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



Trace and investigation

Alexander Bastrykin spoke about the major recent investigations

What grounds did the investigators have for initiating a criminal case against the ex-governor of the Khabarovsk Territory Sergei Furgal? At what stage currently is the investigation of major probes, including into economic offenses? To what extent has the pandemic affected the crime situation in Russia?

Alexander Bastrykin, Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia, spoke about this and many other things in the interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

Alexander Ivanovich, the arrest of the former governor of the Khabarovsk Territory, Sergei Furgal made the biggest impact lately. In your opinion, why did the local residents react so violently to the actions of law enforcement officers?

Alexander Bastrykin: According to the investigation, Sergei Furgal is the organizer of the attempted murder and murder of a number of entrepreneurs in the Khabarovsk Territory and the Amur Region in 2004-2005. It is obvious to the investigation that the decisions to commit these crimes were made against the background of Furgal and his accomplices promoting their own commercial interests. I would like to note that usually it takes a lot of time to investigate such crimes, and the investigation is preceded by serious operational, investigative, analytical work.

The citizens who expressed their dissatisfaction are partly understandable. They were choosing the subject's leader, apparently trusting the person and expressing support. However, the events referred to in the criminal case are not related to Furgal's activities as head of the region, and his achievements are not an exempt from criminal liability. He is accused of committing especially grave offenses against person that were committed many years ago.

At the moment, given the secrecy of the investigation, I will not disclose all the details. However, I can say with confidence that the investigators and operational staff, understanding what demand the society will have for our work, have collected substantial evidence of its involvement. These are the results of examinations, and the testimony of witnesses, and, of course, the results of operational and search activities. Only after that the corresponding procedural decisions have been made. We have no doubts about Furgal's involvement in these crimes, but in any case, the court will have the last word.

In fact, what is imputed to Sergei Furgal is the so-called crimes of the past. How many of such cases have been solved by the officers of the Investigative Committee of Russia this year?

Alexander Bastrykin: During this year we managed to solve 3600 crimes of past years, which is by 6 percent more than during the same period of last year.

This includes 399 murders, 215 crimes of intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm resulting in the death of the victim, 263 crimes against sexual freedom and personal inviolability. When investigating such crimes, we actively use unique expert technologies. Among them - DNA screening of checked persons, information and analytical studies of electronic databases of vehicles and mobile operators.

This year, together with the investigating authorities, with the help of expert research, including on DNA samples, we uncovered a number of resonant crimes, including a series of rapes and murders of women in the Moscow region (committed by a resident of Kashira in the period from 2010 to 2020), as well as similar crimes in the Rostov region, committed by a serviceman who voluntarily left the location of the unit.

And in St. Petersburg, the investigation of the criminal case on the attempted murder committed in 2002 has been completed. As a result of the work of the analytical group, operational-search measures and investigative actions, it was established that Pirkasum Makhmudov, who had been hiding from the investigating authorities for a long time and even changed his name was involved in the commission of this offense. When re-checking the handprints taken from the scene, a match was found with the dactocard of Makhmudov (Pashayev), who was convicted for murder 12 years ago in another region. During further work within the framework of the concluded pre-trial cooperation agreement, he reported on the circumstances of the murders committed in 2003 and 1995. And these are just several examples.

Diamond shine of crime

What crimes, in the opinion of the country's chief investigator, are the most dangerous for the state?

Alexander Bastrykin: I have repeatedly spoken about the danger of crimes in the economic sphere, and we managed to uncover many similar facts.

One of them is associated with illegal activities around PJSC Tolyattiazot, where large thefts of the company's assets were carried out for two decades, and funds were transferred abroad, which posed a threat to economic activity. Investigators, together with operational units, established that members of a criminal community that operated from 1997 to 2018, which included the heads of the enterprise and other persons, including foreigners, were involved in this.

