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



### **Landing rule**

**Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation Alexander Bastrykin shared in an interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta new priorities in the work of investigators and forensic specialists.**

**Alexander Ivanovich, how does the Investigative Committee work under quarantine measures against the coronavirus?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Despite the difficult situation, we must continue the basic activities related to the investigation of criminal cases and countering criminal manifestations. As you know, coronavirus is the most discussed topic in the public space right now. And some individuals, often deliberately,

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replicate inaccurate information. All this has a negative effect on citizens. For this reason, a separate working group has been created to identify the facts of dissemination, including on the Internet and messengers, of deliberately false and unverified information about the number of coronavirus cases in Russia, as well as other unreliable information that contributes to panic moods. At the same time, we must also remember those who are in a special risk group. Therefore, all employees of the Investigative Committee of Russia actively support veterans of the Great Patriotic War and home front workers, as well as veterans of the investigation, observing the precautionary measures. In each region, the department's staff has organized remote communications with veterans to help deliver needed medications, food, and other assistance.

We promptly took comprehensive security measures. First and foremost, it is to prevent the spread of coronavirus among employees and persons with whom they come in contact. To this, the agency has organized continuous monitoring of health of employees. Access to the facilities of the central office and territorial investigative bodies of persons with signs of acute respiratory viral infections was excluded. All students in the educational institutions of the Investigative Committee have been transferred to distance learning. In this situation, it is necessary to remain calm and clearly comply with all the recommendations of the relevant institutions, as well as regulations of the authorities.

### **How do you assess the overall state of crime in the country?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Last year, law enforcement agencies worked in a difficult crime environment. This is evidenced by the number of reported crimes. It increased by 1.6 percent. In total, over 2 million crimes were registered. But coordinated prevention measures have reduced the most dangerous - violent crime.

Thus, the number of rapes reduced by almost six percent. The number of recorded murders and cases of intentional infliction of severe health damage entailing by negligence the victim's death decreased by seven percent.

### **Prison for a bandit and a fine for a one who stumbled**

**But the Investigative Committee handles the most serious crimes. From general figures, what applies to your subordinates?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Investigators sent to court almost 100,000 criminal cases (96,882) against 107,000 accused individuals. Not staying away from the tragic events in southeastern Ukraine, the Investigative Committee has opened more than 400 criminal cases since 2014, in which 155 people have been prosecuted, including high-ranking officials of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense.

Special attention was paid to prevention. In one hundred and eleven thousand criminal cases, the causes and conditions that led to the commission of the crime were established, and recommendations were made to eliminate them. As a result, more than 37,000 officials were brought

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to disciplinary responsibility.

Repeatedly the law enforcement officers were reproached for the excessive punitive measures. The fact that even for minor crimes a person is surely sent to prison. What can you say to them? Is there any statistics on how many citizens didn't go to jail after the investigator finished his or her job?

**Alexander Bastrykin:** It is very important to note that the number of cases referred by investigators to the court with a request to impose a court fine on the accused increased by almost one and a half times, and there are more than nine thousand such cases. And the number of cases in which, at the request of investigators, educational measures were applied to minors instead of convictions, increased by five percent.

However, there can be no leniency for hardened criminals.

### **You mean serious criminal gangs and their leaders?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** The fight against organized crime is our main task. As a result of the investigation, former leaders and members of organized criminal groups, who over the years had committed murders of citizens and businessmen, were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. They include the so called Kluchevskie in Zabaikalsky Territory. Leontyevskie in Tyumen Region. Klusov's gang in Saratov Region.

In Moscow, a sentence was imposed over I. Galantsev and members of his gang that committed a number of offences in Bryansk, Kaluga and Smolensk Regions. In Novosibirsk, the evidence gathered by investigators was considered by the court to be sufficient to impose a sentence over one of the former leaders of the so-called Trunov' criminal community - A. Radchenko. He was found guilty of directing structural subdivisions of a criminal association, as well as of murders.

### **Are there already examples of prosecutions for higher ranks in the criminal environment?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** It should be emphasized that a novelty introduced in the criminal law in 2019, which allows criminal liability of the leaders of the criminal world for the very fact of occupying the highest position in the criminal hierarchy, has already been implemented in practice. A striking example of this is the criminal investigation into the so-called thief in law Oleg Medvedev (Shishkanov), who established criminal control over the Ramensky District of Moscow Region.

The efforts of investigative bodies in this direction will only increase.

## **The bunks are not for everyone**

**People often say about your subordinates that all they want to do is to lock a person up. Do investigators send suspects into custody more or less often? Is there more demand for arrests**

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**for those involved in criminal cases?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** This preventive measure has been chosen quite deliberately. At the time of the investigation, 20,000 people were in custody. To be clear, this is less than 16 percent of the total number of defendants. In other cases, the normal course of the investigation was ensured by more lenient measures of restraint.

## **Millions and mansions to be returned**

You know better than anyone that catching a bribe-taker or a fraudster by the hand is often not the most important thing. It is important to compensate for the harm caused. Damage from individual citizens in office has long been measured not in millions, but billions of rubles or other currency. And what is the situation with compensation for damages?

