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## **The Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russian Federation grants an interview to ITAR-TASS News Agency**



Mr.Bastrykin: Ukrainian nationalists are ready for any casualties among the civilian population.

Since 2014, the Investigative Committee of Russia has been documenting all war crimes committed by Ukrainian servicemen against civilians in Donbass. Over the years, hundreds of criminal cases have been launched by the Russian investigation. The Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Ivanovich Bastrykin in his interview to TASS spoke about the way the special operation, carried out by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, impacted the work of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, what crimes, committed by the Ukrainian nationalists were recorded, and he spoke about the danger of Ukrainian nationalism.

**— Alexander Ivanovich, have the Investigative Committee’s objectives changed in any way due to the ongoing events in the Donbas and Ukraine?**

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— The Investigative Committee of Russia, as before, continues to collect evidence of the crimes committed by the Ukrainian nationalists, who endanger the lives and health of Donbas civilians and of Russian citizens, and infringes the interests of the Russian Federation. Now all the work is being carried out with maximum intensity. All specialized units of the Department work almost around the clock. The situation is a subject of my personal control and I give separate instructions to document the most egregious and cruel facts. Since February 17, the investigators of the Main Directorate have launched more than 80 criminal cases.

We are also doing everything possible to support the refugees who have arrived on the Russian territory. For this, we involve not only the regional units, that border the Donbas and Ukraine, but also the investigative units from other regions, including the military investigators. Our officers have become a part of the operational headquarters, they provide the legal assistance to the residents of the republics, explain the legislative details to them, and, if necessary, they help to proceed and draw up the documents. In parallel with this, of course, we record what we are told by people who were forced to leave their homes due to hostilities. These are not only dozens and hundreds of tragic stories, but also documents, confirming our line of enquiry related to the Ukrainian nationalist's actions. We are convinced that this information, as well as the materials of hundreds of criminal cases that have already been investigated since 2014, will become evidence of the crimes of the Ukrainian regime in court.

— **And what is the approximate amount of work we are talking about over these eight years?**

— Since 2014, on the events in Donbass and Ukraine, the Investigative Committee has launched more than 500 criminal cases involving 180 persons. Among them are high-ranking representatives of the military and political leadership of Ukraine - former Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Arsen Avakov and Governor of Dnepropetrovskaya oblast of Ukraine Igor Kolomoisky, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Oleksandr Turchynov, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Anton Gerashchenko. Commanders of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Valery Ismailov, Andrey Grishchenko, Oleg Mikats, Mikhail Prokopiv, Alexander Zhakun, Oleg Kutsin, Valery Gudz, Vyacheslav Pechenko, Dmitry Kashchenko, Fyodor Yaroshevich, Andrey Gnatov, members of the Right Sector radical nationalist associations (the organization is banned in the Russian Federation) , "Volunteer Ukrainian Corps" and other persons. At the same time, all criminal cases on the use of banned means and methods of warfare are integrated into one case proceeding. Over the entire period of the investigation, more than 160 thousand people have been interrogated; more than 32 thousand people have been recognized as victims, including about 4 thousand juveniles.

— **These are impressive numbers, but what exactly do they stand for? What criminal acts have been documented?**

— All these years we have seen hatred, cruelty and meanness towards the Donbas civilians on behalf of the Ukrainian security forces. Once they used to be the citizens of one and the same country, and how it is possible to act in such way towards the compatriots ... is incomprehensible to my mind.

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Apparently, the nationalist ideas that increasingly permeated the Ukrainian society, took roots and spread from top to bottom of it, and really grew very deep. How else the actions of the Ukrainian military can be explained or justified, actions of those, who mined the area near residential buildings, where three children were later blown up and killed during their walk. They fired targetly from large-caliber artillery at residential areas, knowing that people were dying from that. There can be no accidents, all soldiers know how this system is operating.

And how the Tochka-U system use could possibly be explained? This is a six-meter rocket containing almost half a ton of explosives, while they did not hesitate to send such rockets to residential areas, even with cluster charges, which, as you know, are prohibited munition. And we recorded dozens of civilian casualties. It is possible to continue to list everything that was tested against the civilian population - the Grad, Uragan multiple launch rocket systems, unguided aircraft rockets, other types of heavy offensive weapons of indiscriminate action with high damaging properties, as well as small arms firearms.