At the same time, it was systematically structured. Each unit specialized on a specific licensed type of activity, like banking, legal, registration or appraisal activities. All this helped to implement criminal schemes and significantly complicated the disclosure of crimes.

At the moment, a number of episodes are being investigated, according to which a total damage of 50 billion rubles has been established, in addition, the fact of tax evasion in the amount of one billion rubles has been established.

The investigation arrested the property of the accused, including the stolen assets of the enterprise and money. For example, about 300 land plots in the Samara region worth about a billion rubles were arrested from one of the defendants in the criminal case.

The investigation established involvement of 15 persons in these offenses. The number of persons who fled from the investigation and were put on the international wanted list include co-owners of Tolyattiazot Sergei and Vladimir Makhlai, Yevgeny Korolev, Alexander Makarov, foreign citizens Beata Ruprecht, Andreas Tsivi.

To remind, a number of them were sentenced in absentia to imprisonment by a Russian court in the highlighted criminal case of embezzlement of 84 billion rubles at selling Tolyattiazot products at a

deflated cost.

Do you think the investigators managed to find a corruption component in this high-profile criminal case?

Alexander Bastrykin: After arbitration courts in several instances recognized the claims of the tax service to Tolyattiazot on tax arrears as legal, the former chairman of the Togliattikhimbank board, Alexander Popov, attempted in 2015 to bribe a Supreme Court judge through intermediaries in order to overturn the court decision.

He acted upon instruction of Sergey Makhlay. The Popov's illegal action were suppressed by law enforcement officers. He was accused of an attempt to give a bribe of at least 1.2 million dollars. In the near future, the materials of the criminal case will be presented to the accused and his defense counsel for familiarization.

Reports on major embezzlements often say that the accused fled abroad. What happens with the stolen property in these cases?

Alexander Bastrykin: There are many examples when we were able to return not only the defendants in criminal cases, such as Alexei Kuznetsov, but also to compensate for the damage. In some situations the decisions of foreign relative authorities are not always clear for us. But in most cases, the professionalism of the investigators of the Investigative Committee allows us to convince foreign colleagues of our correctness and build effective cooperation. For example, the investigation of the criminal case against the brothers Alexei and Dmitry Ananyev is ongoing. They are accused of embezzling of over 87 billion rubles belonging to PJSC Promsvyazbank, in which they owned more than 50 percent of the shares. Back in 2017, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation revealed serious violations at Promsvyazbank.

The Ananiev brothers, realizing that they could be removed from the management of the bank, decided to withdraw the funds entrusted to them from the country's financial turnover into Cypriot companies.

They created an organized criminal group consisting of 10 trusted persons including foreigners. These persons were illegally employed by the bank and issued powers of attorney for the right to dispose of funds.

Subsequently, on the basis of fictitious documents, more than 57.3 billion rubles and more than \$ 500 million were withdrawn to the bank accounts of a foreign company under the guise of payment for the allegedly purchased securities. In fact, PJSC "Promsvyazbank" did not purchase securities for the indicated amount.

Most of the accomplices of the Ananyev bankers have been identified and are currently outside the

Russian Federation. With the assistance of Interpol Russia, measures are being taken to extradite them for criminal prosecution.

The property of the Ananyev brothers was identified and seized in cooperation with the FSB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Rosfinmonitoring. Over 15% of the stolen amount has been already reimbursed to the victimized party.

The property of the defendants worth more than 10 billion rubles has been found in foreign countries, and work has been organized with the competent authorities to seize it. Investigators are continuing painstaking work to identify and seize the property of the accused. Also, accounting examinations conducted by the expert departments of the Investigative Committee revealed additional episodes of embezzlement in 2017 by the Ananyev brothers of money of PJSC Promsvyazbank amounting to more than 15 billion rubles. Probes were launched into these episodes.

Recently, another high-profile case concerning the theft of Alrosa's diamonds was sent to court. How did the enormous scale of gem theft go unnoticed for so long?

