sunday.

³⁵¹ [FT49 31 October 2024 127/12-131/25; INQ005997_00002](#) at paragraph 7; [INQ006203_00001-00002](#)

³⁵² [Ross Cassidy 28 October 2024 34/15-35/11; INQ005774_00003](#)

³⁵³ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 78/22-80/16; INQ006056_00041](#) at paragraph 192b

- f. On top of all that, there is no suggested way in which the UK authorities, if bent on staging an attack designed to look as if these two men had carried it out, could have had the remotest inkling that their designated unwitting pawns would then obligingly walk into the immediate area of the Skripals' home – and not once, but four different times.

3.124 I conclude that I am sure that there was no staging of the Salisbury event by the UK authorities, designed to blame Russia. I will return later below (in Part 5), after consideration also of the Amesbury event on Saturday 30 June 2018, to the more general question of whether Russian state responsibility for the events is established.

Part 4: The Amesbury event

Chapter 1: Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley

4.1 I have given an outline of Dawn Sturgess' life and personal circumstances in Part 1 above.

4.2 Dawn Sturgess' partner was Charlie Rowley. He had also been living in Salisbury, in different accommodation, until 18 May 2018. He then moved to a flat at 9 Muggleton Road, Amesbury, where he was living at the time of the Amesbury poisonings on Saturday 30 June 2018.³⁵⁴

4.3 Charlie Rowley was frank with the police officers who interviewed him after that event, and he showed a degree of self-insight. He had a history of several years of heroin addiction.³⁵⁵ He continued to misuse heroin, and, like many others with the same addiction, he was prescribed methadone (an alternative opioid drug designed to relieve cravings and to reduce withdrawal symptoms should they occur).³⁵⁶ He was subject to a regime which required him to collect his methadone daily from a nominated pharmacy. During the time with which I am concerned, that was in Amesbury. Charlie Rowley was also addicted to alcohol and said that it was not unusual for him to be unable to remember what had happened, due to his drinking.³⁵⁷

4.4 Charlie Rowley had criminal convictions, including for drug offences,³⁵⁸ the details of which are irrelevant to this Inquiry. What is relevant, in particular to the emergency response when he first became unwell, is that Wiltshire Police had intelligence which suggested that he was sometimes a supplier of class A drugs.³⁵⁹ He did not deny, when interviewed afterwards, that he had a history of supplying drugs, and he described himself, without dissembling, as sometimes engaged in "*mischief*" of this nature at the time with which I was concerned.³⁶⁰

4.5 As will be seen, Charlie Rowley was gravely ill after exposure to Novichok at the same time as Dawn Sturgess. One of the known possible side effects of organophosphate (and hence of Novichok) poisoning is impairment of memory. An undoubted sense of grief at the loss of Dawn Sturgess and of some (entirely unwitting) responsibility for it, combined with his addictions and possible adverse effect from the Novichok, leave him with little or no reliable memory of many of the matters which are the subject of this Inquiry.

³⁵⁴ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 28/10-29/1](#); [INQ05820_00042](#) at paragraphs 127 and 128; [INQ006057_00035](#) at paragraph 151; [INQ003113_00005-00006](#)

³⁵⁵ [INQ05820_00042](#) at paragraph 129; [INQ003114_00026](#)

³⁵⁶ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 29/13-30/3](#); [INQ006057_00006](#) at paragraph 31; [INQ005820_00049](#) at paragraph 152; [INQ003114_00026-00027](#); [INQ005685_00009-00010](#)

³⁵⁷ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 53/11-55/3](#); [INQ005982_00001-00002](#) at paragraph 5; [INQ003114_00011-00012](#)

³⁵⁸ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 29/13-21](#); [INQ005820_00042](#) at paragraph 129; [INQ006057_00006](#) at paragraph 31

³⁵⁹ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 29/18-21, 30/14-18](#); [INQ006057_00006](#) at paragraph 31

³⁶⁰ [INQ003112_00028-00029](#)

4.6 By the time I came to hear evidence from witnesses in the autumn of 2024, a convincing medical report demonstrated beyond doubt that Charlie Rowley was wholly unfit to be called and would not be able to give oral evidence. For example, his interview with the reporting doctor had to be cut short due to him being severely under the influence of alcohol.³⁶¹ The unreliability of his recall also affected what he was able to tell police officers after the poisoning, but, where possible, I have taken account of those parts of what he said which appear to be supported by independent material, and that is true of a significant part of what he related.

³⁶¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Charlie Rowley Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-11-15-Ruling-Charlie-Rowley.pdf>)

Chapter 2: Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley: Movements on Friday 29 and Saturday 30 June 2018

4.7 On Saturday 30 June 2018, Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley fell gravely ill at Charlie's flat in Muggleton Road, Amesbury,³⁶² as a result of exposure to Novichok of the same specific type that had affected Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal four months earlier and about seven miles away, in Salisbury.³⁶³

4.8 Neither Dawn Sturgess nor Charlie Rowley had any connection to the Salisbury event, or to Sergei or Yulia Skripal, or with anything which might have attracted Russian interest in them.³⁶⁴ There was no reason whatsoever for either Dawn Sturgess or Charlie Rowley to be the object of a deliberate, malicious attack.

4.9 Once it was safe to search the Muggleton Road flat, some days later, on 11 July 2018, a small bottle was found which contained a quantity of neat agent Novichok of high purity,³⁶⁵ together with discarded packaging which purported to be of a brand of perfume.³⁶⁶

4.10 A combination of CCTV and independent evidence makes it possible to reconstruct the significant activities of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley on both Saturday 30 June 2018 and the preceding day, Friday 29 June. There are four critical facts:

- a. Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley spent Friday 29 June in Salisbury. In the evening, they travelled together to Amesbury, departing Salisbury on a bus at 22:06. After arriving in Amesbury, they went to Charlie Rowley's flat in Muggleton Road and spent the night there.³⁶⁷
- b. Neither Dawn Sturgess nor Charlie Rowley experienced any adverse impact on their health until sometime after 10:00 the next morning, on Saturday 30 June.³⁶⁸
- c. No trace of Novichok was found when Dawn Sturgess' room and other places in John Baker House, back in Salisbury, were tested.³⁶⁹

³⁶² [INQ005676_00003-00005](#); [INQ005820_00041](#) at paragraph 123

³⁶³ [MK26 13 November 2024 119/16-120/2, 170/7-25, 176/22-177/9](#); [INQ005923_00023](#) at paragraph 44; [INQ002993_00002](#) at paragraph 11

³⁶⁴ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 120/18-121/11](#); [INQ006057_00010](#) at paragraph 49; [INQ005820_00041](#) at paragraph 123

³⁶⁵ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 135/21-150/19](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 120/16-21, 123/16-19](#); [INQ006057_00024-00027](#) at paragraphs 108, 115, 117 and 118; [INQ005820_00043, 00054](#) at paragraphs 131 and 174; [INQ005923_00009-00010](#) at paragraphs 23 and 24; [INQ006056_00029-00030](#) at paragraphs 137 and 138; [INQ002993_00002](#) at paragraphs 9 and 10; [INQ005126_00006-00008](#); [INQ005675_00007](#); [INQ005529_00007](#); [INQ005133_00011](#); [INQ004563_00001](#)

³⁶⁶ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 155/7-163/16](#); [INQ006057_00025, 00027-00028](#) at paragraphs 109, 111, 120 and 121; [INQ005126_00001-00005, 00009-00012](#); [INQ004672_00001](#); [INQ005529_00006](#); [INQ005675_00007](#)

³⁶⁷ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 30/19-45/18](#); [INQ005820_00045-00046](#) at paragraphs 139–143; [INQ005819_00098-00100](#); [INQ005819_00101-00113](#); [INQ005878_00001-00004](#); [INQ005879_00001-00008](#)

³⁶⁸ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 59/11-92/11](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 128/25-129/10](#); [INQ005820_00047, 00049](#) at paragraphs 144–147 and 155; [INQ005676_00003-00005](#)

³⁶⁹ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 133/2-6](#); [MK26 13 November 2024 128/25-129/10](#); [INQ006057_00014, 00022](#) at paragraphs 63 and 100; [INQ005675_00008](#)

d. The bus on which Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley had travelled from Salisbury to Amesbury was found; there was no trace of contamination anywhere in it.³⁷⁰

4.11 It follows that neither Dawn Sturgess nor Charlie Rowley could have been exposed to Novichok in Salisbury on Friday 29 June 2018. It is therefore not necessary to do more than summarise their activities that day.

4.12 On the morning of that Friday (29 June 2018), Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley were both in and out of Dawn's room in John Baker House, Salisbury. They were joined there by three friends: Sam Hobson, Callum McCrae and Matthew Derrick.³⁷¹ During the morning, an ATM cash withdrawal was made from Dawn Sturgess' account.³⁷² At about 14:25, the group went out into the nearby streets.³⁷³ From different shops, they bought a picnic blanket, some beer and other alcohol, and some hair dye.³⁷⁴

4.13 It was a warm day, and they made their way to Queen Elizabeth Gardens, where, as planned, they sat on the ground, drank their drink, and three of the men (Charlie Rowley, Callum McCrae and Matthew Derrick) set about jokingly dyeing their hair. Dawn Sturgess voiced disapproval of this.³⁷⁵ The group eventually left Queen Elizabeth Gardens at 16:06. All returned initially to John Baker House, and shortly thereafter, Charlie Rowley, Sam Hobson and Matthew Derrick left Dawn Sturgess' room and went out, separating once outside.³⁷⁶

4.14 At about 16:50, Charlie Rowley caught a bus from Salisbury to Amesbury, returning on another at 18:15.³⁷⁷ In the evening, Dawn Sturgess telephoned her mother to make arrangements to see her daughter sometime over the weekend. Her mother remembers the call being made on the Friday at about 17:00 or 18:00.³⁷⁸ It is not clear exactly where Charlie Rowley went on his return to Salisbury; Dawn Sturgess' phone failed to make contact with his three times, but succeeded on the fourth attempt.³⁷⁹ He later told the police that he thought he might have gone to visit a friend who lived not far from the main city car park near The Maltings.³⁸⁰ He met Sam Hobson again somewhere in the city centre, and at different times both went back to John Baker House. Eventually Sam Hobson travelled to Amesbury, where he also lived, by the 20:38 bus.³⁸¹

³⁷⁰ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 170/11-171/10; INQ005675_00014](#)

³⁷¹ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 30/25-34/1; INQ005878_00001; INQ005879_00001-00003; INQ005820_00045 at paragraph 139; INQ005819_00096, 00099-00100; INQ005819_00101-00103; INQ000814_00001-00002; INQ000778_00001](#)

³⁷² [INQ006057_00007 at paragraph 35a; INQ000779_00001](#)

³⁷³ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 34/2-35/11; INQ005819_00103-00105](#)

³⁷⁴ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 35/18-37/22; INQ005820_00045 at paragraph 140; INQ000851_00001; INQ000778_00002; INQ000814_00002; INQ005878_00002-00003; INQ005879_00004-00005](#)

³⁷⁵ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 37/23-39/21; INQ005820_00045-00046 at paragraph 140; INQ000814_00003; INQ000778_00002; INQ005676_00001-00002; INQ000926_00001; INQ000922_00002](#)

³⁷⁶ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 39/22-40/3; INQ005820_00046 at paragraph 141; INQ005819_00106-00108; INQ005878_00003; INQ005879_00005-00006](#)

³⁷⁷ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 41/3-13; INQ005820_00046 at paragraph 142; INQ005819_00108; INQ005879_00006](#)

³⁷⁸ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 40/4-41/2; INQ004389_00003](#)

³⁷⁹ [INQ006057_00007 at paragraph 35b](#)

³⁸⁰ [INQ003112_00008-00012](#)

³⁸¹ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 41/14-42/2; INQ005820_00046 at paragraph 142; INQ005879_00006-00008; INQ005878_00004](#)

4.15 Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley left her room together at about 21:45, and she bought some more alcohol before they waited for the bus to Amesbury, which departed with them both aboard at 22:06.³⁸²

4.16 Charlie Rowley told the police that both he and Dawn Sturgess were hungover on the morning of Saturday 30 June 2018 when they woke up, and he thought Dawn was “*a bit moody*” with him.³⁸³ He said he had been half expecting a row with Dawn because he had stayed up quite late with Sam Hobson the night before, whilst she went to bed early.³⁸⁴

³⁸² [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 42/3-45/3; INQ005820_00046](#) at paragraph 143; [INQ005819_00112-00113; INQ006057_00007](#) at paragraph 35c; [INQ005126_00010, 00012](#)

³⁸³ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 59/11-23; INQ005676_00003; INQ005684_00029](#)

³⁸⁴ [INQ003112_00055; INQ005687_00017](#)

Chapter 3: The injury to Dawn Sturgess

4.17 At 10:14 on Saturday morning (30 June 2018), Charlie Rowley called 999 because Dawn Sturgess was in a state of collapse; he found Dawn lying in the bath with her clothes on, convulsing and foaming at the mouth.³⁸⁵ At 10:22, he reported to the call handler that she was not breathing.³⁸⁶

4.18 The first paramedic to arrive at about 10:23 found Dawn Sturgess lying in the bathroom in a state of cardiac arrest and began basic life support attempts at resuscitation.³⁸⁷ He was soon joined by two other double-crewed ambulances,³⁸⁸ and at 11:19 by an Ambulance Service supervisor.³⁸⁹

4.19 Dawn Sturgess' heart was asystole,³⁹⁰ which means there was no electrical activity.³⁹¹ She was given oxygen.³⁹² Some seven or more shots of adrenaline were administered, as was the anti-opiate medication naloxone as a precaution.³⁹³ The resuscitation efforts resulted eventually in a return of spontaneous circulation, but by then she had been in cardiac arrest for about half an hour, if not longer.³⁹⁴

4.20 At an early stage of this Inquest/Inquiry process, the concern was very properly expressed by those representing Dawn Sturgess' family and Charlie Rowley that there may have been delay in treating both patients for possible organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning: see Chapter 4 below relating to the injury to Charlie Rowley, where I review this question fully. The consequential question – whether, if there had been such delay, any difference to the outcome might have ensued – was accordingly fully investigated in relation to Dawn Sturgess.

³⁸⁵ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 87/4-88/5, 89/7-11](#); [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 127/9-128/16](#); [INQ005676_00004](#); [INQ000653_0001](#); [INQ005942_00037](#)

³⁸⁶ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 157/25-158/24](#); [INQ005942_00037-00038](#) at paragraph 4.9; [INQ000653_00010](#)

³⁸⁷ [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 130/2-18, 133/16-136/4](#); [INQ005000_00006](#)

³⁸⁸ The attending paramedics were Keith Coomber and Glen Davies and the critical care team, Fred Thompson and Keith Mills with an observer, Victoria Gilmartin; [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 140/19-141/6, 152/14-24](#); [Keith Coomber 17 October 2024 173/3-174/16](#); [Fred Thompson 18 October 2024 13/15-13/24](#); [INQ004518_00001-00002](#); [INQ005000_00001, 00007-00009](#); [INQ004550_00001-00002](#); [INQ005142_00001-00003](#); [INQ004513_00001-00002](#); [INQ005942_00040, 00045](#) at paragraphs 4.14 and 4.24

³⁸⁹ [INQ004545_00001-00002](#); [INQ005942_00037](#)

³⁹⁰ [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 139/19-140/8](#); [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 81/14-15, 177/18-21](#); [INQ005942_00043](#) at paragraph 4.20

³⁹¹ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 164/3-15](#); [INQ005942_00040](#) at paragraph 4.15; [INQ005994_00097-00098](#) at paragraph 19

³⁹² [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 142/16-23, 151/20-25](#); [INQ005000_00007](#); [INQ004550_00002](#)

³⁹³ [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 143/21-144/10, 148/13-21](#); [Keith Coomber 17 October 2024 182/19-22, 184/3-24](#); [Fred Thompson 18 October 2024 18/18-24, 19/16-20/5, 24/16-25/5](#); [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 167/20-169/19](#); [INQ004550_00002](#); [INQ000655_00003-00004](#); [INQ004513_00002](#)

³⁹⁴ [Mark Marriott 17 October 2024 145/17-146/14](#); [Keith Coomber 17 October 2024 181/6-8](#); [Fred Thompson 18 October 2024 16/12-18/24](#); [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 165/18-166/25](#); [INQ005942_00037, 00045](#) at paragraphs 4.23 and 4.24; [INQ005000_00007-00008](#); [INQ000607_00001-00002](#); [INQ000655_00005](#); [INQ005994_00041](#)

4.21 I had a full expert report on the issue of Dawn Sturgess' pre-hospital care from Mark Faulkner, a highly experienced consultant paramedic and associate clinical director.³⁹⁵ Similarly, I had a very full joint expert report on the issue of Dawn Sturgess' hospital care from two highly qualified specialists in intensive care medicine and anaesthesia, Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan, and subsequently an addendum report.³⁹⁶ I also had the expert evidence of the very experienced forensic pathologist Professor Guy Ruttly, who carried out the post-mortem on Dawn Sturgess.³⁹⁷ Lastly, I had the evidence of Dr David Minks, who is a consultant neuroradiologist – an expert in interpreting medical imaging of the brain.³⁹⁸ Dr Minks reviewed the scans of Dawn Sturgess' brain, which were made within an hour of her admission to Salisbury District Hospital and subsequently during her treatment there.

4.22 The unanimous combined evidence of the experts was that Dawn Sturgess' condition was unsurvivable from the time the first paramedics reached her, and indeed before that.³⁹⁹ By the time of the hearings of evidence, this was very properly recognised by the family to be the position.⁴⁰⁰ The evidence demonstrates that the period of cardiac arrest, when her heart was not functioning and she was not breathing, meant that her brain was starved of the oxygen without which it cannot work.

4.23 The brain injury was more severe because the cardiac arrest was caused by Dawn Sturgess having stopped breathing.⁴⁰¹ The combination of very low brain oxygen levels (hypoxia) which occurred when her breathing stopped, followed several minutes later by no brain blood flow (ischaemia) when her heartbeat stopped, caused a more severe brain injury than if her heart had suddenly stopped beating in the presence of normal blood oxygen levels. Dawn Sturgess' brain thus suffered a severe irreversible hypoxic ischaemic injury from which it could never have recovered.⁴⁰²

4.24 In the days that Dawn Sturgess was in hospital, the brain injury moreover worsened and developed into severe bleeding, all the result of the hypoxic damage.⁴⁰³ It follows that no different treatment by paramedics or hospital staff could have averted Dawn Sturgess' death.⁴⁰⁴ In any event, I accept the expert evidence that the treatment given to her, whether by the paramedics or after admission to hospital, was of a reasonable standard.⁴⁰⁵

³⁹⁵ [INQ005942](#)

³⁹⁶ [INQ005994](#); [INQ005995](#)

³⁹⁷ [Professor Guy Ruttly 5 November 2024 1/15-95/8](#); [INQ006026](#); [INQ005003](#); [INQ005526](#); [INQ005227](#); [INQ004495](#); [INQ004496](#); [INQ005818](#)

³⁹⁸ [Dr David Minks 11 November 2024 193/24-194/1](#); [INQ005995](#)

³⁹⁹ [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 100/17-102/6](#); [INQ005994_00119](#) at paragraphs 43–46

⁴⁰⁰ [Opening submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess_14 October 2024 130/2-6](#)

⁴⁰¹ [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 64/13-65/8](#); [INQ005994_00099-00100](#) at paragraph 23; [INQ005818_00008-00009](#)

⁴⁰² [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 67/14-68/8](#); [INQ005994_00100-00101](#) at paragraphs 24–27; [INQ005995_00004](#) at paragraph 2

⁴⁰³ [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 78/11-19, 85/20-86/13, 87/1-14](#); [INQ005995_00002](#) at paragraph 6c

⁴⁰⁴ [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 102/2-6](#)

⁴⁰⁵ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 188/12-190/3](#); [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 102/12-15](#); [INQ005942_00056-00057](#) at paragraphs 4.53–4.59; [INQ005994_00109, 00122](#) at paragraphs 49 and 8.5; [INQ005995_00004](#) at paragraph 5

4.25 The post-mortem examination was conducted by Professor Rutty.⁴⁰⁶ Professor Rutty had a long and eminent career as a forensic pathologist: he is a retired Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists and was appointed by the Home Office as a Registered Forensic Pathologist for some 28 years.⁴⁰⁷

4.26 A second forensic pathologist, Dr Frances Hollingbury, was appointed to the role of ‘review pathologist’. Dr Hollingbury conducted a review of Professor Rutty’s report and confirmed the conclusions reached by him were reasonable.⁴⁰⁸

4.27 The autopsy examination was observed by a team of experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).⁴⁰⁹ A large number of samples of tissue were taken from the body,⁴¹⁰ some of which were provided to the OPCW for further independent analysis.⁴¹¹ Tests carried out by Professor Rutty on the remaining tissue samples revealed changes consistent with Novichok poisoning.⁴¹² Tests carried out by the OPCW also revealed that Dawn Sturgess had been exposed to Novichok.⁴¹³

4.28 The cause of Dawn Sturgess’ death (as concluded by Professor Rutty) was hypoxic ischaemic brain injury and intracranial brain haemorrhage, attributable to Novichok poisoning.⁴¹⁴ There was nothing in the condition of the heart to account for her cardiac arrest,⁴¹⁵ nor was there any contribution to it from drugs, whether medicinal or illicit.⁴¹⁶ There was no relevant natural disease.⁴¹⁷ The nerve agent accounted for the cessation of breathing, which occasioned her cardiac arrest; the hypoxic ischaemic brain injury followed.⁴¹⁸ The CT scans undertaken while Dawn Sturgess was in hospital, before her death, showed that the bleeding in the brain came later and was the result, rather than the cause, of the cardiac arrest.⁴¹⁹

4.29 I am satisfied – from the combination of this evidence as to the cause of death, and the clear evidence of Dr Soar and Professor Nolan as to survivability⁴²⁰ – that Dawn Sturgess’ condition was unsurvivable from the time the paramedics reached her.

⁴⁰⁶ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 2/3-8; INQ005227_00001](#)

⁴⁰⁷ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 16/11-17/21; INQ005818_00001-00002](#)

⁴⁰⁸ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 8/11-10/7; INQ005227_00043](#)

⁴⁰⁹ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 28/13-31/11; INQ005227_00067-00069; INQ005003_00002](#)

⁴¹⁰ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 31/19-32/23; INQ005818_00013-00014](#)

⁴¹¹ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 58/16-61/1; INQ005227_00034-00035](#) at paragraph 15, [00068](#) at paragraphs 7 and 8

⁴¹² [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 51/10-56/8; INQ005227_00035](#) at paragraphs 16 and 17

⁴¹³ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 59/8-61/17; INQ005227_00068](#) at paragraph 8; [INQ002993_00002](#) at paragraph 8

⁴¹⁴ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 69/18-76/16; INQ005818_00008-00010](#) at lines 253–264, 283–295; [INQ005227_00003, 00036](#)

⁴¹⁵ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 35/9-37/3; INQ005227_00026](#)

⁴¹⁶ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 40/3-17, 49/1-13, 79/22-81/8; INQ005227_00034-00035](#) at paragraphs 12 and 17

⁴¹⁷ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 78/5-16; INQ005227_00033](#) at paragraph 9

⁴¹⁸ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 69/18-76/16; INQ005227_00035-00036](#) at paragraph 17; [INQ005818_00008-00010](#)

⁴¹⁹ [Professor Guy Rutty 5 November 2024 71/9-73/5; INQ005818_00009-00010; INQ005227_00048](#)

⁴²⁰ [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 100/17-102/6](#)

Chapter 4: The injury to Charlie Rowley

4.30 An ambulance took Dawn Sturgess to hospital a little before midday on Saturday 30 June 2018.⁴²¹ Charlie Rowley remained at his flat, where he was soon joined by his friends Sam Hobson and Ben Milsom. Ben Milsom had been trying unsuccessfully to telephone Charlie Rowley whilst Charlie was fully occupied with Dawn Sturgess' condition and its consequences.

4.31 Charlie Rowley needed to make his daily visit to the pharmacy for his methadone prescription. Ben Milsom gave Sam Hobson and Charlie Rowley a lift to the pharmacy. Charlie Rowley and Sam Hobson then went to a church fête which was under way in Amesbury, where there was food available. After that, the two of them went back to the Muggleton Road flat, at about 15:30.⁴²²

4.32 On arrival at home, Charlie Rowley became unwell. He was sweating and behaving strangely. He had a shower but did not improve, and at 18:42 Sam Hobson called for an ambulance.⁴²³

Paramedic attendance

4.33 Paramedics Ben Channon and Lee Martin answered the call in a double-crewed ambulance, arriving at or about 18:47.⁴²⁴ They found Charlie Rowley leaning against the wall of the living room, sweating and salivating profusely, and making strange "*mooing*" noises.⁴²⁵ He also had increased muscle tone.⁴²⁶ Ben Channon thought this was not the normal presentation of a drug overdose.⁴²⁷

4.34 Because they were based in Salisbury, Ben Channon and Lee Martin were very well aware of the earlier event involving Sergei and Yulia Skripal, though they had not been involved personally in it.⁴²⁸ They initially thought that Charlie Rowley must have overdosed on some drug or other, but they treated the call cautiously, particularly since they also knew that earlier that day there had been another ambulance call to someone else at the same address, and because some of Charlie Rowley's presentation, such as increased muscle tone and salivation, did not seem to provide a common picture of a drug overdose.⁴²⁹

⁴²¹ [INQ005942_00037_00049](#) at paragraph 4.33; [INQ000655_00001](#); [INQ000653_00023](#)

⁴²² [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley_16 October 2024 89/14-90/20](#); [INQ005820_00049](#) at paragraphs 152–155; [INQ000884_00001-00002](#); [INQ000813_00002-00003](#); [INQ000814_00004-00005](#)

⁴²³ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley_16 October 2024 90/20-91/2](#); [INQ005820_00049](#) at paragraphs 155 and 156; [INQ000813_00003-00004](#); [INQ000814_00005-00006](#); [INQ004707_00001](#)

⁴²⁴ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 41/3-21](#); [INQ005143_00001-00002](#); [INQ005542_00001](#); [INQ000656_00001](#)

⁴²⁵ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 46/2-12, 49/21-50/1](#); [INQ000656_00002](#); [INQ005542_00002](#); [INQ005143_00004](#)

⁴²⁶ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 52/12-53/10](#); [INQ005542_00002](#)

⁴²⁷ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 58/16-19, 66/16-68/9](#); [INQ005542_00002](#)

⁴²⁸ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 48/5-17, 56/11-58/4, 68/12-21, 95/14-96/3](#)

⁴²⁹ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 49/21-51/16](#); [INQ005542_00001-00002](#); [INQ005143_00001-00004](#); [INQ000656_00001-00002](#)

4.35 Accordingly, in light of the previous events in Salisbury, Ben Channon and Lee Martin put on their protective clothing before dealing personally with Charlie Rowley. Ben Channon asked their control room to alert the fire brigade, the police and specialist resources – the hazardous area response team (HART)⁴³⁰ – which entailed the likely need to seal off roads around the flat, as well as warnings to nearby residents.⁴³¹

4.36 Before long, another paramedic, Ian Parsons, also arrived. He had attended the scene of the Salisbury event (involving Sergei and Yulia Skripal) and suspected that this might be a further example of similar poisoning.⁴³²

4.37 During the time that the paramedics attended to him, Charlie Rowley's condition worsened. The paramedics helped him as he slumped to the floor; he had become rigid and his jaw fixed.⁴³³ He was administered naloxone, for possible opiate misuse, initially intranasally and then via the bone marrow route.⁴³⁴

4.38 Because nerve agent poisoning was suspected, Charlie Rowley was also administered atropine – both by intramuscular injection, using a DuoDote auto-injector, and via the bone marrow route.⁴³⁵ Following the administration of atropine, Ben Channon did not see an immediate response, but there was a reduction in Charlie Rowley's salivation.⁴³⁶

4.39 The evidence of Mark Faulkner (an expert in pre-hospital care) was that this was exemplary treatment which might have been a key contribution to saving Charlie Rowley's life.⁴³⁷

Police attendance

4.40 In the meantime, Wiltshire Police had been alerted to the admission of Dawn Sturgess to Salisbury District Hospital, and they would have been aware of the HART request in relation to Charlie Rowley's flat.⁴³⁸

4.41 It is clear that a combination of Police National Computer checks on Charlie Rowley, personal knowledge by some officers of both him and Sam Hobson, and recent intelligence regarding Charlie Rowley's involvement with drugs led to a rapid conclusion in the police control room, by the Force Incident Manager and amongst the two principal officers who went to 9 Muggleton Road, that the incident was the result of drug abuse.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁰ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 51/17-25, 55/6-56/4, 60/20-62/7; INQ005542_00002](#)

⁴³¹ [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 112/4-7, 114/15-115/15; Insp Beresford-Smith 18 October 2024 154/18-24](#)

⁴³² [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 57/17-58/5, 75/5-77/9; Ian Parsons 30 October 2024 50/15-51/5, 62/1-63/1; INQ000654_00016; INQ004992_00002](#)

⁴³³ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 64/12-65/10; INQ005542_00002-00003](#)

⁴³⁴ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 66/16-67/1; INQ005542_00003](#)

⁴³⁵ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 69/10-71/2; INQ005542_00003](#)

⁴³⁶ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 71/3-7](#)

⁴³⁷ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 195/20-196/2; INQ005942_00069](#) at paragraph 5.30

⁴³⁸ [DCC Mills 15 October 2024 32/20-33/17; INQ006117_00010](#) at paragraph 37

⁴³⁹ [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 112/10-114/1, 117/19-118/12, 121/7-122/12; Insp Beresford-Smith 18 October 2024 166/2-169/20, 172/10-175/15; INQ004549_00001-00002; INQ006088_00002-00003](#) at paragraphs 7 and 9; [INQ004999_00002; INQ006089_00007](#) at paragraphs 39 and 41; [INQ004989_00001, 00009-00012](#)

4.42 The result was that, when Inspector (Insp) Marcus Beresford-Smith and Acting Police Sergeant (A/PS) Iain McKerlie arrived at 9 Muggleton Road, they carried with them this police assessment. This police view led to the belief that the extensive precautions which would have gone with a hazardous materials incident were not justified.⁴⁴⁰

4.43 The two police officers entered the flat with gloves, but without extensive personal protective equipment (PPE).⁴⁴¹ A cursory search reinforced their belief, because it revealed drug-abuse paraphernalia, such as needles and a sharps box; later, an uncapped syringe and burned spoons were also found.⁴⁴²

Liaison with hospital doctors

4.44 Meanwhile, another Wiltshire Police officer, Detective Sergeant (DS) Kerry Lawes, had gone to the hospital to try to find out how the earlier patient (Dawn Sturgess) was being treated. DS Lawes managed to speak to the intensive care consultant principally dealing with her, Dr Stephen Jukes.⁴⁴³

4.45 Years later, before me, very detailed evidence was properly given as to the state of mind of the various doctors at different stages in the treatment of Dawn Sturgess. Dr Jukes helpfully took me through at least three possible diagnoses, quite apart from either opiates or organophosphates; some he could more or less exclude, and others remained possible but not very likely.⁴⁴⁴ This kind of detail and retrospective analysis was not discussed when DS Lawes arrived to ask how Dawn Sturgess was being treated.

