

Novichok : Jigsaw Exercise

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Goal: To appreciate role of science in international disputes

Objectives :

- 1) To encourage discussion about the importance of evidence**
- 2) To demonstrate one pedagogical approach for discussions**

Case outline

A former Russian spy (Sergei Skripal) and his daughter (Yulia) are admitted to Salisbury (UK) District Hospital unconscious on 4 March 2018. When found, one had been sick, both had difficulty breathing and Sergei had a glassy stare. A drug overdose is suspected. A policeman admitted later displays some similar symptoms. Nerve agent poisoning now suspected. This is confirmed. A Novichok-type agent is found in blood samples and later, environmental samples. The UK Government accuses Russia of using a chemical weapon against it. Russia refutes claim. A very public war of words ensues. Areas cordoned off in Salisbury.

Exercise Plan

- Participants form groups of 4,5, 6 individuals
- Groups should comprise individuals who do not normally work together
- Group roles allocated and scenario explained
- Groups discuss their position (15-20 min)
- Groups mix to form new groups with one member from each group; views exchanged (20 min)
- Reconvene in original group. Have positions/views changed? (10-15 min)
- Group feedback to all participants
- If time allows, original groups reconvene, decide positions, mix again but with different individuals and repeat exercise.

Group allocations

- Group 1 - UK Government (scientists/politicians/police)
- Group 2 - Russian Government (scientists/politicians/police)
- Group 3 - UK public (in Salisbury, UK)
- Group 4 - OPCW (neutral broker)
- Group 5 - European Union/other countries
- Group 6 - Scientists (International/academies)

Your roles

In your groups discuss what you would do:

- What actions should the UK Government take? What should Russia do? What evidence might/should be shared?
- UK effectively accusing Russia of possessing chemical weapons illegally, yet in November 2017 Russia confirmed destruction (under OPCW supervision) of some 40,000 tonnes of declared chemical weapons.
- How should OPCW/other countries/organisations act? What is the risk to others?

“Jigsaw exercise”