Alexander Bastrykin: The fact is that rough diamonds are of different quality, which determines their value.

The accused Kanunnikova was sorting the stones. In order not to arouse suspicion, she would keep the best quality stones at the company, while stealing slightly inferior stones that were also of good quality. To replace these stones, she left inexpensive raw materials supplied by one of her accomplices, Bogomolov.

Over a period of three years, 1,027 stones were taken from the factory, of which 480 were seized and returned. The gemological examination confirmed their purity. At the same time, the damage from the theft, which amounted to more than 700 million rubles, was also determined.

In this situation, it is also surprising that the accused, with an official salary of a little over 100 thousand rubles, bought a car for 10 million rubles and hired a driver. By the way, the official income of the accused and their relatives for 10 years amounted to 22 million rubles. At the same time Kanunnikova had not withdrawn her salary from her bank card for several years. During the investigation the investigators seized money in different currencies equivalent to 170 million rubles, real estate worth 71 million, jewelry and accessories worth 67 million.

At the beginning of the year, the Investigative Committee announced that it had found out who killed Ibrahim Eljarkiyev, head of the Extremism Combating Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Ingushetia. Was it possible to find out a motive for the crime?

Alexander Bastrykin: If you remember, during the first attack Ibrahim Eljarkiyev was shot at in Ingushetia while driving in a car with other law enforcers, one of whom was killed. A few months

later, Eldzharkiev was tracked down in Moscow and shot at the playground along with his brother.

On the basis of evidence painstakingly gathered under difficult operational conditions, last week the investigation classified the attacks as acts of terrorism, committed by members of a terrorist group created in the republic.

Twelve people are currently in custody in the criminal case. By attacking Eljarkiyev, they, together with other identifiable and wanted persons, wished to coerce law enforcement officers not to collect evidence against the leaders and members of the terrorist group. As well as to cause fear and panic among the population of the republic.

40,000 probes in court

What investigations to date do you consider the most important?

Alexander Bastrykin: Our activities were focused on solving the most important tasks in the fight against especially dangerous crimes - malfeasance and corruption, including in the military-industrial complex of the country, extremist crimes and terrorism. On the operative suppression of criminal acts that violate the rights and interests of minors, labor rights of citizens.

Overall, the following figures indicate the amount of work we have done. This year, 40,000 criminal cases were sent to courts, involving 44,000 defendants. At the same time, the number of cases referred to the court with a motion to impose a court fine on the accused increased by 17 percent to 4,273.

In addition, there was an 83 percent increase in the number of juveniles to whom, at the request of investigators, measures of educational influence were applied instead of criminal liability. In the first quarter of this year alone, more than 12 billion rubles were compensated to the state and to citizens who were victims of crime. The property of the accused in the amount of over 10.5 billion rubles was arrested. 98 persons with a special legal status were brought to criminal responsibility.

Special attention was paid to prevention. In forty three thousand criminal cases, the causes and conditions that led to the commission of the crime were established, and recommendations were made to eliminate them. More than 14 thousand officials were brought to disciplinary responsibility.

Expert opinion

The most sophisticated expertise helps solve serious crimes today. Last year, a law was passed that gives your agency the opportunity to create its own expert institutions. What do the powers of the Investigative Committee of Russia to create forensic institutions in its system look like?

Alexander Bastrykin: Indeed, the Federal Law (from 26.07.2019 No 224-FZ) provides for the

creation of forensic expert institutions in the system of the Investigative Committee "in order to organize and produce forensic examinations". In addition, Presidential Decree No. 442 of 01.07.2020 establishes the powers of the Investigative Committee to organize and conduct forensic examinations in the Investigative Committee's forensic institution. The same Decree establishes the authority of the department for legal regulation and organizational support of the forensic institution of our department, organization of scientific and methodological support of its activities.

How many employees are you planning to hire?