4.46 Overall, Dr Jukes (it became clear at the hearing) was of the view that opiates were the most likely cause, from a medical point of view, but he had a slight worry, following his involvement in the treatment of the Skripals after they were poisoned in March 2018, that history might be repeating itself, or that the explanation might be drugs adulterated with organophosphates.⁴⁴⁵

4.47 It was those doubts which led Dr Jukes that evening (Saturday 30 June 2018) to send a message to FT49 at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and to enquire whether the point-of-care acetylcholinesterase screening test kits were still available (see paragraph 4.64 below).⁴⁴⁶ The following day, he also arranged blood tests, which had to be sent away to a laboratory in Birmingham.⁴⁴⁷ In the late evening

⁴⁴⁰ [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 112/20-115/3](#); [Insp Beresford-Smith 18 October 2024 168/23-171/4](#); [INQ004549_00001-00002](#); [INQ006088_00003-00004](#) at paragraphs 11–12; [INQ004999_00002](#); [INQ004989_00011](#)

⁴⁴¹ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 82/9-83/6](#); [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 123/23-124/5](#); [Insp Beresford-Smith 18 October 2024 182/8-18](#); [INQ004549_00003](#); [INQ006088_00005](#) at paragraph 16; [INQ004999_00003](#)

⁴⁴² [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 129/17-130/2](#), [139/2-17](#); [Insp Beresford-Smith 18 October 2024 183/2-185/12](#); [INQ004549_00003](#); [INQ004999_00003](#)

⁴⁴³ [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 11/12-15/24](#); [INQ006105_00005-00007](#) at paragraphs 17–22

⁴⁴⁴ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 115/16-120/6](#); [INQ004411_00003-00004](#) at paragraphs 15 and 16

⁴⁴⁵ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 112/19-114/1](#), [166/12-169/6](#); [INQ000130_00005](#)

⁴⁴⁶ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 148/2-149/1](#); [INQ004411_00006-00007](#) at paragraph 29; [INQ005067_00001](#)

⁴⁴⁷ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 151/10-152/9](#), [173/23-174/11](#); [INQ004411_00007](#) at paragraph 30; [INQ005067_00001](#)

of Saturday, his colleague Dr Paul Russell, who had CBRN expertise, was of the view that it was highly unlikely a chemical weapon was involved, so that decontamination was not called for in the hospital.⁴⁴⁸

4.48 At the time, DS Lawes noted that Dr Jukes had said that, but for the Salisbury incident, he would have thought the explanation a drug overdose.⁴⁴⁹ She herself told Dr Jukes that Wiltshire Police had recent intelligence regarding Charlie Rowley's involvement with drugs,⁴⁵⁰ and that must have tended towards reinforcing the provisional view that opiates were the cause of Dawn Sturgess' condition. DS Lawes continued her conversation with Dr Jukes and understood from him that Dawn Sturgess' symptoms were not indicative of organophosphate poisoning, but that tests would be carried out to confirm the position.⁴⁵¹

4.49 At all events, DS Lawes also spoke by radio to A/PS McKerlie, who was at 9 Muggleton Road. Initially, A/PS McKerlie told her there were items in the address suggestive of drug use. In a subsequent conversation, after DS Lawes had spoken to Dr Jukes, she told A/PS McKerlie simply that Dawn Sturgess was being treated as a probable drug overdose. She had also reported to the Force Incident Manager that the cause appeared to be a drug overdose and that the hospital was satisfied that this was the case; she added that tests remained to be done.⁴⁵²

Police assessment

4.50 To say that drugs were the **probable** cause at that stage was not inaccurate, but behind this lay a level of uncertainty which was not confronted. This was partly because the police did not have access to the level of detailed evidence that I had before me, and partly because the police assessment that this was a drug-related incident was assumed to be correct without the need to rehearse any doubts.

4.51 The upshot of this was that the police view at the scene prevailed over anyone else's doubts, and particularly over those of the paramedics. The two officers at the scene treated the incident as being clearly drug-related. They breached the cordon then in place, contrary to the warning of Ian Parsons, one of the paramedics who had also attended the Salisbury incident involving Sergei and Yulia Skripal.⁴⁵³ They did not warn DS Lawes that the paramedics present believed that there was a real possibility of nerve agent/organophosphate poisoning.⁴⁵⁴ A/PS McKerlie drove the ambulance containing Charlie Rowley to the hospital.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴⁸ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 135/3-7, 147/11-20; INQ004411_00006](#) at paragraph 28

⁴⁴⁹ [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 11/23-12/21; Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 154/1-156/14; INQ006105_00005-00006](#) at paragraph 17; [INQ006143_00001](#)

⁴⁵⁰ [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 13/5-14/4; Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 157/4-158/21; INQ006105_00006](#) at paragraph 18

⁴⁵¹ [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 15/10-16/9; Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 158/22-161/11; INQ006105_00007](#) at paragraph 22

⁴⁵² [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 132/8-134/18; DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 14/5-17/5; INQ006105_00006-00008](#) at paragraphs 19–24

⁴⁵³ [A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 117/19-118/22, 133/17-135/12; Insp Beresford-Smith 18 October 2024 155/25-158/2; INQ004549_00004; INQ004999_00001-00002; INQ004992_00002](#)

⁴⁵⁴ [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 14/5-17/5; INQ004549_00004; INQ006105_00006-00008](#) at paragraphs 19–24

⁴⁵⁵ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 86/13-23; A/PS McKerlie 18 October 2024 131/22-132/7; INQ004549_00005](#)

4.52 On Monday 2 July 2018, as a result of the medical possibility that drugs contaminated by organophosphates might have been involved, Wiltshire Police understandably issued a warning aimed at local drug users.⁴⁵⁶ But over the course of the few days, beginning with Saturday 30 June, there was more than one instance of Dawn Sturgess being carelessly included by Wiltshire Police officers in a compendious reference to ‘two well-known drug addicts’ or ‘well-known local heroin users’⁴⁵⁷ involved in the incident, when there is no evidence that she herself was an abuser of drugs.

4.53 As is now known, this assessment of the incident as the result of a drug overdose was wrong. There were in fact good grounds for **suspecting** that drugs might well have been the cause. Charlie Rowley was a known intravenous opiate user; so was Sam Hobson. The flat was clearly a place where they, and perhaps others, did abuse drugs. Sam Hobson and Charlie Rowley had both used drugs there, as both later admitted – Sam Hobson on the Saturday, and probably both the previous evening.⁴⁵⁸

4.54 Whilst there was no evidence of opiate use by Dawn Sturgess herself (and consistent evidence that she did not use drugs, as I have explained), she was part of a circle in which it was commonplace. Some effort was made to find out what the hospital consultant thought was involved in Dawn Sturgess’ condition, and at the hospital also it was initially thought more likely to be a case of opiate overdose. Nevertheless, it was wrong of Wiltshire Police to refer to Dawn Sturgess as a drug user.

4.55 The police assessment should not simply have trumped other views. The paramedics were not without experience – either personal or via close colleagues – of the appearance of organophosphate or nerve agent poisoning, because their service had been in the forefront of dealing with the unprecedented event in Salisbury involving the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

4.56 The message from the doctors at the hospital was not definitive, and at least Dr Jukes, even on that Saturday (30 June 2018) evening, was troubled by slight doubts. It was very early in the treatment of Dawn Sturgess, and as yet Charlie Rowley had not reached the hospital. One possibility being considered was certainly that the explanation might be – rather than a simple opiate overdose – a bad batch of drugs contaminated with organophosphates, but that only underlined the uncertainty which existed, and which the police approach did not address.

4.57 There were then, as there still are, guidelines for the collaboration of the different emergency services in circumstances such as these. These Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) – issued nationally by the National Police Chiefs’ Council, the Chief Fire Officers’ Association and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives – are, or should be, widely known.⁴⁵⁹ They are, and were then, designed to

⁴⁵⁶ [DS Martin 4 November 2024 73/21-77/22; INQ006106_00004-00005](#) at paragraph 18; [INQ004568_00001-00003](#)

⁴⁵⁷ [DCC Mills 15 October 2024 47/2-48/2; INQ006117_00009](#) at paragraphs 31 and 32; [INQ005044_00003; INQ005293_00001](#)

⁴⁵⁸ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 33/12-21; INQ005820_00045](#) at paragraph 139; [INQ000814_00002; INQ005683_00004-00005; INQ003114_00026-00028; INQ005293_00002-00003](#)

⁴⁵⁹ [INQ006210](#)

achieve co-location of those responsible for the different services; communication between them, leading to joint decisions; coordination of function and effort; joint understanding of risk; and shared situational awareness.⁴⁶⁰

4.58 This cooperation was not achieved, because the police view simply overrode the more cautious assessments of others, and the reasons offered by others for a different scenario were dismissed. There was an absence of proper discussion at the scene and of respect for those alternative assessments.

4.59 This error was frankly recognised by Wiltshire Police in evidence before me, as it needed to be. The JESIP principles have been re-stated with emphasis and circulated amongst officers.⁴⁶¹ Personal apologies were additionally offered by the officers concerned and by Deputy Chief Constable Paul Mills on behalf of the force, for the description of Dawn Sturgess as a known drug user.⁴⁶²

4.60 This error had the potential to put at risk other members of the public and first responders. Had the officers who breached the cordon at, and conducted a cursory search of, the Muggleton Road flat touched the bottle which contained Novichok, the consequences could have been catastrophic.

Hospital doctors' assessment

4.61 The emergency department consultant on duty at Salisbury District Hospital on the evening of Saturday 30 June 2018 (Dr Laszlo Zavori) called Dr Russell and asked him to give an opinion on whether the incident involving Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley was drug-related. Dr Russell's evidence was that Dr Zavori told him the information that Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley were known to the hospital trust as well as to the police for substance and alcohol misuse.⁴⁶³ Dr Russell confirmed that this information impacted his assessment that the likely cause of Charlie Rowley's condition was recreational drug use.⁴⁶⁴

4.62 This information also contributed to the hospital doctors not appreciating the need to enquire of the paramedics at the scene why they suspected organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning. Dr Russell knew that the paramedics suspected organophosphate poisoning. Because of the information about the drug history, he accepted without further enquiry that that was the likely cause of Charlie Rowley's condition.⁴⁶⁵ He did not ask the paramedics who had treated Charlie Rowley what medication they had administered to him.⁴⁶⁶ He therefore did not know that Charlie Rowley had been given atropine, which might have had the effect of reducing the visible symptoms to be expected from organophosphate poisoning.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁰ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 39/5-19, 42/12-43/1; INQ005942_00085; INQ006117_00004-00005](#) at paragraph 16

⁴⁶¹ [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 94/19-104/4](#)

⁴⁶² [DCC Mills 15 October 2024 47/21-48/1; DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 24/18-21; DS Martin 4 November 2024 58/22-24; INQ006105_00010](#) at paragraph 31

⁴⁶³ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 27/14-29/2; INQ005990_0004](#) at paragraph 19

⁴⁶⁴ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 39/19-40/23, 58/7-60/5; INQ004173_00006-00007](#)

⁴⁶⁵ [Ben Channon 18 October 2024 91/2-92/25; Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 32/1-13, 36/24-41/7; INQ005542_00005](#)

⁴⁶⁶ [Dr Paul Russell 21 November 2024 32/25-33/5, 38/7-38/24, 43/14-46/4; INQ005994_00118](#) at paragraph 38

⁴⁶⁷ [INQ005994_00118](#) at paragraph 38

It would have been better if, given the belief of the paramedics, further enquiry had been made as to the basis for it. The absence of enquiry could potentially have caused some delay in the treatment of Charlie Rowley.

Hospital treatment

4.63 In the end, these errors did not lead to the injury to either Dawn Sturgess or Charlie Rowley being worse than it otherwise would have been. In the case of Dawn Sturgess, for the reasons already given, her injuries were regrettably unsurvivable (see paragraphs 4.22 and 4.29 above). In the case of Charlie Rowley, by the evening of his admission that Saturday (30 June), the doctors at the hospital were keeping their minds open to the possibility that they might be dealing with organophosphate poisoning, either alone or in combination with drugs.⁴⁶⁸ On the Sunday (1 July), this was reported by Dr Jukes to Wiltshire Police, and the message was passed on to DS Lawes.⁴⁶⁹

4.64 Meanwhile, at the time of the Salisbury event involving Sergei and Yulia Skripal, two point-of-care screening devices for acetylcholinesterase inhibition had been supplied to the hospital.⁴⁷⁰ Dr Jukes now sought to find them and use them if still available, and one was.⁴⁷¹ He used it to test Dawn Sturgess' blood, and it showed acetylcholinesterase inhibition.⁴⁷² Charlie Rowley was treated with therapies which can sometimes – and in this case did – enable those whose exposure to the nerve agent has not been too intense to survive and to recover.⁴⁷³

4.65 Without the life support treatment provided by paramedics and in intensive care, and without the prompt treatment in hospital for cholinesterase inhibition, Charlie Rowley would not have been expected to survive. As it was, he did, and it was possible for him to be discharged from hospital on 20 July 2018, thus after some three weeks,⁴⁷⁴ albeit with some lasting adverse effects to this day. The actions of the paramedics attending to Charlie Rowley were commendable. Their treatment of Charlie Rowley was regarded by the expert Mark Faulkner as entirely correct,⁴⁷⁵ and it should be added that they treated him in the knowledge that they might thereby be exposing themselves to a risk of contamination.

⁴⁶⁸ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 147/11-150/4; INQ004411_00006-00007](#) at paragraph 29; [INQ005067_00001](#)

⁴⁶⁹ [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 19/23-20/16; INQ006105_00009](#) at paragraph 28

⁴⁷⁰ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 145/11-22](#)

⁴⁷¹ [Dr Stephen Jukes 4 November 2024 143/16-153/11, 169/13-171/15; INQ004411_00009](#) at paragraph 41

⁴⁷² [INQ004411_00009](#) at paragraph 41

⁴⁷³ [INQ005994_00118](#) at paragraphs 39 and 40

⁴⁷⁴ [INQ004553_00001-00002](#)

⁴⁷⁵ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 191/24-196/2; INQ005942_00071](#) at paragraphs 5.35–5.41

Chapter 5: The route by which Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley became exposed to Novichok

4.66 As explained above (see paragraph 4.8), it is not plausible that either Dawn Sturgess or Charlie Rowley were the targets of a deliberate, malicious attack with a deadly nerve agent. The source of their exposure must lie with the bottle later found – when it was possible to make a safe search – in the Muggleton Road flat (see paragraph 4.9 above).

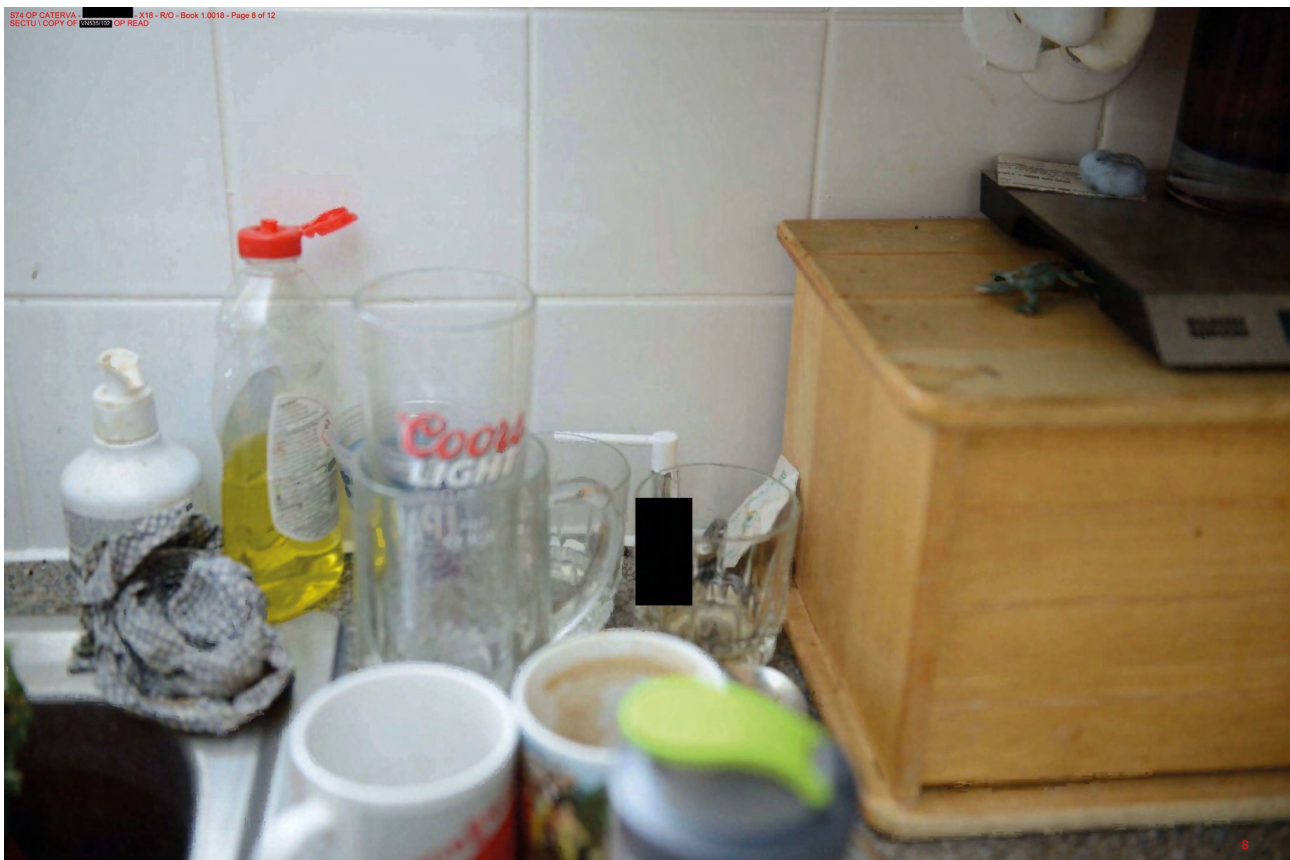
4.67 The search process was painstaking and therefore protracted, given that it was plain from the condition of both Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley that there was a great risk of Novichok contamination and the nerve agent might be anywhere in the flat. Special arrangements had to be devised for handling items recovered without risk of contamination – this included the need for ‘Russian doll’ metal boxes for transport to Dstl for testing.⁴⁷⁶

4.68 The searchers found – in some rubbish in a plastic bag on the kitchen floor – what appeared to be an opened and empty small box for ‘Nina Ricci’ perfume. Later, as the search progressed, they found a small bottle sitting on the kitchen worktop to one side of the sink, and in amongst a clutter of glasses and other unconnected items. The bottle had a kind of push-down applicator attached to its top. The liquid inside was fairly viscous.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 125/18-127/18; INQ005137_00001-00005](#)

⁴⁷⁷ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 135/4-136/11, 139/9-143/15; INQ006140_00046-00047](#) at paragraphs 200 and 201; [INQ005820_00006, 00054](#) at paragraphs 11 and 174; [INQ005819_00115; INQ005133_00005; INQ006189_00001-00008; INQ004563_00001; INQ005529_00009](#)

Figure 9: Photographs of the bottle found at 9 Muggleton Road



Source: [INQ005126_00006, 00008](#)

4.69 Photographs of both the bottle and the box were examined by a representative of the manufacturers of Nina Ricci perfume, Puig. The bottle was not of a size marketed by them, at least in the preceding ten years. The applicator was of a kind used in connection with pharmaceutical products, but not for perfume or by Puig. The box could have been genuine except that the capacity printed on it in fluid ounces did not match its size, nor was the stated millilitre equivalent arithmetically accurate, and the bottle and applicator did not readily fit into it. The barcode printed on it was bogus: the number shown had never existed and the format was wrong.⁴⁷⁸

4.70 With the box, amongst the rubbish, were two heavy plastic sachets which had been opened, along with a small plastic cap which fitted the top of the bottle.⁴⁷⁹ The larger of the two sachets could have accommodated the bottle, or the applicator and cap, but not the bottle and applicator together. The smaller could not have accommodated the bottle.⁴⁸⁰

4.71 The larger sachet had been cut open unevenly.⁴⁸¹ The sachets appeared, particularly the smaller of the two, to have both original manufacturers' sealed edges but also additional heat seals consistent with subsequent application by the kind of domestic sealer readily available for kitchen or similar use.⁴⁸² Those additional heat seals are consistent with the bottle having been used in the Salisbury event involving Sergei and Yulia Skripal and crudely repackaged before being abandoned.⁴⁸³

4.72 When the bottle and associated material were found, Charlie Rowley was still in intensive care and could not be asked what had happened. Nor, obviously, could Dawn Sturgess. But after he was fit enough to do so, Charlie Rowley was able to give an account. He was extensively interviewed on several occasions beginning on 13 July 2018.⁴⁸⁴

4.73 Charlie Rowley told the police that he had found the 'perfume box' at some time previously, and that on the morning of Saturday 30 June 2018, at the flat in Muggleton Road, he had offered it to Dawn Sturgess in case she was interested in it.⁴⁸⁵ He explained that it seemed to him a good idea to make a gift to her, given that he was anticipating a complaint from her about the previous night's excesses and their hungover condition (see paragraph 4.16 above).

4.74 Dawn Sturgess was indeed interested in it, so Charlie Rowley had opened the box and used a kitchen knife to cut open one (at least) of the sealed sachets inside to get access to the bottle.⁴⁸⁶ He was unclear about whether the applicator was also in plastic or loose in the box.⁴⁸⁷ In trying to put the bottle and applicator together, he had spilt quite

⁴⁷⁸ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 144/18-145/21](#); [Josep Vivas \(read\) 28 November 2024 1/4-13/16](#); [INQ005821_00001-00003](#); [INQ005529_00012](#)

⁴⁷⁹ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 142/7-20, 160/15-162/5](#); [INQ005529_00007-00008](#); [INQ005675_00007](#)

⁴⁸⁰ [Adam Wilson 21 November 2024 184/9-185/6, 187/18-188/10](#); [INQ004503_00003](#); [INQ006057_00028](#) at paragraph 122

⁴⁸¹ [Adam Wilson 21 November 2024 174/23-175/12](#); [INQ006122_00007, 00117](#)

⁴⁸² [Adam Wilson 21 November 2024 174/7-22, 175/24-176/3, 177/16-183/25, 187/6-9, 188/14-189/7](#); [INQ006122_00007, 00117](#); [INQ006123_00003, 00011, 00049](#)

⁴⁸³ [INQ006057_00028-00029, 00038](#) at paragraphs 122, 124 and 160

⁴⁸⁴ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 49/11-92/15](#); [INQ005683](#); [INQ005684](#); [INQ003114](#); [INQ005685](#); [INQ003115](#); [INQ003112](#); [INQ005687](#); [INQ003113](#); [INQ005692](#)

⁴⁸⁵ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 59/1-23](#); [INQ005676_00003](#)

⁴⁸⁶ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 60/5-23](#); [INQ005676_00003](#)

⁴⁸⁷ [INQ005687_00019-00020](#)

an amount of the liquid over his hands and had had quickly to wash it off, using soap and water at the sink.⁴⁸⁸ Between them, they had fixed the applicator, and Dawn Sturgess had then sprayed the contents on herself, rubbing it into her wrists.⁴⁸⁹

4.75 Before very long, Dawn Sturgess had said that she felt ill, or strange. She said that she had a headache and was going to go and lie down in the bath. When Charlie Rowley went to the bathroom, he found her lying fully clothed in the bath, convulsing and foaming at the mouth.⁴⁹⁰ It was then that he called 999 (see paragraph 4.17 above).

4.76 This account of gaining access to the bottle of Novichok on the morning of Saturday 30 June 2018 is internally consistent and also consistent with other evidence. It is consistent with the condition of the box, bottle and sachets when they were found. Contamination was also found on the kitchen knife, which Charlie Rowley said he had used.⁴⁹¹ There was no contamination found on the outside door of the flat, which is consistent with the Novichok having been inside the box until it was opened that morning.⁴⁹²

4.77 Charlie Rowley's account is also consistent with the expert evidence I heard from FT49 (Chemical and Biological Medical Adviser to the Dstl) that, if he washed the spilt Novichok off his hands promptly, it might not have affected him until later in the day.⁴⁹³ And it is consistent with the same expert evidence that, if Dawn Sturgess rubbed the liquid into her wrists (and perhaps inhaled it, thinking it was perfume), it might have a much more immediate effect, as Charlie Rowley described.⁴⁹⁴

4.78 I see no reason to doubt these parts of Charlie Rowley's recollection.

⁴⁸⁸ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 60/23-61/18, 80/9-81/6; INQ005676_00003-00004; INQ005684_00047-00048](#)

⁴⁸⁹ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 61/1-6, 77/11-22; INQ005676_00004; INQ005684_00043](#)

⁴⁹⁰ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 16 October 2024 87/19-25; INQ005676_00004](#)

⁴⁹¹ [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 105/22-106/25; INQ005529_00008; INQ005675_00005-00007](#)

⁴⁹² [Commander Murphy 16 October 2024 99/24-104/20; INQ006057_00020-00022](#) at paragraphs 97 and 98; [INQ005529_00003; INQ005675_00004](#)

⁴⁹³ [FT49 31 October 2024 70/17-71/10, 116/22-117/24, 122/12-24; INQ005997_00004](#) at paragraph 14; [INQ006203_00004; INQ005140_00002-00003](#)

⁴⁹⁴ [FT49 31 October 2024 114/17-116/21, 121/6-122/11; INQ005997_00002-00005](#) at paragraphs 7–15; [INQ006203_00004](#)

Chapter 6: Where did the bottle and its box come from?

4.79 It is not plausible that there were two sources of Novichok in Salisbury and Amesbury within a few weeks or months. Moreover, the expert evidence shows that the poisons in Salisbury and Amesbury were highly likely to be from the same batch (see paragraph 2.16 above). Nor is there any credible scenario in which those who applied Novichok to Sergei Skripal's front-door handle would have had any reason to have direct dealings with either Charlie Rowley or Dawn Sturgess (see paragraph 4.8 above).

4.80 It follows that a realistic sequence of events is that whoever attacked Sergei Skripal (see Part 3 above) also left behind the (substantial) amount of unused Novichok found at Amesbury. This would be an astonishingly reckless thing to do, given the potential of even a small quantity to kill many thousands of innocent people – against whom the perpetrators could have had no hostility, even if they believed they had reason to kill Sergei Skripal. But it does appear to be the least improbable explanation for the fact that Novichok remained somewhere in the area after the Salisbury attack.

4.81 Charlie Rowley had a habit of scavenging public areas for anything he could use, or sell.⁴⁹⁵ He explained to the police that he often 'bin dipped', particularly, but not only, in rubbish bins near charity shops.⁴⁹⁶ He told them that he had acquired various electrical goods in this way.⁴⁹⁷ He also described as his 'office' a cigarette disposal bin somewhere near the centre of Salisbury, from which it was his practice to recover cigarette ends and reassemble them for smoking.⁴⁹⁸

4.82 While police cordons were still in place in the city centre to protect the public from the risk of contamination, Charlie Rowley appeared at one of them at about 22:30 on 11 March 2018. When stopped, he protested that he was simply checking the bins there for discarded items he could sell, as was his practice, and he was being prevented from earning his living.⁴⁹⁹

4.83 It follows that a reasonable possibility is that the box (and bottle) were acquired by Charlie Rowley from a bin or from some public place where it had been left.

4.84 By contrast with his account of opening the bottle on Saturday 30 June 2018, Charlie Rowley's history of how he came to be in possession of it is fraught with inconsistency, uncertainty and unreliability, no doubt attributable to his personal difficulties, including those arising out of the poisoning, and in particular to his addictions (see paragraphs 4.3 to 4.6 above).

⁴⁹⁵ [INQ005676_00005](#); [INQ000912_00001-00002](#); [INQ000726_00001-00002](#)

⁴⁹⁶ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 81/6-86/18, 96/14-103/1](#); [INQ005685_00021-00024](#); [INQ003112_00043-00058](#)

⁴⁹⁷ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 97/13-15](#); [INQ003112_00043-00048](#)

⁴⁹⁸ [INQ003112_00008, 00059-00060](#)

⁴⁹⁹ [PC Osment \(read\) 25 November 2024 145/11-148/13](#); [INQ004559_00001-00003](#)

4.85 When first interviewed on 13 July 2018, Charlie Rowley told the police that he could not say how long the bottle had been at his flat before he opened it.⁵⁰⁰ He said that he could not remember where he had acquired it, but that he had “*sort of found it on the street*”.⁵⁰¹ That might have been, he said, “*either in Salisbury or Amesbury*”.⁵⁰² It had been, he said, on its own on the ground.⁵⁰³

4.86 Later in the same interview, asked whether Dawn Sturgess had been with him at the time, and clearly reconstructing in his mind, he said that it might be that he had found it when making his regular visit to the pharmacy.⁵⁰⁴ It appears Charlie Rowley could really remember very little, including whether it was light or dark at the time.⁵⁰⁵

4.87 The following day, on 14 July, he advanced much the same suggestion, now adding that he might have found the bottle in Salisbury on Friday 29 June (the day before he and Dawn Sturgess became unwell).⁵⁰⁶ The day after that, on 15 July, Charlie Rowley repeated that he had found it on the floor, possibly in either Amesbury or Salisbury, and added that it was quite usual for him to be unable to remember what had happened because he had been drinking, or perhaps because he had taken heroin.⁵⁰⁷

4.88 On 17 July, Charlie Rowley told the police that he had had “*a vision*” (i.e. a recollection) of finding the bottle when he had been given a lift to the pharmacy, **and** of his driver (Ben Milsom) warning him to be careful of picking up things in the street.⁵⁰⁸ It seems clear that his memory was at best confused. If what he was remembering is the lift to the pharmacy given to him on Saturday 30 June, that happened **after** Dawn Sturgess had collapsed and been taken to the hospital.⁵⁰⁹

4.89 Moreover, in this same account, Charlie Rowley thought that he had been poisoned by his friend Sam Hobson;⁵¹⁰ at some stage he clearly believed that the bottle could not have contained poison because he himself had not been disabled when he spilled the contents on his hands.⁵¹¹

4.90 It was also in this interview on 17 July that Charlie Rowley introduced into his account the fact that he found quite a lot of things in bins, particularly in the area near to Cash Converters (which is in the area of the Brown Street car park in Salisbury); that too, he said, was a possible source. But such a possibility is inconsistent with the assertion of a circumstantial memory of finding the bottle in the street in the company of someone who advised him to be careful.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁰ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 42/25-43/4; INQ005683_00008-00011](#)

⁵⁰¹ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 44/10-13; INQ005683_00011](#)

⁵⁰² [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 45/24-46/2; INQ005683_00011](#)

⁵⁰³ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 49/2-6, 54/13-15; INQ005683_00015, 00022-00023](#)

⁵⁰⁴ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 51/6-25; INQ005683_00018](#)

⁵⁰⁵ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 54/3-7; INQ005683_00022](#)

⁵⁰⁶ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 61/12-62/6; INQ005684_00004-00005](#)

⁵⁰⁷ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 73/19-74/1; INQ003114_00002, 00012, 00026](#)

⁵⁰⁸ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 78/1-25; INQ005685_00004](#)

⁵⁰⁹ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 79/1-16; INQ005685_00004-00006](#)

⁵¹⁰ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 80/25-81/5; INQ005685_00020](#)

⁵¹¹ [INQ005683_00013](#)

⁵¹² [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 81/6-84/10; INQ005685_00021-00026](#)

4.91 The Counter Terrorism Policing investigation was able to trace extant recent CCTV of Charlie Rowley crossing the Brown Street car park on various occasions during the week preceding Saturday 30 June 2018, when both he and Dawn Sturgess fell ill, but that is scarcely surprising because the area is close to where she then lived in John Baker House.⁵¹³

4.92 No doubt because he had said that he may have found the bottle on Friday 29 June in Salisbury, and because it was important to track his movements that day, the police showed Charlie Rowley, in a further interview on 1 August, a series of CCTV extracts from that day.⁵¹⁴ The CCTV extracts demonstrated many of the movements of both Charlie Rowley and his friends, as summarised in paragraphs 4.12 to 4.15 above.