UK Gov

Russian Gov

UK public

OPCW

EU / others

Scientists

A B C

A B C

A B C

A B C

A B C

A B C

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Group 4

Group 5

Group 6

D E F

D E F

D E F

D E F

D E F

D E F

A A A
A A A

B B B
B B B

C C C
C C C

D D D
D D D

E E E
E E E

F F F
F F F

A B C

A B C

A B C

A B C

A B C

A B C

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Group 4

Group 5

Group 6

D E F

D E F

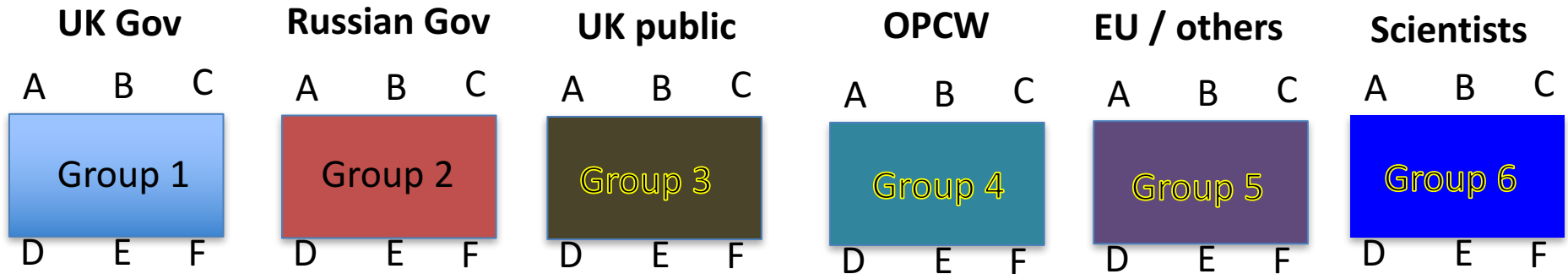
D E F

D E F

D E F

D E F

Step 1: become experts at your group table in these areas



Step 2: Share your information with
a *new* group made of 6 combined experts

Ask challenging questions, confront the
problems, ask for solutions

A	A	A
A	A	A

B	B	B
B	B	B

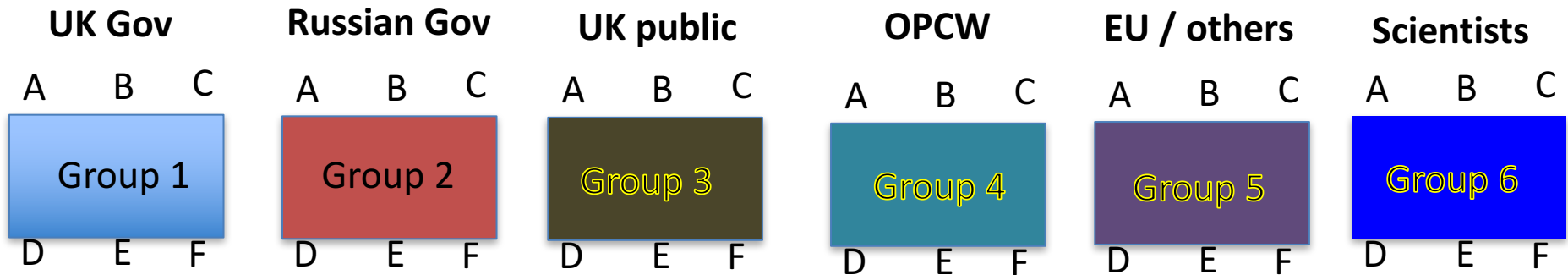
C	C	C
C	C	C

D	D	D
D	D	D

E	E	E
E	E	E

F	F	F
F	F	F

Step 3: Go back to your original group and share with them what happened in your combined experts group



Outcomes

- Groups report to plenary on their position
- What would you do? Or do differently following discussions?
- Could things have been done differently from the start with science/scientists playing more prominent roles?

Case outline

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Case outline cont'd

- UK seeks support of partners. UK expels 23 Russian diplomats; Russia expels UK diplomats and closes British Council offices. 28 other Western Governments expel Russian diplomats. Russia asks to be involved in UK investigations, but UK refuses. UK invites OPCW to confirm findings which OPCW does, and issues report to all 192 member governments, but not the public. Heated arguments in OPCW Executive Council. Extensive clean-up operation in Salisbury.
- All 3 victims survive: Policeman discharged from hospital 22 March; Yulia 10 April; Sergei 18 May.

Case outline cont'd

- 4 months later (30 June) a man and woman, resident 7 miles away (Amesbury) admitted to Salisbury hospital. Drug overdose suspected. A few days later Novichok poisoning confirmed as cause. On 8 July, Dawn Sturgess dies. Charlie Rowley discharged 20 July. Subsequently says found sealed perfume bottle in wrapper which looked like perfume. Gave this days later to Dawn who, allegedly, applied it to both wrists. 15 minutes later Dawn unwell. UK again accuses Russia; Russia dismisses accusation. OPCW again involved.

Resources

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- Hay, Alastair. Nerve Agent: Who controls the world's most toxic chemicals? BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43431537> 20 March 2018
- OPCW Issues Report on Technical Assistance Requested by the United Kingdom <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2018/04/opcw-issues-report-technical-assistance-requested-united-kingdom>
- Novichok used in spy poisoning, chemical weapons watchdog confirms <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/12/novichok-used-in-spy-poisoning-chemical-weapons-watchdog-confirms-salisbury>
- Hay, Alastair. Novichok: Why nerve agent stays deadly for so long - BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-44778697> 11 July 2018
- Salisbury poisoning: Police 'identify Novichok suspects' - BBC News <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-44883803>
- Novichok poisoning: Identity of suspect 'revealed' - News.com.au <https://www.news.com.au/.../novichok...as.../1385d2065703c4f07ff3be84d2d90432>

Resources

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<https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2018/04/opcw-issues-report-technical-assistance-requested-united-kingdom>
- CWC Conference of the States Parties Adopts Decision Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use
<https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2018/06/cwc-conference-states-parties-adopts-decision-addressing-threat-chemical>
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- Statement from the British Council on Russia
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/press/statement-british-council-russia>
- All the countries expelling Russian diplomats – CNN
<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/26/europe/...russian-diplomats-expelled.../index.html>
- Novichok victim found substance disguised as perfume in sealed box
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/24/novichok-victim-ill-within-15-minutes-says-partner>
- Novichok: Murder inquiry after Dawn Sturgess dies - BBC News
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44760875>
- Novichok victim Charlie Rowley says poison could still kill him
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/09/novichok-victim-charlie-rowley-says-poison-could-still-kill-him>