Alexander Bastrykin: At present, the organizational and staffing arrangements have been completed. A total of 623 employees specializing in various fields of expert knowledge are planned to join the forensic expert institution of the Investigative Committee.

As the expert units developed, the number of examinations also increased. Our employees carry out 20 types of expertise, including handwriting, computer-technical, phonoscopic, linguistic, fire-technical, construction-technical, tax, financial-analytical, molecular-genetic, forensic and others.

Now this activity will be carried out within the framework of a separate institution - the Forensic Expert Center of the Investigative Committee of Russia, which will make it possible to carry out the relevant tasks more quickly.

In addition, forensics divisions have been created in the Central Office of the Investigative Committee (Forensics Center), departments for federal districts, departments for subjects of the Russian Federation.

And this is fully justified, since thanks in large part to the help of forensic investigators, it has been possible over all these years to significantly increase the efficiency and quality of the investigation. Not a single high-profile crime goes unnoticed by forensic investigators. When inspecting the sites of aircraft crashes, man-made disasters, in places of committing terrorist acts, in the search for missing minors - in all these cases, forensic investigators are necessarily involved.

Much has been written about the law enforcement's work to decriminalize the North Caucasus. But we are talking mostly about corruption crimes. Is there any change in cases of assault on journalists?

Alexander Bastrykin: With the help of operational services, we were able to identify the persons involved in the murder of the founder and editor-in-chief of the newspaper Chernovik, Khadzhimurad Kamalov, in 2011. According to investigators, the orderer of this crime is the former deputy chairman of the government of the Republic of Dagestan, Shamil Isayev, who has already been convicted in another criminal case.

Among the direct organizers and perpetrators are three more persons. During that period Isayev was trying to increase his political authority and influence on different aspects of life of the republic.

And the Chernovik newspaper openly criticized Dagestan politicians, leaders of various levels, including those united on the principle of community.

Kamalov's social activities created significant problems for Isaev, which, according to the investigation, served as a motive for his murder. I see that the mass media periodically express different opinions and criticize investigation. But when the evidence collected by the investigators is examined by the parties, and then by the court, no one should have any doubts. This evidence, taken together, fully supports the version of the investigation.

Learn to be an investigator

Now there is an active admission campaign in educational institutions subordinate to the Investigative Committee. How many applicants are you planning to admit?

Alexander Bastykin: We plan to admit 286 applicants and postgraduates in higher education programs to our "forges of personnel", to the Moscow and St. Petersburg academies. According to the results of the preliminary selection in the territorial investigative bodies, the competition for specialist programs is on average 3 - 4 people per place. We sincerely welcome those young people who come to our system, embodying their desire to serve the state, their people, to devote themselves to an interesting profession.

The Cadet Corps in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Volgograd are planning to admit over 250 students. At the same time, it is planned to admit about 40 percent of orphans and children left without parental care to both higher educational institutions and cadet corps of the total number of those accepted for training. Such children, studying in the Cadet Corps and academies of the Department, are provided with full government support. Thus, we create all the conditions for receiving quality education for orphans and children left without parental care.

Apart from that, in the new academic year the Sevastopol subsidiary of the St. Petersburg Cadet Corps will open its doors for the first time. It is now admitting children willing to link their lives with serving to law, citizens and the Fatherland. It should be noted that today the fundamental direction of the country's state policy is comprehensive care for children, support for motherhood and childhood, the rooting of traditional family values, and our common task is to surround each child with warmth and care, to instill in the younger generation love for their relatives, their home and Fatherland.

Can I ask a personal question? Your officers work round the clock. Such work should give people some preferences. For example, living quarters. How are your employees provided with housing?

Alexander Bastykin: During the last year and a half, the formation of the housing stock of the Investigative Committee has been actively continuing, which allows us to solve the issues of providing employees with living quarters during the service. All this affects the psychological climate in the team, the retention of highly qualified personnel and the overall performance. Last

year over 460 million rubles were allocated for this purpose, this year - about 250 million rubles. The financing we have enables us to buy on average 70 apartments annually. In addition, we are constantly looking for possible options for obtaining residential premises for operational management from other state bodies or constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Thus, we are moving at a good pace towards the implementation of our task - to provide service apartments for as many needy employees and their families as possible.

