

Russian Investigative Committee sums up Volunteer Year, intend further strengthening of volunteer cooperation



December 5 celebrates International Volunteer Day. For Russia, the date has twice the significance, for the President of the Russian Federation announced 2018 as the Volunteer Year. Labour of love, helpfulness, timeliness, and accurate coordination of volunteers saved more than one life - in challenging moments of life they help those who are in trouble and left without support.

Recognising the importance of this institution both in Russia and worldwide, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation pays special attention to its development during its work. Since times aplenty proved volunteer rescue groups their effectiveness and pertinence.

For instance, the Investigative Committee of Russia has a lively cooperation with Lisa Alert search groups; Missing Children Search volunteer association; Piter-Search, a regional public organisation; Legion public movement; and others.

With support of the Investigative Committee, the 1st All-Russian Volunteer Search and Rescue Forum was held in summer 2018, attended by Andrey Belousov, Aide of the Russian President; Vladimir Kolokoltsev, Minister of Internal Affairs of Russia; Anna Kuznetsova, Children's Rights Commissioner for the Russian President; and others. Forum participants recalled how hard it had been to create an organised volunteer movement in Russia. The tragic death of Liza Fomkina in Moscow Region eight years ago showed that there are a lot of gaps in missing people search activities. At the time, the investigation launched upon instruction of Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin established that law enforcement had been groundlessly delaying search activities, for they have been engaged in guarding of a festive event. It had been volunteers who found the girl and her aunt, already gone, several days after that. Then the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation had initiated a discussion on both the active involvement of volunteer organisations and the missing people procedure regulation by state institutions in charge of said matters.

Upon initiative of the Investigative Committee, a meeting with representatives of volunteer organisations had been held where they had set key areas of cooperation. That had made it possible to identify the regulatory gap that existed at that time in organising the joint work of law enforcement agencies, rescuers and volunteer organisations, which rightly had been making it difficult to involve representatives of the latter in conducting searches and inspections of incidents.

As a result, in May 2018, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, together with representatives of the public and interested government agencies, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Defence, and the National Guard, signed a regulatory act on the interaction algorithm of state bodies, volunteer organisations and volunteers in organising and implementing search for missing persons, including minors. The document was introduced to all Regional Directorates of the Investigative Committee of Russia.

Analysis of criminal cases and conducted pre-investigation probes on missing people, especially minors, showed that the exact execution of the requirements of this document in most cases provided for finding of the missing alive and unharmed or for identifying the persons who committed or attempted to commit a crime as soon as possible. For instance, the total of **18,172 people, including 6,221 minors**, was reported missing in the first 6 months of 2018. Most of said citizens were found alive, an investigators of the Investigative Committee of Russia opened investigations into offences against **the 183 deceased, including 4 minors**.

The time factor plays an important role in search activities, so investigators of the Committee are tasked to immediately respond to all reports of missing children.

For instance, due to the timely actions of law enforcement officers and volunteers, a child missing from the territory of a household in Lipetsk Region was found, as well as a minor who voluntarily left an outpatient clinic in Khabarovsk Territory. On November 23, in Perm Region, two boys lost their way in the forest, but thanks to the coordinated actions of the Russian Investigative Committee,

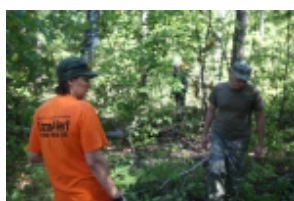
the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and volunteers, the children were found alive despite the difficult weather conditions and the dark time of day. They were located by local hunters. Also, a missing 2-year-old child was found in Chuvashia.

Grievously that sometimes the tragedy happens despite the efforts of law enforcement and volunteers. For instance, active search could not save a missing 7-year-old boy murdered in Kursk Region in October 2018; a similar tragedy happened in Moscow Region in summer 2018, with a girl murdered. Kalimat Omarova missing from Dagestan was found dead too, though searched for by law enforcement together with hundreds of volunteers.

In order to prevent such emergencies, the Chairman of the Russian Investigative Committee holds regular meetings with representatives of volunteer organisations, taking into account their proposals for improving the quality of search activities. The parties have a common position on the fact that the most important thing is the proper training of volunteers and the use of proven equipment in successful searches. At the moment, search for missing people is conducted with forensic equipment of officers of the Investigative Committee; mobile groups of forensic investigators have been formed, able to quickly arrive in the shortest possible time to all subjects of the Russian Federation and provide practical assistance.

Summing up the results of the outgoing Volunteer Year, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation expresses gratitude to all citizens who, sparing no effort and time, participate in volunteer activities. This is a very necessary, socially significant, and, most importantly, efficient activity.

Изображения





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