
Interview of Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin to Rossiyskaya Gazeta



Under Routine Operation

The Investigative Committee of Russia is launching brand new investigative divisions: into crimes against minors; into crimes in the healthcare sphere; into banditry; into organized crime and past years' crimes; and on cooperation in matters of international and federal search.

Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin told Rossiyskaya Gazeta about all of the above and also about the most complicated past years' crimes.

Alexander Ivanovich, on January 15, the Investigative Committee celebrates its eighth anniversary. What areas of combating crime can you call the most important for the Committee?

Alexander Bastrykin: Eight years is a long period of time, during which the jurisdiction of investigators of the Investigative Committee of Russia has been significantly extended. Tax crimes and crimes committed by and against minors have been transferred to the jurisdiction of the Investigative Committee. Apart from that, the Investigative Committee investigates the majority of crimes involving corruption.

Combating corruption and crimes in the economic sphere, protecting the rights of children, countering extremism and terrorism, active handling applications of citizens, and improving criminal and criminal procedural legislation in order to ensure the inevitability of responsibility for committed crimes are still the priority and successfully tackled tasks of the Committee. The protection of the labor rights of citizens is also constantly in the field of our attention.

What is going to change this year? They say that there will be more investigators and new areas of work. Is it true?

Alexander Bastrykin: The number of investigators at the Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia and the personnel of the Main Investigations Directorate will be increased within the authorized number of officers and allocated budgetary funds.

Additional divisions are being currently created in the structure of the Committee, including the Department on Crimes against Minors, Department of Healthcare Crimes, Department on Cooperation in International and Federal Search, and Department on Banditry, Organized Crime, and Past Years' Crimes.

Will these changes affect only the Central Office or the regions as well?

Alexander Bastrykin: Additional units will be provided to the Regional Investigative Directorates of the Investigative Committee of Russia where the number of positions of investigators will be maximized to the authorized level of 70 percent of the total personnel within the allocated budgetary funds.

Have you ever tried to count how many probes have gone through the offices of your investigators during all these years?

Alexander Bastrykin: From the moment of the establishment of the Investigative Committee of Russia, that is since 2011, we have referred to the court almost 800,000 criminal cases, including over 70,000 cases on corruption. More than 8,000 people with a special legal status have been brought to justice.

From the very first days of our work, we have been paying special attention to the protection of the rights of victims. Due to the well-organized work of investigators and their cooperation with law enforcement and control authorities during preliminary investigation and procedural probes, almost

250 billion rubles of damage have been compensated to the state and to the victims of the offenses.

Last year, over 117,000 probes was finished. Compared to 2017, the amount of damage reimbursement has increased from 42.6 to 49.9 billion rubles. The total value of arrested property exceeded 55 billion rubles.

As I have already mentioned, we pay special attention to the protection of the labor rights of citizens.

In 2018, the Committee launched 1,662 probes into non-payment of wages, and most of them have already been reviewed by the court. Over 2.3 billion rubles of damages were compensated due to active cooperation with the Federal Service for Labor and Employment.

It must be also noted that last year investigators solved 4,369 crimes under probes suspended during previous years. Jointly with our colleagues from operative services of the Federal Security Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, we solved high-profile terrorist acts and made progress in the investigation of crimes against Russian military personnel in Syria.

As far as the crime rate is concerned, preventive measures taken in 2018 resulted in the positive trend of maintaining its decrease. The total number of crimes decreased by 4 percent; in this, the number of murders decreased by 13 percent, intentional infliction of grave health injuries by 5 percent, rapes by 18 percent.

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.

The numbers sound impressive, but who did count the workload on your investigators? Speaking frankly, it looks like they are always working in the “emergency mode”, including weekends and holidays.

Alexander Bastrykin: Currently, our investigators are really having a hard time. Frequent working trips and investigation of multi-episode corruption crimes require significant efforts from us and from our colleagues from law enforcement bodies. There are a lot of examples of our successful joint work. The former Head of the Republic of Karelia, former Governors of Sakhalin and Kirov Regions, the Deputy Governors of Altai Territory, Vladimir, Vologda, and Chelyabinsk Regions, the former First Deputy Chairman of the Ryazan Regional Government, the former Deputy Chairman of Penza Municipal Duma and many other former major officials were brought to justice for commission of crimes involving corruption.

Moreover, in 2018, investigators of the Tyumen Regional Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia in collaboration with the Tyumen and Sverdlovsk Regional Directorates of the Federal Tax Service identified participants of an international financial group. They transferred 595 million rubles to the People's Republic of China under the disguise of rendering IT services through

fictitious enterprises. This probe included around 80 forensic examinations and technical studies.

