

Roadmap of a CWC Disinformation Campaign



Provision of “Evidence”:

Providing misleading or deliberately misinterpreted video footage, photos, laboratory findings, or other arbitrary information as “evidence” of nefarious activity



What does this commonly used tactic look like in documents submitted to the OPCW?

Note Verbale #68 (Annex 1), submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2024)

On the Use (Preparation for the Use) of Toxic Chemicals Against Civil Population, Officials and Servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation by Ukraine

On 4 August 2022, a local administration official from a new region of the Russian Federation was taken to hospital with symptoms of acute toxic exposure.

Blood samples were collected for analysis on 5 August 2022.

Identification of the presence of toxic chemicals was carried out by the Analytical Chemistry Laboratory of the 27th Scientific Centre of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation from 8 to 11 August 2022 as part of a forensic chemical and chemical-toxicological inquiry.

Analysis of blood samples was conducted by means of gas and high-performance liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry, and Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy, including with the use of high-resolution analytical equipment.

The analysis revealed the following toxic compound in the victim's blood sample – ricinoleic acid ((Z)-12-hydroxyoctadec-9-enoic acid).

The presence of ricinoleic acid in the blood samples confirms that the person was exposed to a highly toxic substance – RICIN – that is included in the Schedule 1 on toxic chemicals (paragraph 8) of the Annex on Chemicals to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

In this document, results from a laboratory analysis of blood samples are used to “confirm” the alleged poisoning of a Russian official with ricin. The presence of ricinoleic acid in blood, however, does not confirm that someone was exposed to ricin. Ricinoleic acid is a fatty acid found in castor oil, which is nontoxic, can be used as a laxative, and is present in various skin products. Such “evidence,” in other words, is designed to sound convincing but is scientifically flawed.

Note Verbale #39, submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2024)



In this document, a screenshot from a video is used as “evidence” of chemical weapons use in Ukraine, with the white plume allegedly suggesting the deployment of chemical munitions. However, a screenshot from a video is insufficient to determine whether any chemical weapon was actually used. Conventional munitions can produce white smoke. While this form of “evidence” is designed to arouse suspicion, it does not prove nefarious activity.

Appeal to Emotions:

Using emotionally manipulative language or content to elicit feelings of outrage, fear, anger, and/or sympathy



What does this commonly used tactic look like in documents submitted to the OPCW?

Note Verbale #38, submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2023)

NOTE VERBALE FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE OPCW DATED 12 OCTOBER 2023

The Russian Federation expects the OPCW States Parties, for whom their sovereign rights and respect for their national interests on behalf of the world community are imperative, to be able to draw objective conclusions on the matter after studying the materials on the real state of affairs in the zone of the Ukrainian conflict with regard to the CWC. There is a long-felt need to set common sense over against manic ambitions of the countries of the “collective West” aimed at turning the OPCW along with other specialized multilateral structures into an instrument for maintaining and strengthening their dominance in the world politics, economy and finances, imposing on the absolute majority of the world community their cultural and civilizational values and double standards, which are far from being clear-cut and even often corrupted.

Making claims about the desire of the so-called “collective West” to dominate global politics or even subjugate other countries is a tactic designed to evoke fear, outrage, and anger. Such claims also represent an attempt to falsely link past realities (i.e., historical colonization by Western powers) with current circumstances. This tactic is inherently manipulative, eliciting strong emotions that may make it difficult for audiences to process information in a way that is objective and rational.

Note Verbale #44, submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2021)

Annex 1

On the situation around the incident with the Russian citizen Alexey Navalny

Germany, with active support of the United States, Britain, France, Sweden and some other countries is aggressively pushing a far-fetched version that the above-mentioned blogger was allegedly “poisoned” with some toxic chemical from the group of chemical compounds that Western countries tend to call “Novichok”. The leadership of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which discredited itself by falsifying reports on chemical provocations by Syrian anti-government forces and their foreign sponsors, has not remained uninvolved in these anti-Russian activities. At the same time, the fact that it was the Russian Federation which undertook everything possible to save Alexey Navalny’s life and get him by air to Germany in accordance with his wife’s wish, without hindrance or delay, is cynically disregarded.