And judging by what we see now, the nationalists are ready for any casualties among the civilian population. There was a large group of Ukrainian armed formations in the Donbas. As you know, Russian troops got the documents from the National Guard of Ukraine senior staff, and they testify the preparations to a massive offense. If the Russian army had not started a special operation, then the Ukrainian nationalists would have had much more space and strength to concentrate their attacks on the DPR and LPR territories. Then the losses among the civilian population would be much greater.

As the situation developed, Russian military personnel also reported the secret biological laboratories existence in Ukraine, operating with the USA support. Now, in the media profile, the West denies its presence, but we remember the US Officials speeches, where the opposite has been claimed, in regards to the biological research facilities in Ukraine. It is hard to imagine what could have happened if these "facilities" had continued their work. Within the criminal investigation, we requested the Russian Ministry of Defense for the available documents submission; the case is launched in accordance with the article on the mass-casualty biological weapons development and production, all the circumstances of the crime are investigating.

**— You mentioned the nationalism, so where did it come from in Ukraine and what is its danger?**

— A good question, since with a comprehensive study of this aspect, those who went to protests and also expressed an anti-Russian position on social networks could change their minds. These people should study the history and causes of real tragedies more deeply and only after that assess the situation. As you know, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian elites tried to impose a new ideology on their people, based on Ukrainian nationalism. All that continued to develop against the background of the glorification of persons who fought on the Nazi Germany side during the Great Patriotic War. Later, the laws were adopted, aimed at denying the Soviet past of the country,

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including the rights and freedoms discrimination of Russian-speaking population of Ukraine

For example, a law that provides for the exclusive use of the Ukrainian language in almost all spheres of life violates not only the rights of millions of citizens of this country, but also contradicts the constitution, which guarantees the free development, use and protection of Russian and other languages. In fact, total discrimination on the basis of nationality began, and last year a law was passed on the indigenous peoples of Ukraine, where Russians were not even included. At the same time, looking at numerous videos recorded not by the official media, but by ordinary citizens, we see that quite a lot of Ukrainian residents still speak Russian. Thus, Ukraine has become a country whose ideology is built on Russophobia. The current Kiev regime uses nationalist beliefs to persecute the Russian-speaking population of Donbas and contributes to the creation of threats to Russia by NATO. And our country remembers the evidence of the terrible war crimes committed by the Nazi regime and the multi-million losses suffered by the peoples of the USSR in the struggle for peace, and this should not happen again.

**— Going back to the particular acts of Ukrainian nationalists, how is everything assessed by the investigation from the national laws and international law point of view?**

— The use of such indiscriminate weapons with high damaging properties against the civilian population is a violation to a number of international norms. These are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and its Additional Protocols, the Convention (IV) with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (The Hague Regulations) These acts establish the right of every person to life, liberty and personal inviolability, they guarantee that the civilian persons and infrastructural objects should not be the objects of attacks during military operations, they establish a ban on attacking or bombarding undefended cities, villages, dwellings or buildings. We, based on the norms of international law and Russian legislation, evaluate these acts in accordance with the current Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

The Investigative Committee has qualified the actions of Ukrainian nationalists as genocide, ill-treatment of the civilian population, the use of banned by an international treaty of the Russian Federation means and methods in warfare, hostage-taking, attempted murder, and a number of other offenses. Moreover, the first two belong to the categories of crimes against the peace and security of mankind, and such crimes have no statute of limitations for being prosecuted.

**— How does the Russian investigation jurisdiction extend to these crimes? How do you assess the prospects for these cases being brought to court? Where can the Ukrainian nationalists be tried?**

— Understanding the nature of the above crimes, the basis for their objective investigation was the principle of universality, which is based on the protection of common values. This principle implies

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the extension of the criminal jurisdiction of the state to acts recognized as criminal in accordance with the international law. At the same time, the citizenship of the persons convicted of committing them does not matter. The provisions of the modern doctrine of international law are reflected, among other things, in the Princeton Principles of Universal Jurisdiction of 2001 and the Resolution on the Principle of Universality of the Institute of International Law of 2005. They recognize that universal jurisdiction is based solely on the nature of the crime committed, regardless of the existence of any connection with the State establishing the jurisdiction. It applies to "serious international offenses", which include war crimes, crimes against peace and humanity, genocide and torture. The provisions of Russian and Ukrainian criminal law also establish the possibility of its application.

