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## **Interview of Vladimir Markin, the Head of Media Relations Directorate of the Investigative Committee to Interfax**



Today we find common language with journalists

Vladimir Markin, Major-General of Justice and the Head of Media Relations Directorate of the Investigative Committee told Interfax about work of the agency and investigation of high-profile cases.

Today the Russia's Investigative Committee (SK) is marking its second "Independence day". Two years ago SK turned into independent state agency and over the past time has become one of the most frequently cited in media security and law enforcement agencies. On this remarkable for the agency day Vladimir Markin, Major-General of Justice and the Head of Media Relations Directorate of the Investigative Committee told Interfax about work of the Committee, "secrets of craftsmanship" and investigation of high-profile cases.

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- Mr. Markin, the Investigative Committee recently has become one of the most recognizable security and law enforcement agencies. What is the secret PR technology of your department?

- The point is not in technologies. The secret is pretty simple: all our work is open. Our aim is to give news, but we are not a PR agency. To be more detailed our aim is to honestly and openly provide public with timely and precise information about SK activities. We provide only the information the trustworthiness of which is impossible to question. And the task of the directorate I head is to provide maximum amount of information about work of our investigators so that people understand what the Investigative Committee does and that it does it openly. But this maximum transparency by itself has no less important function – prevention of crimes.

- Principle of transparency and feedback with public is declared by many agencies. But not everybody is good with that in practice.

- It's not empty words for us. The main task of the Investigative Committee is derived from the task of an investigator – to find the truth. And our task is to deliver the truth to the public and make it in easy-to-understand form. Our directorate uses the strategy of full and impartial reporting, analyses materials of media to see how needed and efficient our work is. One more exclusive task is to find in media reports about crimes which are subject to be checked by SK. This way, the results of the monitoring show that over 9 months of 2012 alone there were registered 314 reports about crimes published by media.

For example, on 15 February 2012, a news agency site published an article reporting that in Rostov-on-Don schoolchildren held a man who offered them sexual relations. Based on the results of the pre-investigating check investigators launched criminal proceedings against Vadim Ivanov held by schoolchildren over lecherous actions. At the moment the case is already pending in the court.

Two more sentences were passed over criminal cases launched over media reports by the Tomsk Region Investigations Directorate and Main Military Investigations Directorate. On 6 March 2012, the Tomsk city website published a video showing a traffic inspector beating up a driver. The criminal case was launched into exceeding official powers. The traffic inspector was found guilty and sentenced to 4 years in prison.

In April 2012, a website posted information that military conscripts from the Kirov Region are physically abused in a military unit in Trans-Baikal Territory. Military investigations department checked the message and launched a criminal case against Pvt Baldzhinimayev over acts of violence among servicemen. Investigators found that he delivered more than 20 hits to his fellow servicemen. He was sentenced to a year and a half in prison.

You see how important it is for us to get information from media and we are always grateful for that.

- Which principles is your work, including relations with journalists, based on?

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- Law, law and law again, and then – speed, continuity, flexibility and positiveness. The information handed over to media should always be honest, reliable and trustworthy. And one more thing – we should always say the truth even if it is not very pleasant. Public attitude to the Committee and its staff depends on that.

Our staff are ready to provide information at any time of day and night and our work does not depend on time zones. In order to pay attention to press each investigations department in each region has head assistants in charge of media relations. And these people are ready at any time of day and night to work with journalists for impartial and quick reporting of our activity.

- Do journalists reciprocate your feelings?

- Journalists abuse our trust extremely rare. If media and person in charge of media relations have mutual trust, there are no problems in their work and even if there are any it is always possible to find some mutually acceptable way or reach a compromise. Investigators and media have one common quality – independence so each of us has right to defend our positions. We have long-standing model of civilized cooperation with media. And I thank all the journalists who help us to dialogue with people.

- Do you make sure that the information you provide is maximum reliable?

- This is a key question. Sometimes the wrong word, incorrect or rude phrase about a journalist can cost a lot to the organization and its head. Press-service has to weigh up and check information, before giving it to journalists. Press-service should not comment on rumors or follow some false opinions. It is very easy for us to be trustworthy – we are dealing with a primary source – information from investigators.

- Do you compete with press-services of other security and law-enforcement agencies? How do you handle that?

- Over the years of regular contacts, we have formed a number of rules, knowing which it is much easier to build strong foundation of relations with our colleagues. We have nothing to argue about, we do a common thing.

- What do you direct your staff on in daily work?

