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



Bastrykin: Digital forensics is developing in the investigation of crimes

On October 19 the people who hold the keys to solving the most complex and intricate crimes celebrate their professional holiday. As you can easily guess, we are talking about forensic specialists. They consider October 19, 1954 to be the birth date of their legendary service. On that day, by order of the Prosecutor General of the USSR, the instruction "On the criminal prosecutor" was approved. That's where the countdown came from.

The head of the Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin told "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" about how this legendary service has changed, the role of its staff in solving crimes, including the most high-profile, the unique methods of work and equipment in their possession.

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**Alexander Ivanovich, tell us about the most high-profile crimes, the disclosure of which you consider the merit of forensic experts.**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Among the most high-profile cases was the disclosure of rapes and murders of minors using DNA research in Kemerovo, Nizhny Novgorod, Orel, and Tyumen Regions. These are the murders of six people, including two children, in Artyom, Primorsky Territory, in 2005. A series of murders of women committed between 2011 and 2012 in the Central, Volga and Ural Federal Districts.

Decrypted bribe

**Doesn't it offend you that journalists, when reporting on the most high-profile crimes of recent years and how they are investigated, almost never mention forensic specialists. They talk about investigators, operatives, and don't say a word about the one who found the invisible. In what criminal cases the presence of a competent forensic specialist is the key to success?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Such work is especially important when investigating crimes that have caused a public outcry.

For example, thanks to the comprehensive forensic support of the investigation of the armed attack on the students and teachers of the gymnasium in Kazan, buckshot of the cartridges used by the accused was discovered. The investigation carried out effective examinations and analysis of information from his mobile devices, and investigated Internet resources of interest to the investigation. Thus, in conjunction with other evidence, information confirming the thorough preparation of the defendant for the commission of the incriminated acts was obtained.

We have repeatedly spoken about the investigation of the circumstances of mass murder and genocide of the civilian population of the USSR during the war. In a criminal case of genocide in the Krasnodar Territory, the forensic specialists of the State Criminal Investigation Committee (SIC) assisted in establishing the boundaries of civilian burials, further excavations, and identification of victims.

**And can a forensic specialist help in the investigation of white-collar crimes and high-profile corruption cases?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** In such cases the help of forensic scientists is also important. Hardware and software complexes to analyze information from various media are often used here.

Here is a typical example - a criminal case into bribery by an investigator of the Investigative Department of the Department of Internal Affairs in Kaluga. An employee of the Main Forensic Department was able to detect and decipher a number of data pointing to the unlawful behavior of

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the perpetrator.

Another example. The inspection of facilities in the criminal case of fraud against Deputy Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation Anatoly Tikhonov and others recovered deleted user files, previously unknown to the investigation.

In May in the Rostov region 11 employees of a water supply company died during repair works. Investigators and forensic specialists of the Central Office have studied the design documents and the technological process of the sewage treatment facilities. Inspections of the scene and the investigative experiment were organized, forensic examinations were appointed, and the mechanism and cause of the accident were established.

It was found that in the production of works the technological process was violated: no gas analyzers, personal protective equipment, exhaust and fresh air ventilation were used. As a result, the chief engineer of the enterprise was detained on suspicion of committing this crime.

Expertise from above

**Lately, everyone has been hearing about high-profile traffic accidents. Is it impossible to investigate them without forensics there, either?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Forensic units often organize complex inspections under extreme conditions at the scenes of airplane crashes.

This year these were the crash sites of L-410 aircraft in Irkutsk and Kemerovo regions, An-28 in Kamchatka Territory and An-26 in Khabarovsk Territory, Robinson helicopter in Vologda Region. An aerial photo-video survey of the scene is made using a helicopter-type unmanned aerial vehicle, a quadcopter, and a forensic video kit. Flight recorders, electronic instruments with air navigation information, flight and aircraft documents, and fuel samples are seized. Wipes are made of the surviving hull fragments in order to examine them further for the presence or absence of traces of explosives, and so on.

Scientists in uniform

**In what direction is forensics developing in the Investigative Committee today?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** At present, the most important area of forensic work is analytical and research activities. It is no coincidence that they say that forensic specialists are "scientists in uniform".

The Investigative Committee is focused on ensuring the maximum use of forensic capabilities in the detection and investigation of every crime committed. Including those that were committed in

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previous years and remained unsolved.

The forensic science brings together the achievements, including natural and technical sciences, which scientists and practitioners adapt to obtain evidentiary information in the detection and investigation of crimes, to establish the involvement of specific individuals in their commission.

