

**theguardian**

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## Police treating Litvinenko case as murder

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Fred Attewill and agencies

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Alexander Litvinenko in hospital. Photograph: Getty

Scotland Yard said tonight it was treating the death of the former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko as murder.

The police, however, stressed they had "not reached any conclusions as to the means employed, the motive or the identity of those who might be responsible for Mr Litvinenko's death".

Earlier, investigators found traces of radiation at the British embassy in Moscow.

A spokesman for the embassy said there was no risk to public health and staff were working as normal.

The news came as a man thought to be a key witness in the Litvinenko case was due to meet British detectives in Moscow.

Andrei Lugovoi, who met Mr Litvinenko in London on November 1 - the day the former KGB agent said he believed he was poisoned - said he was undergoing tests for radiation in hospital.

Doctors gave Mr Lugovoi permission to meet British officers, who will be accompanied by their Russian counterparts.

"I have been officially informed that our meeting with Scotland Yard detectives will take place today and proceed with the participation of employees of the Russian prosecutor general's office," the Russian Itar-Tass news agency quoted him as saying.

The former KGB bodyguard met Mr Litvinenko four times in the month before his death, the Russian media reported. He claimed Mr Litvinenko had contacted him with business proposals around a year ago, and said they had met intermittently in London since then.

Mr Lugovoi is believed to be the source of minute traces of polonium-210 - the substance that killed Mr Litvinenko - detected at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium in north

London yesterday.

He attended the Champions League match between Arsenal and CSKA Moscow hours after meeting Mr Litvinenko on November 1.

Alexander Goldfarb, a friend of Mr Litvinenko's, said he doubted that Mr Lugovoi was a major suspect in the case.

"I frankly doubt that he was the hit man because hit men are usually people hiding in the dark," Mr Goldfarb added. "I think it's one of his associates; I think he was used unawares ... now his life is in danger because he knows a lot."

Yuri Chaika, the Russian prosecutor general, yesterday said British detectives would be allowed to visit Mr Lugovoi and listen to him being interrogated by Russian prosecutors, but could not ask questions themselves.

The Emirates Stadium, which opened in August, was one of 30 London sites earmarked for tests. By the weekend, 24 had been tested, with polonium-210 being detected at 12 of them.

It was also announced today that Mario Scaramella, the Italian academic who met Mr Litvinenko on November 1, had been discharged from hospital.

Mr Scaramella had been receiving treatment at University College hospital in London after testing positive for polonium-210. A hospital spokesman said the academic was showing no symptoms of radiation poisoning.

He met Mr Litvinenko at the Itsu sushi restaurant in Piccadilly on November 1. Earlier today, the Health Protection Agency confirmed that all the restaurant's staff had tested negative for radiation.

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