What significance does the Investigative Committee of Russia render to international cooperation in combating corruption?

Alexander Bastrykin: International cooperation in countering corruption is our priority. In 2018, officers of the Investigative Committee represented the agency in various anti-corruption events organized by UN, APEC, and FATF. The Investigative Committee of Russia takes an active part in the country-wide implementation of a number of international treaties ratified by the Parliament. These include the UN Convention against Corruption, the EU Convention on Legal Responsibility for Corruption, the European Council Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure, and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime. This significantly expands our capacity to countering the laundering of illegal profits.

I will show one prime example.

On January 4, 2019, investigators of the Main Directorate on Major Crimes Investigation pressed charges for swindling and embezzlement against former Deputy Chairman of the Moscow Regional Government Alexey Kuznetsov, who was extradited by relevant authorities of the French Republic. According to the investigation, Kuznetsov and his accomplices had inflicted the damage of over 14 billion rubles to the regional Public Utilities companies and Mosobltrustinvest.

The money had been legalized through fake deals with various legal entities controlled by members of the organized group, with accounts in a bank controlled by Kuznetsov and his accomplices. It had been spent on elite real estate objects in Switzerland and France, high-value cars, and other assets.

I shall underline that the real opportunity to bring Aleksey Kuznetsov to justice is a natural result of close and consistent cooperation of the Investigative Committee of Russia and competent authorities of France which served justice. In 2013, I personally discussed the matters of criminal proceedings against Kuznetsov with French law enforcement officers. Subsequently, the French criminal police promptly located and detained the convict, whereas, during investigative activities in Russia, the Investigative Committee discovered antiques of artistic and historical value that Kuznetsov's ex-wife Janna Bullock tried to smuggle to Finland.

Those assets amounted to 1,357 items, including print media, books, paintings, furniture, interior design items, coins, armor, and other valuable property.

I shall also note that the High Court of Paris ruled to arrest the hotels in Courchevel, the pieces of art, the house in Sent-Tropez, and the apartment in Paris belonging to the perpetrators.

A number of Kuznetsov's accomplices have been already brought to justice. For instance, Valery Nosov, Vladislav Telepnev, and Elena Kuznetsova are already serving sentences in places of

deprivation of liberty. Janna Bullock was sentenced in absentia.

Investigating such high-complexity crimes, investigators and forensic experts cannot let themselves relax and put aside immediate investigative activities; therefore, they work 24/7. Citizens are also becoming more demanding about our work.

Therefore, with regard to the piling workload, I have decided upon the step-by-step increasing of the investigative and forensic personnel, those who take a direct part in the investigation of crimes.

You have said more than once that reinforcement of staff is one of your key priorities. Where do you hire new officers?

Alexander Bastrykin: In order to train qualified investigators, we use our own sources of manpower, the Moscow and Saint Petersburg Academies of the Investigative Committee of Russia, with the significantly modernized educational process. In 2018, the first young officers graduated from the Moscow Academy of the Investigative Committee of Russia and joined our investigative bodies.

In 2019, we are planning to establish five more subsidiaries of our Academies so that in five years these educational institutions would fully cover our demand for investigative officers.

Not a single crime is solved without the assistance of forensic experts. How is the forensics service of the Committee developing?

Alexander Bastrykin: We pay special attention to the development of the forensic service of the Investigative Committee. Besides, it is impossible to establish the truth in criminal proceedings without using high-technology forensic equipment. For the prompt implementation of new and prospective technologies in the investigation of crimes, we have created the Forensics Centre which includes the Forensics Research Institute.

Are pieces of evidence delivered to the Forensics Centre, or its staff goes for them on their own?

Alexander Bastrykin: The personnel of the Forensics Centre promptly arrive at the scene in order to provide practical and methodological help. Mobile forensics teams have been formed for this purpose. In December 2018, such teams and DNA examinations helped to solve the murders of two women and a minor girl in Rostov-On-Don; the rapes of two young girls, including a minor, in Saint Petersburg; the rapes and murders of four young girls in Ivanovo Region.

How many forensic experts are there in the Investigative Committee of Russia, if this can be disclosed?

Alexander Bastrykin: In recent years, the number of staff of forensic and expert units has increased dozens of times and now exceeds 1.5 thousand employees.

I shall underline that the Committee is indeed interested in the introduction and use of new, innovative, and primarily Russian developments. For this purpose, we are building cooperation with federal executive authorities in the sphere of industry and with the Russian Academy of Sciences.

