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Interview of Alexander Bastrykin, Chairman of Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, to Rossiyskaya Gazeta



Who Is To Investigate?

Alexander Bastrykin on improving the quality of investigations and reducing the time expenditure

In the interview to Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin talks about changes launched in the Committee.



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Alexander Ivanovich, what is the specific character of investigation of nowadays crimes? They are indeed different from crimes of the past in many ways.

Alexander Bastrykin: With every year, the number of complex, large-scale, multi-episode criminal cases, the materials of which make up hundreds of volumes, increases. The most significant of the recently investigated are the cases into offences committed by regional Governors - Khoroshavin, Gaizer, Belykh; by member of the Federation Council Tsybko; by former Minister of Economic Development Ulyukaev; by Deputy Chief of the T Directorate of the General Administration for Economic Security and Combating Corruption of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Zakharchenko; as well as the cases into large-scale thefts in the space and energy sectors of the country.

Such a job does not provide for days off and fixed working hours, I guess.

Alexander Bastrykin: With such a high amount of work and high responsibility, with investigators having to work for a long time without taking intervals to rest, on weekends, often in difficult and unfavourable situations, the need has arisen to optimize their load.

I wonder how it is to be done.

Alexander Bastrykin: It has been decided to gradually increase the number of investigators, both in the central administration and in the territorial branches of the Investigative Committee.

The number of investigators reporting to the chairman of the Investigative Committee will increase, and the staff of the Main Investigative Directorate will increase as well.

Bearing in mind that investigative work in the Central Office involves frequent work trips, and sometimes investigators are at their workplaces round the clock, we're working on issues related to social support for investigators and their families.

Also, we will add more units to regional investigative bodies of the Investigative Committee, where the number of posts of investigators will increase to 55% of the staff within the established staff size and increase budget allocations.

We will take the expert and forensic support of the investigation all the way up to a new level.

Your critics often mention how very long the investigations are. It is largely associated with examinations since a queue for complex examinations may be months long.

Alexander Bastrykin: Indeed, it is no secret that examinations for complex crimes, especially the economic ones, take very long time and are performed in side expert institutions. We believe, the



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means to resolve the issue is to increase the number of experts on economic, financial, construction, and other examinations, in the Federal Districts.

Thus, we will be able to reduce the time spent on examinations and, therefore, the length of the preliminary investigation. But here it's important to emphasize that we're making these changes within the current staff size; that is, we are not talking about increasing the staff of the Investigative Committee.

How do you intend to develop your forensics service?

Alexander Bastrykin: There is a decreasing number of crimes that can be solved without the assistance of forensics experts. This is why we pay special attention to the development of the forensics service of the Investigative Committee.

The active work of the Main Forensics Directorate - the Forensics Centre - on increasing of the territorial forensics units efficiency had been contributing to the sustainable growth of the clearance rate for grave and especially grave offences against person for several years. In the last three years, the clearance target has been reached in 35 regions, including the Republics of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan; Krasnodar and Perm Territories; Irkutsk, Moscow, and Sverdlovsk Regions.

Last year, experts of the Investigative Committee of Russia performed over 30,000 examinations and studies, including over 2,500 by the Forensics Centre. We are going to keep the development of this essential area of our expertise.

To do that, the Central Office designed the Forensics Development Strategy of the Investigative Committee for 2018-2025. It is exceptionally practical and sets major principles, tasks, and development stages for all forensics units in the Investigative Committee system.

Some of our readers may be guessing what the Forensics Centre does.

Alexander Bastrykin: First of all, I have to underline that creation of such centre in the structure of the Investigative Committee was an important step of the forensics development. At the moment, the Centre timely tackles the tasks that involve field visits to crime scenes to provide practical and methodological assistance in preliminary investigative activities.

We are planning to form and maintain databases for forensics and expert accounting and forensics information. Now it's more than ever necessary to implement new advanced investigative methods and technologies along with new research methods.

Therefore, the structure of the Centre is completed with the Research and Development Directorate - the Forensics Research Institute. It will conduct extensive research in the fields of methods and



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tactics of crime solving and crime investigation, technical and expert forensic assistance of investigation for the Investigative Committee and other law enforcement authorities, organizations and institutions.

The research component is one of our key priorities. That's why we actively engage our colleagues from leading Russian universities in joint work.

Who cooperates with the Committee?

