

U.K. Judge: Suspect in Litvinenko Death Can Testify at Inquiry

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The  **Moscow Times**

One of the main suspects in the poisoning of ex-Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko can testify by video link at an inquiry into the death, the judge in charge said Monday. ☒ Judge Robert Owen said he was willing to grant Dmitry Kovtun "core participant" status at the inquiry. He said Kovtun could testify July 27 provided he meets conditions, including submitting a full witness statement. ☒

Litvinenko, a KGB officer-turned-Kremlin critic, died after drinking tea laced with radioactive polonium-210 at a London hotel in 2006. ☒

British police have accused two Russian men — Kovtun and Andrei Lugovoi — of the killing. Both deny involvement, and Russia refuses to extradite them. ☒

Earlier this month Kovtun contacted the inquiry, offering to take part. ☒

Owen criticized his delay, saying "this application could and should have been made months ago." ☒

Kovtun's application will postpone the end of the inquiry. Public hearings had been due to finish this week. ☒

Lugovoi has declined to appear, accusing the inquiry of attempting to "whitewash" the involvement of British intelligence in Litvinenko's death. ☒

On his deathbed, Litvinenko accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of ordering his assassination, and Britain has also alleged that the Russian state was involved.

☒The killing soured British-Russian relations for years, and the investigation into the death stalled — first because Russia refused to hand over the suspects, then because British authorities would not disclose classified intelligence evidence.

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