At the departmental level, the development of forensic science is enshrined in the relevant concept. It was approved several years ago. As part of its implementation, a department of research activities (Forensic Research and Development Institute) was created. It is part of the structure of the Forensic Center. Establishment of the Forensic Research and Development Institute was a logical response to the needs of the investigation - to raise to a new level of scientific support for criminal investigation and detection of crimes, to ensure the build-up of scientific and technical capacity of the department in the fight against crime, the creation of its own scientific base.

Research work has been conducted in nearly 40 scientific and practical areas (topics), and they are all practice-oriented. The results of the research are published in scientific and practical manuals intended primarily for investigators and are actively used in investigative practice.

**These publications, it must be understood, are not for the mass reader. But can you at least tell us about the subject matter?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** This year, manuals were prepared for practitioners on the topics "Investigation of mass riots", "Investigation of deaths due to natural and man-made emergencies", and "Investigation of past years crimes". As you know, these are all crimes of our jurisdiction, which are always challenging. We have a lot of young investigators, and such materials are very important to improve their professional level and develop a unified approach to the investigation of criminal cases.

Previously, the Institute has also prepared materials on the organization of the investigation of homicides related to the alienation of housing - these are crimes committed by so-called "black realtors"; on the investigation of crimes of extremist orientation, as well as on the search for minors.

There are a number of studies in the field of forensic science as well. The development of methods of expert support of the investigation, which largely determines the effectiveness of the crime investigation process, is underway. In particular, these are standard methods for investigating computer information, guidelines for conducting forensic psychological research on video materials, guidelines for the use of spore-pollen analysis in investigative practice, and others.

Now it's more than ever necessary to implement new advanced investigative methods and technologies along with new research methods.

Web traces

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**Since we are talking about modern technology, it is logical to ask: how is the forensic science developing in the context of today's digital transformation of society?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** It must be said that unlike their literary counterparts, the world-famous Hercule Poirot and Sherlock Holmes, forensic specialists of the XXI century have a lot of technical innovations in their arsenal. And at the current stage of development, the introduction and use of advanced information technology is one of the priority tasks of the Investigative Committee. After all, it certainly largely determines the quality of our work.

Today the forensic technology, the latest digital technology helps investigators not only to establish a picture of what happened and the suspects of specific crimes, but most importantly - to create conditions for fair justice. In this regard, the direction of the so-called extra-expert "digital" forensics has been actively developed in the activities of the Main Forensics Department.

**An unfamiliar concept. Explain, please...**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Its main areas include primarily the search, retrieval, recovery and other operational processing of data in electronic form, associated with the detection and examination of information on electronic media and digital devices. That is, on computers, cell phones, flash drives, and the like. Plus, assessment of the radio electronic situation and analysis of billing arrays, details of telephone connections, obtaining satellite imagery, technical improvement of photo and video materials, inspection of disparate data on the Internet and cloud storages, messengers, using hardware and software complexes.

By the way, the volume of such work is quite extensive - every year our specialists inspect about 5,000 digital devices and objects that contain information in electronic form.

I would like to note that we are keeping up with the times, and now for the training of qualified specialists in the field of IT technologies in St. Petersburg and Moscow Academies of the Investigative Committee are creating departments of information technology and organization of cybercrime investigation. They will organize training courses for future investigators - "Fundamentals of cybersecurity", "The use of information technology in the investigation of digital traces".

To implement this project in St. Petersburg, we are cooperating with ITMO University, the St. Petersburg Bonch-Bruевич State University of Telecommunications, and St. Petersburg Polytechnical University of Peter the Great. In addition, we developed new additional professional programs "Investigation of Crimes in the Field of Information, Telecommunications and High Technology" and "Investigation of Crimes Committed with the Use of Digital Currency and Digital Financial Assets" to enhance the skills of the Committee's employees.

**It's probably no big secret that for the successful investigation of many crimes, your**

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**subordinates need information support.**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Of course, interdepartmental cooperation is in place for this. Thanks to it, the investigative and HR departments of the Central Office are able to remotely access and quickly use the information of forensic and operational records of the Russian Interior Ministry, the Federal Tax Service of Russia, other government agencies. And this is quite an extensive amount of information, included in the system "Safe City" and "Safe Region", which makes it possible to quickly solve the crimes on hot pursuit.

In addition, a departmental database of unsolved crimes and improvised explosive devices has been created and is constantly updated. There are also records of subjective portraits of suspects used to organize their search, as well as DNA registers.

Such support contributes to the successful investigation of not only recently committed crimes, but also of past crimes, as an essential component of our work, without which it is impossible to ensure the inevitability of punishment for the perpetrators of crimes. In this area forensic specialists analyze investigative practice, systematize forensic identification information on traces seized from crime scenes in criminal cases of unsolved crimes, and provide practical assistance to investigators in the investigation of this category of crimes.