Claiming that certain states—and the OPCW in general—have an “anti-Russian” agenda is a common tactic designed to elicit sympathy for Russia and fear about the functioning and impartiality of the OPCW. The additional statement about Russia doing “everything possible” to ensure Navalny’s safety and to respect his wife’s wishes is another attempt to garner sympathy and arouse feelings of outrage for Russia’s alleged mistreatment

Discrediting Inspection and Assistance Mechanisms:

Disputing or questioning the validity of inspection and assistance mechanisms, including OPCW-led technical assistance visits and fact-finding missions



What does this commonly used tactic look like in documents submitted to the OPCW?

Note Verbale #15, submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2025)

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Regarding the Note by the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the Technical Assistance Visit to Ukraine (S/2370/2025 of 14 February 2025)

Paragraph 3 of the report stated that "[t]he TAV team ... received nine environmental samples collected by Ukraine..." But the most vital point for maintaining the chain of custody under the OPCW standards is the requirement for the physical evidence and samples subject to further analysis to be collected by the inspection team engaged in the investigation and not by any third parties, let alone the party concerned. In this case the OPCW Technical Secretariat accepted alleged evidence of RCA use from the party concerned – i.e. “the Ukrainian experts”. Such an approach clearly reminds of similar cases of staging real facts in Ukraine’s favour.

In addition, the reasons why the TAV team avoided going directly to the sites of the reported incidents and taking samples on sites are not specified. This is particularly strange as the report does not refer to the circumstances that precluded such a visit.

Claiming that OPCW activities (in this case, a technical assistance visit or TAV) were conducted improperly or that associated reports were based on falsified or “staged” evidence is a common tactic designed to undermine the credibility of the OPCW. Russia regularly accuses OPCW investigatory teams of improper procedures. While the samples from the 2025 TAV were collected by Ukraine, the report states that the sampling procedure was “in line with international standards” and that the TAV team was able to confirm that the chain of custody had been maintained.

Given active conflict in the region, the circumstances precluding the TAV team from conducting its own sampling are self evident.

Note Verbale #759, submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2019)

COMMENTARIES ON THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE REPORT OF THE FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN SYRIA REGARDING THE ALLEGED USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN DOUMA ON 7 APRIL 2018

(e) Paragraph 8.73 of the Report reads: "The FFM could not establish the precise number of casualties; however, some sources reported that it ranged between 70 and 500. Others sources denied the presence of chemically-related casualties".

However, paragraph 8.74 and, further, conclusions of the FFM activities indicate that the number of dead in relation to alleged chemical exposure is reported by a number of witnesses to be 43, including men, women, adults, and children.

The Report provides no documentary evidence or grounds for that number of victims.

Based on interviews of witnesses and compilation of witness interview data, the number of dead/casualties does not correlate with the quantities of the alleged means of use of chlorine that were found.

This document represents another attempt to undermine an OPCW report, this time the report from a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Syria.

Identifying apparent “discrepancies” in OPCW reports is a tactic designed to arouse suspicion and mistrust of the organization and its affiliated experts. However, the report is simply providing estimates of the number of casualties (including fatalities and injuries) according to different witnesses. There is nothing suspicious or inherently contradictory about these numbers.

As stated above, the report did not provide an exact number of casualties, so this statement is nonsensical.

Fake Mirroring:

Accusing another state of what you yourself have been accused of (and have likely done/are doing)



What does this commonly used tactic look like in documents submitted to the OPCW?

Note Verbale #38, submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2023)

NOTE VERBALE FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE OPCW DATED 12 OCTOBER 2023

The Russian Federation has repeatedly pointed out that the wrongful accusations brought against the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation of alleged plans to use, including "under a false flag", chemical weapons or toxic chemicals for CWC prohibited purposes in the special military operation zone, are absolutely groundless. Moreover, this kind of insinuation indicates the intention of the Euro-Atlantic allies, their satellites and accomplices to carry out provocations involving toxic chemicals in order to blame the Russian Federation for these crimes afterwards. A similar scenario has already been test run many times in the Syrian Arab Republic by the intelligence services of NATO countries

Russia's attempt to accuse the US and Europe of exactly what Russia itself was accused of (i.e., staging a false flag operation using chemical weapons) is a tactic designed to sow confusion and minimize the impact of the original allegations brought against Russia. This tactic effectively muddies the information environment, making it difficult to determine which allegation is true and which is false.