4.93 The police asked Charlie Rowley about a period after his first bus trip to Amesbury on Friday 29 June 2018, from which he had returned at 18:55, and for which there was no CCTV record. He said he had probably been to see a friend; he did not suggest that he had found the bottle on this occasion.⁵¹⁵

4.94 Eventually he hypothesised that perhaps his memory of picking up the bottle in the street was of his having had it in his pocket and having dropped it;⁵¹⁶ that was clearly an effort to reconcile in his mind the different possibilities to which he had previously referred. It is inconsistent with him finding the bottle when a friend took him to the pharmacy, and even more so with his being advised not to pick things up in the street (see paragraph 4.88 above).

4.95 A few days later, on 8 August 2018, when told that the bottle cap had been heavily contaminated, Charlie Rowley reverted to his theory that Sam Hobson had poisoned him. He had been alright, he said, until Sam Hobson gave him a cigarette, and he suggested that the cigarette must have been dunked in Novichok contained in the bottle cap.⁵¹⁷

4.96 Pressed to be more precise about where he found the bottle, Charlie Rowley claimed a recollection of reaching deep into a large bin, with his legs in the air, and thought that it was probably a couple of days before Saturday 30 June 2018.⁵¹⁸

4.97 It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that by now Charlie Rowley was – no doubt with good intentions – simply creating false memories (confabulating) or reconstructing events, and was, moreover, astute to pick up hints from the interviewing officers which he may have misinterpreted as endorsing the theory that the discovery had been (a) in a bin near the charity shops and (b) during the week before Saturday 30 June 2018. Neither of those propositions was in any way supported by any independent evidence, save that such bins were often his targets.

4.98 The same applies to a much later interview in February 2019, when Charlie Rowley said that he did not think that he had had the bottle for more than four days.⁵¹⁹ Nothing is added by a valiant attempt by the police on 15 July 2019 to compose a witness statement

⁵¹³ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 143/2-145/9; INQ005880_00001](#)

⁵¹⁴ [INQ003112_00002](#)

⁵¹⁵ [INQ003112_00004-00019](#)

⁵¹⁶ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 103/21-104/4; INQ003112_00060](#)

⁵¹⁷ [INQ005687_00009-00012](#)

⁵¹⁸ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 107/20-108/8, 111/23-112/10; INQ005687_00036-00040](#)

⁵¹⁹ [Commander Murphy 25 November 2024 112/11-114/9; INQ003113_00002](#)

of his recollections for the Inquest.⁵²⁰ Here, Charlie Rowley returned to the assertion that the bottle had been picked up in the street on his way to the pharmacy, either in Salisbury or Amesbury, whilst adding that he might have picked it up from the charity bins “*the day before*” (Friday 29 June 2018).⁵²¹

4.99 It follows that I derive no assistance from Charlie Rowley’s understandably fallible memory on the subject of when and where he came into possession of the bottle. I do, however, find that it is more probable than not that he did find it somewhere, and that for this to happen it must have been left somewhere in a public or semi-public place by those who had used Novichok on Sunday 4 March 2018 on the front-door handle of Sergei Skripal’s house.

4.100 When is this likely to have occurred? There is no plausible reason for anyone to have retained Novichok from the attack on Sergei Skripal and then to wait before putting it somewhere where Charlie Rowley could later find it. Since, as shown later in this report (see Parts 5 and 8 below), I am sure that it can only have been Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov who mounted the attack on Sergei Skripal, and since they left London by plane for Moscow on the same day, Sunday 4 March 2018 (see paragraph 3.57 above), the bottle must have been placed somewhere that day.

4.101 It must be accepted that it would have been physically possible for Petrov and Boshirov to have disposed of the bottle in a bin somewhere in Salisbury. They were at large in the city during Trip 3 after the opportunity had arisen to put the Novichok on the front-door handle (see paragraph 3.53 above). But if they did this, it is highly improbable that it remained there for nearly four months until shortly before the Amesbury event. The evidence before me was that the public litter bins and commercial waste bins in the city, including those in the Brown Street car park area near the back of the charity shops, were emptied regularly, at least once each week and often more frequently.⁵²²

4.102 It is perhaps physically possible for the bottle to have been left or placed somewhere else on Sunday 4 March and to have remained in the possession or under the control of someone unknown who subsequently abandoned it elsewhere, but this is very improbable. There is no obvious reason and no evidence for why any such unknown person should retain the box, unopened, before abandoning it weeks or months later.

4.103 The evidence did explore whether it was possible for a charity shop – in particular the Cancer Research shop, to which the bins belonged in the Brown Street car park – to have come into possession of the box and then disposed of it (i.e. in a bin) for Charlie Rowley to find.⁵²³ However, the evidence was that:

- a. the bins were emptied three times a week;⁵²⁴
- b. those who worked at the Cancer Research shop, and were traced, had not seen the ‘Nina Ricci’ box, although the manager was interested in perfume and anticipated that she would have seen it if it had passed through the shop;⁵²⁵ and

⁵²⁰ [Commander Murphy 25 November 2024 119/17-120/11; INQ005676; INQ005692_00001](#)

⁵²¹ [Commander Murphy 25 November 2024 122/4-123/9; INQ005676_00005; INQ005692_00007-00008](#)

⁵²² [Martin Litherland 25 November 2024 202/20-206/4; Adam Wylie 25 November 2024 208/7-217/2; Marc Read \(read\) 25 November 2024 218/9-25](#)

⁵²³ [Mary Hodges 25 November 2024 174/21-191/25](#)

⁵²⁴ [Mary Hodges 25 November 2024 183/4-15; INQ000818_00002](#)

⁵²⁵ [Mary Hodges 25 November 2024 176/4-13, 184/4-20, 187/6-21, 189/9-190/19; INQ000817_00001; INQ000818_00001-00002; INQ000824_00001; INQ000806_00001](#)

- c. there was nothing to support the possibility that such a package could have remained in the shop for any appreciable time.⁵²⁶

4.104 If, therefore, Charlie Rowley did find the box, it is more likely to have been within a few days of Sunday 4 March than later. It must also follow that, although he does not now remember it, it must have been amongst his possessions (perhaps unnoticed) when he moved to Amesbury on 18 May 2018 (see paragraph 4.2 above).⁵²⁷

⁵²⁶ [Mary Hodges 25 November 2024 187/21-188/2, 190/25-191/7; INQ000824_00001](#)

⁵²⁷ [Evidence relating to Charlie Rowley 25 November 2024 116/13-117/24, 163/5-165/4; INQ006056_00047-00048 at paragraphs 214 and 215; INQ003113_00017](#)

Part 5: Responsibility for the Salisbury and Amesbury events

5.1 I set out in Part 3 Chapter 3 above the actions of Alexander Petrov, Ruslan Boshirov and Sergey Fedotov on Friday 2 to Sunday 4 March 2018.

5.2 For the reasons there explained, I am sure that Petrov and Boshirov were in the near vicinity of Sergei Skripal's house in Salisbury on several separate occasions on both Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 March.

5.3 I am sure that the material which poisoned Sergei and Yulia Skripal (and Detective Sergeant (DS) Nick Bailey) was the nerve agent Novichok. All of these patients demonstrated acetylcholinesterase inhibition.⁵²⁸ The material was definitively identified by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) by tests carried out on blood and other samples taken from the patients.⁵²⁹ The independent Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' (OPCW's) designated laboratories confirmed the analysis.⁵³⁰

5.4 Further, the later discovery of near-neat Novichok of very high purity in a bottle found in the flat of Dawn Sturgess' partner, Charlie Rowley, at 9 Muggleton Road, Amesbury,⁵³¹ can only be confirmation that this is the chemical which had been used at the Salisbury event. It demonstrates that Novichok was brought to Wiltshire. It is not plausible that two different organophosphate-type nerve agents were at large within a few months of each other in a relatively small area of that county, there having been no previous instance of such material being found anywhere in the UK.⁵³² Moreover, further Dstl examination showed that the Novichok found in Salisbury came from the same manufacturing batch as that found in Amesbury.⁵³³

5.5 I am sure that the evidence demonstrates that that Novichok was used in a deliberate attack on Sergei Skripal. Its presence on the front-door handle of his house cannot have been accidental, nor is it plausible that it was aimed at someone else. I am sure that the object can only have been to kill him.

5.6 The evidence shows, and I am sure, that the Novichok was applied to the external front-door lever handle. That must have been after 18:00 on Saturday 3 March, and much the most likely time is about midday on Sunday 4 March (see paragraph 3.52 above).

5.7 Russia is known to have had access to Novichok; indeed it, or its predecessor, the USSR, developed this type of nerve agent (see paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 above).

5.8 There is a clear connection between Sergei Skripal and Russia and, moreover, of a kind which might have been thought, in Russia, to provide a motive for attempting to kill him. He had served as an officer in the GRU and had been arrested for espionage, then

⁵²⁸ [Dr James Haslam 30 October 2024 155/5-9, 162/6-12; INQ004479_00002](#) at paragraph 8; [INQ004691_00041; INQ004631_00001; INQ002995_00001](#) at paragraph 3

⁵²⁹ [MK26 13 November 2024 80/14-90/19; INQ005923_00011-00012](#) at paragraphs 27 and 29; [INQ005132_00002](#)

⁵³⁰ [MK26 13 November 2024 113/18-115/15; INQ002995_00002](#) at paragraph 10; [INQ005132_00002-00003](#)

⁵³¹ [MK26 13 November 2024 36/12-16; INQ005923_00009-00010](#) at paragraph 23

⁵³² [MK26 13 November 2024 31/15-19; INQ006056_00008](#) at paragraph 33

⁵³³ [MK26 13 November 2024 178/21-180/13; INQ005923_00024](#) at paragraph 48

convicted of treason.⁵³⁴ Whatever the truth of Sergei Skripal's history, Russia believed him to be a traitor to his country.⁵³⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that anyone else had a motive to kill him.

5.9 Petrov and Boshirov had clear opportunity about midday on Sunday 4 March to apply the Novichok to the front door of Sergei Skripal's house (see paragraph 3.52 above). They had no other reason to be in the vicinity of the house. I reject the account they gave in their interview with the Russian news channel RT that they were in Salisbury as tourists (see paragraphs 3.107 to 3.112 above) as not credible. The area they visited was residential. From Salisbury station (where they arrived), it was in the opposite direction and some distance away from the city centre. Moreover, they visited that residential area four times on Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 March (see Part 3 Chapter 3 above). The possibility of some other, unidentified person(s) attacking Sergei Skripal, and with Novichok, at much the same time as those two men were making repeated forays into the immediate neighbourhood of the house can safely be dismissed.

5.10 Particularly given the absence of any participation in this Inquiry by any Russian representative (see Appendix 1 paragraph A1.20 below), I have given careful consideration to the suggestion that what occurred was a scheme devised and orchestrated by the UK authorities with a view to casting public blame on Russia. That suggestion does not, however, hold water, for the reasons given at paragraphs 3.113 to 3.124 above.

5.11 The later appearance of the bottle of near-neat Novichok in Charlie Rowley's flat in Amesbury is further confirmation of this conclusion. Even if the UK authorities had wished to set such a scheme in motion, they had no possible reason to leave the remaining unused Novichok somewhere in a public or semi-public place, where it might cause multiple deaths amongst an innocent British population. If one were to postulate it being a part of the kind of scheme suggested, to engineer a 'finding' of more Novichok as staged public confirmation of the accusation against Russia, there is no reason why the bottle should be left for four months and consigned to the unpredictable actions of Charlie Rowley.

5.12 By contrast, it is not impossible (although astonishingly reckless) that Petrov and Boshirov should either have had no plans for the safe return to Russia (whether by themselves or with the assistance of others) of surplus Novichok, or had, for some reason, to change whatever plans they initially had. Fedotov had, for instance, left for Moscow before they could return to London from Salisbury on Sunday 4 March (see paragraph 3.58 above). I am sure that the responsibility for leaving behind the bottle found at Charlie Rowley's flat in Amesbury rests with Petrov and Boshirov, and that their doing so led, directly and foreseeably, to the death of Dawn Sturgess.

5.13 The evidence summarised here is more than enough to demonstrate that responsibility for the Salisbury event, and hence for the consequent collateral Amesbury event, can only lie with the Russian personnel (Petrov and Boshirov, with the support of Fedotov) described above in Part 3 Chapter 2.

⁵³⁴ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 58/11-12, 76/2-9](#)

⁵³⁵ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 76/2-9](#)

5.14 I have considered whether it is likely that the actions of Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov might be explained as private initiatives undertaken as a result of personally felt resentment against Sergei Skripal. It is true that he had served in the organisation of which they were part (the GRU) and was regarded as having betrayed it (see paragraph 5.8 above). The evidence, however, points firmly against a private initiative:

- a. First, access to Novichok was a necessity, and it is likely to be significantly restricted in Russia.⁵³⁶
- b. Second, Russia had, no doubt for what seemed good national interest reasons, voluntarily released Sergei Skripal and allowed him to go to live in the UK, and this with a pardon granted at presidential level.⁵³⁷ It is not likely that that high-level state decision or policy would in effect be reversed by a private initiative.
- c. Third, I accept the evidence of Jonathan Allen CMG, Director General Defence and Security at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, speaking from long study of the Russian state, that it is heavily characterised by bureaucratic controls, and any activity which could give rise to international repercussions would necessitate senior oversight.⁵³⁸ It is simply not likely that any step as serious as assassination on foreign soil would be undertaken without high-level authorisation. For there to be a private initiative to kill Sergei Skripal without high-level authorisation would be to court the probability of considerable international sanctions, as indeed happened by way of the many diplomatic reprisals taken against Russia by multiple states, and I do not think that consequence would have been risked without senior approval.

5.15 For these reasons, I am sure that authorisation at a very high level must have been given. In the context of a state where executive power is heavily concentrated in the person of the President, an attempt on the life of Sergei Skripal would not have been made without the approval of the Russian President.⁵³⁹

5.16 It is to be observed that there was considerable recklessness and indeed brazenness in the manner of the attack on Sergei Skripal:

- a. There was some limited risk of being apprehended in the course of planting the Novichok. However, Petrov and Boshirov had ample opportunity on Saturday 3 March, and again on Sunday 4 March, to see that there was no security patrol and no camera near Sergei Skripal's house. Although Petrov and/or Boshirov had to walk up to the front door in a small cul-de-sac at lunchtime on a Sunday, the risk of being challenged was probably judged to be small, and a cover reason for approaching the house would not be difficult to prepare.
- b. There was a somewhat greater risk of them being apprehended on their way back to London and to Heathrow airport if, but only if, the attack on the Skripals were to be discovered **and** the use of nerve agent detected in time to consider for whom it might be necessary to look. The chances of sufficient information being known, speedily

⁵³⁶ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 34/21-35/6, 39/23-40/13, 105/11-22; INQ006103_00003](#) at paragraph 11

⁵³⁷ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 76/10-12; INQ006086_00005](#) at paragraph 14

⁵³⁸ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 64/24-66/4; INQ005938_00004-00006](#) at paragraphs 20 and 25

⁵³⁹ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 66/12-74/21; INQ005938_00005](#) at paragraph 22; [INQ006200_00005](#)

enough, about this unprecedented type of attack, were slim. In fact, it was not until the evening that it became clear that this may be a deliberate attack. By this time, Petrov and Boshirov were safely on a flight home.

- c. Petrov and Boshirov's greater recklessness lay in the willingness to plant a deadly nerve agent where it might injure or kill many others, and in not caring about that possible consequence. Novichok on the front-door handle might have poisoned any casual caller to the house, such as a neighbour or friend, and likewise any police officer or paramedic if the poison had overcome the Skripals while still at home, as might easily have happened.
- d. Greater recklessness still lay in the willingness to abandon the remaining Novichok where it might cause uncontrolled collateral death or grave injury to people against whom, individually, the attackers could have entertained no malice.
- e. Even more clearly, the brazenness lay in the fact that, once there was time to conduct the kind of chemical tests on the Skripals (whether dead or alive) which were bound to follow, the use of a nerve agent was virtually sure to be detected, and the perpetrators must have known that.

5.17 I have asked myself whether it is sufficiently unlikely, given that this is so, that the attempt would indeed have been made by Russian operatives, and thus whether this consideration undermines the conclusion that Russia was responsible. The correct conclusion must, however, be that the likelihood of attribution to Russia was something which that state was willing to accept.

5.18 The evidence that this was a Russian state attack is overwhelming. The attack on Sergei Skripal by Russia was not, it seems clear, designed simply as revenge against him, but amounted to a public statement, for both international and domestic consumption, that Russia will act decisively in what it regards as its own interests.⁵⁴⁰ Had personal revenge been the intention, a secret assassination attempt disguised, for example, as an accident would probably not have been difficult for professional military agents to arrange. Russia, however, had become increasingly intolerant to opposition and dissent, and had taken measures to suppress civil society and independent media.⁵⁴¹ Meanwhile, the annexation of Crimea and the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines passenger flight MH17 en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur on 17 July 2014 were examples of increased risk appetite. Notwithstanding the fact that the attack constituted a significant geopolitical risk,⁵⁴² a public demonstration of Russian state power for both international and domestic impact is, I conclude, the most likely analysis of what occurred. I address this in more detail in the closed section of my report.

5.19 In addition to the material reviewed here, there are two more pieces of evidence which may be relevant to the question of Russian state responsibility for the events into which I had to inquire. One concerns an incident near to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Netherlands. The other concerns Alexei Navalny. Both are examples of second-hand evidence, or hearsay, which can of course be reliable, but which I did not have the opportunity to explore in any detail. Moreover, I took the view early in this Inquiry that it should concentrate fully on the two events which it was set up to investigate, and ought not to be diverted into other allegations, which would

⁵⁴⁰ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 59/6-60/2, 80/12-22; INQ005938_00003](#) at paragraph 12

⁵⁴¹ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 80/12-22](#)

⁵⁴² [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 65/10-66/4](#)

be likely to involve greatly broadening the evidence which had to be scrutinised. Neither of the two additional areas of evidence now summarised would be enough by themselves to justify the conclusions which I have reached here. But both may provide some limited additional support for those conclusions, at which I arrived without needing to call upon them, and I ought to refer to them both.

Incident near the OPCW

5.20 The OPCW is, as explained in paragraph 2.8 above, an international organisation which administers the multilateral Chemical Weapons Convention. It is based in The Hague, in the Netherlands. When, in April 2018, the OPCW was considering the Salisbury event and the request by the UK government to review its analysis of the material used, the Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) reported that it had apprehended GRU officers in the vicinity of the OPCW premises attempting to hack into its computer systems.⁵⁴³

5.21 I have not been in a position to examine the facts around this report by MIVD and therefore reach no firm conclusions about it. It is not immediately obvious why MIVD might make a false report. However, if their report was genuine, it may appear to point towards a wish by Russia to discover what evidence the OPCW had about the alleged use of a nerve agent in the Salisbury event. It also perhaps demonstrates a willingness by the GRU to attempt cyber interference with the OPCW's processes.

Alexei Navalny

5.22 Alexei Navalny was a prominent Russian public critic of his country's regime. He died in a Russian state prison on 16 February 2024.⁵⁴⁴ On 20 August 2020, he was on an internal flight from Tomsk to Moscow when he became very ill. The plane put down as an emergency in Omsk, also in Russia. By the time the plane landed, Alexei Navalny was in a coma. He was taken immediately to a local hospital. His family and supporters persuaded a local court to allow them access to see him and, moreover, to permit his transfer to a specialist hospital in Berlin for treatment. He remained in the Berlin hospital for several weeks, initially maintained in an induced coma, but after several months of rehabilitation, he was able to be discharged.⁵⁴⁵

5.23 Both before and after his transfer, there ensued extensive litigation in Russia, in which it was alleged that he had been poisoned with Novichok. That allegation has always been denied by Russia, whose authorities also denied that any nerve agent, or indeed any form of toxic substance of any kind, had been found in him.⁵⁴⁶

5.24 However, on 2 and 14 September 2020, the German government made a public announcement that testing of Alexei Navalny's samples had revealed unequivocal evidence of a Novichok.⁵⁴⁷ The OPCW was asked by Germany to investigate, and, in due course, it issued a public report on 6 October 2020 to the effect that its two independent laboratories (as in the case of the samples taken following the Salisbury and Amesbury

⁵⁴³ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 47/18-50/12; INQ005938_00004](#) at paragraphs 17 and 18

⁵⁴⁴ 'Putin critic Alexei Navalny dies in Arctic Circle jail, says Russia', BBC News, 16 February 2024 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-68315943>)

⁵⁴⁵ [INQ005314_00004](#) at paragraphs 5, 7 and 9

⁵⁴⁶ [INQ005314_00004-00014](#)

⁵⁴⁷ [INQ005314_00005-00006](#) at paragraphs 15 and 20

events, laboratories in two different countries, here Sweden and France) had confirmed that a cholinesterase inhibitor had been found. A biomarker was also reported as having been found, which indicated that the chemical concerned was not amongst those recently added to the Schedule to the Chemical Weapons Convention (see paragraph 2.9 above), thus suggesting the possibility of a new Novichok.⁵⁴⁸

5.25 Later in the year, the two United Nations Special Rapporteurs on ‘extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions’ and on ‘the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression’ conducted a four-month-long investigation. After a dispute with the Russian authorities, in which the latter complained that they had not had access to the samples and to some other requested material, and for that reason declined to take part, the rapporteurs published a report on 7 June 2021. In it, they expressed their conclusion that Russia had been responsible for the attempted murder of its dissident Alexei Navalny with Novichok.⁵⁴⁹

5.26 The litigation generated by Alexei Navalny’s illness eventually reached the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, from the judgment of which I extracted the history just set out.⁵⁵⁰ Russia’s case before that court involved the complaint previously made that it had not had access to the samples held in other countries; it also once again included the positive assertion that testing of Alexei Navalny’s samples from his time in the local Russian hospital had not only not revealed Novichok, but also had not revealed any kind of toxic substance. It is important to note that the remedy sought in the Strasbourg court could not and did not involve it making any findings of fact about responsibility for Alexei Navalny’s illness. That court dealt only with a complaint that Russia had failed sufficiently to investigate the circumstances of Alexei Navalny’s near-death, and thus that it had failed to discharge the procedural obligation inherent in Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to life).⁵⁵¹ That complaint, the court upheld.⁵⁵²

5.27 This Inquiry does not have the material, any more than the Strasbourg court had, to make any finding of fact as to what did, or did not, cause Alexei Navalny’s illness. I note only that the stance taken by Russia, of complaint that it had not been able itself to check the samples analysed in other countries, mirrors the position previously adopted in the dispute with the UK government over the Salisbury event (see paragraphs 3.117g and 3.121g above). I also note that, as in that instance, the Russian stance must involve a refusal to accept the independent findings of the OPCW, as well as the implied assertion that the sudden and long-lasting illness of Alexei Navalny is (implausibly) wholly unexplained.

5.28 For the reasons given, I have not thought it right to make definitive findings of fact about the incident involving Alexei Navalny. This evidence, if accurate, tends to support the conclusions as to Russian state responsibility at which I have arrived without relying on it. Out of caution, I have asked myself also whether there is anything in this evidence which ought to cause me to doubt those conclusions. There is not.

⁵⁴⁸ [INQ005314_00006-00008](#) at paragraphs 20–29

⁵⁴⁹ [INQ005314_00018-00020](#) at paragraphs 85–90

⁵⁵⁰ [INQ005314](#)

⁵⁵¹ [INQ005314_00020](#) at paragraph 92

⁵⁵² [INQ005314_00033](#) at paragraphs 159–161

Part 6: Should either or both events have been prevented?

6.1 I address in Part 6 questions which were properly raised before me, chiefly on behalf of the family of Dawn Sturgess, but which are also of general importance beyond the family's particular interests: whether either or both of the events into which I am enquiring should have been prevented by some identifiable means.⁵⁵³

6.2 It is important to note that in the context of the events considered by this Inquiry, the principal question is not whether any **could** have been prevented, but whether they **should** have been. It is very often possible, with the benefit of hindsight, to find means by which outcomes **could** have been different, but it does not follow that, judging decisions and actions at the time they were made or taken, one ought to conclude that they were wrong then.

6.3 Equally, it may be that actions or decisions ought to have been different, but the outcome would not have been altered if they had been. That does not mean that the error should not be identified.

6.4 In some instances, an ensuing question may be whether actions or decisions which were not wrong at the time should now, if similar circumstances arise in future, be revisited, in the light of experience, with a different approach.

⁵⁵³ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess_2 December 2024 52/6-81/14](#); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, pages 79–87 at paragraphs 180–189 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

Chapter 1: Prior knowledge of risk from Russia to Sergei Skripal

6.5 I was invited to consider that, as at 2018, there was known to be a risk of extra-territorial Russian violence, in particular towards those regarded as opponents of the state, and that that known risk meant that additional security ought to have been placed around Sergei Skripal.⁵⁵⁴

6.6 Amongst several of the factors which I was invited to treat as demonstrating this prior knowledge was simply the accusation made against Russia after the Salisbury event.⁵⁵⁵ Except where such accusation can be shown to have indicated prior knowledge of a risk of physical harm to Sergei Skripal, this is circular reasoning. That is true of the general accusation made after the event that Russia was responsible for the attack on Sergei Skripal.

6.7 Other factors are, however, ones which might indicate known reasons for assessing there to be a real risk of harm to him (e.g. Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations, Russian state aggression, Russian law on extra-judicial action against terrorists, Russia's chemical weapons programme, the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko, and apparent cyber interest in Yulia Skripal dating back to about 2013).

6.8 I was invited to conclude that a number of statements made by Mr Putin should have indicated to the UK government prior to the Salisbury event that Russia was likely to assassinate those of whom it disapproved. Two of these statements precede the Salisbury event.

6.9 One statement was in 2001, when Mr Putin reportedly contrasted an enemy, with whom one is at war, with a traitor, who must be destroyed or crushed.⁵⁵⁶ That is the nearest to what could have been understood as a threat of extra-territorial assassination; it is some way from that.

6.10 The second statement, made in 2010, referred to the prisoner exchange in which Sergei Skripal was included.⁵⁵⁷ Mr Putin had been asked by a (possibly obliging) interviewer whether he had taken the decision to assassinate any enemies of the state abroad. The full text of his reply (as reported with minor translation differences) follows:

“Russian special services do not use such methods. As regards traitors, they will kick the bucket [or possibly will “croak”] all by themselves, I assure you. Take the recent case of treason. Whatever equivalent of 30 pieces of silver they get will get stuck in their throats ... Those people sacrificed their lives to serve the Motherland, and there

⁵⁵⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, pages 79–87 at paragraphs 180–189 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁵⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, pages 81–83 at paragraph 187b (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁵⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, pages 83–84 at paragraph 187e (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁵⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, page 27 at paragraph 82 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

*happened to be an animal who betrayed them. How will he live with it all his life; how will he look his children in the eye? To keep hiding for the rest of their lives, not to be able to see their loved ones – you know, whoever chooses such fate will regret about it. Swine!*⁵⁵⁸

6.11 However contemptuous of those regarded as traitors, this is not an utterance from which anyone could deduce a threat of extra-territorial assassination; it is in fact a denial of such a strategy.

6.12 The 2010 (pre-Skripal poisoning) remark is in keeping with other statements reportedly made by Mr Putin after the event and therefore cannot have been material from which it can be said that the UK government, or anyone, could deduce, before 2018, a general threat of assassination.

6.13 Other statements include those made in October 2018 about Sergei Skripal, which, although dismissive of him, again amount more to a denial of complicity than an assertion of it:

*“He’s just a spy. A traitor to his motherland.”*⁵⁵⁹

6.14 And (at about the same time):

*“He’s simply a scumbag, that’s all.”*⁵⁶⁰

6.15 And:

“If we’re talking about Skripal being poisoned there, do you want to say we have also poisoned some homeless person? I sometimes look at what is happening with this case and I’m just surprised. Some guys come and begin poisoning homeless people there. Nonsense. What, do they work for some kind of cleansing department?”

*This Skripal, as I said, is a traitor, he was caught, he was punished, he spent a total of five years in jail and we released him. That was it. He left and continued co-operating and he consulted some special services.”*⁵⁶¹

6.16 At paragraphs 6.20, 6.21 and 6.24 below, I deal with the possible relevance of the last sentence, which may have a bearing on a foreseeable motive for an attack on Sergei Skripal specifically. That apart, these various statements by Mr Putin are strikingly scornful, but I do not believe that they ought to have led the UK government to conclude that there was a known prior risk of assassination to Sergei Skripal.

6.17 Much stronger is the contention that, well before 2018, there was known to be a risk of extra-territorial Russian violence, including towards those regarded by that country as hostile to it.⁵⁶² The assassination of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 was a concrete example,⁵⁶³ and there had been other allegations of state-sponsored assassination by

⁵⁵⁸ [INQ005938_00005](#) at paragraph 23; [INQ004576_00020](#)

⁵⁵⁹ [INQ004797_00001](#)

⁵⁶⁰ [INQ000612_00409-00411](#)

⁵⁶¹ [INQ004797_00001](#)

⁵⁶² The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family’s written closing statement, pages 28–29 at paragraphs 86–88; pages 85–87 at paragraph 188 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁶³ *The Litvinenko Inquiry: Report into the death of Alexander Litvinenko* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-litvinenko-inquiry-report-into-the-death-of-alexander-litvinenko>)

Russia. It is possible that the Russian law of 2006 (to which I refer in paragraphs 3.117e and 3.121e above) was regarded as a legal justification for such an extra-territorial attack, but in any event, the risk of it clearly existed with or without legal colour.

6.18 It is also clear from what is reviewed above in Part 2 of this report that it was known to the UK government, and generally, that Russia had access to Novichok. There was – so it appears from Sir Mark Sedwill’s letter of 13 April 2018 to the Secretary-General of NATO – some information held to the effect that experiments had at some stage in the past been conducted into methods of delivery. This included various forms of contact delivery, one of which was a door handle; this was one of a number of different methods of delivery known to have been considered.⁵⁶⁴ No nerve agent had, however, demonstrably been used in any attack, at least not in the UK.

6.19 I reviewed the information underlying what is said in Sir Mark Sedwill’s letter about methods of delivery as part of the closed hearings. The information could not reasonably have led to an investigative action to prioritise the door handle. Even if it had been possible to identify the door handle slightly earlier, it would have made no material difference to the overall investigation.

6.20 Both Alexander Litvinenko and Sergei Skripal were perceived traitors to the Russian state. Both were living in the UK. However, their cases are not entirely analogous. Alexander Litvinenko was a defector who campaigned energetically and noisily against the Russian state, and against Mr Putin personally. He had never been held accountable by the Russians. There was a strong Russian interest in stopping him doing what he made his mission and he was, from the Russian point of view, unpunished. On the other hand, Sergei Skripal was not a defector who had eluded retribution. He had been convicted as a spy and, after capture and imprisonment, the Russian government had agreed to release him to live in the UK as part of an exchange. This was deliberately undertaken with a view to advantage the Russian government and was accompanied by a pardon granted at presidential level.⁵⁶⁵

6.21 The state which released someone who had previously served in the GRU, thus knowing its workings intimately, and whom, moreover, that state regarded as having spied against its interests, can only have anticipated that the released man would be extensively questioned and pumped for information in his new country, by that country and by its allies.

6.22 It also appears from Sir Mark Sedwill’s letter of 13 April 2018 that the GRU was believed to have cyber targeted Yulia Skripal’s email accounts from about 2013.⁵⁶⁶ On 18 July 2025, it was made public that specific named officers of GRU Unit 26165 had been identified as responsible for the cyber targeting.⁵⁶⁷ It is, however, scarcely surprising that state A, which has released to state B someone it believes to have been a spy against it, should take an active intelligence interest in a member of the convict’s family still living in state A and, through her, in the convict himself. I am unable to see that this ought to have led those who learned of it to deduce a plan to assassinate Sergei Skripal as distinct from making it necessary to keep his safety under review. On the latter point, see paragraphs 6.25 and 6.26 below.