Alexander Bastrykin: We keep developing our interaction with the Moscow State University in narrower terms aimed at specific tasks under our cooperation agreement. We are planning to sign a relevant cooperation agreement between the Forensics Centre, the Moscow State University Forensics Department, and the Moscow Academy of the Investigative Committee of Russia. The work under the agreement will empower us to use scientific ideas in development of the newest forensic methods and equipment for their implementation into practice.

Do you have enough staff to implement all these ideas?

Alexander Bastrykin: We already have an institutional educational system that partially meets our demand for investigative officers. As you know, we created the Moscow Academy of the Investigative Committee of Russia on a basis of the Investigative Committee Institute for Advanced Training. Two institutional academies are already operating - one in Moscow and one in Saint Petersburg, along with six faculties for advanced training. Relevant units have been tasked with development of regional universities. Therefore, we are planning to reorganize faculties for advanced training that are operating in the regions into branches of our academies.

This will expand our opportunities to train personnel with basic specialized education. If all of this is implemented successfully, several years after the Investigative Committee units will be staffed entirely with graduates of institutional universities.

There are a lot of young people in the Investigative Committee team. How much time does an average officer need to adapt and start working at the level of their more experienced colleagues?

Alexander Bastrykin: Above all, the young officers of the Investigative Committee have a special mission no one else can fulfil. They are to inherit experience obtained by many previous generations of investigators and to form an image of the future system of the Investigative Committee.

Two years ago we created the Young Investigators Council to receive information on problems they face at initial stages of work as investigators directly from the young specialists.



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All this data is accumulated by the Educational Outreach Directorate responsible to take all necessary measures to create favourable working conditions for the young investigators.

We initiated creation of Council of Heroes of the Investigative Committee and the National Association of investigative veterans organizations called “Union of Investigation Veterans” which is currently comprised of over 2000 people. These organizations contribute significantly to upbringing and training of the young investigators.

However, I’m sure that the most effective way to form a professional investigator is to engage him into real investigative work. There is no substitute for personal experience. This is why we adhere closely to a combination of a high degree of confidence in our young generation with an able support and strengthened responsibility for deeds and acts.

As for the average time it takes young investigators that just graduated from universities to adapt to their investigative teams, this is individual for everyone; but in average it lasts for up to 18 months.

It will take less time as our educational institutions develop and their graduates join the Committee. The quality of work will also benefit since our educational system is focused on specific investigative tasks.

So, you intend to train personnel for your own needs, don’t you? Who are you going to give preference to?

Alexander Bastrykin: From their student years, our students are provided not only with theoretical basis but also with practical skills of investigative work to form the basis of their future qualified professional performance. We try to avoid young people coming to our academies to get a diploma and return to civilian life. The whole education process is aimed to prepare the students for responsible state service; and I have instructed to select future students more rigorously, giving preference to children of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

I shall specify that we have a great tradition of securing intergenerational resilience and sharing experience with the young officers. Today, many veterans stand next to us and help their young colleagues in word and deed.

What would you say if I ask how successfully your Committee tackles tasks set when it had been created?

Alexander Bastrykin: The Investigative Committee of Russia started functioning independently on January 15, 2011. The results of our work demonstrate that, in general, our Committee successfully meets the tasks of investigating especially grave offences, securing and restoration of legitimate rights and interests of our citizens.



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Thus, from 2011 till now, investigators of the Investigative Committee have sent to the court over 720,000 criminal cases including almost 70,000 into offences involving corruption. Over 8,000 persons with a special legal status have been brought to justice under these investigations. Over 230 billion roubles have been reimbursed to the government and to the victims of the offences during preliminary investigations and procedural probes.

During the period of work of the Investigative Committee, the clearance rate for murders and other especially grave offences has significantly improved to exceed the 90% level.

We have been doing our utmost to solve past years crimes. In 2007, when the Investigative Committee had been created as a part of the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation, it had received over 200,000 unsolved criminal cases from the Prosecutor's Office.

This number had significantly decreased due to intense development of forensic units of our Committee.

In 10 years of work, the investigators of the Investigative Committee together with their colleagues from the Ministry of the Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service managed to solve almost 70,000 crimes which had been previously suspended.

Our achievements would have been impossible without the sound analytical work and timely management decisions that are promptly made in accordance with the crime situation.

Your subordinates are also engaged in solving crimes outside Russia.

Alexander Bastrykin: Yes, we immediately launch probes into the Ukrainian Armed Forces committing grave and especially grave offences involving crimes against the peace and security of mankind in the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics.

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