For example, some samples of equipment--in particular, sources of expert light of the IKS and MIKS series, which allow detecting invisible traces of biological origin, have been developed and introduced into production according to the technical specifications of the Main Forensics Directorate by domestic manufacturers.

One of the problems you have inherited is associated with unsolved probes. How do you handle these?

Alexander Bastrykin: I shall underline that the work on solving past years' crimes stays one of the key priorities of the Investigative Committee from the moment of its foundation.

In 2007, the Prosecutor's Office handed 257,483 suspended probes over to our investigators.

As a result of their consistent work, the number of suspended cases decreased by over 55,000 and amounted to 202,482 by the beginning of 2018. In many regions of the country, we managed to identify persons who had committed murders more than 10 years ago.

Would you please tell us about the most interesting ones?

Alexander Bastrykin: In Saint Petersburg, investigators and criminal investigation police officers solved a high-profile murder of entrepreneur Dmitry Zeinalov, his wife, and two children committed 13 years ago.

In December, the criminal case against the leader and participants of the armed gang that had operated in Smolensk Region and had committed the murder of former Roslavl Prosecutor Nikolay Prokopovich in 2005 was sent to the court.

Four participants of the armed gang of Shamil Basayev and Emir Khattab who had encroached the lives of Russian military officers in Botlikhsky District of Dagestan in 1999 were identified. Over 70 participants of armed gangs were sentenced for committing this crime.

Today, the Investigative Committee of Russia actively engages with social institutes, including us, the media. Is this a special policy you're pursuing?

Alexander Bastrykin: Above all, the open dialogue with social institutes and mass media enables us

to respond promptly to all requests from society. For the same reason, we hold regular meetings with members of the Advisory Council of the Investigative Committee of Russia on issues of providing help to orphan children and children left without parental care, as well as with members of the Coordinating Council for providing help to children affected by humanitarian disasters, natural disasters, terrorist acts, and military conflicts. The members of the Heroes Council and the Union of Investigation Veterans of the Investigative Committee carry out fruitful work on the development of civic stance in our youth.

Active functioning of the Public Council of the Investigative Committee of Russia is very important for our everyday activities. Late last year, we carried out the regular meeting to summarize results of our joint activities and discuss the key priorities for 2019.

What in particular do you discuss with the members of the Public Council?

Alexander Bastrykin: We develop joint initiatives of the Investigative Committee of Russia in the field of criminal proceedings and combating crime. We discuss draft regulatory acts of the Investigative Committee of Russia related to the rights and freedoms of citizens and organizations. And it is especially important that the members of the Public Council actively assist the Investigative Committee of Russia to provide help to minors and other socially unprotected segments of the nation affected by adverse actions. This year, the members of the Public Council will regularly interact with relevant units of the Central Office of the Investigative Committee of Russia in each of these areas of work.

Recently, the Committee has been responding to articles and TV reports on violations of the rights of children and senior people within several hours. Is such an immediate reaction not a coincidence but a part of work?

Alexander Bastrykin: In the course of media and social media monitoring, we immediately conduct inspections and restore justice when we receive information about the use of violence against children, their harassment, violation of their housing and other rights, and criminal law measures.

We see a joint solution to these issues as a key to true partnership with civil society.

When the President declared the Decade of Childhood, he listed specific goals of securing the rights of children. It is known that the Investigative Committee of Russia takes part in the implementation of this program. How does it work?

Alexander Bastrykin: The Investigative Committee of Russia stands for its attitude towards the protection of children's rights and legal interests. Our motto is "No child is somebody else's!" Investigation of all grave and especially grave offenses against children is under my special supervision and is assigned to the most experienced investigators.

Upon my instruction, all Investigations Directorates are equipped with special rooms for the work with minor victims and witnesses. In the search for missing children, the staff of the territorial investigative bodies of the Investigative Committee regularly cooperates with volunteer associations, such as Lisa Alert, VolgoSpas - Missing Children Search, the Legion Public Movement, and regional public organization Piter-Search. It is just a small share of volunteer organizations that cooperate with local investigative units under cooperation agreements.

In collaboration with representatives of the public and state stakeholders, including the Ministry for Internal Affairs, EMERCOM, Ministry for Defense, and the National Guard of Russian Federation, the Main Forensics Directorate developed a regulatory act on an algorithm of interaction between state agencies, volunteer organizations, and volunteers in arranging and carrying out searches of missing citizens, including minors. The Act was signed in May 2018.

Looking at the number of cases brought against officials for stealing orphan's money, providing orphans with housing has also turned out to be your concern.

