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Description of document: Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI)  
National Intelligence Council (NIC) Sense of the  
Community Memorandum SOCM 2016-035C, entitled:  
Kremlin-Ordered Assassinations Abroad Will Probably  
Persist, 2016

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Chief, Information Management Office  
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Electronic Requests  
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Office of the Director of National Intelligence

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22 April 2026

Reference: ODNI Case No. DF-2026-00219

This letter responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) received on 22 December 2025, requesting:

- The National Intelligence Council Sense of the Community Memorandum SOCM 2016-035C, entitled: “Kremlin-Ordered Assassinations Abroad Will Probably Persist.”

This request was processed under FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended. ODNI located one document responsive to this request. During the review process, we considered the foreseeable harm standard and determined that certain information must be withheld pursuant to FOIA exemptions:

- (b)(1), which applies to information that is currently and properly classified pursuant to Executive Order 13526, Section 1.4(c).
- (b)(3), which applies to information exempt from disclosure by statute. The relevant statute includes the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, specifically, Section 102A(h)(1) (codified at 50 U.S.C. § 3024(h)(1)), which mandates the protection of intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure.
- (b)(7)(E), which applies to records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, specifically that which would disclose investigative techniques and methods information in law enforcement records.

If you are not satisfied with this response, a number of options are available. You may contact the FOIA Public Liaison, at ODNI\_FOIA\_Liaison@odni.gov, or the ODNI Requester Service Center, at ODNI\_FOIA@odni.gov or (703)-275-1313. You may also submit an administrative appeal to the Chief FOIA Officer, c/o Chief, Information Management Office, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Washington, DC 20511 or emailed to ODNI\_FOIA@odni.gov. The appeal correspondence should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal of Adverse Determination" and must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days of the date of this letter.

Lastly, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) of the National Archives and Records Administration is available with mediation services and can be contacted by mail at 8601 Adelphi Road, Room 2510, College Park, MD 20740-6001; phone at (202) 741-5770; toll-free (877) 684-6448; or email at ogis@nara.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bonnie Calabria".

Bonnie Calabria  
Chief, Information Review and Release Group  
Information Management Office

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

# National Intelligence Council

## Sense of the Community Memorandum

SOCM 2016-035C

11 July 2016

(U) This is an IC-coordinated memorandum.



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

## Kremlin-Ordered Assassinations Abroad Will Probably Persist

(b)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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 and coordinated with (b)(3). Questions about this memorandum may be directed to the NIO for CI 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)(1), (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 Yuschenko, 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)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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)(1), (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), (b)(7)(E) Moscow tracks dissidents and defectors (b)(1), (b)(3), (b)(7)(E)

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