

Russia is COVERING UP the killing of Boris Nemtsov, claims former aide to Vladimir Putin

A FORMER senior aide to Vladimir Putin has accused the authorities of staging a cover-up over the killing of Boris Nemtsov.

By Aaron Brown

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Russian scientist and liberal politician Mr Nemtsov was shot in the back four times in February as he walked hand-in-hand with his girlfriend, Ukrainian model Anna Durytska in Red Square.

The unknown gunman leapt a barrier into the road and got into a waiting light-coloured car. Mr Nemtsov was pronounced dead at the scene.

But his former economics aide Andrei Illarionov has claimed Russian authorities are seeking to COVER-UP the fatal crime.

"At the very least, from the moment of Boris Nemtsov's murder, the authorities have taken extraordinary efforts to prevent the transparent investigation of this crime," he said.

Their aim appeared to be to muddy the waters, he said, as opposition figures fear a state role in the shooting.

"Given their efforts, it is very unlikely the killers will be found," he said.

Mr Illarionov alleges the Russian authorities have threatened Mr Nemtsov's girlfriend so that she says she "didn't see anything, doesn't remember anything" – despite being beside him when he was shot.

The former aide has also claimed security cameras in the area were switched off at the time of the shooting – although this has been denied by Moscow city council.

A snow vehicle driver, who was in the area at the time of the killing, spoke on a pro-Kremlin television channel today, saying: "I saw in the rear-view mirror that a man was lying on the pavement.

"I stopped to offer my help. A girl ran towards me, she was shouting 'please help'. Of course, she was hysterical. She could not dial a phone number, because she was in hysteria."

He then went on: "I made a call from her mobile, I dialled 112, we called the police and ambulance.

"I did not wait for them. I had a job to do, there is a schedule, so I drove off."

Second woman claims she was dating Boris Nemtsov as funeral for murdered politician held

For reasons not explained by the broadcaster, the interview was filmed in two separate locations, outside a government building, and in the yard of an apartment block.

He sped from the scene "driving at full speed", said Mr Illarionov, now a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington.

However, "he didn't keep cleaning the road as he said," added Mr Illarionov.

Many amateur sleuths online have questioned whether – with his unemotional statement, well-groomed appearance, and expensive glasses – he was in fact ever a snow vehicle driver.

Russia has remained very quiet throughout the investigation into the high-profile killing.

Mr Putin today said: "We must pay the greatest attention to crimes that prompt a major reaction, including those that are politically charged.

"We must rid Russia of disgrace and tragedies like the one we just saw. I am referring to the audacious murder of Boris Nemtsov right in the centre of the capital."

When asked about the progress of the investigation and whether investigators had identified any suspects, FSB secret service chief Aleksandr Bortnikov simply said "there are always some".