⁵⁶⁴ [INQ003070_00003](#)

⁵⁶⁵ [Jonathan Allen CMG 28 November 2024 74/23-76/20](#); [INQ006086_00005](#) at paragraphs 14 and 15

⁵⁶⁶ [INQ003070_00003](#)

⁵⁶⁷ Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and The Rt Hon David Lammy MP, ‘UK sanctions Russian spies at the heart of Putin’s malicious regime’, 18 July 2025 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-russian-spies-at-the-heart-of-putins-malicious-regime>)

6.23 It may well be true that, once there was a decision made in Russia (unknown and unknowable in the UK) to assassinate Sergei Skripal, a weekend when, because Yulia Skripal's visit was likely to be known, he could be predicted to be at home presented a good opportunity. But that is not at all the same as deducing that the fact of interference with Yulia's emails, or indeed with any other communications of hers if they were similarly treated, must itself have sent the message that there was obviously going to be an attack on her father, whether when she was visiting him or otherwise.

6.24 The risk which existed is likely to have been increased if Russia believed that Sergei Skripal was taking a more active part in the inevitable debriefing than it had anticipated (and whether he was actually doing so or not). Whether this is the explanation for the attack which ensued, or whether there was a change of approach based on making an international demonstration of Russian power, may have to remain uncertain.

6.25 I have considered some aspects of this in the closed section of this report. The question of any risk which Sergei Skripal faced was addressed – particularly on his arrival in the UK in 2010 – and considered subsequently. On the basis of all the material which I have seen, I conclude that there were some features of the management of him as an exchanged prisoner which could and should have been improved. This includes the conclusion that his management did not include sufficient regular written risk assessments.

6.26 Even if one – from experience or information or otherwise – is of the reasonable opinion that a risk of harm is small, the exercise of setting down the reasons in writing should be undertaken. It is a powerful spur to clarity of thought, it much reduces the risk of confirmation bias via the suppression of factors which might point in a direction different from the conclusion arrived at, and it provides for other people who may need to revisit the risk the ability to see the reasoning behind the approach being adopted.

6.27 That said, I have concluded that, whilst there was, inevitably, some risk of harm to Sergei Skripal at Russia's hands, the considered analysis that it was not likely was one at which it was reasonable to arrive. There is no sufficient basis for concluding that there ought to have been assessed to be an enhanced risk to him of lethal attack on British soil, such as to call for security measures of the kind which were suggested to me, and which I now examine.

Chapter 2: Security around Sergei Skripal

6.28 Whatever the level of risk to Sergei Skripal, the question arises whether the UK authorities failed to take security precautions which they ought to have taken. If so, they will have left in danger not only Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, but – because of the nature of the weapon which was used – a wide circle of those who might have dealings with him and, moreover, the public at large. Should additional precautions have been taken, and if they had been, would they have been likely to avert what happened?

6.29 I was invited by Michael Mansfield KC (Counsel for the family of Dawn Sturgess) to consider, first, whether there was a duty to create an entirely new identity for Sergei Skripal, coupled with a change of appearance (however accomplished) and a different occupation, life narrative and routine.⁵⁶⁸ Those kinds of steps might have been technically possible, and if taken they might have hidden him sufficiently to avert the possibility of an attempt to kill him, but they were not at all practicable. Living under an alias is complicated and fraught with the risk of accidental disclosure; Sergei Skripal was not of a character readily to adapt to it. Such measures could, moreover, only have been accomplished with his consent, and he plainly would not willingly have accepted them.

6.30 Sergei Skripal's own statement to the Inquiry said:

- a. that he believed he had been offered protection, including changing his name, but he "*decided against it*" because he had received a presidential pardon and he "*wanted to lead as normal a life as possible, including maintaining my personal and family relationships*"; and
- b. that he had declined recommended CCTV "*because I did not want to make my house conspicuous or live under surveillance*".⁵⁶⁹

6.31 There is no basis in English law for compelling someone to accept such measures, save conceivably by refusing to admit him to the country except on those terms, and that may largely have negated the prisoner exchange apparently negotiated between the USA, the UK and Russia in 2010 (see paragraph 1.7 above). I do not think that, as at 2010, the level of risk – that Russia, having just negotiated a prisoner exchange designed to recover several of their operatives, would then set about assassinating one of the prisoners who moved in the opposite direction – was such that it was the duty of the UK authorities to impose such a condition on Sergei Skripal.

6.32 In the alternative, those authorities could perhaps have tried to persuade him to agree to such measures, either immediately on arrival or later. They would, realistically, have been able to wield some persuasion since he was inevitably dependent on their support to allow his continued residence in the UK. Was it a culpable failure on the part of those authorities not to do so? I do not think such was reasonably practicable.

⁵⁶⁸ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess 2 December 2024 73/21-24](https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, page 89 at paragraph 195a–c (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁶⁹ [INQ006086_00007-00008](#) at paragraph 27a and 27e

6.33 The steps contemplated are drastic ones. They would have meant Sergei Skripal abandoning any form of normal life as well as severing links with his family and friends. These steps would have involved a similar change of identity for his wife, Liudmilla Skripal, who died in 2012. They would have meant the same for his son, Alexander (Sasha) Skripal, and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, both of whom lived with him for about two years from 2012 to 2014 – unless they were to be separated from their father. And these steps would have meant that Yulia Skripal, in practice, would be unable to visit her father or live with him from time to time; since she was living latterly in Russia, she could have been followed to him.

6.34 It would require a very high level of risk of attack to justify measures such as those suggested, but prior to 2018, there was nothing to indicate that level of risk.

6.35 Next, I was invited to consider a regime under which Sergei Skripal's residence was secret and changed from time to time; that, it was suggested, would have made an attack virtually impossible.⁵⁷⁰ This too was impracticable if he was to continue in contact with his various family and associates. Moreover, if, as was postulated by those making the suggestion to be the case, the attack had been facilitated through Russian intelligence on Yulia's movements, or even simply by following her if she set off for England, such moves would not have been at all effective, and that was a good reason for not imposing them.

6.36 In the further alternative, I was invited to consider various forms of local security which could have been put in place. These included security cameras and alarms, CCTV in the street or in the curtilage of the house, hidden audio-visual devices inside the house, a car camera fitted to the front or rear windscreens, and residence in a gated estate with concierge supervision and access codes.⁵⁷¹ Such measures might have been possible, but I am entirely satisfied that they would not have prevented a professionally mounted attack with a nerve agent such as took place. In any event, some such measures were recommended to and declined by Sergei Skripal.⁵⁷²

6.37 It is clear that this attack showed considerable determination and was expected to stand as a public demonstration of Russian power. Attackers willing to run the risk of being seen approaching the front door by the occupants or by neighbours – and who must have been willing to accept that the use of a nerve agent would soon be discovered – were not likely to be deterred by cameras, hidden or otherwise, if their plan was to be on a plane leaving the country the same evening.

6.38 Extra security around a different kind of home, such as in a gated community, might have deterred the exact form of delivery of the Novichok employed by Petrov and Boshirov. However, once they were bent on arriving in England with a nerve agent designed to kill Sergei Skripal, the likely effect of extra security would simply have been to lead them to deliver the poison somewhere else as he moved about, probably in public and thus posing greater, not less, danger to innocent individuals.

⁵⁷⁰ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess_2 December 2024 73/24-25](#); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, page 89 at paragraph 195d (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁷¹ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess_2 December 2024 74/3-24](#); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, page 90 at paragraph 195e–i (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁷² [INQ006086_00007-00008](#) at paragraph 27

6.39 I have, as asked, given specific consideration to the potential that Sergei or Yulia Skripal's communications were being monitored.⁵⁷³ Sir Mark Sedwill's letter of 13 April 2018 to the Secretary-General of NATO explained that the UK authorities were aware that there had been Russian cyber interference with Yulia Skripal's emails from about 2013 (see paragraph 6.22 above). Taking into account that Sergei Skripal asserts in his witness statement to the Inquiry that he is "*not sure what is meant by 'secure communications networks with regular password changes'*", I have investigated this matter in the closed hearings. On all the evidence which I have heard, I am satisfied that there is no basis for complaint that the Skripals were insufficiently warned (in general terms) of the risks associated with penetration of communications.⁵⁷⁴

6.40 But whatever warning could be given, it is apparent that Russian intelligence was always likely to take an interest in Yulia Skripal, who lived within its jurisdiction. It was obvious that her communications and her movements could readily be monitored, not least simply by checking her airline bookings (to which Russian intelligence service access could reasonably be expected) or even more simply by watching her at the airport in Moscow. It was therefore likely that her visit to her father in March 2018 would be known to those intelligence interests. That implied no failure to take identifiable precautions. I have dealt above at paragraph 6.23 with the question of whether this ought to have signalled to the UK authorities an imminent attack on Sergei Skripal; for the reasons given, it did not.

6.41 The reality is that the only security arrangements for Sergei Skripal which could have prevented the kind of attack which happened – employing a novel weapon in the form of a lethal nerve agent – would have been to hide him entirely from view. That would be justified only if the risk to him of assassination on UK soil stood at a high level, and it did not.

⁵⁷³ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess_2 December 2024 75/10-11](#); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family's written closing statement, page 91 at paragraphs 200–202 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁷⁴ [INQ006086_00008](#) at paragraph 27c

Chapter 3: Warning to local police?

6.42 There is a further factor relevant to the Salisbury event. On the night of Sunday 4 March 2018, when Sergei and Yulia Skripal had been taken promptly to hospital and their identity discovered via the driving licence in Sergei's wallet, Wiltshire Police recording systems contained no reference to him at all.⁵⁷⁵

6.43 If someone with the kind of sensitive background which Sergei Skripal had (i.e. the Russian subject of a prisoner exchange, who had been arrested for espionage and convicted of treason in Russia) comes to live in a UK police force area, there should be a means of providing some warning to the local police force if anything significant involving him should occur.

6.44 This does not of course mean that his background should be made generally available to all officers; on the contrary, it needs very careful handling. However, it does mean that some form of alert is needed to indicate that, if anything should happen involving this person, contact should be made with a suitably briefed superior (e.g. within the relevant Counter Terrorism Policing unit).

6.45 Such an alert should be identifiable to at least a senior officer handling a significant incident involving the individual concerned.

6.46 I explored this question specifically in closed hearings. I do not find that no notice to Wiltshire Police was provided in 2010, but it is apparent that, if any such alert made its way onto the recording systems, it was no longer there in March 2018.

6.47 Some years before the Salisbury event in March 2018, Wiltshire Police's own Special Branch had been merged, by successive reorganisations, into the South West Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit (SWCTIU), which spanned several neighbouring forces. Any records by March 2018 were held by SWCTIU.⁵⁷⁶ The unit was still often colloquially referred to as 'Special Branch'.⁵⁷⁷

6.48 On the night of Sunday 4 March 2018, when the Skripals were rushed to hospital, Detective Superintendent (DSU) Tim Corner and Inspector Gillian Hughes of Wiltshire Police spoke to the on-call duty officer of SWCTIU, who belonged to one of the associated forces. In particular, DSU Corner had two conversations with that officer. He was told that there was no record of Sergei Skripal on any of their databases, and that as far as SWCTIU was concerned, the incident should be treated in the normal routine manner.⁵⁷⁸

6.49 However, that officer did say that there was a record on the systems of a routine police action – a port interview of Sasha Skripal at London Heathrow Airport, when he had explained that he was visiting his father in Salisbury. The officer gave no further details of that record, which therefore appeared to the Wiltshire enquirers to be of doubtful relevance.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁵ [DCC Mills 7 November 2024 103/3-23, 108/24-25, 123/17-127/16](#); [INQ006163_00006](#) at paragraph 26; [INQ006164_00001](#); [INQ006117_00030-00032](#) at paragraphs 128, 131, 136 and 138

⁵⁷⁶ [DCC Mills 7 November 2024 109/22-112/2](#); [DI Mant 11 November 2024 10/17-25](#)

⁵⁷⁷ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 5/23-6/7](#)

⁵⁷⁸ [DCC Mills 7 November 2024 112/3-123/9](#); [DI Mant 11 November 2024 18/7-24/14](#); [INQ006117_00031-00032, 00034](#) at paragraphs 138 and 153; [INQ006132_00008](#) at paragraph 52; [INQ006163_00008-00009](#) at paragraphs 33, 34 and 36; [INQ005669_00002-00006](#); [INQ006149_00001](#)

⁵⁷⁹ [INQ006117_00031-00032](#) at paragraph 138a; [INQ005669_00004](#)

6.50 There had indeed been a routine port interview of Sasha Skripal when he arrived at London Heathrow Airport in 2011.⁵⁸⁰ He explained that he was visiting his father, named Sergei, who was, he said, “a retired GRU/SVR officer” now residing in the UK, and he gave the then address in Devizes Road, Salisbury. The police officer who had spoken to him at the airport made a record of what he said and added his own note that he did so “to highlight the intelligence gathered in relation to his [Sasha’s] father”.⁵⁸¹

6.51 That the SWCTIU officer did not find any alert on police systems is consistent with the fact that it was not to be found when, after March 2018, a search was made for it by investigating officers. But it also follows from paragraph 6.49 above that he **did** find the record of the port interview at London Heathrow Airport. He did **not** report what Sasha Skripal had said about his father’s background nor indicate that any further information was available.⁵⁸²

6.52 The correlation of records, coming from a variety of sources and some, such as the interview of Sasha Skripal, coming simply as routine sharing, is no doubt sometimes a complex process and may be vulnerable to the significance of information not being apparent. But by one or other, or more, of these routes, a warning ought to have been available – probably via SWCTIU – to Wiltshire Police that there was likely to be further sensitive information in existence about Sergei Skripal’s background.

6.53 Since Wiltshire Police had themselves discovered that there were assertions in the press about Sergei Skripal’s background from an open-source internet search that same evening,⁵⁸³ and indeed had done so before they contacted SWCTIU to check, the incompleteness of the records, or of the reporting of them, made little or no difference to the progress of the investigation.

6.54 Detective Inspector (DI) Ben Mant’s evidence was that he was, to an extent, reassured by the absence of any record relating to Sergei Skripal,⁵⁸⁴ but such reassurance did not prevent Wiltshire Police (DSU Corner) from making enquiries of scientific contacts.⁵⁸⁵ These enquiries were made because of the possibility that Sergei Skripal had been the target of an attack, rather than falling ill for some other reason.

6.55 And, when DI Mant and Dr Stephen Cockroft spoke together later that same night at the hospital, they were both by then independently aware of the internet references to Sergei Skripal having been a Russian intelligence officer, convicted and exchanged, and DI Mant was relieved that he did not have to worry about sharing that information outside the police.⁵⁸⁶

6.56 Nor did the non-report of what Sasha Skripal said at the airport make any difference to the medical management of Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

⁵⁸⁰ [Commander Murphy 28 October 2024 55/1-56/20; INQ006056_00009](#) at paragraph 35

⁵⁸¹ [INQ006216_00001](#)

⁵⁸² [INQ006216_00001](#)

⁵⁸³ [DS Bailey 7 November 2024 35/10-37/11; DCC Mills 7 November 2024 99/20-109/21; INQ004615_00001-00002; INQ006132_00007](#) at paragraphs 43–45; [INQ006163_00006](#) at paragraphs 26 and 27

⁵⁸⁴ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 17/11-24/14; INQ005669_00006](#)

⁵⁸⁵ [DI Mant 11 November 2024 36/4-37/21; INQ006163_00008-00009](#) at paragraphs 36–40

⁵⁸⁶ [Dr Stephen Cockroft 31 October 2024 20/23-22/1; DI Mant 11 November 2024 52/5-53/24; INQ005669_00008](#)

6.57 I record it, however, for future reference. In my view, there needs to be a working system for the creation of suitably discreet alerts in cases such as this, and likewise for ensuring that information, once recorded on police databases, is successfully transferred and maintained when those databases are updated or otherwise altered. I considered these necessities in closed evidence and it is clear that the current arrangements meet the need.

Chapter 4: Public health messaging

6.58 The use of a highly toxic nerve agent – designed for military purposes and with the potential capacity to kill a very large number of people – in Salisbury, a quiet English cathedral city, was enormously shocking, but also enormously frightening. Quite apart from the great challenges it presented to medical resources, to those who were likely to have to attend any patient or suspected scene of contamination, and to those responsible for investigating the criminal attack, it presented a very real challenge as to how most safely to advise the public.

6.59 Members of the public would have no informed basis for deciding for themselves what they ought to do, or ought not do, nor for knowing what risk they and their families faced. The information – that such a chemical weapon was, or might be, about – was potentially very frightening.

6.60 At the same time as managing the known patients and attempting to make safe the places where they were known to have been, together with protecting those whose duty would place them at particular risk, the public authorities had to work out what advice to give. They had to do this, initially at least, with only limited information about the mechanics of transfer and the effect on the body if primary or secondary contact with the nerve agent were made, and without, for many days, any clear evidence of how and where the nerve agent had been used.

6.61 The task of undertaking public health messaging fell principally on Public Health England (PHE), the predecessor body of the present UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), but that was part of a complex network.⁵⁸⁷ It necessitated liaison with the police (both Wiltshire Police and Counter Terrorism Policing), to whom the management of scenes of possible contamination fell, and with the hospital and ambulance services.

6.62 PHE convened a Strategic Response Group (SRG), which initially met very frequently,⁵⁸⁸ as did a local police coordination group.⁵⁸⁹ PHE was advised by scientists in the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), who were meeting ad hoc for the purpose of discussing the Salisbury event in London. The Chief Medical Officer (CMO), also based in London, received advice from PHE and co-chaired SAGE when health-related issues arose.⁵⁹⁰

6.63 The principal messaging task undoubtedly concerned the risk of secondary contamination of people other than Sergei and Yulia Skripal.⁵⁹¹ That especially included those who had been, or might have been, in the places which the Skripals were known to have visited in Salisbury on Sunday 4 March 2018, notably The Bishops Mill public house, Zizzi restaurant and the area of The Maltings surrounding the bench where they sat after they became unwell. At the early stages of the public health response, it might also have included, for example, the Sainsbury's car park, and other as yet unknown places which they might have visited. Cordons were in place to limit future access to such places, if and as they became known. However, many members of the public might have visited them

⁵⁸⁷ [V13A 21 November 2024 69/8-16](#); [INQ006133_00002](#) at paragraph 4

⁵⁸⁸ [V13A 21 November 2024 73/10-22](#); [INQ006133_00002-00006](#) at paragraphs 6–22

⁵⁸⁹ [INQ006117_00037-00038](#) at paragraphs 165–167

⁵⁹⁰ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 81/22-82/15](#); [INQ006138_00002](#) at paragraph 7

⁵⁹¹ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 119/17-21](#); [INQ006138_00005](#) at paragraph 22

before the Skripals became ill and thus before there could be any cordons put in place. An initial estimate of who might have visited the pub and the restaurant at relevant times worked on a figure of up to 500.⁵⁹²

6.64 Once work had been done on the matter of secondary contamination, it was possible for SAGE to advise that the risks of serious illness ensuing from it, if it had not appeared promptly, were comparatively low. This still took several days – days of accumulating scope for public anxiety and circulating rumour, whether via social media or otherwise. This assessment of (relatively) low risk was communicated to the public by various means, including by a formal announcement on Wednesday 7 March 2018 – made by the CMO (Professor Dame Sally Davies) and Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley of the Metropolitan Police – and by a PHE statement on a gov.uk website.⁵⁹³

6.65 Next, it was necessary to decide what advice should be given to those who had been, or might have been, in the principal known sites, beyond individuals making known to the medical services any symptoms they experienced. That entailed anxious consideration of the level of risk which might ensue not only from fleeting secondary exposure, but also in the event of longer-term exposure, albeit to low or trace levels of contamination. This might well affect those whose business took them repeatedly either to those main sites or to anywhere else where there might be low levels of the nerve agent.⁵⁹⁴

6.66 From SAGE downwards, debate surrounded three principal possible forms of advice to those who had visited relevant sites from Sunday 4 March 2018, 13:30 onwards:

- a. there is no call to do anything unless you have become affected by relevant symptoms; or
- b. it is a sensible precaution to wash thoroughly the clothes you wore and to wipe down any objects you handled; or
- c. for safety's sake, you should burn everything you had with you (i.e. clothing and possessions).

6.67 The outcome was advice by SAGE to take the middle of the three options, making it clear that this advice was precautionary (or, as described at the time in public statements, a “*belt and braces*” approach).⁵⁹⁵

6.68 After that decision in principle had been reached on 9 March 2018, steps were taken to make the necessary coordinating arrangements for helplines and websites, and it was announced publicly by the CMO on the morning of Sunday 11 March and repeated in a press conference later that day by representatives of PHE.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹² [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 131/17-132/8, 185/22-186/11; INQ006138_00007](#) at paragraph 33

⁵⁹³ [INQ005797_00001; INQ003031_00003-00004](#)

⁵⁹⁴ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 122/23-124/22; INQ006138_00006](#) at paragraph 25

⁵⁹⁵ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 127/7-130/25; INQ006138_00006-00007](#) at paragraphs 26–31

⁵⁹⁶ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 129/25-131/21; INQ005092_00001-00002; INQ005797_00002](#)

6.69 Much later, after the Amesbury event and after the bottle of nerve agent was found – disguised as perfume and apparently found somewhere by Charlie Rowley – a further strand of advice to the public was added. It was, in effect, ‘don’t pick up anything which you did not drop’.⁵⁹⁷

6.70 That advice was not issued, in those or any similar terms, after the Salisbury event. I have accordingly asked myself whether it ought to have been given and, since it was not, whether, if given, it would or might have avoided what happened in Amesbury.

6.71 The argument, skilfully presented to me, was that this kind of advice is simple to give and to understand, was in fact given four months later, and might either have deterred Charlie Rowley from picking up the disguised perfume bottle or, if it would not have done that, might have induced Dawn Sturgess to decline to accept it as a gift.⁵⁹⁸

6.72 The possibility that there might exist as yet undiscovered nerve agent somewhere was certainly present in the minds of those who had to cope with the Salisbury event.⁵⁹⁹ That possibility was not limited to **discarded** material. It was several days before the principal place for delivery of the Novichok (the front-door handle) was known, so until then, there was the real possibility, subsequently proved, of finding deliberately placed nerve agent. Even when the door handle was identified, there might, for all anyone knew, have been more than one such location.

6.73 But the possibility that material might have been discarded after the attack on Sergei Skripal’s house was also realised to exist.⁶⁰⁰ Because of this possibility, amongst other things, the police investigative teams undertook searches in the immediate area of Christie Miller Road, where there are numerous hedges, trees and scrubland areas, not to mention a children’s playground.⁶⁰¹

6.74 When the evidence relating to this possible public advice came to be given before me, some six years later in the autumn of 2024, it was affected by a degree of confusion, attributable in part to some of the potential witnesses trying to reconstruct their thinking long after the event. Some witnesses were not available at all. Some did not have to address until years after the event the question which now had to be confronted. That could and should have been avoided if the decision on the point (i.e. whether public health advice should be issued, to the effect that members of the public should not pick up anything that they had not themselves dropped) had been recorded (see paragraphs 6.110 and 6.111 below). However, a careful chronological examination of the contemporaneous documents – assisted to some extent by the oral evidence of Professor Dame Sally Davies, V13A formerly of PHE, and Professor Sir John Aston (Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser)⁶⁰² – enables one to reach sufficient conclusions about what happened.

⁵⁹⁷ [INQ003018_00001](#); [INQ005805_00006](#); [INQ005920_00002](#), [00004-00005](#)

⁵⁹⁸ [Closing submissions of the family of Dawn Sturgess 2 December 2024 33/23-40/10](#); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: The family’s written closing statement, pages 61–62 at paragraphs 151 and 152 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Family-Closing-Submissions.pdf>)

⁵⁹⁹ [V13A 21 November 2024 101/6-104/15](#); [INQ004745_00004](#)

⁶⁰⁰ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 114/9-115/8, 117/2-6](#); [INQ004745_00004](#); [INQ006178_00001](#); [INQ006133_00007-00008](#) at paragraph 28

⁶⁰¹ [Keith Asman 14 November 2024 101/8-116/17](#); [INQ006140_00029-00040](#) at paragraphs 124–168

⁶⁰² [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 74/8-190/22](#); [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 91/4-198/15](#); [V13A 21 November 2024 67/18-167/9](#)

6.75 First, I am satisfied that advice not to pick up unknown objects was **not** publicly given after the Salisbury event. I reach that conclusion with all possible regard to the conviction held at one time by the then CMO, Professor Dame Sally Davies, that she did indeed issue such public advice at that earlier time.⁶⁰³

6.76 Second, advice not to pick up unknown things was undoubtedly given after the Amesbury event showed that the material which caused it was likely to have been discarded and found. In giving that advice in July 2018, Professor Dame Sally Davies plainly believed that she was repeating what had been said by her in March.⁶⁰⁴ Her belief to this effect was duly reflected in a Parliamentary statement made by the Home Secretary (then Sajid Javid) on 5 July 2018, expressly endorsing what she said. He referred to both the ‘belt and braces’ washing and wiping advice in relation to possible secondary contamination and the ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice, saying of both that this advice was not new but reflected what had been said in March.⁶⁰⁵

6.77 Similarly, when, on 5 September 2018, Professor Dame Sally Davies gave the same advice in a further public statement, she did so in terms which reflected her belief: *“I am therefore repeating the advice that I previously gave in March.”*⁶⁰⁶

6.78 The same assumption underlay a formal report made after the Amesbury event by PHE to the World Health Organization, which followed the same formula.⁶⁰⁷

6.79 These various repetitions add nothing to the question whether the recollection recited is correct.

6.80 In fact, it cannot be; this belief of Professor Dame Sally Davies is clearly mistaken. If there had been public advice in March 2018 to the effect of ‘don’t pick up the unknown’, there would undoubtedly be a record of it; and there is none. There would have been written advice from PHE, media coverage, website references and more.⁶⁰⁸ Moreover, though the contemporaneous documents demonstrate that the possibility of giving such advice was thought about, there is no record of the taking of a decision about it prior to the Amesbury event. It is perhaps a possibility that the suggestion, although raised, was simply lost in the flurry of activity around the time of the Salisbury event. Since, however, such advice was clearly considered, I find that what is much more likely to have happened is that a considered decision was made not to issue it at that time.

6.81 There is no reason to doubt Professor Dame Sally Davies’ present evidence that the possibility of discarded Novichok surfacing occurred to her at the time, and worried her – she described experiencing one or more nightmares about it – and it may be that she raised it at one or more meetings.⁶⁰⁹ It is also very likely that anyone who was involved in the response to this unprecedented attack would be greatly affected by the appearance, four months later, of more Novichok, which looked as if it must indeed have been discarded; this could easily have an unconscious effect on the memory, however

⁶⁰³ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 115/21-116/18, 183/5-9](#)

⁶⁰⁴ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 141/19-142/1](#)

⁶⁰⁵ [INQ003018_00001](#)

⁶⁰⁶ [INQ006138_00008](#) at paragraph 35

⁶⁰⁷ [INQ005805_00006](#)

⁶⁰⁸ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 175/8-22, 180/11-181/3](#)

⁶⁰⁹ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 115/21-116/11, 165/3-166/1; INQ006138_00013](#) at paragraph 55

clinical one's efforts to avoid it. But she simply cannot be right that the advice which was given after the Amesbury event was also given in March 2018, or at any time before Dawn Sturgess was fatally affected.

6.82 At a meeting of the SRG on 9 March 2018, amidst a heavy agenda, a preliminary note on this subject was made. It was recorded: *"What we are moving towards is to relay messages to the public around not picking up any unidentified containers and reassure that there are decontamination measures in place and zoonotic surveillance in the area is happening."*⁶¹⁰ They were thus dealing with three of the several potential topics which might need public information. (The zoonotic surveillance referred to involves monitoring any sign of adverse reaction amongst animals, whether wild or domesticated.) That shows that the topic of advice on picking things up was present and considered from an early stage.⁶¹¹ Professor Dame Sally Davies was not present at this meeting but may well have learned of some or all of its discussion.⁶¹²

6.83 Later that same day, 9 March 2018, SAGE met.⁶¹³ It did not address the possibilities of discarded nerve agent; at that stage, the main risk was of as yet undiscovered sites where it might have been deliberately placed, such as the not-yet-discovered front-door handle.⁶¹⁴ Amongst many other issues, such as decontamination strategies, sampling planning and the threshold for cordons, SAGE addressed public health advice.

6.84 SAGE concluded that, as a matter of science, the risk from secondary contamination to those who had not yet felt adverse effects was low.⁶¹⁵ Its advice was that no further public health advice was called for at the present, although the topic should be kept under review.⁶¹⁶

6.85 If, as may well be the case, there had been discussion of the possibility of advice not to pick up the unknown, adverted to at the earlier SRG meeting (see paragraph 6.82 above), it was not recorded in these SAGE minutes, and it did not result in a recommendation that such advice be given. A principal consideration at this time was what, if any, risk to the public there might be from low-level secondary contamination, but prolonged over a period; more work was to be done on this.⁶¹⁷ Professor Dame Sally Davies was present at this SAGE meeting.⁶¹⁸

6.86 SAGE met again on 12 March 2018.⁶¹⁹ It gave detailed consideration to decontamination of buildings and their contents, such as soft furnishings, vehicles and other possible sites (e.g. the car park ticket machine; see paragraph 3.90 above). It returned to the problem of any risk from low-level but prolonged-term exposure to

⁶¹⁰ [INQ004745_00004](#)

⁶¹¹ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 114/22-115/8](#)

⁶¹² [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 112/8-113/2](#)

⁶¹³ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 118/5-9; INQ004837](#)

⁶¹⁴ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 119/10-121/25; INQ006138_00005](#) at paragraphs 22 and 23

⁶¹⁵ [INQ004837_00003](#) at paragraphs 20 and 21

⁶¹⁶ [INQ004837_00003](#) at paragraph 19

⁶¹⁷ [INQ004837_00003](#) at paragraphs 23 and 24; [INQ006138_00006](#) at paragraph 25

⁶¹⁸ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 118/17-19; INQ006138_00005](#) at paragraph 22

⁶¹⁹ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 150/11-16; INQ004842](#)

contamination. As to public health advice, it recorded that it was to be asked to comment on the CMO's proposed statements.⁶²⁰ There is no sign of consideration at this meeting of any 'don't pick up the unknown' advice.

6.87 On 13 March 2018, the gov.uk website containing advice to the public was updated by adding to the formula presented on 7 March (see paragraph 6.64 above) specific reassurance that, although it is understandable that people should be unsure, there had been no further cases since Sunday 4 March.⁶²¹ This is one of many examples of concern not to alarm the public.

6.88 Meanwhile, on 7 March 2018, PHE had been asked to produce a hypothetical 'reasonable worst-case scenario' (RWCS) in the event that the (then unknown) source of the nerve agent was located. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) was to coordinate this work and liaise with PHE. V13A was to 'link in' on behalf of PHE. In the event, a RWCS was prepared by an officer at the DHSC and submitted within the department on 15 March. V13A's evidence to me was that she did not see it.⁶²²

6.89 The RWCS considered three possible scenarios in which new discovery of nerve agent might occur: (i) a second, targeted attack on individuals; (ii) accidental discovery via animal behaviour; and (iii) accidental discovery of discarded agent by humans.⁶²³ This third scenario is directly relevant to the question presently being considered and probably represents the high point of the argument that advice against picking up the unknown ought to have been given in March 2018.

