
Interview of Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation - Chief of the Main Military Investigation Department Alexander Sorochnik to "Rossiyskaya Gazeta"

The Generals got down

The chief military investigator - about the criminals in uniform

A series of harsh sentences to generals is one of the trends of recent months. What kind of crimes does dominate in the power structures today? Alexander Sorochnik , Colonel-General of Justice, Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, Head of the Main Military Investigation Department told about it to the “RG” correspondent.

Mr. Sorochnik, what does the crime in uniform look like today?

Alexander Sorochnik: We have registered more than 5 thousand crimes committed by the army and other security agencies during 6 months. More than 8.7 thousand criminal cases have been in the proceedings of military investigators during this period. Of this, nearly 4 thousands have been completed; about 3 thousands have been taken to court.

Which of the security forces leads?

Alexander Sorochkin: The number of crimes committed by Spetsstroy and FPS of Russia officials. The EMERCOM forces and departments are leading in reduction of the crime level.

They have dropped the crime rate by almost 45 percent.

The number of crimes in the armed forces reduced by 22 percent, in the border authorities of the FSS – by 12 percent, in the Interior Ministry troops and subunits of the FSS by almost 10 percent.

Which of the crimes have gone down?

Alexander Sorochkin: If we talk about common crimes, the number of cases of the intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm has decreased (- 16 percent), as well as sexual assaults (-12 percent) and crime while intoxicated (-5 percent).

Violations of the order of military service have reduced by a third. These include unauthorized absence, desertion, evasion of service, breach of statutory regulations on personal relations. The number of cases of physical violence by officials against the subordinate has reduced by 21 percent.

Recently, the former chief of the Main Military Medical Directorate, Major-General of Medical Service, Alexander Belevitin has been sentenced to 8 years. Criminal charges were brought against the former commander of Special Forces, Colonel-General Yuri Solovyov stock and Chief of the

Military Topographic Directorate of the General Staff, Rear Admiral Sergei Kozlov. The chief of the military medical department of the Internal Troops High Command of the Russian Interior Ministry Major General of Medical Service, Yuri Sabanin was arrested. How many “general” cases are there in the proceedings now?

Alexander Sorochkin: This year, four criminal cases against senior officers were taken to court. The military investigators are working on 11 criminal cases against 11 generals and admirals. Most of them are cases of corruption.

Which articles of the Criminal Code do people of such a high rank “prefer”?

Alexander Sorochkin: Typically, these are abuse of office, forgery, bribery and fraud.

For example, by the decision of the court, the former Deputy Chief of Finance and Economic Directorate of the Ministry of Defense, Reserve Major-General Anatoly Vorobyov was convicted of fraud on a large scale. For five years, Vorobiev, being the chairman of the Housing Commission of this directorate, was taking steps that were carefully concealed from the higher command. As a result, his son illegally obtained and registered the ownership over a three-room apartment in Moscow acquired at the War Department expense with a total space exceeding 100 square meters and cost more than 13.3 million rubles. During the investigation the convicted person voluntarily compensated the damage to the State.

Does the number of corruption crimes increase or decrease?

Alexander Sorochnik: Speaking in absolute terms, the total number of such crimes has decreased by 3.5 per cent for a year and amounted to 1958 offenses. But against the backdrop of general decline in the number of registered offenses, the proportion of corruption crimes rose by almost 4 percent.

The number of these crimes has slightly reduced in the Ministry of Defense (-3 percent) and in the subunits of the FSS (-2 percent). The Interior Ministry troops and border authorities show the opposite tendency, there is an increase of about 19 percent. It looks alarming that the size of the material damage from the actions of corrupt officials is constantly growing. This year, it increased by one third and amounted to over 992 million rubles.

Do you receive reports on the facts of corruption and how often are such signals being confirmed?

Alexander Sorochnik: In six months, we have received about two thousand reports of crimes of corruption. 1.7 thousand procedural decisions were taken. Criminal investigation was launched in 44 percent of cases.

Crime reduction in law enforcement agencies is a good sign. But maybe it is simply the result of reduction of military personnel?

Alexander Sorochnik: Of course, this has had an impact. But the reduction of the total number of reports of crime received by military investigators, has also affected. In six months, we have reviewed nearly 13,000 such reports; this is 10 percent less than the year before. As a consequence, the number of criminal cases initiated on the review results has reduced as well.

