Twitter Thread by Eliot Higgins



Eliot Higgins
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This has now started livestreaming, you can watch it here https://t.co/fGV4sx7OfD

Russia will not be participating as they've refused to take part in the hearing. Definitely the act of an innocent party.

Jacques Maire starts by explaining the situation they're investigating, the poisoning of Navalny with Novichok, and introduces the work of Bellingcat, as seen here https://t.co/R1WHKbpYvv

Jacques Maire also refers to the call between Navalny and an FSB officer who detailed the operation https://t.co/DRbwHMlxew

Jacques Maire says no-one from the Russian delegation will attend, and will miss the opportunity to respond to the allegations being put today. The Russian authorities claims the poisoning happened either in the aircraft or the Berlin hospital.

Jacques Maire says Putin said the FSB was following Navalny, but no explanation has been presented to why chemical weapons experts and medical experts would be part of that team.

Jacques Maire says he's spoken to the German authorities, Navalny, @christogrozev, and today's hearing is about establishing answers to the questions they have. He notes Navalny was invited, but has been detained in Russia.

Navalny's colleague @leonidvolkov is now speaking to the committee.

Volkov says the Russian authorities are still developing nerve agents, and that a novichok poisoning, if successful, looks like a heart attack, and is something that's very difficult to prove.

Some technical issues at the moment, joys of digital communications in the days of Covid-19

Volkov notes Navalny is in the prison where Magnitsky was tortured to death.

Volkov is currently describing the rather complex way in which trumped up charges were made against Navalny, including the European Court of Human Rights saying the charges against Navalny were illegal, and Russia paid compensation

because of it.

Volkov says Navalny was arrested for violating probation on a sentence the European Court of Human Rights has already said is illegal, putting Navalny in the hands of the people who poisoned him in the first place.

Volkov says he expects rallies in Russia in support of Navalny, along with more unlawful arrests, but Europe can support Navalny here and now.

Bellingcat's @christogrozev is now up, you can watch him live here https://t.co/fGV4sx7OfD

Christo says Bellingcat tends to focus on state crimes, that often are never investigated, especially by states who aren't investigating their own crimes. This appears to be the case with the poisoning of @navalny

Our investigation into Navalny really started with the poisoning of Skripal, which we linked to Unit 29155, with their officers dispatched to assassinate one of their former GRU colleagues.

We also discovered another GRU poisoning of a Bulgarian arms dealer, where a nerve agent was applied to his car door handle.

We discovered that the Signal research centre, supposedly developing sports drinks, employed multiple individuals involved in the development of nerve agents, and members of that centre were in frequent contact with GRU officers linked to the Skripal poisoning.

From that it could be concluded that Russia was still running a clandestine chemical weapons programme, in violation of their international commitments.

We examined call data from the chairman of the Signal centre and three FSB officers around the time of the Navalny poisoning, and other colleagues, who were specialists in chemical weapons.

Two figures at the Signal facility communicated with a group of 8 FSB officers, who themselves had expertise in chemical weapons and/or medicine. We acquired their travel records, and discovered they travelled on the same trips at Navalny.

Overall, over 40 trip like this were identified, starting after Navalny announced his presidential candidacy, and travelled to the same locations as Navalny, under real and fake identities. They only travelled when Navalny would be staying in locations overnight.

In 2020 on the 2nd of July 3 members of the squad flew to Kalingrad, just before Navalny and his wife travelled there on a getaway break. On July 6, Navalny's wife fell ill, with signs of communications between the FSB officers and CW labs.

Christo is now describing the very complicated details of this investigation, so probably easier if you just read this https://t.co/R1WHKbpYvv

Christo stresses that this just doesn't point to one poisoning, but the existence of an FSB unit built to track and poison opposition figures with chemical weapons.

Richard Balfe says he thinks the next stage must ask their Russian colleagues to respond to the allegations of Bellingcat.

He says their are questions to be answered by the Russians, and he hopes they will be answered. I hope he likes evidence free allegations and conspiracy theories.

PACE representatives are pointing out the lack of Russian attendance to this meeting, doesn't seem anyone has been impressed by their absence.

First question to Christo Grozev is how did the Russian authorities reply to the different articles of Bellingcat. First to Volkov about whether Navalny gave permission for the German authorities to send biological samples to the Russian authorities.

Unfortunately Christo is having some technical issues, so can't reply.

Volkov points out that we only know about the unsuccessful poisonings with novichok, but investigations by Bellingcat indicate there are previously unknown successful poisonings by the same team.

Christo is back, he says we've not received an official response from the Russian state, any investigation we publish gets the same answer, that Bellingcat isn't an official body, and they'll only respond to official bodies, and today we hope the Council will be that body.

Christo does say that Putin did confirm the presence of FSB officers, just following him for his political beliefs, but Christo points out it doesn't make sense to send a highly overqualified team to follow him for 3 years.