6.90 This RWCS document sounded notes of caution. First, it was described in the covering email as a "*first stab*" at the exercise.⁶²⁴ Second, there is no attempt in the document to assess the probability or improbability of any of the scenarios occurring; it is one thing to say that such things are hypothetically possible, but if advice is to be tailored to the possibilities, one needs to know how likely they are.⁶²⁵ For this reason, and, it seems likely, because of the concern not to add to the danger by alarming the public, the covering email counselled limited circulation.⁶²⁶

6.91 On 16 March 2018, SAGE met again.⁶²⁷ As well as discussing in detail several decontamination issues, it gave particular consideration to public health advice. It did so because there was concern that a recent television interview given by Dr Vil Mirzayanov (see paragraph 2.5 above) might have given the impression that the risk from long-term exposure at low or trace level might be greater than it was believed to be, at least outside the area of prolonged exposure to organophosphates in agriculture.⁶²⁸ Having done so, it recommended no change to the public health advice given thus far and resolved to confirm its advice to the CMO.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁰ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 127/19-130/1](#)

⁶²¹ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 150/17-151/23; INQ003031_00002-00003; INQ004738_00002](#)

⁶²² [V13A 21 November 2024 90/18-95/10, 156/6-158/2; INQ006191_00001-00002; INQ004872_00001, 00003; INQ004704_00001-00006](#)

⁶²³ [INQ004704_00003](#)

⁶²⁴ [INQ004704_00001](#)

⁶²⁵ [INQ004704_00003](#)

⁶²⁶ [INQ004704_00001](#)

⁶²⁷ [INQ006138_00009-00010](#) at paragraph 41; [INQ004841](#)

⁶²⁸ [INQ004841_00001](#) at paragraph 3

⁶²⁹ [INQ004841_00001](#) at paragraphs 3 and 4

6.92 Whatever discussion there was with the CMO did not result in any urge to deliver advice concerning picking up the unknown. On the same day (16 March), Professor Dame Sally Davies wrote a summary of the health advice position for the use of the Cabinet Secretary (then Sir Jeremy Heywood) and thus of the government.⁶³⁰ That, likewise, contained no reference to the possibility of such ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice being either necessary or under consideration.

6.93 These several documents show that the possibility of discarded nerve agent was known to be a live one at the relevant time (between the Salisbury and Amesbury events, March to the end of June 2018). The contemporary documents also show that those having to address public messaging were acutely aware of the dangers of unwittingly setting up anxiety amongst the community or some sections of it (see paragraph 6.100 below). I consider that, quite apart from the inherent direct damage to people’s lives which alarm would easily bring, anxiety carried the risk of overwhelming medical, police and other services with well-meaning reports and thus obstructing the essential decontamination and investigation processes.

6.94 The SRG and SAGE meetings record regular reports of the public reaction. At the SRG meeting on 9 March 2018, there was concern that inaccurate numbers of people affected were finding their way into the media, with reports that 21 people had been adversely affected (they had not).⁶³¹ On 12 March, the SRG dealt with expressions of public concern, such as whether employees might have been exposed at the cemetery and whether having walked through an area subsequently cordoned off meant one was at risk.⁶³² It noted that the message that Salisbury was open as usual needed to be reiterated. The SAGE meeting on 12 March made the point that the washing/wiping advice given was “*incredibly precautionary*”.⁶³³ The SAGE meeting on 16 March was clearly concerned that Dr Mirzayanov’s interview not be construed as indicating a higher level of risk than was the assessment.⁶³⁴

6.95 When the considered advice about washing/wiping was given to those who might have been at affected sites (see paragraphs 6.66 and 6.67 above), it was accompanied by what was intended to be the reassuring assessment that it would apply to fewer than 500 people. That was meant to be the maximum number of people who might have passed through The Bishops Mill public house and Zizzi restaurant at material times, but it seems to have been regarded by at least some sections of the listening public as an indication that very large numbers might be at risk. Professor Chris Whitty (Chief Scientific Adviser to the DHSC), who chaired SAGE at the time, in due course recorded that this advice, although it reflected scientific counsel, “*didn’t land brilliantly well*”.⁶³⁵ He remarked, with some restraint, that Salisbury had shown resilience, but that in other cities the tensions could be greater.

6.96 Towards the end of June 2018, a policy adviser in the Government Office for Science (GO-Science), L55F – who had had no other involvement in the response to the Salisbury event but had experience in communicating policy – undertook a review of that response, designed to indicate any particular lessons learned.⁶³⁶ As part of the review process, L55F

⁶³⁰ [INQ006138_00010](#) at paragraph 42; [INQ005797_00001-00002](#)

⁶³¹ [INQ004745_00004](#)

⁶³² [INQ004715_00005](#)

⁶³³ [INQ004842_00002](#) at paragraph 14b

⁶³⁴ [INQ004841_00001](#) at paragraphs 3 and 4

⁶³⁵ [INQ004834_00003](#)

⁶³⁶ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 122/7-123/17; INQ006186_00001-00002](#) at paragraphs 1–4

conducted interviews with a number of individuals involved in the response, including an official from the DHSC, D84U.⁶³⁷ A full report was completed in August 2018, chiefly based on materials gathered before the Amesbury event.⁶³⁸

6.97 The report cites Professor Whitty's assessment of the impact of the washing and wiping advice (see paragraphs 6.66 and 6.67 above). It added that, although 11 March 2018 had been the first opportunity to give this advice with the necessary scientific and communications underpinning, the public had been concerned that it came about a week after the poisoning of the Skripals.⁶³⁹ This also reflects comments made by D84U during their interview.⁶⁴⁰

6.98 Likewise, D84U commented that people had been worried about walking freely in the city when decontamination personnel were in full personal protective equipment; the reason, no doubt, was that decontamination personnel were undertaking close-quarters work in areas of particular risk, but the concern is quite understandable. The interview notes record that D84U added that multiple public meetings had been necessary to try to allay alarm.⁶⁴¹

6.99 The report states that the social media response directed to any animal effects had been extensive, and generally that concerns shown by the 'worried well' exceeded what had been anticipated.⁶⁴²

6.100 Overall, the picture presented by the report is of sections of the public being understandably nervous, and it is clear that those charged with giving advice wished to do nothing to aggravate the anxiety.⁶⁴³

6.101 L55F's notes of the interview with D84U record the following explicit comments, made by the DHSC official in June 2018, that is, before the Amesbury event:

*"The possibility was considered that other caches of the agent could be present, e.g. in a discarded bottle. It was agreed to be ready for a surge medical response if more people became ill, but not to stoke panic by issuing public messages about this hypothetical scenario. (An assumption was made that the assassin was acting 'professionally'.)"*⁶⁴⁴

6.102 When, after the Amesbury event, the advice not to pick up the unknown was given, contemporaneous documents – other than those which reflect Professor Dame Sally Davies' mistaken belief (see paragraphs 6.76 to 6.78 above) – show that this was recognised to be a change, and thus that this advice was new. On 10 July 2018, SAGE was convened specifically to discuss public advice. It agreed that the information now given was correct, *"particularly given the change of emphasis taken by the Chief Medical Officer"*.⁶⁴⁵

⁶³⁷ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 109/7-9, 192/15-193/12; INQ006186_00004](#) at paragraphs 12 and 14; [INQ004836_00001-00003](#)

⁶³⁸ [INQ006187](#)

⁶³⁹ [INQ006187_00002](#)

⁶⁴⁰ [INQ004836_00003](#)

⁶⁴¹ [INQ004836_00003](#)

⁶⁴² [INQ006187_00002](#)

⁶⁴³ [INQ006187](#)

⁶⁴⁴ [V13A 21 November 2024 131/24-133/6; INQ004836_00003](#)

⁶⁴⁵ [INQ004838_00002](#) at paragraph 8

6.103 On the same day (10 July 2018), the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (Dr Patrick Vallance) wrote a report for the Home Secretary (then Sajid Javid). It said:

“SAGE reviewed the advice given by the Chief Medical Officer to the public since March and agreed that it has been consistent with the scientific advice available at each stage. The recent change in emphasis maintains this approach.

*We also recognise that the change of emphasis may not be an easy message to receive, but I am sure this is something that will be considered by the cross-government communications effort.”*⁶⁴⁶

6.104 These references to a “change of emphasis” are clearly to the addition of the new advice against picking up the unknown.

6.105 It is not hard to see why such additional advice was likely to be difficult to receive. To warn people against picking up something they have not dropped may be simple enough. But the message which it necessarily sends to the public is that a very dangerous nerve agent may be absolutely anywhere – not just on the ground, but on any fixture anyone might touch. The alarm likely to be generated is not so much that one, or one’s children, might (against advice) interfere with something on the ground; it is that anyone might find themselves unwittingly in contact with a highly toxic substance without being able to do anything about it.

6.106 Professor Dame Sally Davies, in her oral evidence, had the difficult task of attempting to reconcile her belief that this advice was given in March 2018 (see paragraph 6.76 above) with the very clear indications that it had not. She accepted that her memory may be in error.⁶⁴⁷

6.107 She did remember that, when the topic had been raised, there had been concern about the risk of alarm. Eventually she remembered saying, in effect, that “*maybe we shouldn’t for a bit while we think about this*”.⁶⁴⁸ And she added: “*[I]t is scary, isn’t it, for the public, except that you are telling them to protect themselves...*”⁶⁴⁹

6.108 Those observations are likely to reflect exactly the discussions which were had, and which resulted in the decision not to issue such advice – until the Amesbury event altered the circumstances, clearly demonstrating publicly that nerve agent had indeed turned up unexpectedly in the hands of people not connected to Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

6.109 Professor Sir John Aston, who co-chaired some of the SAGE meetings, recalled Professor Dame Sally Davies raising the possibility of discarded material, but he had not seen the RWCS until later.⁶⁵⁰ He explained that the question of what risk there was of discarded material being present somewhere was not one scientists (as distinct from public health advisers) could answer. That is no doubt correct, but the question did need confronting, and, on balance, I conclude that it is more likely than not that it was confronted, with the result here set out.

⁶⁴⁶ [INQ005097_00003](#)

⁶⁴⁷ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 115/21-116/17, 183/5-9](#)

⁶⁴⁸ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 140/15-22](#)

⁶⁴⁹ [Professor Dame Sally Davies 11 November 2024 141/1-2](#)

⁶⁵⁰ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 118/22-120/19, 171/18-24](#)

6.110 The evidence before me did not resolve exactly where these discussions were held prior to the Amesbury event; they were clearly in PHE but may well not have taken place in detail in SAGE. SAGE is a specialist group designed to give expert scientific advice, not a general overseer of public messaging. But wherever discussions took place, they clearly should have been recorded, whether by minutes or otherwise. They were not. That was an error.

6.111 The principal responsibility for public health messaging lay with PHE, not SAGE or the CMO, and this is where the decisions/discussions should have been properly recorded. If they had been, it is unlikely that Professor Dame Sally Davies would have been left with the mistaken conviction that advice against picking things up was given between March and the end of June 2018, and equally less likely that V13A would have been left, as she was, with apparently very little memory of the course of contemporaneous discussions as suggested by the documents.

6.112 Wherever it was taken, I have asked myself whether this decision was wrong. With the hindsight afforded by the Amesbury event, one would no doubt reach a different conclusion, but the decision had to be made without that hindsight. The danger of adding public alarm was a very real one. Against this, there had to be balanced the assessment of how likely or unlikely it was that discarded nerve agent might be found lying somewhere in a public or semi-public place, available to be picked up by an unsuspecting person.

6.113 As the author of the hypothetical RWCS (see paragraphs 6.88 to 6.90 above) had rightly said, the likelihood of the possible scenarios was an essential factor in the equation and had yet to be assessed when they were formulated.⁶⁵¹ For example, the first possible scenario – the discovery of a site where nerve agent had been deliberately placed – was a very real one with a high probability it existed. As at the time of writing, points of delivery of the poison in Salisbury had yet to be resolved. Multiple points of delivery could not, for the purposes of a worst-case scenario, be ruled out; the front-door handle was not identified until two days later, on 17 March 2018.

6.114 Moreover, whilst it may be known now that the attack on the Skripals was a one-off event, no one could then know whether it might be the precursor to a series of attacks anywhere in the country on those regarded by those responsible as their enemies.

6.115 By contrast, the likelihood that trained assassins might have abandoned any residue of so lethal a substance – and done so where an unsuspecting member of the public might find it and help himself to it – was small. Even now it is remarkable, to say the least, that trained military personnel should have done so, and moreover in a form which looked inviting to a finder. It is more than appalling that they should have had no adequate plan either for returning the material to Russia (without, probably, risking ordinary airport departure security) or for disposing of it safely via the kind of support from other co-nationals which one would expect them to be able to call upon.

6.116 The reference to the assassin being assumed to have acted ‘professionally’ (see paragraph 6.101 above) sounds naïve now, but however unfortunate the expression, viewed with hindsight, it encapsulates a reasonable risk assessment when judged as at the time it had to be made.

⁶⁵¹ [INQ004704_00003](#)

6.117 Another factor which had to be taken into account if ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice was to be given in March 2018 was: how widely would it have to be given? Again, hindsight now strongly suggests that the residue of Novichok must have been left somewhere in Salisbury, since Charlie Rowley was the person who in the end came into possession of it.

6.118 But considering the position as at mid-March, if the Novichok had been discarded at all, it might have been anywhere the attackers had been. That could certainly have been, as well as in Salisbury, anywhere on or adjacent to the train route from Salisbury to London, and more or less anywhere in London, including in the immediate vicinity of one or other of the hugely busy airports – if not further afield, depending on what their (then unknown) movements turned out to have been.

6.119 The implications of giving the suggested advice in a way which reached everyone who might be in any of those places would have been enormous, and the number of people likely to feel threatened as a result would have been vast.

6.120 All this material thus leads to the clear conclusion that it is impossible to criticise the decision made in March to the end of June 2018 not to issue ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice until the Amesbury event decisively altered the balance of probabilities. It is possible that some professionals charged with making this decision might have decided otherwise, but the course taken was plainly within the range of the reasonable, judged at the time and without the benefit of hindsight.

6.121 If ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice had, contrary to this analysis, been given in the period of March to June 2018, would it have prevented the dreadful consequences for Dawn Sturgess? Given the conclusions above at paragraphs 4.99 to 4.104, this question does not arise, but I should address it.

6.122 The answer is that it is simply impossible to say. If such advice had been given, it is probable that it would have been after Charlie Rowley found the ‘perfume bottle’ (see the discussion above at Part 4 Chapter 6). One cannot now know, given his lifestyle and habit of picking up discarded items in public areas, whether it would have impacted on him either then or (less likely) later, at the point where he remembered the bottle and decided to give it to Dawn Sturgess.

6.123 Nor can one know whether, on the morning of Saturday 30 June 2018, hungover as Charlie Rowley and Dawn Sturgess both were, the presentation of the bottle to her might have triggered in Dawn a recollection of the advice given publicly several weeks earlier and might have caused her to query where it had come from and avoid trying out its contents. These things are no doubt possible, but they are unavoidably unknowns.

Chapter 5: Information-sharing with Public Health England

6.124 Following the Amesbury event, there was concern that limited information-sharing between the police and Public Health England (PHE) had an impact on the public health advice given. Professor Sir John Aston was tasked with leading a review into whether the lack of information-sharing between the police and PHE had implications for the public health advice given at the time.⁶⁵²

6.125 Commander Dominic Murphy (Commander of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO15) and in 2018 Senior Investigating Officer for Operation Caterva) accepted that Counter Terrorism Policing did not share with PHE the detail of Petrov and Boshirov's routes around Salisbury, nor the routes they had taken to and from Salisbury. Nor did they share information regarding the suspects' stay at the Citystay Hotel, Bow, east London, and the contamination of their hotel room with Novichok.⁶⁵³

6.126 As part of his review, Professor Sir John Aston asked Dr Nick Gent (Senior Medical Adviser, PHE) whether the police had sought his advice on the covert investigation prior to the Amesbury event. Dr Gent responded by letter that his advice on the covert investigation had not been sought.⁶⁵⁴

6.127 Following the Amesbury event, a special SAGE meeting was convened on 10 July 2018 to consider this newly shared information (i.e. the information in paragraph 6.125 above) and whether, in light of that information, the advice in place – both at the time it was given and at the current time – was correct.⁶⁵⁵ SAGE concluded the public health advice in place at the current time was correct, “*particularly given the change in emphasis taken by the Chief Medical Officer*”.⁶⁵⁶ As noted above at paragraph 6.103, this “*change in emphasis*” is a reference to the ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice which was given on 4 July 2018 (after the Amesbury event).⁶⁵⁷

6.128 I have considered whether, if the police had shared relevant information with PHE, this could have prevented Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley from coming into contact with Novichok. I do not consider that it could have done. As noted by the experts who attended the special SAGE meeting, given the gaps in the CCTV sightings of Petrov and Boshirov, the information provided by the police did not resolve the uncertainty of whether any remaining Novichok was “*somewhere within a large area or indeed nowhere in the UK*”.⁶⁵⁸ There was nothing specific in that information which would have enabled PHE to give advice to the public about the probable location of any remaining Novichok.

⁶⁵² [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 130/18-132/6; INQ006053_00003](#) at paragraph 11; [INQ004838_00002](#) at paragraph 9

⁶⁵³ [Commander Murphy 18 November 2024 67/24-69/11; Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 132/8-23](#)

⁶⁵⁴ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 139/22-140/6, 146/19-149/8, 152/16-23; INQ006053_00004](#) at paragraph 15; [INQ006178_00001](#)

⁶⁵⁵ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 132/24-137/18; INQ006053_00003](#) at paragraph 12; [INQ004838_00001-00002](#) at paragraphs 1 and 7

⁶⁵⁶ [Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 137/19-139/6; INQ006053_00003-00004](#) at paragraph 13; [INQ004838_00002](#) at paragraph 8

⁶⁵⁷ [Commander Murphy 18 November 2024 51/25-52/25; Professor Sir John Aston 18 November 2024 138/9-14](#)

⁶⁵⁸ [INQ004838_00001](#) at paragraph 5

At its highest level, the information might have provided an additional basis for giving the 'don't pick up the unknown' advice. As I explain above at paragraphs 6.122 and 6.123, it is impossible to say whether that advice, if given, might have prevented Dawn Sturgess' death.

6.129 More fundamentally, the Counter Terrorism Policing investigation was one of the utmost sensitivity. It might or might not turn out to disclose a major international and diplomatic incident; there had already been public statements by the Prime Minister (then Theresa May) and the National Security Adviser (then Sir Mark Sedwill) to the effect that it appeared that either this was a direct act by Russia against the UK, or Russia had lost control of its Novichok.⁶⁵⁹ Detail of the level of evidence obtained, or of the movements of the suspects, would be of the greatest possible interest to any hostile elements, state or otherwise. And insofar as the risk was of hostile state interest, such a state might well have advanced and developed intelligence methods which might be deployed to penetrate any sharing of police information and/or to spoil the investigation.

6.130 I do not think it is at all possible to criticise the decision to keep the sharing of such information very tightly controlled. It is a commonplace experience that, once some limited sharing is undertaken, the control of the information rapidly and progressively becomes impracticable. Given the limited impact which such sharing could have had, I conclude that the course taken was entirely reasonable.

⁶⁵⁹ [INQ002997_00003](#)

Chapter 6: Symptom advice for first responders

6.131 There is some overlap between the common symptoms of opiate overdose, on the one hand, and organophosphate (or nerve agent) poisoning, on the other (e.g. miosis, respiratory depression, coma, slow heart rate), but there are some differences. Excessive secretions and sweating are not typical of opiate overdose but do tend to occur with organophosphate poisoning.⁶⁶⁰ Given the overlap in symptoms, there is a risk of confusion between the two. Further, diagnosis on the basis of symptoms is far from easy. Symptoms are not definitive, nor do they necessarily occur in predictable combinations.

6.132 As at early 2018, first responders, in particular police and paramedics, were only too likely to have dealt with opiate overdoses, but they were very unlikely to have come across organophosphate poisoning (e.g. involving pesticides or fertilisers) and certainly not a nerve agent poisoning.⁶⁶¹ There was therefore an identifiable risk that they might make the assumption that they were dealing with the much more common drug overdose in cases where in fact they were not. If they are made aware of the possible confusion of symptoms, that risk can be at least reduced.

6.133 The question was debated in evidence whether the training available to first responders, whether police or ambulance personnel, sufficiently conveyed the risk of such confusion.⁶⁶²

6.134 Before the Salisbury event, the possibility of organophosphate poisoning – and a *fortiori* of nerve agent poisoning – being encountered was so remote that there was no occasion for general training. To direct information at chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) trained personnel (of whom VN005 was an example), and not at others,⁶⁶³ was perfectly reasonable.

6.135 The Salisbury event, however, demonstrated the risk of false assumption: the initial thought of those attending Sergei and Yulia Skripal was that it looked like a case of drug overdose, whereas it turned out not to be (see Part 3 Chapter 4 above).⁶⁶⁴ After that, first responders needed to be alerted to the possibility of confusion. It was not so much that a second targeted attack was likely, but the presence of nerve agent in Salisbury meant that it was possible that other people who had been contaminated might appear.

⁶⁶⁰ [Dr Jasmeet Soar and Professor Jerry Nolan 6 November 2024 24/25-26/8; INQ005994_00018, 00110](#) at paragraphs 4.3 and 7.3

⁶⁶¹ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 5/10-6/24; Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 127/3-131/18; INQ005942_00030-00031, 00072](#) at paragraphs 3.41 and 6.2

⁶⁶² [DCC Mills 15 October 2024 22/9-23/8; Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 5/4-39/19; DCC Mills 17 October 2024 56/24-73/13; DCC Mills 7 November 2024 153/7-162/16; INQ006117_00029](#) at paragraphs 124–127; [INQ006058_00006-00009](#) at paragraphs 29–47; [INQ006176_00001-00002; INQ000623_00001-00002; INQ006069_00001-00002; INQ006066_00001-00009](#)

⁶⁶³ [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 57/11-73/13; DCC Mills 7 November 2024 153/7-162/16; INQ006069_00001-00002; INQ006066_00001-00009](#)

⁶⁶⁴ [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 70/24-73/13](#)

6.136 The author of the ‘reasonable worst-case scenario’ (see paragraphs 6.88 to 6.90 above) saw this need at national level and incorporated into that document the recommendation that the learning afforded by the Salisbury event should be disseminated rapidly to ensure effective and safe first response.⁶⁶⁵ That was a realistic approach.

6.137 Some advice on symptoms was certainly offered to paramedic first responders:

- a. First, a relatively new device, the DuoDote auto-injector (which delivered atropine and pralidoxime), had recently been added to the equipment carried by many ambulances, and the literature about it described the common symptoms of organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning. This was circulated in 2017 to all ambulance staff by the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT), which covered Wiltshire.⁶⁶⁶
- b. Second, in the immediate aftermath of the Salisbury event, PHE issued guidance aimed respectively at general practitioners and hospital emergency departments. The guidance included descriptions of the likely symptoms of organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning and gave advice on the management of patients.⁶⁶⁷

6.138 In Wiltshire, both documents were circulated to all paramedics early in March 2018.⁶⁶⁸

6.139 This was helpful. However, neither the DuoDote literature nor the PHE guidance drew attention to the risk of confusion between opiate overdose and organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning symptoms. This risk was not specifically referred to in documents given to paramedics until early July 2018 (i.e. after the Amesbury event).⁶⁶⁹ Although the paramedic expert witness to the Inquiry (Mark Faulkner) did not criticise the absence of such reference, and drew attention to the limited usefulness of adding extra documents to circulation to front-line staff,⁶⁷⁰ Wayne Darch of SWASFT realistically accepted before me that it would have been better if the risk of confusion had been identified, and I agree.⁶⁷¹

6.140 So far as police officers are concerned, there was likewise nothing by way of information or training which drew attention before the Amesbury event to the risk of confusion between opiate overdose and organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning.⁶⁷² In direct response to the Salisbury event, two advice notes were issued promptly by the National CBRN Centre (part of Counter Terrorism Policing) in March 2018:

- a. One was designed to remind of likely symptoms in the event of such a nerve agent attack; it set them out helpfully. It was, however, issued at an early stage when what had occurred remained sensitive, and its circulation was confined to CBRN advisers and commanders, whether in the police, fire or ambulance services.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁵ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 31/11-35/25](#); [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 81/21-86/10](#); [INQ004704_00001_00004](#)

⁶⁶⁶ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 7/17-14/14](#); [INQ006058_00008-00009](#) at paragraphs 40–47; [INQ000627_00001](#); [INQ000623_00001-00002](#)

⁶⁶⁷ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 16/23-25/1](#); [INQ006058_00018-00019](#) at paragraph 105.1; [INQ000660](#); [INQ000659](#)

⁶⁶⁸ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 23/4-25/1](#); [INQ006058_00018-00019](#) at paragraph 105.1

⁶⁶⁹ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 21/18-23/3](#); [INQ006058_00020](#) at paragraph 108.2; [INQ000657_00001-00007](#)

⁶⁷⁰ [Mark Faulkner 5 November 2024 151/19-154/16](#)

⁶⁷¹ [Wayne Darch 17 October 2024 29/22-30/9](#)

⁶⁷² [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 71/10-73/13](#)

⁶⁷³ [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 58/11-65/15](#); [DCC Mills 7 November 2024 159/6-161/25](#); [INQ006069_00001-00002](#)

- b. The other was intended to brief all first responders on hazardous substance exposure. It included 'Remove, Remove, Remove' advice and a reminder about the signs of exposure to hazardous substances more generally, but it did not specifically refer to the symptoms of organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning.⁶⁷⁴

6.141 With regard to the first advice note (see paragraph 6.140a above), it is understandable that at an early stage there was caution about wider circulation concerning an event which carried the real risk of security considerations. However, once it was public knowledge that a nerve agent attack had been perpetrated, there was nothing sensitive about the risk of confusion of symptoms. What did not happen was to widen the circulation of the advice note to all police officers, as it would have been helpful to do.⁶⁷⁵ Commander Murphy gave evidence to the Inquiry that the advice note could perfectly well have received wider circulation in due course.⁶⁷⁶

6.142 In any event, neither advice note addressed the risk of confusing nerve agent poisoning with opiate overdose. Deputy Chief Constable Paul Mills of Wiltshire Police agreed that it would have been better if something had been circulated to all officers dealing with symptoms that highlighted the risk of confusion.⁶⁷⁷ I find that such advice could and should have been circulated to police officers.

6.143 The omission to alert first responders to the risk of confusion between the common opiate overdose and the uncommon but possible organophosphate/nerve agent poisoning did not make any difference to the treatment of Dawn Sturgess, and no alert could have saved her (see paragraphs 4.22 and 4.29 above). Nor did it make any significant difference to the treatment of Charlie Rowley – the paramedics thought his might be a nerve agent poisoning case and the hospital was soon treating him for that possibility, although his symptoms could have been accounted for by opiate overdose (see paragraph 4.63 above).

6.144 The principal reason for the error of coordination at 9 Muggleton Road in Amesbury (Charlie Rowley's address) was not ignorance of the risk of confusing symptoms. The paramedics were actively alive to the possibility that they were dealing with a nerve agent case (see paragraphs 4.33 to 4.39 above). The police disagreement with them was based not on misreading the symptoms, but on the priority they gave to their assessment that this was a drug-related incident, even when the paramedics had advanced their opinion (see paragraphs 4.50 to 4.60 above). But if there had been better information given to the police as to the known risk of confusion of symptoms, it is at least possible that they might have been more open-minded to what they were dealing with, and that might have increased the chances of the error being avoided.

⁶⁷⁴ [Commander Murphy 18 November 2024 21/3-23; INQ006066](#)

⁶⁷⁵ [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 65/16-21; DCC Mills 7 November 2024 162/1-17](#)

⁶⁷⁶ [Commander Murphy 12 November 2024 118/21-120/4](#)

⁶⁷⁷ [DCC Mills 17 October 2024 64/13-22, 71/13-73/13; DCC Mills 7 November 2024 162/6-16; INQ006117_00029](#) at paragraphs 124–127

Part 7: Closed section

7.1 As I have explained above in Part 1 of this report, the sole purpose of converting what were previously inquest proceedings into a public inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005 was to enable the investigation into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death to receive not only open evidence, but also security-sensitive closed evidence. Using the powers available to me as Chair, I have received and taken into account both categories of evidence.

7.2 The process of determining which evidence is so sensitive that it must remain closed has been a painstaking one. It is described in detail below in Appendix 1 to this report. With regard to almost all the material in question, decisions as to what evidence can be open and what must be closed have been made by me in granting Restriction Orders under section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005. In making such decisions, I have sought to maximise the amount of evidence made available in open evidence. I have only agreed to material remaining in closed evidence if there is no means of disclosing it in open evidence, including by way of summary or gist.

7.3 In the case of a very small amount of the documentation involved, the decision that it must remain in closed evidence has been made by way of Restriction Notices (also made under section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005), signed by a government minister. Restriction Notices have the theoretical potential – because they are outside the control of the Inquiry – to impose limitations on the material available for open consideration, when the Inquiry does not support those limitations. If that had occurred, I should have had to consider whether to decline to proceed with the Inquiry under such a Notice. But that does not arise. I have considered with care the (very limited) material covered by the Restriction Notices, and I have no hesitation in endorsing the requirement that the relevant material remain closed.

7.4 Taken together, there is a considerable quantity of closed documentary evidence. I have also received a number of closed witness statements, some of which are lengthy.

7.5 In order to assist me in the task of assessing the closed material, I held closed Inquiry hearings in January 2025. The hearings lasted several days. Attendance at the hearings was limited to myself, members of the Inquiry Team, and appropriate members of the teams for His Majesty's Government (HMG) and Operation Verbasco.⁶⁷⁸ The hearings took place in a government building in London. During the closed hearings, as in the open hearings, I heard oral evidence from witnesses and also received submissions from Counsel regarding documentary evidence. A number of witnesses were called and questioned during the closed hearings. The witnesses included Commander Dominic Murphy (Commander of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO15)), MK26 (Chemical and Biological Scientific Adviser, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Porton Down) and also witnesses represented by HMG. The HMG witnesses included individuals who had been personally involved in making decisions regarding Sergei Skripal's security prior to March 2018. On the conclusion of the oral

⁶⁷⁸ Operation Verbasco is the joint policing operation set up by the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command and Counter Terrorism Policing South East in response to the Inquest and then Inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess.

evidence, HMG and Operation Verbasco filed, at my request, written submissions addressing certain issues arising from the closed evidence. I subsequently held a short further closed hearing to hear oral submissions on these matters.

7.6 I have admitted into evidence all the documents contained in the hearing bundles prepared for the closed hearings. I have also admitted into evidence the closed witness statements.

7.7 The following materials will form part of the Appendices to this report, although the sensitivity of the material will of course mean that they cannot be published in the same way as the other Appendices:

- a. the closed documents contained in the closed hearing bundles;
- b. the closed witness statements;
- c. the transcripts of the closed hearings; and
- d. written submissions filed in the course of the closed hearings.

7.8 The remaining sections of Part 7 of the report will address a number of issues that arise on the closed evidence. I will set out my analysis and conclusions regarding each issue. In light of the sensitivity of these issues and the evidence relating to them, I do not expect the remaining sections of Part 7 of the report to be published. To do so would breach the Restriction Orders and/or the Restriction Notices referred to in paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3 above.

7.9 Although I cannot (for the same reason) list the issues that I will address, I can say that they include questions relating to:

- a. the security arrangements in place for Sergei Skripal in the period before March 2018;
- b. the responsibility for the attack on Sergei Skripal; and
- c. scientific material relating to the type of Novichok found in Salisbury and Amesbury.

Part 8: Conclusions

8.1 Here I summarise my principal conclusions. They are based on the totality of the evidence that I have taken into account in conducting my investigation, thus on both the oral and documentary evidence that I received in the course of the public hearings (records of which are available on the Inquiry website) and also the oral and documentary evidence adduced in the course of the closed hearings.

