

Order to “major” investigative offices turns 300 on 9 December



A significant date in the history of Russian investigative job is 9 December, when “major” investigative offices were legally established in 1717.

It was the Order issued that day that made preliminary investigation into an independent stage of criminal proceedings.

Not made public at the time of publishing and therefore not included in “The complete code of laws of the Russian Empire since 1649” in 1830, the Order to “major” investigative offices was forgotten for almost two hundred years. However, its norms that had gotten implanted in the investigative system, remained unmatched up until “The Order to Judicial Investigators” published in 1860.

Historically speaking, the Order to “major” offices is a truly unique document, because along with norms establishing specialized investigative bodies, it contained norms of procedural law which are

so similar to the modern-day criminal procedure law. Validating the powers of investigative offices, structure of bill of indictment, formerly known as a “sentence”, and the most important principle of separating investigation and court, which is a fundamental principle for any democratic state today, became the beginning of a whole age in the history of Russian investigation. The “major” offices that under the Order were responsible directly to the head of state can be seen as a prototype of the modern-day Investigative Committee.

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