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National Intelligence Council (NIC): Sense of the
Community Memorandum: Kremlin-Ordered
Assassinations Abroad Will Probably Persist 2016

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From: ODNI_FOIA <odni_foia@odni.gov>
Cc: ODNI_FOIA <ODNI_FOIA@ODNI.GOV>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2025 at 02:31:31 PM EST
Subject: RE: New FOIA request received for Office of the Director of National Intelligence

UNCLASSIFIED

Good afternoon,

To follow up, the attached document is responsive to Item 1 of your request.

Searches were never completed for Item 2 in the original request, so your case will remain open to process that portion of the request.

Thank you,

ODNI FOIA

ODNI's New FOIA address: ODNI_FOIA@ODNI.GOV

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(b)(1), (b)(3)

National Intelligence Council Sense of the Community Memorandum

(U) This is an IC-coordinated memorandum.

SOCM 2016-035C
11 July 2016

(b)(3) Kremlin-Ordered Assassinations Abroad Will Probably Persist

(b)(3) We assess that the Russian Government will continue to use its intelligence services and other loyal entities to assassinate suspected terrorists as well as individuals abroad whom it deems as threats to core national security interests or the security of President Vladimir Putin's regime. Our confidence level for this judgment is high, based on official Russian statements and the findings of foreign governments in countries where assassinations have taken place.

- (b)(3) Russia targets for killing those it considers terrorists—especially North Caucasus extremists—and select opposition figures. The first clear case in the Putin era of Moscow directing an assassination abroad occurred in 2004 in Qatar, where two Russian military intelligence officers were convicted of killing Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, designated by the United States and the United Nations as a terrorist.
- (b)(3) The Russian Government has been open about using assassinations as part of its counterterrorism policy. President Putin in June 2006 stated publicly that he had directed Russia's security services to kill the people who murdered four Russian diplomats in Iraq. Also in 2006, the Russian legislature amended the law on countering terrorism. Then Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov publicly stated that the law gave the services a legal basis for killing terrorists outside of Russia.

(b)(3) In addition, Moscow probably selectively targets individuals it perceives as political threats to Putin. Moscow almost certainly ordered the 2006 murder in London of former Russian Federal Security Service officer Aleksandr Litvinenko by means of the radioactive isotope polonium, the clearest example of a political killing. The official British inquiry into Litvinenko's death, which parallels the findings of the US Intelligence Community, concluded that Russian intelligence probably carried out the assassination. The Russian Government probably has been involved in targeting other high-profile figures for politically based assassinations, but we have only low-to-moderate confidence in this judgment because there is less direct and credible evidence of Kremlin direction than in the case of Litvinenko.

(b)(3) An analysis of intelligence reporting on known and suspected Russian assassination attempts indicates that the Kremlin targets individuals from the following categories:

- (b)(3) **Intelligence defectors or dissidents** whose actions the Kremlin considers to have gone beyond acceptable limits or to have the potential to do so. Litvinenko, for example, was not only a

(U) This Sense of the Community Memorandum was prepared for the National Intelligence Council under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Counterintelligence. It only addresses assassinations that have taken place outside of Russia since Putin took power in 2000. It was drafted by NCSC (b)(3). Questions about this memorandum may be directed to the NIO for CI (b)(3).

CL BY: (b)(3) | DRV FRM: (b)(3) | DECL ON: (b)(3)

(b)(1), (b)(3)

(b)(1), (b)(3)

traitor in Kremlin eyes but may have crossed a threshold by working with British and Spanish intelligence against Russia. Moreover, Litvinenko had publicly accused Putin of pedophilia, as well lodging accusations for years that Putin ordered the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings as a pretext to renew the conflict with Chechnya. Russian businessman Aleksandr Perepilichnyy was reportedly assassinated with a biological toxin in the UK in 2012 shortly before he was scheduled to testify about a Kremlin tax fraud network, according to press reports, suggesting that he may also fall into this category.

- (b)(3) **Political and opposition leaders** in key former Soviet republics that are deemed a threat. A key example is former President of Ukraine Viktor Yushenko, who suffered a near-fatal poisoning in 2004. His supporters concluded that Russian intelligence introduced the chemical dioxin into his food when he was a presidential candidate advocating Ukraine's integration with the West. (b)(1), (b)(3)
- (b)(3) **Insubordinate separatists in Ukraine.** At least some key separatist figures in Ukraine's Donbas Region who resisted Kremlin orders, such as Oleksandr Bednov, have probably been killed at Moscow's behest, reflecting Russia's priority on maintaining control over the region.

(b)(3) We assess that Putin probably authorizes assassinations of high-profile figures abroad. The official British inquiry into Litvinenko's murder concluded that Putin "probably approved" it, based upon a review of physical evidence and decisionmaking on matters related to the security services. Putin's role reflects concern over the potential for significant political repercussions.

- (b)(3) However, Putin probably has given head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov—who is fiercely loyal to Putin—latitude to kill Chechens abroad. Most killings attributed to Kadyrov's operatives have been shootings, whereas those we judge to have been conducted by Russia's security services have involved a range of methods, including poisoning.

(b)(3) We assess that Russia has the capability to assassinate individuals using chemical and biological agents (b)(1), (b)(3) leveraging longstanding efforts dating back to the Soviet era. (b)(1), (b)(3)

(b)(3) The development of chemical or biological agents with lower risk of attribution might tempt the Kremlin to consider assassinating individuals (b)(1), (b)(3)

Moscow tracks dissidents and defectors (b)(1), (b)(3)

(b)(1), (b)(3)