http://dx.doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v23.5824

PROCEDURAL CONTROL OF THE HEAD OF THE INVESTIGATIVE BODY OVER THE ACCOUNTING AND STORAGE OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

CONTROLE PROCESSUAL DO CHEFE DO ÓRGÃO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO SOBRE A REGISTRAÇÃO E ARMAZENAMENTO DE PROVAS MATERIAIS

Article received on: 12/11/2025
Article accepted on: 3/10/2026

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Abstract
The authors of this article discusses the issues of increasing the effectiveness of the procedural control of the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the accounting and preservation of material evidence in pre-trial criminal proceedings. It is emphasized that these issues are very relevant and urgent, since it is the activity of the head of the investigative body of criminal proceedings that is the resource on which the quality of the entire preliminary investigation, as well as proper accounting and preservation of physical evidence, in particular, directly depends. It has been established that the problems of accounting and storage of physical evidence are currently not fully resolved and are relevant both for the theory of criminal proceedings and for law enforcement practice. Unfortunately, currently in the practice of investigative units, cases often occur that indicate a negative trend, expressed in the presence of facts of loss and damage of physical evidence. In conclusion, the authors conclude that the consequences of improper procedural control by the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the

Resumo
Os autores deste artigo abordam as questões relacionadas ao aumento da eficácia do controle processual exercido pelo chefe do órgão de investigação sobre as atividades do investigador. com o objetivo de garantir o registro e a preservação das provas materiais na fase de instrução do processo penal. Salienta-se que essas questões são muito relevantes e urgentes. uma vez que é da atividade do chefe do órgão de investigação do processo penal que depende diretamente a qualidade de toda a investigação preliminar. bem como a contabilidade e a preservação adequadas das provas materiais. em particular. Ficou estabelecido que os problemas de contabilização e armazenamento de provas materiais não estão. atualmente. totalmente resolvidos e são relevantes tanto para a teoria do processo penal quanto para a prática da aplicação da lei. Infelizmente. atualmente. na prática das unidades de investigação. ocorrem frequentemente casos que indicam uma tendência negativa. expressa na presença de fatos de perda e danos às provas materiais. Em conclusão. os autores concluem que as

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accounting and preservation of material evidence are the numerous facts used in practice to bring to disciplinary responsibility not only investigators, but also the heads of specific investigative units themselves.

Keywords: Pre-Trial Proceedings. Head of the Investigative Body. Investigator. Physical Evidence. Storage and Accounting of Physical Evidence.

consequências do controle processual inadequado por parte do chefe do órgão de investigação sobre as atividades do investigador para garantir o registro e a preservação das provas materiais são os inúmeros fatos utilizados na prática para atribuir responsabilidade disciplinar não apenas aos investigadores. mas também aos próprios chefes de unidades de investigação específicas.

Palavras-chave: *Fase de Instrução. Chefe do Órgão de Investigação. Investigador. Provas Materiais. Armazenamento e Registro de Provas Materiais.*

1 INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the topic is primarily due to the fact that the issues of ensuring the safety of physical evidence during a preliminary investigation are among the most difficult and controversial in the science of criminal procedure law. Physical evidence makes up a significant amount of all evidence in each criminal case. Physical evidence proves the guilt or innocence of a person involved in criminal proceedings. Their importance should not be underestimated, since on the basis of the collected material evidence, various procedural decisions are made that significantly affect human and civil rights and freedoms, and their fundamental principles are regulated by the norms of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Articles 49, 50, 51) [12, pp. 367-376; 5, pp. 2563-2566].

The activities of the head of the investigative body aimed at improving the organization of ensuring the safety of physical evidence, seized and other property seized in the course of operational activities are justified and significant. It should be noted that the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 09/28/2023 No. 1589 "On the approval of the Rules (hereinafter – "Accounting and transfer rules") accounting and storage of items and documents seized during pre-trial proceedings but not recognized as material evidence in criminal cases until they are recognized as material evidence in criminal cases or until they are returned to the persons from whom they were seized and seized property, accounting, storage and transfer of material evidence in criminal cases, as well as the return of material evidence in criminal cases in the form of money to their

rightful owner and the invalidation of certain acts and a separate provision of the act of the Government of the Russian Federation" adjusted the approach to implementing the provisions of Russian legislation, including the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as the CPC RF).

