

Salt of the Street Judicial Branch

Court of Opinion

Dissenting Opinion: The West v. Russia

Russia. It's been on the mind of just about everyone at some point over the last two years or so. It seems you can't turn on a TV, Radio or even fire up a political/social podcast without hearing something about Russia. We've gone from the accusations of possible collusion on behalf of the Trump Presidential campaign to the latest accusations of a Russian assassination attempt on a double agent in the UK. There has been a slew of other Russia related stories between these two points, the Mueller investigation to name just one. Even today, March 28th, as I write this article USA Today has just reported that a former aid to the Trump campaign, and associate of former campaign manager Paul Manafort, Rick Gates was in contact with a person the FBI says was an intelligence officer in the GRU (Russian military intel). Don and I have talked about Russia in small amounts on the show but with the massive response we've seen from the international community around the possible poisoning of the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal, I feel like maybe we should once again dive into the maelstrom and take a closer look at it, in this particular case we'll look at the Skripal story.

The first thing we need to look at is just who is, and more importantly who 'was' Sergei Skripal? Like I mentioned before, Skripal was a Russian military intelligence

officer who became a double agent for MI6, the UK intelligence service. He was arrested by FSB (Russian Federal Security Service) back in 2004 but ultimately escaped a 13-year prison sentence when he was traded back to the UK in a spy-trade back in 2010.

To catch up very briefly, on March 4th Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious on a bench near Salisbury, they were then transported to the hospital. It was discovered that the two had come in contact with a nerve agent of some kind; this we will get into later. After this discovery and subsequent investigation Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom said it was "highly likely" that Moscow was to blame for the attack. Ever since then we've seen international outrage over the incident, along with huge support from allies of the UK. Including at least half of the member states of the European Union whom have publicly come out against Russia. A number of them expelling Russian diplomats from within their countries.

The United States was no different. President Trump ordered the expulsion of 60 Russian diplomats and also the closure of the Russian consulate in Seattle. It should be said that Moscow has denied the allegations and claimed to have no involvement in the poisoning of Skripal. Best that we can tell the sole evidence of Russian guilt is the type of poison used in the attack. Its known as

Novichok, the name applied to a group of advanced nerve agents that were created in the 70's and 80's by the Soviet Union. In other words, it looks like it would be next to impossible to prove actual Moscow involvement, a point Russia Today(RT) the Russian state sponsored media network likes to point out, as they did in an article posted on the 26th of March saying, "The Russian embassy in Washington had previously urged Trump not to heed the "fake news" on Skripal's poisoning."

Unfortunately, I don't think the true answer actually matters that much in the end. Geopolitics will play out as if Russia was guilty of the attack and we can only hold our collective breaths and see what the next moves will be. Will the west actually end up "doing something" about it? I for one shudder to think about just what the western world could actually do without potentially devastating consequences. For now, it looks like we'll continue to alienate Russia diplomatically and economically which in my eyes will probably strengthen their relationships with countries like China and North Korea, where that leads... Again, I shudder to think. But after saying all that remember that, this has just been my opinion and we here at Salt of the Streets are more interested in the conversation, so hit us back and let us know what your opinion is on this subject or any other subject that we've covered recently.

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