Twitter Thread by Bellingcat

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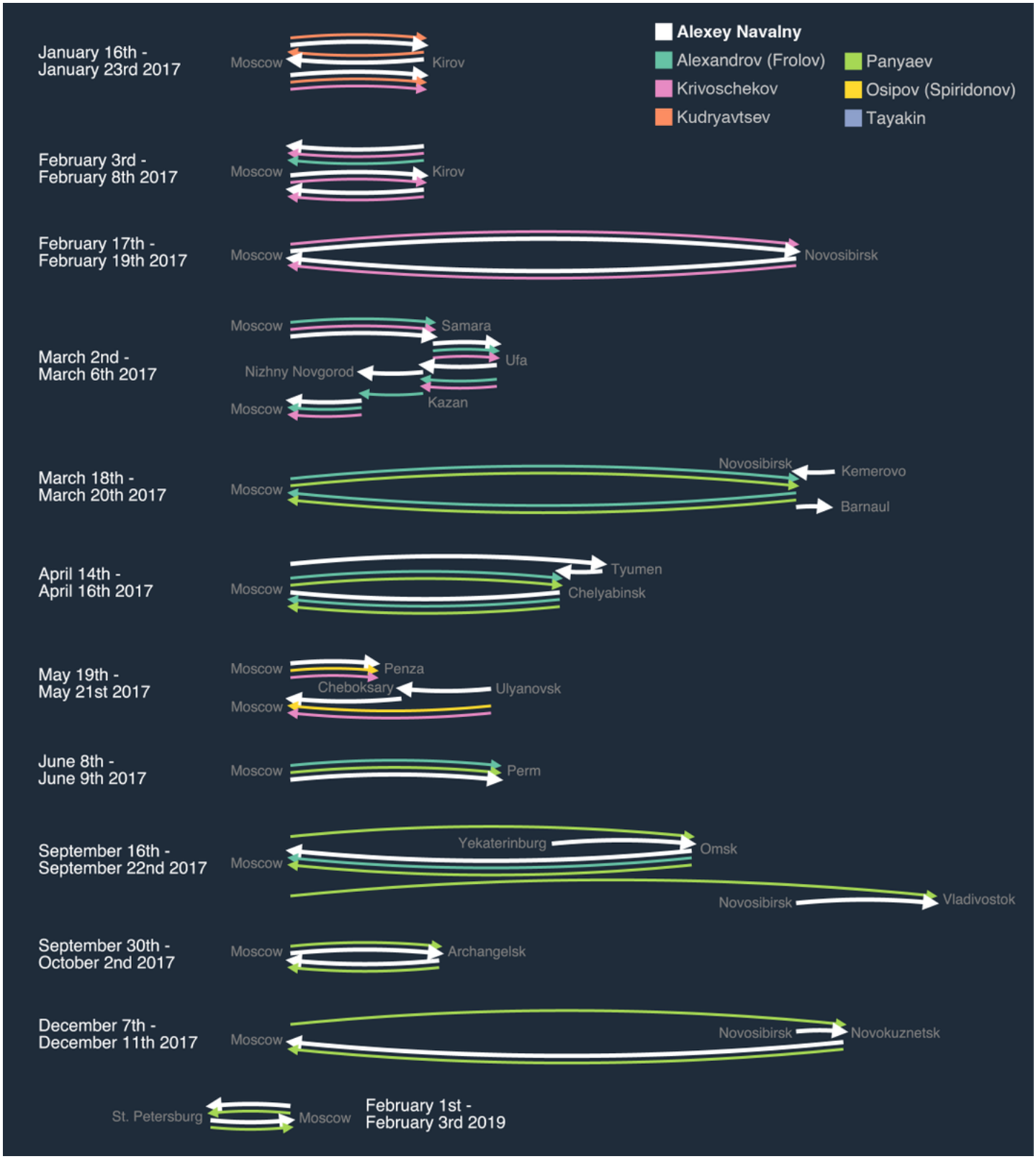
A joint investigation between Bellingcat and The Insider, in cooperation with Der Spiegel and CNN, has discovered voluminous telecom and travel data that implicates Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) in the poisoning of Alexey Navalny.

The August 2020 poisoning in the Siberian city of Tomsk appears to have happened after years of surveillance, which began in 2017 shortly after Navalny first announced his intention to run for president of Russia.

Data shows that operatives from a clandestine FSB unit, specialized in working with poisonous substances, shadowed Navalny during his trips across Russia in 2017, 2019 and 2020, traveling alongside him on more than 30 overlapping flights to the same destinations.



Navalny also believes he was victim of previous poisoning attempts, including one in the Western Russian city of Kaliningrad only a month before the near-fatal Novichok poisoning in Siberia.

Our investigation identified three FSB operatives from this clandestine unit who traveled alongside Navalny to Novosibirsk and then followed him to the city of Tomsk where he was ultimately poisoned.

These operatives, two of whom traveled under cover identities, are Alexey Alexandrov (40), Ivan Osipov (44) - both medical doctors - and Vladimir Panyaev (40).

These three were supported and supervised by at least five more FSB operatives, some of whom also traveled to Omsk, where Navalny had been hospitalized. Members of the unit communicated with one another throughout the trip.

There were sudden peaks of communication just before the poisoning as well as during the night-time hours (Moscow time) when Navalny left his hotel and headed to the Tomsk airport.

In the course of this investigation, Bellingcat and its partners also uncovered data pointing to the existence of a clandestine chemical weapons program operated by this sub-unit of the FSB.

The unit appears to report to a scientist who previously worked in Russia's military chemical weapons program in Shikhany, where nerve agents from the Novichok family were originally developed. This scientist is Col. Stanislav Makshakov

Our investigation also unearthed telecoms and travel data that strongly suggests the August poisoning attempt on Navalny's life was mandated at the highest echelons of the Kremlin.

This investigation is particularly important due to the legal vacuum in which no country other than Russia – the country implicated in the assassination attempt – has offered its jurisdiction for an official investigation into Navalny's near-fatal poisoning.

Read the full article here: https://t.co/ACbA2gkV2H

And read this piece on how we conducted the investigation here: https://t.co/0FXY6ln00F