Given that the psychology of recruits' group has not changed, I can assume that non-manual relations continue to thrive in military communities continue, we just do nothing about them.

From this place on, please, be more detailed.

Alexander Sorochkin: The fact is that according to the rules of criminal procedure law, as a division of the Investigative Committee we cannot "search for crimes". It is the prerogative of other agencies. However, in the first half of this year, the command of military units, heads of agencies and organizations, which are the bodies of inquiry, have identified by 40 per cent less crimes than a year earlier. Military Prosecutor's Office, which is our main supplier of materials for prosecution, has reduced their number by nearly 11 percent.

The reorganization of the Financial Inspection of the Ministry of Defense has also affected the results of our activities. Its specialists have been working in cooperation with the investigation committee for many years. In some districts and fleets, such as the Northern Fleet, financial inspections have been eliminated. Control and financial inspections, which are being created instead, are not properly staffed yet. As a result, the amount of materials sent to us by the auditing bodies of the Ministry of Defense has fallen by more than 3 times.

Have you recently noticed any growth in certain "military" crimes?

Alexander Sorochkin: The number of crimes involving violations of safety rules when using the military-technical means is growing now. There are more cases of the criminal handling of weapons and items that represent an increased danger to others, cases of dangerous driving or operating machinery, as well as the general order for border guards.

If we talk about common crimes, the murder and attempted murder number has increased by 1.5 times during a half of the year. The level of crimes against public health and public morality has grown by 30 percent, 18 per cent increase has been noticed in the number of crimes related to violation of traffic rules and vehicle operation. The level of crime in the area of drug trafficking has escalated by almost 27 percent. As a result, there is an increase of almost 4 times in the number of crimes while intoxicated.

Are drugs being distributed in the military environment?

Alexander Sorochkin: The military investigation department of the Investigative Committee of Russia in the Lyubertsy garrison is investigating a criminal case against the warrant officer of the military unit № 66,631 Yan Serbsky and other 4 citizens. The search of the gardeners' partnership in the Orekhovo-Zuyevsky district near Moscow carried out with the participation of drug control officers has allowed the investigators to find clandestine laboratory for the production of amphetamine. In addition to the equipment they seized three barrels with about 120 liters of liquid containing amphetamine. According to experts, in dry form it is more than 18 kilograms of psychotropic substance. This amount is sufficient for the preparation of more than 90,000 doses. The defendants are in custody. The preliminary investigation is continuing.

Do you react to the exposures on the web?

Alexander Sorochkin: Here is an example. Two video clips have appeared in the Internet, in which unidentified persons dressed in camouflage were killing a dog. We have launched a criminal case of animal cruelty committed by a group of people. The investigator had only a video clip of a poor quality at his (her) disposal. The criminals were seen only from the back, which prevented their identification. The place and time of the offense were also unknown.

First of all, our employees have checked the military units, to which animal protection societies and social networks had claims. Through the organs of Internal Affairs we have received information about the persons subjected to criminal or administrative responsibility for the cruelty to animals. We have set the location and time of their service, checked them for involvement in the specified crime. We were catching at a straw. The clothing of one of the defendants contained a fragment of a chevron. In order to somehow identify him, images of hundreds of chevrons, used in the army in the last 10 years, have been collected from all over the country. Photo and video technical expertise we have carried out has allowed us to establish a specific military unit, where the chevron, the fragment of which was visible in the video clip, was in use from 2005 to 2009.

We have found that in late February - early March 2010 shooting of animals was conducted. Upon hearing that one dog was still alive, two warrant officers, Sergey Akimov and Denis Prosvirin, have finished it off, that was what got into the Internet. In the course of the investigation the warrant officers confessed to the crime.

3 examinations have been carried out; dozens of witnesses have been established and questioned for 18 months of preliminary investigation in this case. The case amounted to 24 volumes.

Perhaps someone will say, so much effort was spent for one dog. But we believe that criminal cases cannot be divided into important and unimportant ones.

The main thing is to find and identify the person who committed the crime. And we do well in this area. For example, in the first half of this year, only 1 criminal case has been suspended for the first time in all military investigative agencies in connection with the non-identification of person to be brought as a defendant. Last year this figure was 5.

FIGURE 11 top officials are now involved in 11 criminal cases.

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