The UN Secretary-General reports, prepared in pursuance of the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, also contain precise examples based on the information provided by the governments of countries on this principle implementation. This practice is already quite widespread in a number of countries, where it is noted that this is a good tool in the fight against impunity in connection with the commission of international offenses. And in the situation with Ukraine, we are talking about impunity and ignoring serious crimes by the present government. In our turn, we intend to continue documenting them, based solely on the principles of international law, international treaties, national legislation, interdepartmental documents of an international nature and the principle of universal jurisdiction.

The recognition of this principle in our legislation implies that the perpetrators of these crimes can be trialed by national courts. We already have such examples. Moreover, those who are put on the international wanted list but for some reasons cannot be extradited, has a possibility to be tailed and convicted in absentia, the law provides for such a possibility.

**Will cooperation between the authorities of these states will be more effective with the DPR and LPR recognition by the Russian Federation?**

— Yes, and we have already taken the first steps towards this. After the executing the relevant decrees and friendship treaties between Russia and the two republics, a foundation was laid for the interstate relations development. Based on this, the cooperation agreements were concluded between the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation with the Prosecutor General's Offices of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. This is the beginning of the joint work of law enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, including the investigation of the Kyiv regime crimes. And, of course, these agreements will help us build our collaboration to combat crime, including in its organized and transnational forms.

— **Are the attacks on Russian embassies also being investigated among the cases you have mentioned?**

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— All this is true. As I have already said, most of the criminal cases relate to the shelling of the civilian population in Donbas, however, we give a legal assessment of all the facts when the infringement is made on the interests of Russia and its citizens. Since 2014, 21 cases of attacks on Russian diplomatic institutions in Kiev, Kharkov, Lvov and obstruction of the electoral rights of Russian citizens on the territory of Ukraine have been recorded. And after the information war has started and the incitement of hatred against Russia, against the backdrop of a special operation by our military personnel and attacks began on Russian foreign missions in other European countries - the Netherlands, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, France, Estonia.

We also document all this information within the criminal investigations and in the future the requests will be submitted to the competent authorities of these countries for the legal support input. But there is a premonition that their civilization has a very limited scope, they are now clearly demonstrating this, wanting to see the emerging situation one-sidedly and clearly biased.

— **In your opinion, to what extent does the information background influence the situation?**

— It is obvious that the information war of the West against Russia, which is saturated with disinformation and falsification, is becoming a cover for genocide, aggression, as well as nationalist attacks on civilians in Donbass. The Russian legislator has very timely adopted a law on criminal liability for disinformation about the Russian Armed Forces activities, and for discrediting their actions to protect the country and maintain peace. The investigating authorities are already investigating more than 10 criminal such cases. The sanctions of the Criminal Code new articles are very severe and, I believe, will help to minimize false information and its negative impact on a wide audience.

Separately, I would like to note some speeches made by the public figures of Ukraine. We see their numerous misanthropic statements, threats, calls for the murder of Russian citizens, close relatives of Russian military personnel, their children and wives. And they allow themselves to do this not somewhere in private messengers, but in the official Ukrainian media. And, apparently, the shareholders of these mass media support this. All this once again confirms that nationalist ideas in their minds have been transformed into radical forms, becoming the norm, and this is very dangerous for any society. The Russian side has never and nowhere allowed itself such a thing.

In this regard, I would also like to thank the journalists who report truthfully from the spot. We see how important, though dangerous, this profession is in a wartime. During the information war, the journalists help to see the real picture of what is happening, what is going on, in fact, at the forefront. Their journalists reports, as well as the materials of our criminal cases, will become irrefutable evidence of the Kyiv regime crimes, where the criminals must stand trial for the atrocities committed.

I also instructed the preparation of the next edition of the "White Book" on the events in the Donbas. This edition will include testimonies of the monstrous crimes of Ukrainian nationalists against

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civilians, eyewitness accounts, as well as stories about our humanitarian mission.

The interview was held by Tatyana Khan

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