**Alexander Bastrykin:** In close cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service, the Federal Tax Service, Rosfinmonitoring and the Rosreestr, we took effective measures to maximize compensation for damages, so that criminals could not benefit from their unlawful deeds.

Thus, in 2019, more than 50 billion rubles were compensated to victims. The property of the accused in the amount of more than 55 billion rubles was arrested. Agree, this is not a small amount and a significant contribution to the compensation of damage to the state and the restoration of property rights of citizens violated as a result of criminal actions.

**Can we say that the system of compensation to citizens or the state is working successfully? Or is there anything else that needs to be improved?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** In my opinion, in order to better protect the victim's right to compensation for damages caused by a crime, it is necessary to adjust Article 115 of the Criminal Procedure Code. It should be possible to retain the seizure of property when the victim's claims are found to be justified, but the issue of the amount of compensation has been referred for consideration in civil proceedings.

**There have always been plenty of critics of the investigative agencies. One of their most common arguments is the decline in the quality of investigated cases. How would you respond to that? Has the quality of the investigation really changed?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Certainly, because the number of cases returned by the court for revision has decreased by 10 percent. The share of such cases in the number of cases brought to court was no more than 1.5 percent. We actively continue to work on this priority area, continuously increasing responsibility for the legality and validity of our decisions.

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## **Inherited cases**

**Fresh investigations of crimes committed decades ago are in the news more often. Why is there an increased focus on solving crimes of past years?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** I have already noted how important crime prevention is. But if the crime was not prevented, we have an obligation to prosecute the perpetrator, no matter how many years have passed since the tragedy. Given the modern possibilities of forensic science, last year, together with the agencies of preliminary investigation, we were able to solve five and a half thousand crimes of previous years. Of these, almost half are grave and especially grave criminal acts.

These include 558 murders, 274 cases of intentional infliction of grave harm to health with fatal outcome for the victim, 305 rapes and violent acts of sexual nature, as well as more than 1.5 thousand other grave and especially grave crimes. Undoubtedly, genomic expertise has become increasingly important in the investigation of such crimes.

**Do you remember most of these cases?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** DNA research uncovered a series of rapes of women committed since 1992 in the Irkutsk region. A man who killed a 10-year-old girl in 2011 was detained in the Leningrad region. In Kaluga Region, sentences were imposed over the Tatarintsev brothers, who murdered a student in 2014, as well as against the Korobekov brothers, who murdered a young girl in 2016. A criminal case against members of the Piskarev' (Kostya Bolshoi) gang, involved in the murder of the mayor of Sergiev Posad, Dushko, and the murders of twenty more people, has been sent to court.

In addition, 14 years later, a series of rapes of underage girls committed in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District - Yugra was uncovered. As it turned out during a thorough analysis of the materials of the unsolved case, the only fingerprint found by the perpetrator was not suitable for identification because the rules of trace coding had been violated. This mistake was corrected by our forensic specialists and investigators. They figured out the scoundrel by additional forensic tests to establish his genetic profile. The perpetrator stood trial.

In addition, crimes that resonated with the public for their defiant audacity - the murder of an investigator in the Moscow region and the murder of the head of the Center for Counteraction to Extremism of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Ingushetia, - as well as many other criminal atrocities committed in different regions of the country were solved.

**When security officials talk about the spread of terrorism and its financing, they just quote numbers. And they are frightening. And what information does the Investigative Committee have?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** In 2019, our investigators sent to court 55 criminal cases of extremism and

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119 cases of terrorism. Emphasis was placed on the suppression of organized activities to incite ethnic and religious hatred. 34 criminal cases on organization of extremist association and activity of extremist organization were sent to court. That, by the way, is twice as much as in 2018.

Channels of financing terrorism are consistently shut down. In 2019, criminal cases were sent to the courts against 45 individuals who fueled international terrorist organizations with money.

In addition, our investigative units perform responsible tasks in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. On the basis of the evidence obtained, 10 persons involved in the murder of military pilot Oleg Peshkov in Syria are being prosecuted. Evidence of heavy weapons fire on a Russian hospital in Aleppo has been secured.

## **Attention, a child is missing**

### **What work did investigators do to protect children's rights?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** To begin with, there were more than 20,000 serious and especially serious crimes committed against children investigated in 2019. More than 11,000 criminal cases were sent to court. We monitor incidents and crimes against children and their disappearance around the clock.

### **How is the search for missing children organized?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** I'll begin with numbers. In 2019, 15,493 children were reported missing to investigators. By the measures taken, almost all of them were found in the first hours or 24 hours after their disappearance. That's 99.5 percent of all the missing children. In order to improve the effectiveness of the search on the website of the Investigative Committee a section "Attention, a child is missing!" was created.