8.2 Generally, if I state a fact, or say that it is ‘likely’, I have found it proved at least on the balance of probabilities, that is, to the ordinary civil standard adopted in UK courts. Where I say that I am ‘sure’, I have been satisfied of that fact to the level generally applied in criminal courts, that is, beyond reasonable doubt. Other expressions, such as that something is ‘possible’, do not represent findings of fact but are indications of my state of mind.

8.3 Dawn Sturgess:

- a. Dawn Sturgess was born on 18 June 1974. She was 44 years old when she died on 8 July 2018.
- b. In June 2018, she was living at John Baker House in Salisbury, Wiltshire. Dawn Sturgess was in a relationship with Charlie Rowley. Her mother and father lived close by. She had two grown-up children, and a daughter under 18 who lived with Dawn’s parents and with whom she was in close contact.
- c. Dawn Sturgess was not in employment.

8.4 On the morning of Saturday 30 June 2018, Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley were together at Charlie’s flat at 9 Muggleton Road in Amesbury, Wiltshire. Charlie Rowley gave Dawn Sturgess a gift of a small bottle of what was labelled as – and he believed to be – Nina Ricci perfume. He removed the packaging and attached to the bottle the dispensing pump that came with it. Using the pump, Dawn Sturgess then applied to her wrists the substance inside the bottle, which she believed to be perfume. She may well also have inhaled some of the vapours of the substance.

8.5 In fact, the substance inside the bottle was a deadly nerve agent from the Novichok class of organophosphorus chemicals.

8.6 Dawn Sturgess became seriously ill very quickly. Charlie Rowley called an ambulance, and paramedics attended the flat. By the time they arrived, Dawn Sturgess’ heart had stopped beating. Although the paramedics managed to resuscitate her, she had sustained an unsurvivable brain injury. She received expert medical treatment in hospital but never regained consciousness and died some days later, on 8 July 2018.

8.7 The medical cause of Dawn Sturgess’ death was hypoxic ischaemic brain injury and intracranial brain haemorrhage, attributable to Novichok poisoning. This was the Novichok that had been in the bottle which she and Charlie Rowley believed contained perfume.

8.8 At an early stage of this process, Dawn Sturgess’ family requested that the investigation should consider whether she received appropriate medical treatment, as well as the related question of whether she might have survived had she received better or different treatment. I have, accordingly, considered these matters with care, with

the assistance of expert medical witnesses. Having done so, I am satisfied that Dawn Sturgess received entirely appropriate medical care – both from the ambulance staff who responded to the emergency call and from the hospital doctors.

8.9 Moreover, it is absolutely clear that her condition was in fact unsurvivable from a very early stage – indeed, from before the time the ambulance crew arrived to treat her. This was a result of the very serious brain injury that was itself the consequence of her heart stopping for an extended period of 30 minutes or so immediately after she was poisoned. Looking back, I am sure that no medical treatment could in fact have saved her life, and I should record that, by the time the medical evidence was obtained, her family accepted that conclusion.

8.10 On Sunday 4 March 2018, some four months before Dawn Sturgess died, an attempt had been made to assassinate Sergei Skripal in Salisbury using Novichok. As to that event, I am sure of the following facts:

- a. Alexander Petrov, Ruslan Boshirov and Sergey Fedotov (all aliases) were all members of GRU Unit 29155. They arrived in London from Moscow on Friday 2 March 2018 with the intention of working together to kill Sergei Skripal.
- b. Petrov and Boshirov travelled to Salisbury on Saturday 3 March and conducted reconnaissance of Sergei Skripal's house and the surrounding area.
- c. Petrov and Boshirov returned to Salisbury on Sunday 4 March and placed Novichok on the handle of Sergei Skripal's front door. Their intention was that he would touch the door handle and that the Novichok would kill him. They must have been aware that others might also touch the door handle, most obviously Sergei Skripal's daughter, Yulia, who they knew was also staying at the house at the time.

8.11 I am sure that Petrov and Boshirov brought with them to Salisbury the 'Nina Ricci' bottle containing Novichok made in Russia that was subsequently responsible for Dawn Sturgess' death. It was probably this bottle that they used to apply poison to the door handle of Sergei Skripal's house. They recklessly discarded this bottle somewhere public or semi-public before leaving Salisbury on Sunday 4 March. They can have had no regard to the hazard thus created, of the death of, or serious injury to, an uncountable number of innocent people.

8.12 Charlie Rowley later came into possession of the discarded bottle of Novichok, probably by finding it somewhere. Exactly where and when he found it, it is impossible to say, but it is likely that it was within a few days of it being abandoned on Sunday 4 March, and some time before the bottle was opened and given to Dawn Sturgess. He had no idea that its contents were toxic.

8.13 It follows that there is a clear causative link between the use and discarding of the Novichok by Petrov and Boshirov, and the death of Dawn Sturgess.

8.14 Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov were members of an operational team within the GRU – the Russian military intelligence agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering. I am sure that, in conducting their attack on Sergei Skripal, they were acting on instructions. I have concluded that the operation to assassinate Sergei Skripal must have been authorised at the highest level, by President Putin.

8.15 I therefore conclude that all those involved in the assassination attempt (not only Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov, but also those who sent them, and anyone else giving authorisation or knowing assistance in Russia or elsewhere) were morally responsible

for Dawn Sturgess' death. Deploying a highly toxic nerve agent in a busy city was an astonishingly reckless act. The risk that others beyond the intended target, Sergei Skripal, might be killed or injured was entirely foreseeable. That risk was dramatically magnified by leaving in the city a bottle of the Novichok disguised as perfume.

8.16 I have considered whether there were steps that the British state ought to have taken to avoid the Salisbury and/or the Amesbury events.

8.17 First, for the reasons set out above in Part 6 Chapter 1, I have concluded that there were failings in Sergei Skripal's management as an exchanged prisoner; in particular, sufficient, regular written assessments were not conducted. However, I do not think that the assessment that Sergei Skripal was not at significant risk of assassination by Russian personnel can be said to have been unreasonable, although, of course, events unhappily demonstrated that it was wrong.

8.18 Nor, for the same reasons, do I consider that the attack on Sergei Skripal ought to have been avoided by the kind of additional security measures which I was asked to consider. The only such measures which could have avoided the attack would have been such as to hide him completely with an entirely new identity, and to prevent him and his family from having any continued contact. As at 2018, the risk was not so severe as to demand such far-reaching precautions.

8.19 Second, I have considered whether public health advice should have been issued in the period between March and the end of June 2018, to the effect that members of the public should not pick up anything which they had not themselves dropped. Such advice was issued after the Amesbury event. I am satisfied – albeit on evidence which is less clear than it ought to have been – that a decision was made not to issue such advice.

8.20 Such a message would not only warn people against electively picking up something on the ground, but would also carry the implication that a very dangerous nerve agent might be encountered anywhere in the public space. As such advice would have had to be given not only in Salisbury but also anywhere else where the as yet unidentified attackers had been, it was a reasonable conclusion at the time that this warning should not be issued.

8.21 What certainly should have happened, however, is that the discussions about the point – which there must have been – and the decision about it should have been recorded, whether by minutes or otherwise. If that ordinary and simple procedure had been adopted, the difficulties which the Inquiry encountered in determining what had happened, and the difficulties which two witnesses had in remembering it, would have been avoided.

8.22 Separately, I have addressed the evidence as to the level of training given to first responders (i.e. paramedics and police) about the possibility of confusion, when considering early symptoms, between opiate poisoning on the one hand and organophosphate poisoning (including nerve agent poisoning) on the other. Although symptoms are not definitive, there can be such a risk that they are misinterpreted.

8.23 Before the completely unexpected use of a nerve agent in an English city, there was no occasion for training on this risk to go any further than it did, that is, to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) trained personnel. After the Salisbury event – and once the use of a nerve agent was publicly known – wider training was appropriate. It was given, but for the reasons set out above in Part 6 Chapter 6, it could and should have been more widely circulated and, where it did not specifically refer to the risk of confusion of symptoms, it should have done so.

8.24 These deficiencies were acknowledged in evidence before the Inquiry and have been rectified. They did not have any bearing on the death of Dawn Sturgess because she was sadly beyond recovery before any first responders were able to reach her. They could have made a marginal contribution to the error which was made when ambulance personnel and police officers attended Charlie Rowley at 9 Muggleton Road, but the cause of that error was not a failure to appreciate a risk of confusion of symptoms, because the diagnosis of the paramedics was in fact correct. Nor did any shortfall in training have any impact on the medical treatment which Charlie Rowley received.

Appendix 1: Background to the Inquiry and procedure

The Inquest proceedings

A1.1 David Ridley, His Majesty's Senior Coroner for Wiltshire and Swindon, was notified of the death of Dawn Sturgess on the day she died, 8 July 2018. Pursuant to sections 1 and 6 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009,⁶⁷⁹ where a senior coroner is made aware that the body of a deceased person is within that coroner's area, he is required to hold an inquest if he has reason to suspect that the deceased died a violent or unnatural death.

A1.2 The purpose of an inquest is to establish the answers to four important but limited questions: who the deceased was, and when, where and how she came to die.

A1.3 On 19 July 2018, the Senior Coroner formally opened and adjourned the Inquest into Dawn Sturgess' death. The Inquest was suspended pursuant to section 11 of and Schedule 1 to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 following correspondence with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on the grounds that a person may be charged with an offence of homicide in connection with the death.

A1.4 On 20 December 2019, the Senior Coroner issued a written Ruling on the scope of the Inquest. He decided that the scope would include the acts and omissions of Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, and whether any act or omission by them (or either of them) may have caused or contributed to Dawn Sturgess' death, but that it could not in law include whether any other members of the Russian state were responsible for her death or the source of the Novichok that appeared to have killed her. He held that to do so would infringe the statutory bars in section 10(2) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 upon determining criminal liability of a named person or civil liability⁶⁸⁰ and, further, that in his discretion these issues were too remote from the question of how Dawn Sturgess came by her death.

A1.5 Dawn Sturgess' family challenged the Ruling by way of judicial review. The claim was heard by the Divisional Court on 14 and 15 July 2020, and judgment was handed down on 24 July 2020. The Court quashed the Senior Coroner's decision that he was disabled in law from investigating the issue of wider Russian responsibility.⁶⁸¹ It left the decision whether to do so as one of discretion for the Coroner.

⁶⁷⁹ Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/contents>)

⁶⁸⁰ Coroners and Justice Act 2009 section 10(2) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/section/10>)

⁶⁸¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: R (GS) v HM Senior Coroner for Wiltshire and Swindon [2020] EWHC 2007 (Admin) (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/R-GS-v-HM-Senior-Coroner-for-Wiltshire-and-Swindon-Judgment.pdf>)

A1.6 In January 2021, The Rt Hon the Baroness Heather Hallett DBE was nominated by the Lord Chief Justice and appointed by the Chief Coroner to conduct the Inquest pursuant to paragraph 3 of Schedule 10 to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.⁶⁸² She held the first pre-Inquest review hearing on 30 March 2021.⁶⁸³

A1.7 The question whether to investigate the wider issue of Russian responsibility thus fell for Baroness Hallett to reconsider. In directions dated 30 March 2021⁶⁸⁴ and a Ruling of 8 April 2021,⁶⁸⁵ Baroness Hallett confirmed the provisional scope of the Inquest:

- “a. The death of Dawn Sturgess*
 - i. Dawn Sturgess – pen portrait evidence*
 - ii. Events June 2018 to 8 July 2018*
 - iii. Medical cause of death*
 - iv. Sufficiency of medical treatment*
- b. The poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal*
 - i. The events*
 - ii. Responsibility for the poisoning*
 - (a) Involvement of Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov*
 - (b) The source of the Novichok*
 - (c) Russian State responsibility*
 - iii. Whether the UK authorities took appropriate precautions in early 2018 to protect Mr Skripal from being attacked*
- c. Steps taken by UK authorities to ensure public safety following the Skripal poisoning, focusing on the search for any remaining poison – to include relevant aspects of police investigation / public health response*
- d. Connection between the Skripal poisoning and the death of Dawn Sturgess”*⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸² Coroners and Justice Act 2009 Schedule 10 paragraph 3 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/schedule/10>)

⁶⁸³ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Pre-Inquest Review on 30 March 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Pre-Inquest-Review-Transcript.pdf>)

⁶⁸⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Directions following the first Pre-Inquest Review, 30 March 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Directions-following-the-First-Pre-Inquest-Review.pdf>)

⁶⁸⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, First Ruling on Scope and Case Management, 8 April 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-04-08-First-Ruling-on-Scope-and-Case-Management.pdf>)

⁶⁸⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Directions following the first Pre-Inquest Review, 30 March 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Directions-following-the-First-Pre-Inquest-Review.pdf>)

A1.8 Baroness Hallett also decided⁶⁸⁷ that the following should be designated as Interested Persons, within the meaning of section 47(2) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009:⁶⁸⁸

- a. members of the family of the deceased, namely:
 - i. Stephen Stanley Sturgess (Dawn Sturgess' father);
 - ii. Caroline Sturgess (Dawn Sturgess' mother);
 - iii. Aidan Hope (Dawn Sturgess' son);
 - iv. Ewan Hope (Dawn Sturgess' son); and
 - v. GS (Dawn Sturgess' daughter; Baroness Hallett directed and ruled that the daughter of Dawn Sturgess would be referred to for the Inquest proceedings as 'GS', as she was a child whose name was unlikely to be relevant to the proceedings);
- b. Charlie Rowley (Dawn Sturgess' partner);
- c. the Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police;
- d. the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis;
- e. the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police;
- f. the Secretary of State for the Home Department, both on her own behalf and in a representative capacity for the following branches of government:
 - i. the Cabinet Office;
 - ii. the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
 - iii. the Department of Health and Social Care (which included Public Health England, Porton Down as an executive agency);
 - iv. the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office;
 - v. the Ministry of Defence (which includes the Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory); and
 - vi. the security and intelligence agencies, namely: the Secret Intelligence Service, the Security Service and the Government Communications Headquarters;
- g. the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust; and
- h. Wiltshire Council.

⁶⁸⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Directions following the first Pre-Inquest Review, 30 March 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Directions-following-the-First-Pre-Inquest-Review.pdf>); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: First Ruling on Scope and Case Management, 8 April 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-04-08-First-Ruling-on-Scope-and-Case-Management.pdf>)

⁶⁸⁸ Coroners and Justice Act 2009 section 47(2) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/section/47>)

A1.9 The Senior Coroner had previously designated Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov as Interested Persons. The Solicitor to the Inquest sent them written notice in January and February 2021 informing them of the progress of the Inquest but received no reply.⁶⁸⁹ In those circumstances, Baroness Hallett withdrew their designation but emphasised that they might at any time apply for Interested Person status should they wish to cooperate with, and participate in, the Inquest. At no time did they do so.

Disclosure and conversion to an inquiry

A1.10 At the first pre-Inquest review, it was indicated that, in light of the complexities and sensitivities of the case, disclosure from Her Majesty's Government (HMG) could take a minimum of two years to complete.⁶⁹⁰ Accepting a proposal by HMG, Baroness Hallett directed that HMG share some high-level assessments that were written in 2018 (a set of overarching reports) with the Inquest Legal Team for review.⁶⁹¹

A1.11 Baroness Hallett acknowledged that she may have to invite the Secretary of State for the Home Department (the Home Secretary) to convert the Inquest into a public inquiry to satisfy the obligation in section 5(1) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009,⁶⁹² fully and fairly to ascertain and determine how Dawn Sturgess came by her death. The material disclosed would inevitably be of a highly sensitive nature, and the Secretary of State would be likely to claim public interest immunity, which, if upheld, would result in the material being excluded from consideration. A public inquiry has the power to conduct closed hearings to consider sensitive material, whereas an inquest has no equivalent power. Baroness Hallett reserved her decision as to whether she must invite the establishment of an inquiry until she and her team had reviewed the overarching reports.⁶⁹³

A1.12 On 29 July 2021, Baroness Hallett wrote to the then Home Secretary (Priti Patel) informing her that the overarching reports had strengthened her provisional view that it was necessary to establish a public inquiry. She asked the Home Secretary to indicate, in advance of the next pre-Inquest review, her likely position should she ask her to

⁶⁸⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Pre-Inquest Review on 30 March 2021 13/24-14/5 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Pre-Inquest-Review-Transcript.pdf>)

⁶⁹⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Pre-Inquest Review on 30 March 2021 63/2-7, 70/1-3 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Pre-Inquest-Review-Transcript.pdf>)

⁶⁹¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Directions following the first Pre-Inquest Review, 30 March 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-03-30-Directions-following-the-First-Pre-Inquest-Review.pdf>)

⁶⁹² Coroners and Justice Act 2009 section 5(1) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/section/5>)

⁶⁹³ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, First Ruling on Scope and Case Management, 8 April 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-04-08-First-Ruling-on-Scope-and-Case-Management.pdf>)

establish an inquiry.⁶⁹⁴ On 16 August, the Home Secretary responded, suggesting it would be inappropriate for her to consider whether to establish a public inquiry ahead of any request to do so. She gave no provisional indication of her view.⁶⁹⁵

A1.13 A second pre-Inquest review was held on 22 September 2021.⁶⁹⁶ The agenda included the issue of inquest or public inquiry, disclosure and scope. Following the CPS authorising charges against Sergey Fedotov (alias for Denis Sergeev) on 21 September, the provisional scope was amended to include his involvement in the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal.⁶⁹⁷

A1.14 At that pre-Inquest review on 22 September 2021, Baroness Hallett said: “*I have ... firmly concluded that I cannot conduct a full, fair and effective investigation into the death of Dawn Sturgess if these proceedings continue as an inquest.*”⁶⁹⁸ She requested the Home Secretary urgently to convert the Inquest into an inquiry.⁶⁹⁹ And she confirmed her direction in a letter, written the same day.⁷⁰⁰

A1.15 On 16 November, the Home Secretary responded, confirming her decision to establish an inquiry under the provisions of the Inquiries Act 2005 and inviting Baroness Hallett to be the Chair.⁷⁰¹ Baroness Hallett accepted the invitation on 17 November.⁷⁰² On 18 November, the Home Secretary publicly announced the government’s decision to establish a public inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from Baroness Hallett to the Home Secretary, 29 July 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-07-29-Letter-from-The-Rt-Hon-Baroness-Heather-Hallett-DBE-to-the-Secretary-of-State-for-the-Home-Department.pdf>)

⁶⁹⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from the Home Secretary to Baroness Hallett, 16 August 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-08-16-Letter-from-The-Rt-Hon-Priti-Patel-MP-to-The-Rt-Hon-Baroness-Heather-Hallett-DBE.pdf>)

⁶⁹⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Pre-Inquest Review on 22 September 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-09-22-Pre-Inquest-Review-Transcript.pdf>)

⁶⁹⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Provisional Scope of the Inquest, 4 November 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-11-04-Provisional-Scope-of-the-Inquest.pdf>)

⁶⁹⁸ [Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess: Pre-Inquest Review 22 September 2021 28/18-21](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inquest-into-the-death-of-dawn-sturgess-pre-inquest-review-22-september-2021)

⁶⁹⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, Directions following the second Pre-Inquest Review, 22 September 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-09-22-Directions-following-the-Second-Pre-Inquest-Review.pdf>)

⁷⁰⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from Baroness Hallett to the Home Secretary, 22 September 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-09-22-Letter-from-The-Rt-Hon-Baroness-Heather-Hallett-DBE-to-the-Secretary-of-State-for-the-Home-Department.pdf>)

⁷⁰¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from the Home Secretary to Baroness Hallett, 16 November 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-11-16-Letter-from-The-Rt-Hon-Priti-Patel-MP-to-The-Rt-Hon-Baroness-Heather-Hallett-DBE.pdf>)

⁷⁰² The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from Baroness Hallett to the Home Secretary, 17 November 2021 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021-11-17-Letter-from-The-Rt-Hon-Baroness-Heather-Hallett-DBE-to-the-Secretary-of-State-for-the-Home-Department.pdf>)

⁷⁰³ Home Office and The Rt Hon Priti Patel, ‘Public inquiry into death of Dawn Sturgess’, 18 November 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-inquiry-into-death-of-dawn-sturgess>)

The Inquiry proceedings

A1.16 In December 2021, the then Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) requested Baroness Hallett chair the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. The Rt Hon Lord Hughes of Ombersley was asked by the Home Secretary to chair the Inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess, and on 9 March 2022 she wrote in accordance with section 4 of the Inquiries Act 2005 confirming his appointment.⁷⁰⁴

A1.17 The Inquiry was formally established on 17 March 2022. Its Terms of Reference can be found at Appendix 3 below.

A1.18 Open preliminary hearings were held on 25 March 2022,⁷⁰⁵ 15 July 2022,⁷⁰⁶ 11 November 2022,⁷⁰⁷ 24 March 2023,⁷⁰⁸ 6 September 2023,⁷⁰⁹ 2 February 2024,⁷¹⁰ and 21 June 2024.⁷¹¹ Closed preliminary hearings were also held to prepare for closed substantive hearings.

Core Participants

A1.19 Those who had been identified as Interested Persons in the Inquest were designated by Lord Hughes as Core Participants in the Inquiry pursuant to rule 5(1) of the Inquiry Rules 2006,⁷¹² with the addition of Sergei Skripal and Yulia Skripal (who had applied for such status), as well as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Government Office for Science as further branches of government represented by the Secretary of State for the Home Department.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from the Home Secretary to Lord Hughes, including Terms of Reference, 9 March 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Letter-from-the-Home-Secretary-to-Lord-Hughes-dated-9-March-2022-including-the-Terms-of-Reference-of-the-Inquiry.pdf>)

⁷⁰⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 25 March 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/DS250322-Transcript-of-Preliminary-Hearing-on-25-March-2022.pdf>)

⁷⁰⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 15 July 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Transcript-of-Preliminary-Hearing-on-15-July-2022.pdf>)

⁷⁰⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 11 November 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/DS111122.pdf>)

⁷⁰⁸ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 24 March 2023 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Transcript-of-Preliminary-Hearing-on-24-March-2023.pdf>)

⁷⁰⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 6 September 2023 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/DS-060923.pdf>)

⁷¹⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 2 February 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/ds020224.pdf>)

⁷¹¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/ds210624-inpublic-amd1.pdf>)

⁷¹² The Inquiry Rules 2006, rule 5(1) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1838/article/5/made>)

⁷¹³ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Order following the Preliminary Hearing on 25 March 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-03-25-Order-following-Preliminary-Hearing-on-25-March-2022.pdf>)

A1.20 The three Russian men named in the provisional scope of the Inquest as having possible involvement in the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, and who were subject to charges by the CPS – Alexander Petrov, Ruslan Boshirov and Sergey Fedotov – did not apply for Core Participant status, although they remained entitled to apply for such at any time during the course of the Inquiry.

Funding

A1.21 The Home Secretary wrote to Lord Hughes on 9 March 2022, enclosing a Notice of Determination under section 40(4) of the Inquiries Act 2005, which set qualifications and conditions in respect of the Chair's power to make a section 40 award for funding for legal representation.⁷¹⁴

A1.22 In written submissions dated 18 March 2022, the family of Dawn Sturgess applied for funding for legal costs under section 40.⁷¹⁵ The application included funding for separate leading counsel to represent Charlie Rowley. The Inquiry published a costs protocol dated 22 April 2022.⁷¹⁶ Lord Hughes considered the family's funding application in accordance with the procedure set out in the costs protocol and granted it. He also, exceptionally, allowed a limited award to cover expenditure incurred in the period between the set-up date of the Inquiry and the date of the award.

A1.23 Lord Hughes also received and allowed applications from a number of other witnesses for expenses and legal costs.

Closed evidence and the impact on disclosure

A1.24 As explained at paragraphs A1.10 to A1.15 above, the sole reason for the Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess being converted to a public inquiry was so that closed evidence could be considered, in closed hearings from which most Core Participants and the press would be excluded. It would not have been possible to consider such material or hold such hearings at all during an inquest.

A1.25 HMG produced proposed open and closed versions of documents, which helped with starting to identify which issues could be dealt with in open hearings and which issues would need to be dealt with in closed evidence. Operation Verbasco⁷¹⁷ provided the Inquiry Legal Team with a draft report, which served as a statement or narrative of events, together with the underlying material. However, the disclosure process initially moved very slowly as a result of the special sensitivities of the case, which presented significant challenges.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from the Home Secretary to Lord Hughes including Notice of Determination, 9 March 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Letter-from-the-Home-Secretary-to-Lord-Hughes-dated-9-March-2022-including-a-Notice-of-Determination.pdf>)

⁷¹⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Family Submissions for Preliminary Hearing on 25 March 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-03-18-Family-Submissions-for-Preliminary-Hearing-on-25-March-2022.pdf>)

⁷¹⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Costs Protocol for Legal Representation at Public Expense (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-04-22-Costs-Protocol-for-Legal-Representation-at-Public-Expense.pdf>)

⁷¹⁷ See Appendix 2 paragraph A2.7 below.

⁷¹⁸ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 15 July 2022, page 5 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Transcript-of-Preliminary-Hearing-on-15-July-2022.pdf>)

A1.26 At a substantial open preliminary hearing on 15 July 2022 and a subsequent closed preliminary hearing, disclosure procedure was extensively reviewed.⁷¹⁹ Two principal issues confronted were: (i) whether it was necessary for HMG to conduct a preliminary security review of all documents before they could be considered by the Inquiry Legal Team and the Chair; and (ii) whether it was necessary for a Restriction Order to be made in relation to the names of all government staff not already publicly connected to the Salisbury or Amesbury events.

A1.27 On 19 August 2022, Lord Hughes issued, by consent, directions requiring the provision of police documents to the Inquiry Legal Team without any further preliminary security review by HMG.⁷²⁰

A1.28 Both HMG and Operation Verbasco had made Restriction Order applications (pursuant to section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005) for broad categories of names of individuals to be removed from the open versions of documents. They were not applications for witness anonymity, since no decisions had been made as to which witnesses would be called to give evidence. The open parts of the written applications and supporting documents were published on the Inquiry website.⁷²¹

A1.29 Also on 19 August 2022 and after the open and closed preliminary hearings, Lord Hughes gave a Ruling on the names Restriction Order applications.⁷²² He held that the test for making a Restriction Order was necessity, rather than desirability or convenience, and that determining necessity involved balancing the risk of harm to national security and/or to individuals, against the public interest in transparency and in a public inquiry being conducted as openly as possible. He was satisfied that there were marked, real twin risks, either of targeting of individuals and/or of the use of names to disrupt public processes in the UK. Whilst a Restriction Order was likely to be necessary in relation to many of the individuals covered by the applications, that did not apply to all government staff. Moreover, there would be some individuals (considered at paragraph 11 of the Ruling) who were already sufficiently publicly identified or sufficiently resilient to the risks inherent in their posts for a Restriction Order to serve little purpose. Lord Hughes declined to make a general Restriction Order at that stage. He indicated that if one or more descriptors could be devised which identified those who attracted one or other of the twin risks, an order could be made. Otherwise, the question of redactions of names would fall to be addressed (alongside questions of other redactions) at the point of preparing relevant documents for onward disclosure to Core Participants. Accordingly, HMG and Operation Verbasco were required to include in their future Restriction Order applications over documents any requests for specific names to be redacted.

⁷¹⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 15 July 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Transcript-of-Preliminary-Hearing-on-15-July-2022.pdf>)

⁷²⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Disclosure Directions, 19 August 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-08-19-Disclosure-Directions.pdf>)

⁷²¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Documents (<https://www.dawnsturgess.independent-inquiry.uk/documents/>)

⁷²² The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Restriction Order Ruling, 19 August 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-08-19-Restriction-Order-Ruling.pdf>)

A1.30 In August 2022, HMG served on the Inquiry a Restriction Notice signed by the Home Secretary dated 27 July 2022.⁷²³ The Restriction Notice does not identify the material it covers. After a query raised by those representing the family, it was established that the Restriction Notice did not prevent the Inquiry Chair from taking into account the material concerned, and he did so. The Restriction Notice and correspondence relating to it were published on the Inquiry website.⁷²⁴ HMG served two further Restriction Notices during the course of the Inquiry (dated 30 May 2024 and 20 March 2025).⁷²⁵ All three Restriction Notices relate to very small volumes of material. All were considered by Lord Hughes in closed conditions. In relation to all three, he was entirely satisfied that if the material had not been the subject of Restriction Notices issued by the Secretary of State, then he would have had to make Restriction Orders about it himself.

A1.31 By the third preliminary hearing in November 2022, Operation Verbasco had provided thousands of documents to the Inquiry Legal Team for relevance review. However, the relevant documents could not be disclosed to Core Participants, pending Restriction Order applications.⁷²⁶ Lord Hughes directed HMG and Operation Verbasco each to review the documents which the Inquiry Legal Team had identified as relevant within ‘batch 1’ of the Operation Verbasco disclosure, as well as the documents appended to the police report, and to provide: (a) a draft schedule of sensitivities; and (b) a list of documents in respect of which no Restriction Order application would be made. Wiltshire Police was directed to provide a draft schedule of sensitivities and to identify any documents in respect of which no Restriction Order application would be made in relation to its own documents which the Inquiry Legal Team had identified as relevant.⁷²⁷

A1.32 Following the fourth preliminary hearing in March 2023, Lord Hughes issued directions dated 3 April 2023 that HMG and Operation Verbasco complete the provision to the Inquiry Legal Team of final redacted documents for onward disclosure to Core Participants by 19 April 2024.⁷²⁸ The 3 April 2023 directions required HMG and Operation Verbasco to make first-round Restriction Order applications over bundles of sample

⁷²³ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Restriction Notice, 27 July 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-07-27-SSHD-Restriction-Notice.pdf>)

⁷²⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Documents (<https://www.dawnsturgess.independent-inquiry.uk/documents/>)

⁷²⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Restriction Notice, 30 May 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/30-05-2024-SSHD-Restriction-Notice.pdf>); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Restriction Notice, 20 March 2025 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/20-03-2025-SSHD-Restriction-Notice.pdf>)

⁷²⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Disclosure Directions, 19 August 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-08-19-Disclosure-Directions.pdf>)

⁷²⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Directions following Preliminary Hearing on 11 November 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-11-11-Directions-following-Preliminary-Hearing-on-11-November-2022.pdf>)

⁷²⁸ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Directions, 3 April 2023 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Directions-3-April-2023.pdf>)

documents in accordance with the Inquiry's Restriction Order application protocol.⁷²⁹ They set out a staged process with specific deadlines for the selection of sample documents to be agreed and for applications to be filed.⁷³⁰

A1.33 By the fifth preliminary hearing in September 2023, HMG, Operation Verbasco and others had substantially completed the provision of documents to the Inquiry Legal Team for relevance review, and the Inquiry Legal Team had completed its review of those documents. The hearing was principally to consider Restriction Order applications.⁷³¹ The open issues were considered at the open preliminary hearing, but the task of considering whether specific redactions should or should not be made had to be undertaken at the closed preliminary hearing, which was held after the open hearing.

A1.34 On 3 November 2023, Lord Hughes issued a Restriction Order Ruling over the sample documents.⁷³² He noted that determining the necessity of a Restriction Order in each instance involved balancing the risk of harm against the public interest in transparency and open justice. In assessing the strength of the public interest in transparency and open justice, he had regard to: (a) public confidence in the outcome, both nationally and internationally; (b) enabling all parties (and here especially the family of the deceased, Dawn Sturgess) to participate effectively; (c) encouraging frankness and accuracy in witnesses; (d) the possibility that reliable new information might surface; and (e) the reduction of uninformed speculation.