Echo of war

Alexander Ivanovich, the Investigative Committee has recently been actively investigating crimes against civilians during the Great Patriotic War. Moreover, you have organized the work of the headquarters to coordinate search and archival work. Why do we need all that?

Alexander Bastrykin: The year of 2020 - The Year of Memory and Glory - has a special meaning for our Fatherland. Our people paid an enormously heavy price for the liberation of our country, the countries of Eastern and Western Europe from fascism. According to the available archival data, only on the territory of the RSFSR during the years of occupation, more than 2 million civilians were deliberately exterminated. Not all of the facts have been investigated, not all the persons have been identified and brought to justice. For example, thanks to the excavation of search teams and the declassification of archives, details of the tragic events in the Novgorod, Rostov, Pskov regions, Krasnodar Territory and other regions related to the massacre of civilians became known. In this regard, the Investigative Committee is investigating a number of criminal cases on the facts of the criminal actions against the civilian population committed by the Nazis and their accomplices during the Great Patriotic War.

At the same time, many Nazis guilty of committing atrocious crimes, unfortunately, managed to escape from justice and escape punishment. Therefore, the Investigative Committee continues active work on the study of new, previously unknown circumstances of the crimes of those years.

Our duty is to protect the good name of the living and fallen Soldiers-Liberators, civilians, victims of the Nazis. Not a single act based on the criminal ideas of misanthropy and racial superiority, even after such a long time, will remain unnoticed and unpunished.

FOCUS

Preventive measures coordinated by law enforcement have reduced the most dangerous - violent crime

FOCUS

Many Nazis, guilty of cruel offenses, managed to flee from investigation. The active research work on crimes of these years continues

Crime in specific circumstances

Alexander Ivanovich, how has the crime situation changed this year, taking into account the spread of the coronavirus, and how has your work reorganized?

Bastrykin | Indeed, this year the Investigative Committee of Russia worked in a difficult environment, caused, among other things, by the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, it is obvious to everyone that the organizational measures promptly taken by the country's leadership allowed the health care system to cope with the pressure that had arisen. In that, the investigators faced new challenges. They immediately responded to the spread of deliberately false information (fakes) on the Internet about the coronavirus epidemic. We also took measures to ensure that in all cases the money allocated from the federal center for payments to health workers would reach them. I would like to emphasize that the investigators are aimed at strictly suppressing the misappropriation of budget funds allocated to support medical workers and, in general, to modernize the health care system.

We are constantly improving our work and improving the management system. In a way, the coronavirus has encouraged us to use a more efficient meeting format. We hold weekly meetings with all heads of territorial investigative bodies using video-conferencing. We also practice personal receptions of citizens online. This disciplines and improves the quality and efficiency of work. We used to practice attending such meetings in person, and they were much less frequent. And this means additional time and financial costs. Now I can promptly not only demand a report on this or that incident, but also personally understand how much the leader knows about the crime situation in the region, how much he knows about the work of his subordinates in detail. By the way, regarding the state of crime, in general, this year 832,377 crimes were registered in the country, which is 0.4 percent less than last year (data for 5 months of 2020). Moreover, preventive measures coordinated by law enforcement agencies made it possible to reduce the most dangerous - violent crime. Thus, the number of murders decreased by 2.2 percent and the number of facts of intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm, which resulted in the death of the victims, decreased by 7.6 percent.

FOCUS

The events referred to in the criminal case - especially grave crimes against the person - are not related to the activities of Furgal as head of the region

Alexander Bastrykin believes that economic offenses remain one of the most dangerous categories of crime. The picture was provided by the Investigative Committee of Russia

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