The rules for recording and transferring material evidence, as well as other above-mentioned items, are established by Part 3 of Article 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation, as well as in the previously mentioned Resolution. In other words, actions to implement the "Accounting and Transfer Rules" are not criminal procedural actions, they fall within the competence of both the preliminary investigation authorities and other citizens and officials, and for the latter to a greater extent. In this regard, the procedural control of the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the safety of material evidence in pre-trial criminal proceedings is of particular importance.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of the research is the general scientific systematic method of cognition, which made it possible to comprehensively consider issues related to the procedural control of the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the safety of physical evidence, and related problems of theory and practice.

The authors applied private scientific methods in the preparation of this study.:

- the historical and legal method allowed us to study the genesis and legal nature of the procedural control of the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the safety of material evidence in pre-trial criminal proceedings;
- the methods of analysis and synthesis made it possible to identify existing problems in the law enforcement practice of exercising procedural control over the activities of the investigator by the head of the investigative body to ensure the safety of material evidence in pre-trial criminal proceedings;
- a statistical method involving the collection and analysis of the data obtained;

- a specific sociological method used in the sociological survey of investigators and heads of investigative bodies;
- the method of legal and technical analysis used in the formulation and submission of proposals to improve the procedural control of the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the safety of physical evidence in pre-trial criminal proceedings.

3 RESULTS ANALYSIS

To date, the issues of improving the effectiveness of the procedural control of the head of the investigative body are very relevant and urgent, since it is the activity of this participant in criminal proceedings that is a resource on which the quality of the entire preliminary investigation, as well as the safety and accounting of physical evidence in particular, directly depends.

We would like to emphasize right away that the head of an investigative body is the subject of collecting, recording and subsequent storage of material evidence only in those rare cases when he personally accepts specific criminal cases and investigates them. In the absolute majority of cases, the head of the investigative body, by virtue of his status and official regulations, performs administrative and managerial functions, exercising procedural control over the activities of investigators to ensure proper accounting and storage of physical evidence.

In the fair opinion of S.P. Shcherba, "the head of the investigative body, exercising procedural powers in accordance with Part 1 of Article 39 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation, must ensure control over the legality, validity and timeliness of the investigator's actions and decisions. The exercise of such powers by him not only does not violate the procedural independence of the investigator, but even in some way provides its guarantee" [16, p. 77].

One of the indisputable advantages of the procedural control of the head of an investigative body, as V.A. Sementsov notes with absolute justification, "is its close proximity to the object of control (actions and decisions taken by the investigator). This creates the necessary conditions for continuous verification of compliance with the

requirements of the law and an urgent response to identified violations and miscalculations" [15, p. 23].

The importance and special significance of procedural control is pointed out by O.V. Khimicheva, whose opinion we fully share, who states that "the name of the control of the head of the investigative body is procedural due to the criminal procedural nature of the activity, the implementation of which is entrusted to the head of the investigative body. At the same time, the emphasis is placed on the consolidation of powers (in confirmation of the criminal procedure nature) in the criminal procedure Code" [11, p. 22]. This point of view is supported by other process scientists [20, p. 35; 2, p. 211-220].

In our opinion, K.A. presented the most successful formulation of procedural control. Moskovtseva, who claims that "procedural control is an integral part of departmental control, which should be understood as the activity of the head of an investigative body based on the norms of the criminal procedure law, carried out during pre-trial criminal proceedings, in order to implement the appointment of criminal proceedings, identify, eliminate and prevent violations by the investigator of criminal procedure and other legislation, taking into account the boundaries determined by the procedural independence of the investigator" [13, pp. 38-39].

According to T.A. Grigoryan, an obligatory stage in the procedure of the mechanism of attachment and use of physical evidence in a criminal case "should be the accounting and storage of physical evidence. The official conducting the preliminary investigation is obliged to take measures not only to attach material evidence, but also to preserve it, especially those that are valuable [9, p. 157; 8, p. 488]. All the qualities and signs of a thing, its integrity and traces of a crime should be preserved as much as possible.

In this regard, the implementation of proper and effective procedural control by the head of the investigative body over this type of investigator's activity cannot remain without the close attention of both the legislator and the law enforcement officer.