Alexander Bastrykin: Providing housing is one of the guarantees of their social support. Therefore, in 2018, the State Duma adopted the Federal Law establishing additional guarantees for the realization of the housing rights of orphans and children left without parental care.

Our goal is to ensure that regional budgetary funds allocated for the building of special housing stock for orphan children and children left without parental care reach the planned objectives without any waste. In this, we often face drastic cases when orphans are deceived and provided with completely substandard housing.

We have detected such facts in Lipetsk Region and pressed charges against the Director of the Regional Budgetary Institution "Housing Stock Operation" under an investigation into fraud committed during the purchasing of housing units for orphans. In Tyva, a probe was launched into negligence of authorities of the Agency for Family and Children Issues. It was established that the indicated persons had failed to provide an orphaned girl with housing, acting against the existing law. In Kurgan Region, a probe was launched into the commissioning of a house for orphan children that was unfit for occupation. In the Republic of Buryatia, a probe on exceeding official authority was launched into illegal activities during the commissioning of housing for orphans by authorities of the Republican Ministry of Construction and Modernization of Housing Stock.

Last November, evidence gathered by the Main Investigations Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia was found by the court to be sufficient to sentence former Deputy Governor of Vladimir Region Dmitry Khvostov. He was found guilty of bribe-taking (Paragraph C of Parts 5 and 6 of Article 290 of the Criminal Code of Russia) for, among all, illegal activities committed during the implementation of the federal program "Housing for a Russian Family".

Looks like your officers not only investigate stealing money from orphans but also analyze

the whole situation.

Alexander Bastrykin: I have instructed to seek real elimination of causes and circumstances of committing offenses against minors and to bring to justice all officials responsible for these offenses during the investigation of such cases.

It must be underlined that the Investigative Committee of Russia constantly analyzes information about systematic problems in this area received during the investigation and procedural probes. It reaches the leaders of the country. Moreover, representatives of the Investigative Committee of Russia bring up this information during meetings of specialized workgroups created under the Children's Rights Commissioner for the Russian President, State Duma, Federation Council, and the Russian Ministry of Enlightenment. Centers for psychological, medical, and social aid are created with the assistance of investigative bodies of the Investigative Committee of Russia.

I shall also note that officers of investigative units of the Investigative Committee of Russia actively help 408 specialized children's institutions that are bringing up over 20,000 children. We don't stay out of children's problems. For instance, last December, a senior woman Lyudmila Sukhonosova and her 11-year-old grandson Artem, both forced to move to Russia from Donbass for permanent residence, received citizenship and housing with the assistance of the Investigative Committee of Russia, relevant authorities, and business representatives, which was covered by Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

Key Question

The Committee regularly publishes reports on Bastrykin's personal receptions. Why are these receptions important for the Head of the Committee?

Bastrykin: I would like to say once again that the most important direction of the Investigative Committee's activity is the personal reception of citizens, and we consider it as the main component of the realization of the constitutional rights of people. For example, in June 2018, the active part in the personal reception of people applying to me with complaints about the low-quality rendering of healthcare assistance was taken by the President of the Emergency Children's Surgery and Traumatology Research Institute of Moscow Healthcare Department Leonid Roshal and members of the Union of the Medical Community "National Medical Chamber". Such cooperation helps us to sort out complicated issues of medical justice, to avoid violations of the rights of doctors and patients, and to prevent mistakes in procedural decision-making. Last year, special attention was paid to the work with citizens' appeals, which requires from us, as well as from all state structures, increased consideration and control.

In order to improve the quality of application handling, I regularly hold personal receptions of citizens involving the participation of representatives of expert communities. I personally travel to regions to take part in the organization of investigation of the most high-profile crimes, including those in North Caucasian Federal District. All episodes of red-tape and unjustified procedural

decisions are immediately stopped, and the responsible persons are subject to strict disciplinary measures.

Being close to people, holding personal receptions with a convenient time schedule, responding to media reports on violations of the rights of citizens in a prompt and constructive manner--these are the objectives of all Heads of Investigative Directorates of the Investigative Committee of Russia, who have received over 100,000 visitors during personal reception sessions, which exceeded the number for 2017 by 25 percent.

In our everyday activities, we are trying to be as close to people as possible. In 2018, I instructed to set up the work of an official account of the Reception of the Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia at the VKontakte social network, which provides me with additional opportunity to access the quality of work of the investigative units.

I shall underline once more that we see the public opinion based on the confidence of each citizen in their personal security as the main evaluation criteria of our work.

The interview was prepared by Natalya Kozlova

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