A1.35 Lord Hughes was satisfied that the categories of harm identified in the Restriction Order applications were capable of justifying a Restriction Order, but the balancing exercise had to be conducted in relation to each proposed restriction. This involved assessing the potential relevance of the material to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference (where the relevance was high, the public interest in open justice was high; where relevance was low, public interest in open justice was lower). In assessing potential harm, he had regard to the extent to which the material was already in the public domain (where the information was already known, the scope for harm was reduced).

A1.36 In relation to the principle that the state will neither confirm nor deny whether an individual was or is an agent of the intelligence agencies (NCND), Lord Hughes was satisfied that use of it was justified in this Inquiry.

A1.37 Lord Hughes' decisions in relation to each proposed restriction are recorded on schedules, which remain closed. The purpose of the Ruling over the sample documents was to assist in determining subsequent applications over the remaining documents. However, each proposed redaction to each of the remaining documents was still considered on a line-by-line, document-by-document basis and determined by him. His decisions in relation to Restriction Orders remained subject to review throughout

⁷²⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Protocol on Applications for Restriction Orders (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-04-14-Protocol-on-Applications-for-Restriction-Orders.pdf>)

⁷³⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Directions, 3 April 2023 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Directions-3-April-2023.pdf>)

⁷³¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Directions, 3 April 2023 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Directions-3-April-2023.pdf>)

⁷³² The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Restriction Order Ruling, 3 November 2023 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2023-11-03-Restriction-Order-Ruling.pdf>)

the Inquiry process. It was occasionally necessary to revisit Restriction Orders which had been made because the apparent significance of a document changed in light of further evidence. One example is the revisiting of a Restriction Order made in relation to the record of a conversation between a Counter Terrorism Policing officer and Sergei Skripal's son, Alexander (Sasha) Skripal.⁷³³

A1.38 On 12 February 2024, Lord Hughes issued a supplementary Ruling on the redaction of HMG names,⁷³⁴ which supplemented the 19 August 2022 Restriction Order Ruling.⁷³⁵

A1.39 Following the indication given in the Ruling of 19 August 2022 as to possible descriptors of government staff susceptible to the twin risks of harm (set out in paragraph A1.29 above), on 8 September 2022, HMG had proposed the following descriptor:

*"[A]ll HMG staff and advisers to HMG who have held at any time and/or who currently hold security clearance that allowed or allows them access to material classified as Secret or above, unless the individuals in question have already been officially publicly linked with the events of 2018. This would cover those with DV and SC Clearance as they have routine and unsupervised access to material with at least a Secret classification. It would also cover those with a minimum of BPSS Clearance who had limited and supervised access to relevant Secret material in accordance with Government Security Classifications guidance."*⁷³⁶

A1.40 In the February 2024 Ruling, Lord Hughes indicated that he was not satisfied with HMG's proposed descriptor/test. However, (a) the hearing start date had been set and disclosure to Core Participants needed to be completed, and (b) it was clear the large majority of names on documents were of marginal or no significance. He therefore agreed to make a Restriction Order in relation to all names in respect of which HMG's application was made, subject to three qualifications: (i) where an individual was likely to be a witness, any anonymity application would need to be considered; (ii) any Core Participant could apply to seek disclosure of the identity of the person whose name had been redacted; and (iii) if the individual fell within the category mentioned in paragraph 11 of the August 2022 Ruling so that a Restriction Order would serve no useful purpose, then he would refuse the redaction.

Special measures and witness anonymity

A1.41 There were some applications for anonymity or special measures. Those were considered separately, witness by witness, on the basis of evidence of their particular circumstances.

⁷³³ [INQ006216](#): this is an open gist specifically requested by Lord Hughes.

⁷³⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Supplementary Ruling on the Redaction of HMG Names, 12 February 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-02-12-Supplementary-Ruling-on-Redaction-of-HMG-Names.pdf>)

⁷³⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Restriction Order Ruling, 19 August 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-08-19-Restriction-Order-Ruling.pdf>)

⁷³⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from the Government Legal Department to the Solicitor to the Inquiry, 8 September 2022 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2022-09-08-Letter-from-GLD-to-STI-regarding-Restriction-Order.pdf>)

A1.42 HMG applied for special measures and witness anonymity for MK26 and FT49. In a Ruling dated 10 July 2024, Lord Hughes agreed that both witnesses should: (a) have anonymity (i.e. their name and identifying details must not be made public and they would be referred to by their ciphers); (b) be screened from everyone except the Chair, Inquiry Legal Team, current Core Participants and their legal representatives, and any accredited members of UK media who the Chair permitted to attend the hearing in person (in practice, this meant the witness was in the hearing room and the public/other press were in the annex room at the hearing venue); and (c) be able to enter/exit the hearing venue by a discreet route. In relation to MK26, Lord Hughes additionally agreed that their face also should not be accessible to the public (which meant there would be a transcript, but no video, of their evidence).⁷³⁷

A1.43 Operation Verbasco applied for special measures for VN513 (subsequently identified as Keith Asman), VN136 and Professor Guy Ruddy (the last for reasons unconnected to his evidence in this matter). There were no anonymity applications for Keith Asman or Professor Ruddy, but Lord Hughes agreed they should be screened and able to enter/exit by a discreet route. There was an anonymity application in respect of VN136, and Lord Hughes agreed that they should have anonymity, be screened and be able to enter/exit the hearing venue by a discreet route.⁷³⁸ In the end, however, VN136 was not required to give oral evidence.

A1.44 Wiltshire Police applied for special measures and witness anonymity for VN005. Lord Hughes did not determine that application in the July 2024 Ruling because he wanted to allow Wiltshire Police an opportunity to make closed submissions, but he gave his provisional view that the witness engaged similar considerations to those relating to VN136.⁷³⁹ Lord Hughes granted the application for anonymity and special measures for VN005, and the application for special measures for Keith Asman, in an Order dated 7 November 2024.⁷⁴⁰ He granted a further application for special measures and witness anonymity for the witness V13A in a Ruling also dated 7 November 2024.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Ruling following the Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-07-10-Ruling-Following-Preliminary-Hearing-21-June-2024.pdf>)

⁷³⁸ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Ruling following the Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-07-10-Ruling-Following-Preliminary-Hearing-21-June-2024.pdf>)

⁷³⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Ruling following the Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-07-10-Ruling-Following-Preliminary-Hearing-21-June-2024.pdf>)

⁷⁴⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Order dated 7 November 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-11-07-Order-re.-Keith-Asman-and-VN005.pdf>)

⁷⁴¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: V13A Ruling dated 7 November 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-11-07-V13A-Ruling.pdf>)

Security and broadcasting for the substantive hearings

A1.45 At the sixth preliminary hearing, on 2 February 2024, Lord Hughes confirmed that the open substantive hearings would commence at Salisbury Guildhall on 14 October 2024, and the London hearings would commence on 28 October 2024 at the International Dispute Resolution Centre.⁷⁴²

A1.46 Following the hearing, Lord Hughes issued directions dated 5 February 2024 that the open substantive hearings would be broadcast subject to a delay in order to preserve the possibility of breaking the feed in the event of inadvertent disclosure of closed material. The length of the delay would be determined later. A live link without a delay would be made available to Core Participants, subject to any application that broadcasting/live links should not be provided in relation to any particular witness.⁷⁴³

A1.47 Following on from these directions, Lord Hughes considered submissions made at the seventh and final preliminary hearing on 21 June 2024 and determined that a ten-minute delay to the live broadcast feed was appropriate and necessary.⁷⁴⁴

A1.48 HMG initially made a generic application for ‘level 1’ and ‘level 2’ hearing arrangements, which would involve different security and broadcast arrangements. Decisions as to which witnesses’ evidence would be heard under general ‘level 1’ arrangements, and which would be heard under the more restrictive ‘level 2’ arrangements, would need to be made at a later stage.⁷⁴⁵

A1.49 Lord Hughes approved the broad categorisation. He ruled that, under level 1 arrangements, the press and public would be prohibited from using electronic devices in the hearing room. Under level 2 arrangements: (a) no electronic devices would be permitted in the hearing room except those required for the official recording, transcription and document management; (b) the public and press (other than a small number of accredited UK media representatives chosen by the Inquiry) would be excluded from the hearing room; and (c) there would be no streaming, except to the annex room at the hearing venue subject to a delay (and a second room at the hearing venue without a delay for HMG and police experts).⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 2 February 2024 64/20-24 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/ds020224.pdf>)

⁷⁴³ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Directions, 5 February 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-02-05-Directions.pdf>)

⁷⁴⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Ruling following the Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-07-10-Ruling-Following-Preliminary-Hearing-21-June-2024.pdf>)

⁷⁴⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: HMG Application for a Restriction Order, 11 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/08.-Revised-HMG-Application-for-a-Restriction-Order-in-relation-to-special-measures-11-June-2024-6.pdf>)

⁷⁴⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess’ death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Ruling following the Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-07-10-Ruling-Following-Preliminary-Hearing-21-June-2024.pdf>)

A1.50 On 20 September 2024, Lord Hughes made a final open Ruling addressing these arrangements.⁷⁴⁷

The substantive hearings

A1.51 The Inquiry's substantive hearings began in Salisbury on 14 October 2024, where evidence was heard over the course of a week, before the Inquiry moved to London. Lord Hughes heard open evidence over 22 days. Forty witnesses gave oral evidence. Commander Dominic Murphy, Commander of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO15), and Deputy Chief Constable Paul Mills of Wiltshire Police attended on more than one occasion to do so, with Commander Murphy giving evidence in eight separate tranches. In total, 155 written witness statements were adduced into evidence. Some of these were referred to and discussed by witnesses; others were simply published on the Inquiry website and then considered by the Chair for the purposes of this report. Thousands of pages of documentary evidence were adduced into evidence and published on the Inquiry website. The Inquiry hearings ran to time, with the open hearings concluding with closing statements on 2 December 2024.

A1.52 There then followed closed hearings at which Lord Hughes considered material subject to Restriction Orders and Restriction Notices, and at which he heard oral evidence from a number of witnesses as well as submissions on the closed evidence. On 17 February 2025, the Inquiry notified Core Participants and published an update on its website confirming that the closed hearings had concluded.

Warning letters

A1.53 Rule 13 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 provides:

- “(1) *The chairman may send a warning letter to any person—*
- (a) he considers may be, or who has been, subject to criticism in the inquiry proceedings; or*
 - (b) about whom criticism may be inferred from evidence that has been given during the inquiry proceedings; or*
 - (c) who may be subject to criticism in the report, or any interim report.*
- (2) The recipient of a warning letter may disclose it to his recognised legal representative.*
- (3) The inquiry panel must not include any explicit or significant criticism of a person in the report, or in any interim report, unless—*
- (a) the chairman has sent that person a warning letter; and*
 - (b) the person has been given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the warning letter.”⁷⁴⁸*

⁷⁴⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Level 1/Level 2 Ruling, 20 September 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-09-20-DSI-OPEN-Level-1-Level-2-Ruling-FINAL.pdf>)

⁷⁴⁸ The Inquiry Rules 2006, rule 13 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2006/1838/article/13/made>)

A1.54 By rule 14, the contents of a warning letter are to be treated as subject to the obligations of confidence set out in rule 14(1).⁷⁴⁹ The Inquiry Chair's obligation of confidence under this rule ends when the Inquiry report is signed, and all other obligations of confidence arising under this rule end when the Inquiry report is published.

A1.55 The fact that a possible criticism has been included in a warning letter does not necessarily mean that the criticism will be adopted in the Inquiry proceedings or in any report. The procedural provision is intended to afford the individual a fair opportunity to prepare for giving evidence or to draw attention to reasons why the criticism should not be made. Accordingly, Lord Hughes did not propose to publish the content of warning letters.

A1.56 However, in accordance with rule 13, warning letters were sent as appropriate to people who were covered by the provisions of rule 13 prior to the finalisation of this report.

⁷⁴⁹ The Inquiry Rules 2006, rule 14 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1838/article/14/made>)

Appendix 2: The police investigations

A2.1 Prior to Dawn Sturgess' death and the opening of the Inquest in July 2018 (see paragraphs A1.1 and A1.3 above), three criminal investigations had been established. Operation Wedana was the Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE) investigation into the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury in March 2018. Operation Read was the Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) investigation into the poisoning of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley in June 2018. Operation Caterva was a parallel investigation, initially covert, which sought to identify those responsible for the poisonings.

A2.2 Parallel to the criminal investigations, multi-agency consequence management operations, known as Operations Fairline (in response to the March poisonings) and Fortis (in response to the June poisonings) took place to identify members of the public who may have been contaminated, and to protect public health.

A2.3 On 19 July 2018, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) authorised charges against Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov. The charges were for conspiracy to murder Sergei Skripal, three counts of attempted murder (of Sergei Skripal, Yulia Skripal and Detective Sergeant (DS) Nick Bailey), two counts of grievous bodily harm with intent (against Yulia Skripal and DS Bailey) and one count of possession and use of a chemical weapon, all arising out of the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury in March 2018.

A2.4 On 20 July 2018, warrants for the arrest of Petrov and Boshirov were issued by Westminster Magistrates' Court. The charges were announced publicly on 5 September 2018.

A2.5 On 20 April 2021, the CPS authorised charges against a third individual, Sergey Fedotov, for the same offences as Petrov and Boshirov. An arrest warrant was issued by Westminster Magistrates' Court on 5 July 2021, and these further charges were made public on 21 September 2021. Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov remain wanted by CTP and have been placed on international wanted lists.

A2.6 As there are outstanding charges and warrants for the arrests of Petrov, Boshirov and Fedotov concerning their involvement in the attack on Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, the criminal investigation remains ongoing. A further active object of the ongoing investigation is the consideration of charges in relation to the death of Dawn Sturgess and poisoning of Charlie Rowley.

A2.7 CTPSE (for which the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police is responsible) and the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command, SO15 (for which the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is responsible), set up a joint operation, named Operation Verbasco, in response to the Inquest and then Inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess. Wiltshire Police was responsible for the local policing response to both the Salisbury and Amesbury events, since both had occurred in its area.

Appendix 3: Terms of Reference

1. Subject to paragraph 2 below, the Chair is to conduct an investigation into the death of Dawn Sturgess in order to:
 - a. ascertain, in accordance with section 5(1) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 who the deceased was; how; when and where she came by her death; and the particulars (if any) required by the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 to be registered concerning the death;
 - b. identify, so far as consistent with section 2 of the Inquiries Act 2005, where responsibility for the death lies; and
 - c. make such recommendations as may seem appropriate.
2. That investigation is to take into account the investigations which have already been conducted by the Coroner (Baroness Hallett).⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁵⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Terms of Reference (<https://www.dawnsturgess.independent-inquiry.uk/documents/terms-of-reference/>); The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Letter from the Home Secretary to Lord Hughes, 9 March 2022, page 2 ([Letter-from-the-Home-Secretary-to-Lord-Hughes-dated-9-March-2022-including-the-Terms-of-Reference-of-the-Inquiry.pdf](#))

Appendix 4: List of issues

The Inquiry published an (updated) provisional list of issues on 3 May 2024,⁷⁵¹ as a guide to the topics that the Inquiry proposed to explore in its evidential hearings in order to meet its Terms of Reference.⁷⁵² The list of issues was kept under review throughout the Inquiry, and the final list of issues for the Dawn Sturgess Inquiry is as follows:

A. The death of Dawn Sturgess

1. Dawn Sturgess – pen portrait evidence
2. Events from June 2018 to 8 July 2018:
 - a. Movements of Dawn Sturgess on Friday 29 and Saturday 30 June 2018
 - b. Circumstances of poisoning
 - c. Emergency response
 - d. Hospital treatment
3. Medical cause of death
4. Sufficiency of medical treatment provided to Dawn Sturgess:
 - a. Points of comparison between treatment received by Dawn Sturgess and that received by Sergei Skripal, Yulia Skripal and Charlie Rowley
 - b. Was treatment of Dawn Sturgess appropriately/sufficiently informed by experience of treating Sergei and Yulia Skripal?

B. The poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal

5. Overview of police investigations:
 - a. Wiltshire Police/Counter Terrorism Policing response
 - b. Liaison with other agencies
 - c. Key sources of evidence (e.g. scientific testing and analysis, mobile phone records, CCTV)
 - d. Key stages in investigation
 - e. Charges
6. Background evidence relating to Sergei Skripal and his family
7. The events – March 2018:
 - a. Movements of Sergei and Yulia Skripal on Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 March 2018
 - b. Circumstances of poisoning

⁷⁵¹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: List of Issues (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/Provisional-List-of-Issues.pdf>)

⁷⁵² See Appendix 3 to this report.

- c. Emergency response
- d. Hospital treatment
- 8. Actions of Alexander Petrov, Ruslan Boshirov and Sergey Fedotov:
 - a. Background evidence – true identities, service with GRU,⁷⁵³ travel, etc
 - b. Movements from Friday 2 to Sunday 4 March 2018
 - c. Accounts given by Petrov and Boshirov
- 9. Novichok:
 - a. Background evidence – history/development of Novichok
 - b. Potential source of the Novichok used in attack on Skripals
 - c. Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) analysis re Novichok used in attack on Skripals
- 10. Russian state responsibility:
 - a. Official public statements involving allegations of Russian culpability
 - b. Statements made by and on behalf of the Russian government
 - c. Evidence of GRU involvement
 - d. Current HMG (His Majesty's Government) assessments regarding culpability
- 11. Whether the UK authorities took appropriate precautions in early 2018 to protect Sergei Skripal from being attacked

C. Public safety following the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal

- 12. Steps taken by UK authorities to ensure public safety following the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, focusing on the search for any remaining poison – to include relevant aspects of police investigation/public health response:
 - a. Overview of public health response – the 'clean-up'
 - b. Search for any remaining poison
 - c. Public health warnings

D. Connection between the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal and the death of Dawn Sturgess

- 13. The provenance of the 'perfume bottle':
 - a. Where/when/how it was found by Charlie Rowley
- 14. Comparison of the Novichok in the 'perfume bottle' with that used to poison Sergei and Yulia Skripal

⁷⁵³ The GRU is the Russian military intelligence agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering.

Appendix 5: Chronology

This appendix cross-references to those events where a date or time is identified in the report. It is designed to aid access to the report, but it is not a summary of it, nor is it exhaustive of the material covered by it. The report must be read as a single document.

Date	Evidence	Source
1965–1992	Dr Vil Mirzayanov, an analytical chemist, worked at the Moscow branch of GosNIIOKhT (the State Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology).	Part 2, paragraph 2.5
1970s	GosNIIOKhT conducted a secret research programme (FOLIANT) into a new class of nerve agents, 'Novichoks'.	Part 2, paragraph 2.6
18 June 1974	Dawn Sturgess was born.	Part 1, paragraph 1.4
1980	The Soviet Union claimed to have halted chemical weapons production.	Part 2, paragraph 2.6
1991	The Soviet Union collapsed and was dissolved.	Part 2, paragraph 2.5
1992	The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (the Chemical Weapons Convention) was drafted and adopted.	Part 2, paragraph 2.7
13 January 1993	The Chemical Weapons Convention opened for signature.	Part 2, paragraph 2.7
1997	The Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April. Russia acceded to the Convention on 5 November.	Part 2, paragraphs 2.7 and 2.10
2006	Sergei Skripal, a former Russian soldier and intelligence officer who served in the GRU, was tried in a closed court in Russia on charges of espionage. He was convicted of treason and imprisoned.	Part 1, paragraph 1.7
2010	Sergei Skripal was part of a prisoner exchange. He was pardoned by the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, and moved to the UK to live.	Part 1, paragraph 1.7; Part 6, paragraph 6.31
2011	Alexander (Sasha) Skripal was spoken to during a routine interview at London Heathrow Airport. He said he was visiting his father, named Sergei, in Salisbury and that his father was a retired GRU/SVR officer, who now lived in the UK.	Part 6, paragraphs 6.49 and 6.50
September 2011	Sergei Skripal and his wife Liudmilla moved to 47 Christie Miller Road, Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.2
18 October 2011	Passport, number 643258060, was issued to Sergey Fedotov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.35
2 December 2011	Passport, number 643258090, was issued to Ruslan Boshirov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.35
21 December 2011	Passport, number 643258115, was issued to Alexander Petrov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.35
2012	Liudmilla Skripal, Sergei Skripal's wife, died.	Part 3, paragraph 3.3

Date	Evidence	Source
7 September 2013 to April 2016	Sometime between these dates, Anatoliy Vladimirovich Chepiga was awarded the honour of 'Hero of the Russian Federation'.	Part 3, paragraph 3.28
2014	Fedotov made a visa application to the Swedish authorities.	Part 3, paragraph 3.32
January 2014	Petrov made a visa application to the Swedish authorities.	Part 3, paragraph 3.23
	Petrov and Fedotov flew together from Moscow to Prague, where they stayed in the same hotel.	Part 3, paragraph 3.38
7 June 2014	Petrov flew from Moscow to Milan but booked a stay in a hotel in Geneva for a week, until 14 June.	Part 3, paragraph 3.38
1 July 2014	Fedotov flew from Moscow to Milan and booked a stay in a hotel in Geneva for about 17 days, until 16 July.	Part 3, paragraph 3.38
17 July 2014	Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, a scheduled passenger flight, was shot down en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.	Part 5, paragraph 5.18
18 July 2014	Petrov and Boshirov travelled from Moscow to Geneva via Milan, and they changed hotels in Geneva part-way through a stay of about ten days.	Part 3, paragraph 3.38
October 2014	Petrov and Boshirov travelled together from Moscow to Prague and Ostrava, Czech Republic.	Part 3, paragraph 3.38
2015–2017	Fedotov made four UK visa applications.	Part 3, paragraph 3.32
2016	Dawn Sturgess moved to John Baker House, Salisbury.	Part 1, paragraph 1.4
	Petrov made a visa application to the Dutch authorities.	Part 3, paragraph 3.23
2016–2017	Petrov made two UK visa applications.	Part 3, paragraph 3.24
25–31 March 2016	Fedotov stayed at the Castleton Hotel in Sussex Gardens, London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.33
15 June 2016	Passport, number 653453915, was issued to Fedotov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.35
28 July 2016	Passport, number 654341294, was issued to Boshirov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.35
2 August 2016	Passport, number 654341297, was issued to Petrov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.35
September 2016	Boshirov and Petrov successively (but not at the same time) stayed at the same hotel in Frankfurt.	Part 3, paragraph 3.39
November 2016	Petrov stayed at the same hotel in Frankfurt where he (and separately Boshirov) had stayed in September 2016.	Part 3, paragraph 3.39
December 2016	Boshirov and Petrov travelled together by train from Paris to London. Petrov was booked into the Citystay Hotel, Bow, east London. Petrov, together with Boshirov, flew from Paris to Moscow.	Part 3, paragraph 3.39
July 2017	Alexander (Sasha) Skripal, Sergei Skripal's son, died.	Part 3, paragraph 3.3
	The daughter of General Andrey Averyanov, Commander of GRU Unit 29155, married. Open-source images show that Boshirov attended the wedding.	Part 3, paragraph 3.29
September 2017	Petrov and Boshirov flew together from Moscow to Paris, and Petrov had booked a stay at the same hotel in Frankfurt where they had each stayed (separately) in September 2016.	Part 3, paragraph 3.40

Date	Evidence	Source
October 2017	Petrov and Boshirov flew together from Moscow to Paris and then stayed in Geneva.	Part 3, paragraph 3.40
October–November 2017	Fedotov stayed in Geneva.	Part 3, paragraph 3.40
2 March 2018 (Friday)	Alexander Petrov (Aleksandr Mishkin), Ruslan Boshirov (Anatoliy Chepiga) and Sergey Fedotov (Denis Sergeev) flew from Moscow to London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.19; Part 8, paragraph 8.10
	<i>About 11:00</i> Fedotov arrived at London Heathrow Airport.	Part 3, paragraph 3.20
	<i>12:35, 14:40, 16:08</i> Fedotov was in the Paddington area of London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.42
	<i>16:22</i> Petrov and Boshirov arrived at London Gatwick Airport.	Part 3, paragraph 3.20
	<i>About 19:10</i> Petrov and Boshirov's phones were in the east London area.	Part 3, paragraph 3.43
	<i>About 19:30</i> Petrov and Boshirov checked in to the Citystay Hotel, Bow, east London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.43
3 March 2018 (Saturday)	Petrov and Boshirov travelled to Salisbury, where they had the opportunity to conduct reconnaissance of Sergei Skripal's house and the surrounding area.	Part 8, paragraph 8.10
	Yulia Skripal flew from Moscow to London Heathrow Airport.	Part 3, paragraph 3.5
	<i>About 11:40–12:35</i> The phone used by Fedotov was in the Waterloo area of London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.45
	<i>12:50</i> A train left London Waterloo station for Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.44
	<i>About 13:00</i> Ross and Maureen Cassidy, former next-door neighbours and then friends of Sergei Skripal, collected Sergei from near his house on Christie Miller Road, Salisbury, to take him to London Heathrow Airport to meet his daughter, Yulia Skripal.	Part 3, paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6
	<i>13:55</i> The phone used by Fedotov was in the Paddington area of London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.45
	<i>14:20</i> The 12:50 train from Waterloo arrived at Salisbury station.	Part 3, paragraph 3.44
	<i>14:26</i> Petrov and Boshirov were at the arrivals barrier at Salisbury station.	Part 3, paragraph 3.44
	<i>14:50</i> From Devizes Road, Salisbury, Petrov and Boshirov turned left into India Avenue (which gives access to Christie Miller Road).	Part 3, paragraph 3.48
	<i>15:26–15:27</i> Petrov and Boshirov returned to Salisbury station's entrance and then more or less immediately departed again, walking to St Paul's roundabout and then along Wilton Road to a point near the junction with Highbury Avenue (which gives access to Christie Miller Road).	Part 3, paragraphs 3.48 and 3.49
	<i>About 16:00–18:15</i> The phone used by Fedotov was in the Paddington area of London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.51
	<i>16:07</i> Petrov and Boshirov returned to Salisbury station, where they remained until about 16:36.	Part 3, paragraph 3.49

Date	Evidence	Source
	<i>About 16:35</i> Ross and Maureen Cassidy, and Sergei Skripal, met Yulia Skripal off her flight at London Heathrow Airport.	Part 3, paragraph 3.6
	<i>About 18:06</i> Ross and Maureen Cassidy, and Sergei and Yulia Skripal, arrived back at 47 Christie Miller Road, Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.6
	<i>18:10</i> Yulia Skripal's mobile phone connected to the Wi-Fi network at 47 Christie Miller Road.	Part 3, paragraph 3.7
	<i>About 18:25</i> Petrov and Boshirov arrived back at London Waterloo station.	Part 3, paragraph 3.50
	<i>About 18:37</i> The phones used by Petrov and Boshirov were in the Bond Street area of London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.51
	<i>Just before 20:00</i> The phone used by Petrov was in the area of the Citystay Hotel, Bow, east London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.50
	<i>Until about 23:00</i> Sergei and Yulia Skripal were online on their computers at 47 Christie Miller Road.	Part 3, paragraph 3.8
4 March 2018 (Sunday) The poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal	Petrov and Boshirov returned to Salisbury.	Part 8, paragraph 8.10
	<i>11:45</i> Petrov and Boshirov arrived at Salisbury station.	Part 3, paragraph 3.52
	<i>12:00</i> Fedotov was at London Heathrow Airport, where he caught a flight home to Moscow.	Part 3, paragraph 3.58
	<i>12:00</i> Petrov and Boshirov were by the Shell petrol station, near the junction of Wilton Road with Canadian Avenue, Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.52
	<i>12:16</i> Petrov and Boshirov were on Devizes Road, Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.52
	<i>12:31</i> Petrov and Boshirov were in Fisherton Street, Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.53
	<i>13:04</i> Petrov and Boshirov were in the High Street, Salisbury.	Part 3, paragraph 3.53
	<i>13:23</i> Petrov and Boshirov were by the Horse & Groom public house on Wilton Road.	Part 3, paragraph 3.55
	<i>About 13:30</i> Sergei and Yulia Skripal left 47 Christie Miller Road, Salisbury, in Sergei Skripal's BMW car.	Part 3, paragraph 3.12
	<i>13:33</i> Sergei Skripal's BMW car passed the closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera in India Avenue.	Part 3, paragraph 3.12
	<i>13:35</i> Sergei Skripal's BMW car passed the CCTV camera in Devizes Road.	Part 3, paragraph 3.12
	<i>13:40</i> Petrov and Boshirov were captured on the CCTV camera on Devizes Road, heading towards the city centre.	Part 3, paragraph 3.55
	Sergei Skripal's BMW car was parked in the multi-storey car park near to Sainsbury's supermarket in Salisbury city centre.	Part 3, paragraph 3.12

Date	Evidence	Source
	Sergei and Yulia Skripal paused by the river footbridge to feed the ducks. Sergei passed bread for the ducks to a boy stood on the riverbank.	Part 3, paragraph 3.13
	<i>About 13:45</i> Sergei and Yulia Skripal went to The Bishops Mill public house and Zizzi restaurant.	Part 3, paragraph 3.14
	<i>13:48</i> Petrov and Boshirov passed through the barrier at Salisbury station and returned by train to London Waterloo.	Part 3, paragraph 3.57
	<i>About 15:45</i> Sergei and Yulia Skripal sat down on a bench on the walkway outside Superdrug in The Maltings and became seriously unwell.	Part 3, paragraph 3.15
	<i>Just before 17:00</i> The phone used by Boshirov was in the Waterloo area of London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.57
	<i>About 17:00</i> Sergei and Yulia Skripal were taken to hospital in separate ambulances.	Part 3, paragraph 3.18
	<i>By 19:00</i> Petrov and Boshirov were at London Heathrow Airport.	Part 3, paragraph 3.57
	<i>22:30</i> Petrov and Boshirov caught a flight from London Heathrow Airport to Moscow.	Part 3, paragraph 3.57
Evening of 4 March 2018 (Sunday)	Wiltshire Police systems did not contain reference to Sergei Skripal. Detective Superintendent Tim Corner and Inspector Gillian Hughes, of Wiltshire Police, spoke to the on-call duty officer of the South West Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit, who confirmed there was no record of Sergei Skripal on any of their databases, but reported that there was a record of Alexander (Sasha) Skripal having been interviewed at London Heathrow Airport.	Part 6, paragraphs 6.42, 6.46, 6.48 and 6.49
5 March 2018	<i>About 02:00</i> Wiltshire Police decided to enter and conduct a cursory search of 47 Christie Miller Road.	Part 3, paragraph 3.71
	Counter Terrorism Policing took over the investigation.	Part 3, paragraph 3.83
5–6 March 2018	Three officers involved in the search of 47 Christie Miller Road (Detective Sergeant Nicholas (Nick) Bailey, Police Constable Oliver Bell and VN005) suffered symptoms.	Part 3, paragraphs 3.75 to 3.77
6 March 2018	<i>By about 04:00</i> Testing strongly suggested organophosphate or similar poisoning as the cause of Sergei and Yulia Skripal's symptoms.	Part 3, paragraph 3.83
7 March 2018	Professor Dame Sally Davies (Chief Medical Officer) and Mark Rowley (Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) made an announcement that the risk to the public from contamination by Novichok was low.	Part 6, paragraph 6.64
	Public Health England was asked to produce a hypothetical 'reasonable worst-case scenario' in the event that the (then unknown) source of the nerve agent was located.	Part 6, paragraph 6.88
8 March 2018	A 'sedation hold' was conducted on Yulia Skripal.	Part 3, paragraphs 3.87 and 3.88