- Staff of press-service should think as investigators – strategically and tactically. You know, there are two approaches to working with the news – response and forecast. The former means tactical thinking and reporting daily news. The latter requires strategic approach and planning for the future. My staff combine both. Because if you respond only to the issues that spring up right now, most likely, you are not able to produce your best counterarguments. There has to be a forecast, pre-planning allowing bringing ideas to citizens. This should be done continually and minutely.

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- It's not a secret that the work of any press-service is determined by the first person in the agency. Do you always manage to have information first-hand?

- Of course, it's important, because if the leadership and the service work separately this will not give any results. I should note here that the Chairman of the RF Investigative Committee supports our initiatives. Moreover he is opened for the dialogue with people through media and you have had many chances to see that.

- Let us now to move on to discussing high-rank criminal investigations. There are still arguments about Leonid Razvozzhayev's crossing the Russian-Ukrainian border. Some media reported that he had been abducted in Ukraine and delivered to Russia and after that had been handed over to investigators. Can you give details as how Razvozzhayev entered Russia from Ukraine?

- Investigators carefully checked the information about his abduction and found that he drove up to the border by taxi, left the car, went through passport control, the car also went through passport control, he took the same car and went in it up to Moscow. But he had illegally entered Ukraine. Main Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee launched criminal proceedings against Leonid Razvozzhayev. He is suspected of a crime under part 1 of article 322 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code (illegal crossing of Russian Federation state border). According to investigators, on 15 October 2012 Razvozzhayev bought a train ticket to Kiev, using his brother's passport and crossed the RF state border without valid documents granting right to leave the country. Investigation of this case is continued.

- Before the New Year it was reported that Mikhail Kodanov convicted of organizing murder of deputy Yushenkov was to be transported to Moscow. Had investigators managed to have his testimony? Had he named the contractor? Was it confirmed that self-exiled Boris Berezovsky was involved in the crime?

- Mikhail Kodanov, convicted in 2004 of organizing a murder of State Duma deputy Sergey Yushenkov, addressed a statement to Chairman of the Investigative Committee. In the statement he said that the real contractors of the murder were Arkady Patarkatsishvili and Boris Berezovsky. Kodanov expressed his full willingness to cooperate with investigators, so it was decided to transport him in Moscow for necessary investigating operations during which investigators will check Berezovsky's involvement in the crime. Apart from this, Berezovsky was also checked on having been involved in murders of Vladislav Listyev, Anna Politkovskaya and the State Duma deputy Vladimir Golovlyov, however information about his involvement in all these crimes was not confirmed yet.

- Yuri Shchekochikhin's fellows still believe that he was murdered and Yabloko party called on resuming the investigation. Do you think there are any grounds to do that?

- For years investigators has had no doubts about the death of Yuri Shchekochikhin, they thought

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there were no reasons to start investigation. Only on the initiative of Alexander Bastrykin, the Chairman of the Investigative Committee, did they start investigation in 2008 with the purpose of all-round, comprehensive and impartial examination of all circumstances of his death. And now this investigation is underway. A whole set of investigating operations, including three examinations have been run. The cause of his death was a toxic epidermal necrolysis – Lyell's syndrome. There is no information in special literature about a mix of drugs that can cause this syndrome in any person. For some it takes 10 aspirin pills, for others – other medicines and it doesn't have to be a large amount. You can't deliberately infect with this illness, that is why violent death is out of question. The reason why Shchekochikhin suffered the syndrome is the main question now. To find this the injured party addressed famous French specialist in toxicology, who is going to run his own examination and make his own conclusions. He will be able to analyze medical documents from Russia as investigator granted the motion of relatives and provided them with copies of materials, including examination conclusions. I think that if the foreign specialist's conclusions will be the same as Russians', we can say about further procedural decisions to be made in this criminal case.

- It has been 15 years since the journalist Vladislav Listyev was killed. Will the criminal case that had earlier been suspended be buried now?

- It is too early to draw the line in this case, it won't be dismissed. The investigation has been suspended, but the operative services have orders and as soon as there is relevant information the investigation will be resumed, so the work continues.

- Will those who ordered the Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya murder be named?

- I can tell that strategy and tactics of investigators were directed to consistent gathering of evidence, which should have not only been the basis of the charges, but allowed to find the contractors. Investigation reached these goals and today we are much closer to finding contractors, the criminal case against which has been severed into a separate law suit and it is being actively investigated. It is known that Pavlyuchenkov testified that according to Gaydukayev, the contractors were Zakayev and Berezovsky. However, by now this version has not been confirmed. I will note once more that investigators are going up to the end of the chain – from perpetrator to contractor. This is confirmed by the fact that the crime has been investigated without suspension for over 6 years and by one of the most experienced and principled investigators of the Russia's Investigative Committee.

- Let me congratulate you and the staff of the Investigative Committee and wish you success in all your undertakings.

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