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



**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin in his interview to RG: Where and why will Ukrainian nationalists be tried**

**Mr. Alexander Ivanovich, very few people know that the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation has been investigating criminal cases against Ukrainian security forces for 8 years now. They have committed crimes against the civilian population of Donbas. Can you provide a number of how many defendants in criminal cases you have today, i.e. the military of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and nationalists?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** The investigation is receiving more and more evidence of the crimes committed by the Ukrainian Regime within criminal investigations. This includes material evidence, and testimonies of thousands of witnesses, victims, surrendered representatives of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as expert opinions, objective control data, and other information.

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We have established cooperation with operational services, the Russian Ministry of Defense and Law Enforcement Agencies of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics.

All this allowed us to establish the involvement of about three and a half hundred persons in grave and especially grave crimes.

These are representatives of the military and political leadership, law enforcement agencies, Ukrainian radical nationalist organizations, and mercenaries. More than half of this number is persons who have committed crimes against the peace and security of mankind. A number of defendants have been put on the wanted list.

**Are there any persons among them, who have already been imposed restraint as custody by the court on the motion of the investigation?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** Yes, there are such people. They are servicemen of the 36th Marine Brigade officers Alexander Plotnikov, Sergey Paliychuk, Denis Nazarov, Sergey Batynsky, a serviceman of the Aidar nationalist battalion (an extremist organization banned in the Russian Federation. - Ed.) Vladimir Chigirovsky and other persons.

In total, since 2014, more than a thousand criminal cases have been launched on the events in Donbas and Ukraine. 70 thousand people, including juveniles, were recognized as victims of the criminal actions by the Ukrainian security forces.

**What types of crimes are all the Ukrainian soldiers that you listed involved in?**

**Alexander Bastrykin:** The main array of crimes under investigation is the shelling of the civilian population with the use of artillery, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, but there are other facts - murders, kidnappings, torture.

All of the above crimes are striking in their cruelty, directed primarily at the civilian population, which does not support the Nazi Kiev regime.

It's hard to see how this is even possible. What should have happened in the minds of these people for the Nazi ideology and Russophobia to reach such a point?

Their commitment to fascism is manifested in them not so much in the image of the swastika, but in their actions.

More than 400 civilians were killed at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists; more than 2 thousand residential buildings were destroyed over the past three months.

There are known facts when people were tortured and brutally killed.

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If we talk about specifics, then Mr. Batynsky gave his subordinates a criminal order to shell residential areas of Mariupol from artillery weapons. We have evidence of his committing violent acts against a local resident, as well as the murder of a man. Mr. Chigirovsky, as the investigators established, being in a state of alcoholic intoxication, shot at civilians in Volnovakha several times, one of them died.

In March-April of this year, Messrs. Plotnikov, Paliychuk and Nazarov fired artillery at 9 settlements of the Donetsk People's Republic.

The vast majority of other security forces, whom we accuse in absentia, are also involved in the shelling of residential areas, the civilian infrastructure of Donbas, resulting in the death and injury of people, and great destruction.

Recently, a number of Ukrainian security officials were identified as being involved in similar crimes. Among them there were the commander of the 25th separate paratrooper brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Mr. Yevgeny Kurash, the commander of the 3rd paratrooper battalion of the same brigade, Mr. Emil Ishkulov, who were involved in the shelling of DPR settlements on May 23-24, which resulted in the injury of 8 civilians and destruction houses.

It was also established that the commander of the 2nd self-propelled artillery battery of the 2nd self-propelled artillery battalion of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Mr. Yuri Akimov, and the head of artillery of the military unit A-2802, Mr. Roman Shostak, shelled several settlements in February-March of this year, including Mariupol, this resulted in the death of two civilians and the destruction of several dozen houses. These facts are also being investigated by our Officers.

### **Does the use of Tochka-U missile systems relate to these crimes?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** These complexes are designed to inflict great damage on equipment and manpower of the enemy. But Ukrainian armed formations also use them against civilians, and in some cases they use banned cluster charges. These actions are qualified as the use of banned means and methods of warfare, which is a crime without statute of limitations.