**Can you give me some examples of this interaction?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** For example, this year, together with the bodies of inquiry of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service revealed 4674 crimes of previous years. This includes 481 murders, 279 cases of serious and fatal injury to health, 274 rapes and 1,537 other serious and particularly serious crimes. Three murders of women and one attempted murder committed by one person in Kazan between 2009 and 2011 were solved. The perpetrator attacked the victims in deserted places in order to rape them and hit them on the head with a hard blunt object. Additional molecular-genetic studies of biological traces, taking into account the new possibilities of genetics, established the genetic profile of the perpetrator of these murders.

I have repeatedly emphasized our approach to this work - conscientious, methodical, and systematic.

The magnetometer will find the weapon

**In one of our previous conversations you talked about the active introduction of Russian technology into the work of forensic specialists. How is the import substitution process going in the Investigative Committee?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** This process moves continuously. There are already Russian developments of specialized computer hardware and software that allow you to work effectively with digital information. Russian companies have also stepped up production of other forensic equipment. For

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example, magnetometers "OS" are used to search for weapons (weapons, ammunition, their parts and other metal objects). Only domestic equipment is used for geolocation and nonlinear location. In addition, there are good Russian light sources, metal detectors and other devices used in the investigation of crimes. At the same time, our employees are involved in the development and testing of this equipment. Not so long ago, a portable mobility spectrometer for detecting trace amounts of low-volatile substances, a paper luminescence meter, a complex for producing gabisopic examination, a universal currency detector and other tools have been tested and received recommendations. It should be understood that the development and production of devices and software that are often superior to Western analogues require the formation of a state order and the involvement of the scientific potential of Russian scientists. Therefore, we actively cooperate with the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation, the Russian Academy of Sciences, and leading Russian universities.

**In the opinion of the country's chief investigator, what does the work of a crime scene forensic investigator provide?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** As a rule, during the urgent investigative actions forensic specialists of the Central Office together with investigators organize and coordinate work at the scene, directly participate in their inspection, search activities, detection, fixation and seizure of traces, physical evidence. They assist in the appointment of forensic examinations, carry out forensic support of the investigation to achieve a positive result - the disclosure of crimes and the isolation of the perpetrators. Practice has shown that such technical and forensic support of the investigation is rational and most effective at the initial stage of the investigation.

**The pandemic has disrupted many plans of many different agencies. Do you communicate with foreign colleagues and in what format?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Interaction with foreign colleagues at the level of personal contacts has decreased significantly over the past year and a half. But it has moved into a remote format. Staff members of the Forensic Center take an active part in meetings of the BRICS working groups, working groups on the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking, established within the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. They also take a variety of courses of scientific and practical interest. This year, several representatives of the IC of Russia were trained at the School of Financial and Economic Police of the Financial Guard of the Italian Republic. In any case, international cooperation will continue, because the exchange of experience is extremely useful in the fight against crime.

Congratulations!

**It's your holiday. Let me congratulate you and the entire staff of the Investigative Committee on the new anniversary of the forensic service. To wish health and success in the difficult but necessary job.**

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**Alexander Bastrykin:** Thank you for your kind words. Taking this opportunity, I cordially congratulate the staff and veterans of the forensic service. Their utmost professionalism, integrity, tremendous capacity for work and dedication earned them the respect they deserve. I express my deep gratitude to the veterans for their active assistance in the education of young professionals, sharing their accumulated knowledge and rich experience. I sincerely wish everyone good health, success, and prosperity!

**Alexander Ivanovich, since the figure of a forensic specialist is so important, disclose the secret - what is the modern forensic science in the Investigative Committee?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Forensics is a science in constant development, and all its achievements are fully at the service of the Investigative Committee.

An important and logical stage in the development of modern forensic science was the creation of the Forensic Center in the system of the Investigative Committee, which employs specialists who combine creativity and iron logic. This unit is constantly developing, introducing the latest techniques of detection and investigation of crimes, modern forensic and special equipment throughout the country. We continue to create departments of forensic support for investigations in the federal districts, which allows us to quickly provide practical assistance to investigators from the central office and territorial investigative units.

For example, this year in the structure of the Forensic Center there was created a department of forensic support of investigation in the Far Eastern Federal District of the Department of forensic support of investigation in the federal districts, located in Khabarovsk. The department will deploy its activities on the territory of 11 subjects of the Russian Federation, included in the Far Eastern Federal District. Similar centers already operate in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk. New facilities for criminalists are equipped with specialized forensic and other equipment, which allows to work with traces of crimes.

It should be emphasized that the coordinated efforts of criminalists, investigators, and operatives make it possible to achieve high results. The detection rate of murders, rapes, and intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm resulting in the death of the victim is currently 97-99 percent.

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