### **And how would you rate the help of volunteers in tracking down lost children? Do they really help?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** They help us in the most effective way. Thanks to them in the Krasnodar region was able to find a missing 9-year-old girl alive. A 3-year-old boy who disappeared from the car when his parents went out for berries was found in the Omsk Region. A 5-year-old girl who had gone into the woods to fetch her grandmother and was lost was found alive in Nizhny Novgorod Region. In the Vologda Region, a mother left her 2-year-old daughter with her infant sisters on the playground and went to her friend's house. The child disappeared. Fortunately, thanks to a timely search, the child was found alive.

### **Do you have some kind of algorithm for what to do if a child is reported missing?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Without delay, a visit to the scene of the incident is organized, and the

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evidence that is important for a complete, objective and comprehensive investigation is promptly recorded. Measures are being taken to identify the full range of officials, whose connivance and inaction led to the accidents with children.

In 2019, the number of underage victims left without parental care decreased by a third, including in orphanages and boarding schools. At the same time, there was a five percent decrease in the number of children affected by offenses committed by family members. Thanks to comprehensive preventive measures, the number of minors against whom crimes were committed in the organization of children's rest and recuperation has decreased fivefold.

**So you mean to say that all indicators have improved?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** It is indeed so.

**Another acute problem is the provision of housing for orphans. Your department often reports - in one region officials were caught stealing orphan apartments, in another the developer was prosecuted for building "cardboard" houses impossible to live in. Does anything change in this area, other than the number of prosecutions?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** As you know, these issues are complicated, but they are gradually being resolved - last April, a government decree was issued on measures to provide orphans with housing for 2019-2021.

In turn, the staff of the Investigative Committee provides assistance to 423 specialized children's institutions, where more than 20,000 children are being brought up. We organize rehabilitation and recuperation for children who suffered during armed conflicts, children in difficult situations.

**One of the most fashionable words today is "optimization". Does the Investigative Committee also use it? If so, how did your department reform last year?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Our work is constantly being transformed based on the anti-crime tasks set before us by the country's leadership. The agency's system optimization efforts continued in 2019, taking into account the nature of the criminal challenges. The All-Russian expert institution of forensic examinations is created in the department to carry out examinations of all types and any complexity, a scientific and technical council on innovation activities has been established. Specialist positions for sociological research were introduced. Training faculties for criminal investigators were created. Management links were reduced by combining investigative units in the Far Eastern, Siberian, and Southern federal districts.

Specialized divisions created in the Main Investigative Department for the investigation of crimes against minors, for the investigation of crimes in the medical sphere, gangsterism, crimes of past years, international and federal search for persons have started working productively. Last year, a

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cybercrime and high-tech crime unit was formed. All this made it possible to centrally strengthen the priority areas of investigative activity, to strengthen the methodological and analytical components.

## **From cadets to investigators**

**They say you have the youngest department, not in age of service, but in age of employees. How are the priorities set in this area?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** We are actively working to train our own personnel, first and foremost in the academies of the Investigative Committee, our cadet corps and cadet classes, taking into account the positive experience of educational organizations of the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and the Federal Security Service. The third cadet corps was created in Volgograd, and the Sevastopol branch of the St. Petersburg cadet corps will be opened this year. Besides, in the end of February in the city of military glory of Kronstadt cadet classes of maritime orientation of the Investigative Committee, which will function on the basis of school N 425 named after Academician Pyotr Kapitsa were ceremonially opened.

In addition, in St. Petersburg on the basis of the departmental cadet corps recently opened the first experimental class for the education and upbringing of girls. On its basis it is planned to create a branch of the St. Petersburg Cadet Corps of the Investigative Committee of Russia - a boarding house for female students of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. Twenty female students, some of whom are orphans and without parental care, study in the experimental 8th grade.

In 2019, 117 orphans and children without parental care were enrolled in our Moscow and St. Petersburg Academies. Such children, studying in the Cadet Corps and academies of the Department, are provided with full government support. Scholarship of students of the Academies of the Investigative Committee exceeds 16 thousand rubles per month.

**You are known to be very attentive not so much to what journalists write about the Investigative Committee, but to what offenses we tell about. The Investigative Committee is now the only agency that regularly reports on media monitoring inspections.**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** In my opinion, journalists have always paid attention to the activities of the Investigative Committee, which certainly has a positive effect on crime prevention and helps to create a climate of trust in all law enforcement agencies of the country. It should be emphasized that, in turn, in 2019, investigators of the Investigative Committee opened more than 400 criminal cases based on materials of investigative journalism and information posted in the media.

## **Aircraft to be confiscated**

**Alexander Ivanovich, your subordinates investigate specific cases, and they often see so-called gaps in the law. What are your suggestions for changing the current legislation?**



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**Alexander Bastrykin:** The analysis by the Investigative Committee of the causes of air accidents has shown that it is necessary to regulate in more detail the legal status of persons operating ultralight manned aircraft. That it is necessary to develop a mechanism for continuous monitoring of the airworthiness of aircraft and the performance of flights by private pilots. In addition, it is possible to increase the amount of fines and introduce the confiscation of the aircraft, being an instrument or object of the offense. I emphasize that our suggestions were accepted. With the participation of representatives of the Committee work has begun on their implementation on the platform of the Government of the Russian Federation.

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