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Poisoned KGB Defector Exposed Russia's Backing of al-Qaeda

Russian defector Alexander Litvinenko is in critical condition at London's University College Hospital, where he is under police protection. Scotland Yard is investigating the case as a suspected "deliberate poisoning."

The BBC reported on November 20 that clinical toxicologist Dr. John Henry had said there was "no doubt" that the ex-spy had been poisoned by a potentially lethal dose of thallium. "It is tasteless, colorless, odorless. It takes about a gram — you know, a large pinch of salt like in your food — to kill you," Dr. Henry said.

Since escaping to England in 2000, Litvinenko has been a thorn in the side of Russian president Vladimir Putin. Litvinenko, a colonel in the FSB (the renamed Soviet KGB), has made a number of explosive claims. In his 2002 book, [Blowing Up Russia: Terror From Within](#), he charged that the 1999 series of apartment bombings in Moscow and other Russian cities were the handiwork of Putin (a former KGB/FSB chief) and the FSB, not Chechen separatists, as Putin had claimed. Putin used the bombings, which killed over 300 and injured many more, to stir up outrage and public support for a second brutal war on Chechnya.

One of Litvinenko's most important accusations is his charge that Ayman al-Zawahiri, reportedly al-Qaeda's "Number 2" commander, second only to Osama bin Laden, had been trained by the Soviet KGB/FSB. "I was working in that section at the time," Litvinenko said in a 2005 interview in Poland, "and I can confirm the fact [that] Zawahiri was not the only link between the FSB and Al Qaeda."



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