Date	Evidence	Source
9 March 2018	Following advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), a decision was made to advise those who had visited Zizzi restaurant or The Bishops Mill public house from 13:30 on Sunday 4 March onwards to wash the clothes they wore and to wipe down the objects they handled.	Part 6, paragraphs 6.64 to 6.67
	Public Health England's Strategic Response Group met and considered messages to the public.	Part 6, paragraph 6.82
	SAGE met and considered areas of risk, including as yet undiscovered sites where the substance might have been deliberately placed, and concluded that the risk to public health was low; no public health advice was needed, but this would be kept under review.	Part 6, paragraphs 6.83 and 6.84
11 March 2018	Professor Dame Sally Davies gave public health advice as per the decision of 9 March 2018. The public health advice was repeated in a press conference later that day by Public Health England.	Part 6, paragraph 6.68
	<i>About 22:30</i> Charlie Rowley appeared at a police cordon in the city centre. When stopped, he said that he was checking bins for discarded items he could sell.	Part 4, paragraph 4.82
12 March 2018	At a meeting of Public Health England's Strategic Response Group, it was noted that the message that Salisbury was open as usual needed to be reiterated.	Part 6, paragraph 6.94
	At a meeting of SAGE, it was noted that the 'washing/wiping' advice given was " <i>incredibly precautionary</i> ". There was no recommendation to give advice not to pick up " <i>the unknown</i> ".	Part 6, paragraphs 6.85, 6.86 and 6.94
13 March 2018	The government website (gov.uk) was updated to reassure the public that there had been no further cases of Novichok poisoning since Sunday 4 March 2018.	Part 6, paragraph 6.87
15 March 2018	A Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) officer prepared a 'reasonable worst-case scenario' document and submitted it internally within the DHSC.	Part 6, paragraph 6.88
16 March 2018	At a meeting of SAGE, consideration was given to public health advice, in light of statements made by Dr Mirzayanov during a television interview. SAGE recommended no change to the public health advice given thus far and resolved to confirm its advice to Professor Dame Sally Davies.	Part 6, paragraph 6.91
	Professor Dame Sally Davies wrote a summary of the health advice position for the Cabinet Secretary.	Part 6, paragraph 6.92
19–23 March 2018	Representatives from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) visited Salisbury.	Part 2, paragraph 2.12
April 2018	The Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) reported that it had apprehended GRU officers in the vicinity of the OPCW premises.	Part 5, paragraph 5.20
9 April 2018	Yulia Skripal was discharged from hospital.	Part 3, paragraph 3.69

Date	Evidence	Source
13 April 2018	Sir Mark Sedwill, National Security Adviser, HM Government, wrote a letter to the Secretary-General of NATO.	Part 2, paragraph 2.10; Part 3, paragraph 3.81; Part 6, paragraphs 6.18, 6.22 and 6.39
Early May 2018	Sampling was carried out at the Citystay Hotel, Bow, east London.	Part 3, paragraph 3.104
16 May 2018	Sergei Skripal was discharged from hospital.	Part 3, paragraph 3.69
18 May 2018	Charlie Rowley moved to a flat at 9 Muggleton Road, Amesbury.	Part 1, paragraph 1.4; Part 4, paragraph 4.2
End of June 2018	L55F, a policy adviser in the Government Office for Science, conducted interviews for a review of the response to the Salisbury event.	Part 6, paragraph 6.96
29 June 2018 (Friday)	Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley spent the morning in or near Dawn's room in John Baker House with three friends: Sam Hobson, Callum McCrae and Matthew Derrick.	Part 4, paragraph 4.12
	<i>About 14:25</i> Dawn Sturgess, Charlie Rowley and their three friends made their way to Queen Elizabeth Gardens, stopping at shops along the way to make purchases.	Part 4, paragraphs 4.12 and 4.13
	<i>16:06</i> Dawn Sturgess, Charlie Rowley and their three friends left Queen Elizabeth Gardens and returned to John Baker House.	Part 4, paragraph 4.13
	<i>About 16:50</i> Charlie Rowley caught a bus from Salisbury to Amesbury. He returned to Salisbury on another bus at 18:15.	Part 4, paragraph 4.14
	<i>About 17:00 or 18:00</i> Dawn Sturgess telephoned her mother to make arrangements to see her daughter.	Part 4, paragraph 4.14
	Sam Hobson left John Baker House and caught the 20:38 bus to Amesbury, where he lived.	Part 4, paragraph 4.14
	<i>About 21:45</i> Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley left John Baker House together.	Part 4, paragraph 4.15
	<i>22:06</i> A bus heading to Amesbury left Salisbury with Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley on board.	Part 4, paragraphs 4.10 and 4.15
30 June 2018 (Saturday) The poisoning of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley	Charlie Rowley gave Dawn Sturgess a bottle containing what he believed to be perfume and spilled some of the contents on his hands. Dawn sprayed the contents of the bottle on herself, rubbing it on her wrists. She became unwell.	Part 1, paragraph 1.1; Part 4, paragraphs 4.73 to 4.75; Part 8, paragraphs 8.4 to 8.6
	<i>10:14</i> Charlie Rowley called 999.	Part 4, paragraph 4.17; Part 8, paragraph 8.6
	<i>10:22</i> Charlie Rowley reported to the call handler that Dawn Sturgess was not breathing.	Part 4, paragraph 4.17
	<i>About 10:23</i> The first paramedic arrived at 9 Muggleton Road and found Dawn Sturgess in cardiac arrest. Resuscitation commenced.	Part 4, paragraph 4.18; Part 8, paragraph 8.6

Date	Evidence	Source
	11:19 An Ambulance Service supervisor arrived at 9 Muggleton Road.	Part 4, paragraph 4.18
	About 12:00 Dawn Sturgess was taken to Salisbury District Hospital by ambulance.	Part 4, paragraph 4.30
	Charlie Rowley, Sam Hobson and Ben Milsom (a friend of Charlie's) went to a pharmacy and a church fête in Amesbury.	Part 4, paragraph 4.31
	About 15:30 Charlie Rowley and Sam Hobson returned to 9 Muggleton Road, and Charlie Rowley started to feel unwell.	Part 4, paragraphs 4.31 and 4.32
	18:42 Sam Hobson called an ambulance for Charlie Rowley.	Part 4, paragraph 4.32
	About 18:47 Paramedics Ben Channon and Lee Martin, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT), arrived at 9 Muggleton Road.	Part 4, paragraph 4.33
	Detective Sergeant Kerry Lawes attended Salisbury District Hospital to find out how Dawn Sturgess was being treated and spoke to the intensive care consultant, Dr Stephen Jukes.	Part 4, paragraph 4.44
1 July 2018 (Sunday)	Dr Jukes reported to Wiltshire Police the possibility that the hospital might be dealing with organophosphate poisoning, either alone or in combination with drugs.	Part 4, paragraph 4.63
2 July 2018	Wiltshire Police issued a warning aimed at local drug users.	Part 4, paragraph 4.52
5 July 2018	The Home Secretary made a Parliamentary statement endorsing the 'don't pick up anything which you did not drop' advice, then (erroneously) said to have been given by Professor Dame Sally Davies after the Salisbury poisonings.	Part 6, paragraph 6.76
8 July 2018	Dawn Sturgess died.	Part 1, paragraphs 1.1 and 1.4; Part 8, paragraphs 8.3 and 8.6
10 July 2018	SAGE convened to discuss public health advice. It agreed that the information now given ('don't pick up the unknown' advice) was correct, " <i>particularly given the change in emphasis taken by the Chief Medical Officer</i> ".	Part 6, paragraph 6.102
11 July 2018	A small bottle was found at 9 Muggleton Road, together with discarded packaging which purported to be of a brand of perfume. Subsequent tests confirmed the bottle contained a quantity of high purity Novichok.	Part 4, paragraphs 4.9 and 4.68
13 July 2018	Police interviews with Charlie Rowley commenced.	Part 4, paragraphs 4.72, 4.85 and 4.86
14–15, 17 July 2018	Further police interviews with Charlie Rowley were conducted.	Part 4, paragraphs 4.87 to 4.90
15–18 July 2018	A team from the OPCW visited the UK.	Part 2, paragraph 2.13
20 July 2018	Charlie Rowley was discharged from hospital.	Part 4, paragraph 4.65

Date	Evidence	Source
August 2018	<i>Scientific Advice: Lessons Learned from Salisbury Response</i> (GO-Science Project) was completed, chiefly based on work done before the Amesbury event.	Part 6, paragraph 6.96
1 August 2018	Further interview of Charlie Rowley.	Part 4, paragraph 4.92
8 August 2018	Further interview of Charlie Rowley.	Part 4, paragraph 4.95
13 August 2018	A team from the OPCW visited the UK.	Part 2, paragraph 2.13
5 September 2018	Professor Dame Sally Davies gave ‘don’t pick up the unknown’ advice and asserted she was repeating advice she had given in March.	Part 6, paragraph 6.77
13 September 2018	The RT news channel broadcast an interview with Petrov and Boshirov.	Part 3, paragraph 3.107
February 2019	Charlie Rowley was interviewed by police.	Part 4, paragraph 4.98
4 March 2019	The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom issued <i>Salisbury: Unanswered Questions</i> .	Part 3, paragraph 3.113
4 March 2020	The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom issued <i>Salisbury: Two Years of Unanswered Questions</i> .	Part 3, paragraph 3.113
20 August 2020	Alexei Navalny, a prominent critic of the Russian regime, became unwell on a flight from Tomsk to Moscow.	Part 5, paragraph 5.22
2 and 14 September 2020	The German government made a public announcement that testing of Alexei Navalny’s medical samples had revealed unequivocal evidence of a Novichok.	Part 5, paragraph 5.24
6 October 2020	The OPCW confirmed that its two independent laboratories had found a cholinesterase inhibitor in Alexei Navalny’s medical samples.	Part 5, paragraph 5.24
7 June 2021	United Nations Special Rapporteurs on ‘extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions’ and on ‘the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression’ made a joint statement in which they expressed their conclusion that Russia had been responsible for the attempted murder of Alexei Navalny with Novichok.	Part 5, paragraph 5.25
March 2023	The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom issued <i>Salisbury: Five Years of Unanswered Questions</i> .	Part 3, paragraph 3.113
16 February 2024	Alexei Navalny died in a Russian state prison.	Part 5, paragraph 5.22
18 July 2025	The UK government made public that GRU military intelligence officers had been identified as responsible for cyber targeting Yulia Skripal’s email accounts from about 2013 – five years before the Salisbury and Amesbury poisonings.	Part 6, paragraph 6.22

Appendix 6: Key individuals

Title	Forename	Surname	Role (in 2018, unless otherwise stated)
	Jonathan	Allen CMG	Current Director General Defence and Security at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
Professor Sir	John	Aston	Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser
General	Andrey	Averyanov	Commander of GRU Unit 29155
Detective Sergeant	Nicholas (Nick)	Bailey	Wiltshire Police officer who was poisoned with Novichok by secondary contamination in Salisbury in March 2018
	Elena	Baranova	Believed to be the sister of Sergey Fedotov
Police Constable	Oliver	Bell	Wiltshire Police officer who was poisoned with Novichok by secondary contamination in Salisbury in March 2018
Inspector	Marcus	Beresford-Smith	Wiltshire Police officer who attended the incident at 9 Muggleton Road in Amesbury on Saturday 30 June 2018
	Marc-Michael	Blum	Head of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) laboratory in The Hague, the Netherlands
	Ruslan	Boshirov	Suspect of the Salisbury poisonings; alias for Anatoliy Chepiga
	Karl	Bulpitt	Paramedic who treated Sergei Skripal and accidentally administered atropine
	Maureen	Cassidy	Former next-door neighbour and then friend of Sergei Skripal
	Ross	Cassidy	Former next-door neighbour and then friend of Sergei Skripal
	Ben	Channon	Paramedic, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT); he attended 9 Muggleton Road on Saturday 30 June 2018 and treated Charlie Rowley
	Vladimir	Chepiga	Believed to be the father of Ruslan Boshirov
Dr	Stephen	Cockroft	Intensive Care Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital; he treated Sergei and Yulia Skripal and interacted with Yulia during a sedation hold
Detective Superintendent	Tim	Corner	Wiltshire Police officer who was on duty on Sunday 4 March 2018
		D84U	An official from the Department of Health and Social Care who gave an interview to policy adviser L55F regarding the response to the Salisbury poisonings
	Wayne	Darch	Head of Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response, SWASFT; currently Deputy Director Operations, SWASFT

Title	Forename	Surname	Role (in 2018, unless otherwise stated)
Professor Dame	Sally	Davies	Chief Medical Officer for England
	Matthew	Derrick	Friend of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley who was with them on Friday 29 June 2018
	Mark	Faulkner	Consultant Paramedic and Associate Clinical Director, London Ambulance Service NHS Trust – expert witness to the Inquiry
	Sergey	Fedotov	Suspect of the Salisbury poisonings; alias for Denis Sergeev
		FT49	Chemical and Biological Medical Adviser to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl)
Dr	Lev	Fyodorov	Former professor of chemistry at an institute in Moscow; he was concerned about the environmental impact of nerve agents
Dr	Nick	Gent	Senior Medical Adviser, Public Health England
The Right Honourable the Baroness	Heather	Hallett DBE	Coroner for the Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess; appointed in January 2021
Dr	James	Haslam	Intensive Care Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital; he treated Sergei and Yulia Skripal
Sir	Jeremy	Heywood	UK Cabinet Secretary from 1 January 2012 until 24 October 2018
	Sam	Hobson	Friend of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley who was with them on Friday 29 and with Charlie on Saturday 30 June 2018
Dr	Frances	Hollingbury	Forensic Pathologist; appointed to review Professor Rutty's post-mortem examination report on Dawn Sturgess
Inspector	Gillian	Hughes	Wiltshire Police officer who was on duty on Sunday 4 March 2018
The Right Honourable	Sajid	Javid	UK Home Secretary from 30 April 2018 until 24 July 2019
The Right Honourable	Boris	Johnson	UK Foreign Secretary from 13 July 2016 until 9 July 2018
Dr	Stephen	Jukes	Intensive Care Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital; he treated Dawn Sturgess
		L55F	Policy adviser in the Government Office for Science who undertook a review of the response to the Salisbury poisonings
	Sergey	Lavrov	Russian Foreign Minister
Detective Sergeant	Kerry	Lawes	Wiltshire Police officer who attended Salisbury District Hospital on Saturday 30 June 2018

Title	Forename	Surname	Role (in 2018, unless otherwise stated)
	Alexander	Litvinenko	Russian defector who died in 2006 after being poisoned with polonium-210. A public inquiry found that the poisoning was probably carried out under the direction of the FSB (the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation) and approved by President Putin
	Michael	Mansfield KC	Counsel for the family of Dawn Sturgess
Detective Inspector	Ben	Mant	Wiltshire Police officer who was on duty on Sunday 4 March 2018
	Lee	Martin	Paramedic, SWASFT; he attended 9 Muggleton Road on Saturday 30 June 2018 and treated Charlie Rowley
The Right Honourable	Theresa	May	UK Prime Minister
	Alison	McCourt	Member of the public who gave first aid to Sergei Skripal on Sunday 4 March 2018; she was an accident and emergency nurse, and, at the time, Chief Nursing Officer of the British Army, but off duty
	Callum	McCrae	Friend of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley who was with them on Friday 29 June 2018
Acting Police Sergeant	Iain	McKerlie	Wiltshire Police officer who attended the incident at 9 Muggleton Road in Amesbury on Saturday 30 June 2018
Prime Minister	Dmitry	Medvedev	President of the Russian Federation from 2008 until 2012; Prime Minister of the Russian Federation from 2012 until 2020
Deputy Chief Constable	Paul	Mills	Current Deputy Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police; Temporary Deputy Chief Constable from Monday 5 March 2018
	Ben	Milsom	Friend of Charlie Rowley; after Dawn Sturgess was taken to hospital, he drove Charlie Rowley and Sam Hobson to a pharmacy in Amesbury
Dr	David	Minks	Consultant Interventional and Diagnostic Neuroradiologist, North Bristol NHS Trust – expert witness to the Inquiry
Dr	Vil	Mirzayanov	An analytical chemist who had worked on nerve agents at the Moscow branch of GosNIIOKhT from 1965 until January 1992; he asserted that the FOLIANT programme into the research and production of chemical weapons had not been halted
	Evgeni	Mishkin	Believed to be the father of Alexander Petrov
		MK26	Chemical and Biological Scientific Adviser, Dstl

Title	Forename	Surname	Role (in 2018, unless otherwise stated)
Commander	Dominic	Murphy	Current Commander of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO15); in 2018, Detective Superintendent and Senior Investigating Officer for Operation Caterva (the investigation into those responsible for the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal)
	Alexei	Navalny	Prominent critic of the Russian regime who died in a Russian state prison in February 2024
Professor	Jerry	Nolan	Consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust – expert witness to the Inquiry
Dr	Helen	Ord	Member of the public who gave first aid to Yulia Skripal on Sunday 4 March 2018 and a paediatric intensive care consultant, but off duty
	Ian	Parsons	Lead Paramedic, SWASFT; he treated Sergei Skripal on Sunday 4 March 2018 and attended the incident at 9 Muggleton Road on Saturday 30 June 2018
	Alexander	Petrov	Suspect of the Salisbury poisonings; alias for Aleksandr Mishkin
President	Vladimir	Putin	President of the Russian Federation
	David	Ridley	His Majesty's Senior Coroner for Wiltshire and Swindon; Coroner for the Inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess until Baroness Hallett was appointed in 2021
	Charles (Charlie)	Rowley	Dawn Sturgess' partner; he was poisoned with Novichok in Amesbury on 30 June 2018
Assistant Commissioner	Mark	Rowley	Current Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; Assistant Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for Specialist Operations from 2014 until mid-March 2018
Dr	Paul	Russell	Consultant in Medical Microbiology and Virology at Salisbury District Hospital who had chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) training
Professor	Guy	Rutty	Forensic Pathologist; he carried out the post-mortem on Dawn Sturgess
Sir	Mark	Sedwill	National Security Adviser, HM Government
	Alexander (Sasha)	Skripal	Sergei Skripal's son; he died in July 2017
	Liudmilla	Skripal	Sergei Skripal's wife; she died in 2012
	Sergei	Skripal	Former Russian soldier and intelligence officer who was poisoned with Novichok in Salisbury on Sunday 4 March 2018

Title	Forename	Surname	Role (in 2018, unless otherwise stated)
	Yulia	Skripal	Sergei Skripal's daughter; she was poisoned with Novichok in Salisbury on Sunday 4 March 2018
Dr	Jasmeet	Soar	Consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine, North Bristol NHS Trust – expert witness to the Inquiry
	Caroline	Sturgess	Dawn Sturgess' mother
Dr	Vladimir	Ughev	Former assistant to the developer of Novichoks in Russia; he asserted that the FOLIANT programme into the research and production of chemical weapons had not been halted
		V13A	A senior official at Public Health England
Dr	Patrick	Vallance	Government Chief Scientific Adviser from April 2018 until April 2023
Police Constable		VN005	Wiltshire Police officer with CBRN training; he suffered symptoms consistent with Novichok poisoning from secondary contamination in March 2018
Professor	Chris	Whitty	Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department of Health and Social Care
	Lisa	Wood	Paramedic, SWASFT; she treated Sergei Skripal on Sunday 4 March 2018
Dr	Laszlo	Zavori	Emergency Department Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital; he was on duty on 30 June 2018

Appendix 7: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
A/PS	Acting Police Sergeant
ATM	automated teller machine
CBAAC	Chemical and Biological Analysis and Attribution Capability
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CCTV	closed-circuit television
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CTP	Counter Terrorism Policing
CTPSE	Counter Terrorism Policing South East
DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DI	Detective Inspector
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
DS	Detective Sergeant
Dstl	Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
DSU	Detective Superintendent
DVOKU	Dvoku Imeni Rokossovskogo – Russian Military School, the Far Eastern Higher Military Command School
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FSB	Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
GO-Science	Government Office for Science
GosNIIOKhT	the State Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology
GRU	the Russian military intelligence agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering
HART	hazardous area response team
HMG	Her Majesty's Government; His Majesty's Government
Insp	Inspector
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
MIVD	Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCND	neither confirm nor deny
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
PC	Police Constable
PHE	Public Health England
PII	public interest immunity
PPE	personal protective equipment
RT	Russian news channel formerly known as 'Russia Today'

Abbreviation	Definition
RWCS	reasonable worst-case scenario
SAGE	Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies
SRG	Strategic Response Group
SWASFT	South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
SWCTIU	South West Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit
UK	United Kingdom
UKHSA	UK Health Security Agency
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Appendix 8: Witnesses

Witnesses who gave oral evidence at the public (open) Inquiry hearings

Witness (role/organisation)	Date(s) of evidence
Caroline Sturgess (Dawn Sturgess' mother)	15 October 2024
Paul Mills (currently Deputy Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police; in 2018 (from 5 March), Temporary Deputy Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police)	15 October 2024 17 October 2024 7 November 2024
Dominic Murphy (currently Commander of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO15); in 2018, Detective Superintendent and Senior Investigating Officer for Operation Caterva (the investigation into those responsible for the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal))	15 October 2024 16 October 2024 28 October 2024 12 November 2024 18 November 2024 19 November 2024 20 November 2024 25 November 2024
Wayne Darch (currently Deputy Director Operations, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT); in 2018, Head of Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response, SWASFT)	17 October 2024
Mark Marriott (Paramedic, SWASFT)	17 October 2024
Keith Coomber (Advanced Technician, SWASFT)	17 October 2024
Fred Thompson (Critical Care Paramedic, SWASFT)	18 October 2024
Ben Channon (currently Critical Care Paramedic, SWASFT; in 2018, Paramedic, SWASFT)	18 October 2024
Iain McKerlie (in 2018, Acting Police Sergeant, Wiltshire Police)	18 October 2024
Marcus Beresford-Smith (Inspector, Wiltshire Police)	18 October 2024
Ross Cassidy (former next-door neighbour and then friend of Sergei Skripal)	28 October 2024
Dr Helen Ord (member of the public who gave first aid to Yulia Skripal)	29 October 2024
Alex Collins (Police Constable, Wiltshire Police)	29 October 2024
Ian Parsons (Lead Paramedic, SWASFT)	30 October 2024
Lisa Wood (Paramedic, SWASFT)	30 October 2024
Dr James Haslam (Intensive Care Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital)	30 October 2024
Dr Stephen Cockroft (in 2018, Intensive Care Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital)	31 October 2024
FT49 (Chemical and Biological Medical Adviser, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Porton Down)	31 October 2024
Eirin Martin (currently Detective Inspector; in 2018, Detective Sergeant, Wiltshire Police)	4 November 2024
Dr Stephen Jukes (Intensive Care Consultant, Salisbury District Hospital)	4 November 2024
Professor Guy Ruttly (Forensic Pathologist)	5 November 2024

Witness (role/organisation)	Date(s) of evidence
Mark Faulkner (Consultant Paramedic and Associate Clinical Director, London Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust; expert witness to the Inquiry on pre-hospital care)	5 November 2024
Dr Jasmeet Soar (Consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine, North Bristol NHS Trust; expert witness to the Inquiry on hospital care)	6 November 2024
Professor Jerry Nolan (Consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust; expert witness to the Inquiry on hospital care)	6 November 2024
Nicholas (Nick) Bailey (in 2018, Detective Sergeant, Wiltshire Police)	7 November 2024
Ben Mant (in 2018, Detective Inspector, Wiltshire Police)	11 November 2024
Professor Dame Sally Davies (in 2018, Chief Medical Officer for England)	11 November 2024
Dr David Minks (Consultant Interventional and Diagnostic Neuroradiologist, North Bristol NHS Trust; expert witness to the Inquiry on hospital care)	11 November 2024
VN005 (Police Constable, Wiltshire Police)	12 November 2024
MK26 (Chemical and Biological Scientific Adviser, Dstl, Porton Down)	13 November 2024
Keith Asman (in 2018, Head of Forensic Management Team, Media Viewing Team and Digital Investigations Team within Counter Terrorism Policing South East)	14 November 2024
Georgina Collins (currently Director for Energy and Resources, Environment Agency; in 2018, Deputy Director for Floods, Water and CBRN Emergencies, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)	18 November 2024
Professor Sir John Aston (in 2018, Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser)	18 November 2024
Dr Paul Russell (Consultant in Medical Microbiology and Virology, Salisbury District Hospital)	21 November 2024
V13A (in 2018, a senior official at Public Health England)	21 November 2024
Adam Wilson (Forensic Scientist, Cellmark Forensic Services)	21 November 2024
Mary Hodges (Shop Manager, Cancer Research UK)	25 November 2024
Martin Litherland (Head of Service for Waste Management, Wiltshire Council)	25 November 2024
Adam Wylie (Managing Director of the Commercial Waste Collections business, Veolia UK Limited)	25 November 2024
Jonathan Allen CMG (Director General Defence and Security, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)	28 November 2024

Witnesses who were unable to give oral evidence but whose evidence was given in writing

Charles (Charlie) Rowley

A8.1 On 11 November 2024, the Inquiry received an application made on behalf of Charlie Rowley seeking for him to be removed from the list of oral witnesses. The application was supported by confidential medical information and included a report from an expert psychiatrist.

A8.2 In a Ruling dated 15 November 2024, Lord Hughes agreed to excuse Charlie Rowley from giving evidence for detailed reasons given therein.⁷⁵⁴ Charlie Rowley's witness statements and full transcripts of his police interviews were adduced into evidence and published on the Inquiry website.⁷⁵⁵

Sergei and Yulia Skripal

A8.3 Following submissions heard at the preliminary hearing on 21 June 2024,⁷⁵⁶ and his decision to defer determining whether to call Sergei and/or Yulia Skripal until after the transcripts of their police interviews had been disclosed to Core Participants,⁷⁵⁷ Lord Hughes issued a Ruling dated 23 September 2024.⁷⁵⁸

A8.4 Lord Hughes concluded that neither Sergei nor Yulia Skripal should be called to give evidence. The key reason for this decision was the overwhelming risk of physical attack on either or both of them, which outweighed the benefit to the Inquiry of them providing oral evidence, in particular since the transcripts of their lengthy police interviews had been disclosed to Core Participants, and they had provided further witness statements addressing specific questions raised by the family of Dawn Sturgess.

A8.5 Lord Hughes also considered whether the audio or video recordings of the police interviews should be played. He was satisfied that the risk of identification, and consequent risk of physical attack, outweighed any benefit in playing them. The witness statements of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, and transcripts of their police interviews, were published on the Inquiry website.⁷⁵⁹

Alison McCourt

A8.6 Alison McCourt is a member of the public who gave first aid to Sergei Skripal following his collapse at The Maltings in Salisbury on Sunday 4 March 2018. At the time, she was the Chief Nursing Officer of the British Army. Alison McCourt was asked to attend the Inquiry to give oral evidence in the week commencing 28 October 2024.

A8.7 On 12 September 2024, the Inquiry received an application made on behalf of Alison McCourt seeking anonymity and for her to be excused from giving oral evidence. That application was supported by confidential personal medical information and a specialist independent medical report.

⁷⁵⁴ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Charlie Rowley Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-11-15-Ruling-Charlie-Rowley.pdf>)

⁷⁵⁵ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Hearings (<https://www.dawnsturgess.independent-inquiry.uk/hearings/>)

⁷⁵⁶ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/ds210624-inpublic-amd1.pdf>)

⁷⁵⁷ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Ruling following the Preliminary Hearing on 21 June 2024 (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-07-10-Ruling-Following-Preliminary-Hearing-21-June-2024.pdf>)

⁷⁵⁸ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Sergei and Yulia Skripal Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-09-23-DSI-Ruling-on-Sergei-and-Yulia-Skripal.pdf>)

⁷⁵⁹ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Hearings (<https://www.dawnsturgess.independent-inquiry.uk/hearings/>)

A8.8 In a Ruling dated 23 October 2024, Lord Hughes refused Alison McCourt's application for anonymity but agreed to excuse her on medical grounds from giving evidence orally and directed that her written statements be adduced into evidence.⁷⁶⁰ Alison McCourt's evidence was read, and her statements were adduced on 29 October 2024.⁷⁶¹

Kerry Lawes

A8.9 Kerry Lawes is a serving member of Wiltshire Police in the rank of Chief Inspector. At the time of the events in 2018, she was a Detective Sergeant within the Wiltshire Police Criminal Investigation Department. Kerry Lawes was listed to give oral evidence on 4 November 2024.

A8.10 On 30 October 2024, the Inquiry was provided with a letter from Kerry Lawes' GP. The letter gave details of a serious medical condition from which Kerry Lawes was suffering, and it expressed the view that she would not be fit to give oral evidence in the week commencing 4 November 2024. It was possible she might be well enough to give oral evidence in the week commencing 25 November 2024.

A8.11 Lord Hughes decided to remove Kerry Lawes from the witness list for 4 November 2024 on medical grounds, and her witness statement was read and adduced into evidence that day.⁷⁶² In a Ruling dated 7 November 2024, Lord Hughes confirmed his decision to release Kerry Lawes from giving oral evidence in the week commencing 25 November 2024.⁷⁶³ A further written statement was obtained from Kerry Lawes addressing specific additional questions raised by the family of Dawn Sturgess.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁰ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Alison McCourt Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-10-23-DSI-Ruling-Alison-McCourt-evidence.pdf>)

⁷⁶¹ [Alison McCourt \(read\) 29 October 2024 4/1-19/7; INQ004476; INQ006137](#)

⁷⁶² [DS Lawes \(read\) 4 November 2024 3/1-32/24; INQ006105](#)

⁷⁶³ The independent Inquiry into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' death in Salisbury on 8 July 2018: Kerry Lawes Ruling (<https://dsiweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/uploads/2024-11-07-Kerry-Lawes-Ruling.pdf>)

⁷⁶⁴ [INQ006206](#)

Appendix 9: The Inquiry Team

Counsel to the Inquiry

Lead Counsel to the Inquiry	Andrew O'Connor KC
Counsel to the Inquiry	Francesca Whitelaw KC
Junior Counsel to the Inquiry	Émilie Pottle

Solicitor to the Inquiry

Solicitor to the Inquiry	Martin Smith
Assistant Solicitor	Amy Nicholls

Secretary to the Inquiry

Secretary to the Inquiry	Piers Harrison
Deputy Secretary	Laura Turner
Press Officer	Bernadette Caffarey

Appendix 10: Core Participants and their legal representatives

The family of Dawn Sturgess (Caroline Sturgess, Stephen Stanley Sturgess, Aidan Hope, Ewan Hope and GS) and Charlie Rowley

Counsel	Michael Mansfield KC, Adam Straw KC, Jesse Nicholls
Solicitor	Marcia Willis Stewart KC (Hon), Ronnie Graham, Hazel Metcalfe (Birnberg Peirce)

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (on her own behalf and in a representative capacity for other government departments and agencies)

Counsel	Cathryn McGahey KC, Ben Watson KC, Georgina Wolfe, Alasdair Henderson, Richard Boyle
Solicitor	Government Legal Department

The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Counsel	Lisa Giovannetti KC, Aaron Moss, Gideon Barth, Edmund Gross, Ruby Shrimpton
Solicitor	Directorate of Legal Services, Metropolitan Police Service

The Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police

Counsel	Jason Beer KC, John Goss
Solicitor	Legal Services, Thames Valley Police

The Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police

Counsel	John Beggs KC, James Berry KC
Solicitor	Victoria Exley (Legal Services, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

Counsel	Bridget Dolan KC
Solicitor	Claire Leonard, George Riach (Bevan Brittan)

Wiltshire Council

Counsel	Joanne Clement KC, John Bethell
Solicitor	Frank Cain (Legal Services, Wiltshire Council)

Sergei and Yulia Skripal

Counsel	Jack Holborn
Solicitor	Natalie Cohen (Kingsley Napley)

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