Aide Memoire submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2018)

REQUEST FOR CIRCULATION OF A DOCUMENT AT THE EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

AIDE-MEMOIRE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Russian Federation resolutely rejects the groundless accusations of its involvement in the poisoning by toxic chemicals in Salisbury in March 2018 of the Russian citizens Sergei and Yulia Skripal reiterated anew by Prime Minister Theresa May in her speech to the British parliament on September 5. We call on the British side to show restraint. We reaffirm our readiness to hold consultations in accordance with the bilateral Consular Convention of December 2, 1965 and the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of April 20, 1959.

The name "Novichok" itself, as well as data on the structure and mass spectrum of the relevant chemical compound began to surface in foreign specialized scientific literature and applied databases owing to certain Soviet defectors who had only an indirect connection to the former USSR chemical warfare programme. Furthermore, similar research activities have been conducted in a number of other States, including Great Britain and more specifically the laboratory of the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom in Porton Down. The latter has special significance in terms of understanding what is going on over the London-staged "Skripal case" and the subsequent incident in Amesbury involving British citizens.

This document represents another attempt by Russia to deflect blame by accusing others (in this case, the UK government) of the very crimes it has committed. The document also represents an attempt to re-write history: though Russia claims there is only an "indirect connection" between the Novichok nerve agents and the Soviet chemical weapons program, these agents were in fact developed under the Soviet chemical weapons program.

Flooding the Zone:

Flooding the information environment with numerous, repetitive allegations, often using a standard template



What does this commonly used tactic look like in documents submitted to the OPCW?

Note Verbale #68 (Annex 2), submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2024)

On the Continuing Use of Toxic Chemicals by Ukrainian Armed Formations

In August 2022 one of the leaders of a Russian region was hospitalised with signs of acute poisoning. As part of forensic chemical and toxicological examinations, the Laboratory of the 27th Scientific Centre of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation carried out the identification of toxic substances in blood samples of the affected person, as a result of which the presence of ricin was established in them.

Also in August 2022 the fact of poisoning of five servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation carrying out tasks in the zone of the SMO was registered. Three of them died as a result of poisoning. Tests conducted allowed to identify the presence of narcotic and psychotropic substances and an analogue of BZ in the blood of affected persons.

In February 2023 a poisoning of seven servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation after the meal was registered in the zone of the SMO. Tests revealed the presence of markers of hydrocyanic acid and cyanogen chloride included in Schedule 3 of the Annex on Chemicals of the CWC.

In this document, numerous successive allegations are listed using a similar format (an allegation of “poisoning” followed by claims that prohibited chemicals were found in blood or other samples). Notice that essential details are not provided about how those samples were collected or what analytic methods were used to test for the prohibited chemicals. This tactic is designed to overwhelm audiences while simultaneously giving the impression that Russia’s claims are numerous enough to be legitimate.

Note Verbale #68 (Annex 1), submitted by the Russian Federation to the OPCW (2024)

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

On the Use (Preparation for the Use) of Toxic Chemicals Against Civil Population, Officials and Servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation by Ukraine

1. Note Verbale No. 5 of the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW dated March 10, 2022, transmitting the National Document of the Russian Federation entitled “Regarding potential chemical provocations in Ukraine”.

2. Note Verbale No. 6 of the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW dated March 22, 2022 on the pre-planned chemical provocation by the Ukrainian armed forces in the city of Sumy at the “Sumykhimprom” chemical plant causing a leak of ammonium on March 21, 2022, as well as on the preparation of provocation with toxic chemicals by Ukrainian militants in the village of Kotlyarovo in the Nykolaev Region in order to blame subsequently the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

3. Note Verbale No. 7 of the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW dated March 30, 2022 on the preparation of provocation by Ukrainian nationalists, i.e. explosive destruction of railway tankers containing chlorine with a capacity of up to 800 tonnes (Kochetok, 15 kilometres northeast of the city of Chuguyev in the Kharkov Region).

4. Note Verbale No. 9 of the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW dated April 6, 2022 on the explosive destruction by the Ukrainian armed forces of tankers containing hazardous substances on the territory of a factory in the city of Rubezhnoye, the Lugansk People's Republic.

In the same note verbale as above (but included in separate annex), Russia lists 29 previous notes verbales. This is another attempt to overwhelm Russia’s target audiences and inflate the legitimacy of its false claims.