Investigators have established that the commander of the 19th separate missile brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Fyodor Yaroshevich and his subordinates were involved in shelling the territory of Donbas with the use of these ammunition. In 2014, they attacked the city of Rovenki.

And this year, they launched a missile attack on Donetsk, killing 27 civilians and injuring more than 40 people, including Russian citizens.

Within the criminal investigation, an explosive examination was carried out, which confirmed the presence of cluster warheads banned by International Law. Also, objective control data was received at the place where the rocket was launched in Donetsk from the territory controlled by the Armed

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Forces of Ukraine. The investigation has no doubts that Mr. Yaroshevich was aware of the use of banned munition, and of the targets - civilian infrastructure objects, which were fired upon, and he also knew about the consequences of this act for the civilian population.

**You recently visited Mariupol and held an operational brief meeting there. How do you assess the situation there?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** It is very difficult to describe in words. All those who believe that there is no Nazism in Ukraine should simply see this horrific picture with their own eyes.

The Ukrainian security forces actually razed to the ground many settlements in the Donbas.

Those ruins that remained after them resemble the consequences of the destruction of cities by the Nazis during the Great Patriotic War.

The actions of the armed formations of Ukraine led to catastrophic destruction of residential buildings, schools, hospitals, children's institutions and other infrastructure. Ukrainian nationalists used human shield tactics: civilians were held back, and if they tried to evacuate, then fire was opened on them.

And military equipment was deployed in civilian facilities, obviously dooming everything around to great destruction.

In these manifestations of cruelty, the Ukrainian security forces can probably give odds even to the Nazi army. And this happened not only in Mariupol, but everywhere. All facts of the civilian population inhuman treatment and the use of banned methods of warfare are carefully documented and analyzed.

I instructed investigators and forensic specialists to conduct appraisal, construction and economic examinations in order to estimate the damage caused. It is already obvious that we are talking about hundreds of billions of rubles.

**Citizens from which states are present in the foreign mercenaries who commit crimes together with the Ukrainian security forces?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** Currently, more than 70 persons are involved in criminal cases on mercenarism. Some of them have already surrendered and were interrogated by investigators.

These are foreign mercenaries who arrived from the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Norway, Georgia and other countries. In particular, members of the Georgian National Legion (an armed formation recognized as extremist in the Russian Federation. - Ed.) were identified by names. It is a unit created by Mr. Mamuka Mamulashvili in Ukraine. At least 24 citizens of Georgia were involved in

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its composition.

**Now do investigators proceed criminal investigations, which are close to be finalized or maybe there are the cases that have already been finalized?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** Investigative actions have been finalized on 11 criminal cases. Dozens of cases are nearing their final stage. We managed to establish the circumstances of a number of especially grave crimes and identify the persons who committed them. The collection of evidence is a very time-consuming and painstaking process, taking into account the conditions in which investigators have to work.

Set of investigative actions and examinations are required. In particular, a criminal case was investigated against a serviceman, Mr. Ruslan Maystruk, who participated in the mining of a bridge in the Lugansk People's Republic.

The accused is in custody, now the process of familiarization with the criminal case files is being finalized, and then it will be sent to the court for consideration.

As you know, the law allows a decision to be made in the absence of the accused. In a number of criminal cases where the accused are wanted, it was possible to establish the circumstances to be proven.

In the future, the issue of sentencing defendants in absentia by the courts of the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics will be decided. Among them, the commander of the tank battalion of the 53rd separate mechanized brigade of the armed formations of Ukraine, Mr. Dmitry Shvets. On his command, a hospital in the city of Volnovakha was shot from a tank, despite the fact that there were medical personnel and patients in the building. The accused was arrested in absentia.

There are a number of other cases at the final stage, which we will report after all the necessary measures have been taken.

**Most recently, Ukraine sentenced a Russian soldier to life imprisonment, and recently two soldiers were sentenced to more than ten years. Do you think this is a political verdict?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** We have observed a series of illegal decisions by the Ukrainian regime regarding Russian citizens. Based on unverified information, the law enforcement agencies of this country made decisions to prosecute Russian military personnel who had long been dismissed from service.

Criminal cases against Russian politicians and Employees of educational institutions were launched on far-fetched grounds.

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There are serious reasons to doubt that the investigation and hasty judgment you mentioned can be objective and meet the objectives of criminal law.

Conducting examinations, investigative actions, and then examining them by the court takes time. Therefore, the results of this process are more like ongoing attempts to discredit our country, using any means to do so.

**Under what legislation and on whose territory will war criminals be tried: Russian or international? Where will they serve their sentence?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** The norms of international law, as well as the laws of the Russian Federation and other states, almost identically interpret actions that relate to crimes against the peace and security of mankind.

Without a doubt, what the Ukrainian militias are doing is one of those actions. We have proof of this. Let me remind you that the competence of the Investigative Committee in this case is based on the principle of universal jurisdiction.

There is a duty to search for and bring to justice those involved in the violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols I and II thereto of 1977 and also to prosecute such persons or extradite them for trial in another state.

As we noted earlier, no one in Ukraine has ever investigated crimes against civilians in Donbas. Other states not only ignored Kiev's failure to fulfill its international obligations, but also supported everything that was happening financially, sent instructors and advisers to Ukraine who trained military personnel.

We initially adhered to the position of intolerance to such criminal manifestations. And now, when the process of formation of new republics is underway, it is obvious that the Donbas is exactly the right place for those who have caused suffering and destroyed the civilian population over years should be judged.

This fully meets both the principles of criminal justice and common sense. But at the same time, the above principle of universal jurisdiction also allows Russian courts to consider such cases.

The question of serving a sentence is already secondary, but one must proceed from the capabilities of the penitentiary system.

**We see what hardships are experiencing the affected residents of Donbas and other territories of Ukraine. Russia and our citizens are helping them cope with problems and build a new life. We see that the Investigative Committee does not stand aside. How do you specifically help, besides criminal investigations?**

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**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** The Investigative Committee organized the provision of assistance to internally displaced persons from among socially unprotected citizens in almost all regions, including those who were forced to leave the territory of the DPR, LPR and Ukraine. The Department organizes work on the emergency evacuation of wounded and sick children, disabled children, orphans, children left without parental care to the Russian Federation.

Monitoring of the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of refugees and internally displaced persons is carried out within the work of interdepartmental operational headquarters.

To do this, Officers of the Department regularly travel to temporary accommodation centers, hold personal receptions. New arrivals are not always able to orient themselves in the information quickly and correctly, therefore, we explain to them how to act, we organize meetings for people with representatives of other authorities, as far as possible.

There are a number of important topics that need to be addressed, such as employment, medical care, education, social benefits, the possibility of using driver's licenses and other documents.

In this regard, the Investigative Committee also proposed measures aimed at resolving emerging issues. The creation of a special information platform for refugees, the development of educational programs, the updating of the regulatory framework in various areas, and a number of others are among them.

We do not leave people in a difficult situation; the Officers of the Department constantly organize the delivery of humanitarian aid to the residents of Donbas.

Obviously, all state structures will have to consolidate the consequences of humanitarian problems and create favorable conditions for people who have been subjected to abuse and extermination for years.

Key Question

## **Viruses Custom framing**

**In the West, the media say that they managed to destroy everything that related to the US biological laboratories in Ukraine. This is true?**

**Mr. Alexander Bastrykin:** Indeed, there is evidence that such attempts were made - the results of the research were taken to the territories controlled by Kiev before the start of a Special Military Operation. But, as you know, there are no crimes without traces. And if we are talking about complex processes in which different states and interested parties are involved, then it is impossible to hide this. The Investigative Committee is investigating a criminal case on the development of biological weapons of mass destruction. A large number of documents that were discovered by the

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Russian Ministry of Defense are being examined.

It is known that the Pentagon and organizations associated with it provided funding and control over this process. The investigation knows the circle of people associated with military biological activities in Ukraine, as well as the amount of foreign funding - it has amounted to more than 224 million US dollars since 2005. The Investigative Committee continues to study all the information related to this activity.

Mss. Natalya Kozlova

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