The importance of procedural control was also noted by the head of the Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, summing up the activities of the preliminary investigation bodies, he stressed that "in the first half of 2025, a set of measures was carried out aimed at improving the quality of the preliminary investigation and the level of procedural control" [18].

Having defined the general provisions concerning the importance and necessity of procedural control, we will pay close attention to this area of activity of the head of the investigative body in the context of monitoring the activities of the investigator in accounting and storage of physical evidence.

We should immediately note that the investigators we interviewed responded positively to the question about the relevance and importance of the procedural control of the head of the investigative body over this type of investigator's activity (92.1% of respondents). At the same time, many also stressed the importance of mentoring experienced employees and helping them at the initial stages of becoming "young" investigators immediately after being appointed to this position and in the early years of their professional activity (84.7% of respondents).

At the same time, we would like to emphasize that the work currently being carried out by the Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia to control the storage of physical evidence indicates a negative trend, expressed in the presence of facts of loss and damage of physical evidence. Thus, during the audits in certain regions, the facts of the loss of physical evidence were established [9, p. 3].

Systemic errors in the organization of activities related to the storage and accounting of physical evidence in pre-trial proceedings lead to violations of the rule of law in investigative activities [17, pp. 281-287]. Thus, on October 12, 2023, the First Deputy Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation initiated a criminal case on the grounds of crimes under Part 4 of art. 160 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, in relation to the deputy head of the Department for the Investigation of organized criminal activities and crimes of previous years of the Main Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation I.A.N. and unidentified persons on the facts of embezzlement of entrusted property on an especially large scale. The investigation revealed 18 facts of misappropriation of material evidence in criminal cases totaling 200 million rubles. In violation of the requirements of the criminal procedure law and departmental instructions, money and valuables recognized as material evidence were stored in the investigator's safe and plundered by I.A.N. The contents of packages and boxes with seized funds, recognized as material evidence in criminal cases, did not correspond to the inventories. By the verdict of the

Basmanny District Court dated 12/24/2025 in case No. 01-0118/2025, I.A.N. was sentenced to 10 years in prison with deprivation of state awards and a special title.

Against this background, serious concerns are raised about the storage and accounting of cryptocurrencies, ensuring their safety as physical evidence. The undocumented nature of cryptocurrencies determines the possibility of its instant transfer to third-party wallets [3, p. 167-190].

A positive example of the seizure and conversion of cryptocurrencies into state revenue is criminal case No. 1-350/2024, initiated by the Main Investigation Department of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation under Part 6 of Article 290 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (receiving a particularly large bribe), against T.M.H. and L.K.V.

T.M.H.'s Apple MacBook Pro laptop contained a folder called "Pension" with an image file of a piece of paper with codes for crypto wallets containing 932.1 and 100 bitcoins, respectively. With the participation of specialists, the cryptocurrency was transferred to the Ledger Nano X hardware wallet, which is placed in the evidence storage room of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. Later, the cryptocurrency was converted into state revenue.

In case of seizure of significant amounts of cryptocurrencies, it is advisable to apply the practice of the Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia on separate storage of a hardware wallet, key parts, mnemonic phrases providing access to a cryptographic wallet in the premises of different investigative bodies. This method makes it possible to exclude the possibility of theft of cryptocurrencies by persons with access to the vault [6, pp. 244-248].

A draft law is currently being considered in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, which proposes a procedural procedure and a mechanism that will ensure the safety of the digital currency, which is subject to seizure and recognition as material evidence. Proper performance by the heads of investigative bodies of the functions of procedural control over the safety of seized digital currencies will require from them not only procedural, but also technical knowledge in the field of modern information technologies [19, p 381-391].

Analyzing the reasons for the current situation, the following organizational shortcomings can be identified.

Firstly, the lack of proper storage conditions that create prerequisites for its spoilage [4, PP 7950-7952].

In particular, according to the data of the Control and Audit Department (CRU) The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, improper storage conditions that do not exclude the possibility of loss, damage or destruction of individual signs, violation of the integrity of packaging – 712 violations (6.6% of the total number of identified and 6.7% of the organizational ones) were identified in 19 subjects, that is, in every third of the attorneys [10].

Thus, it was established that the GSU of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Perm Region revealed the fact of the loss of 13 fragments of sawn tree trunks transferred to responsible storage, which were used by forestry workers to carry out household work. At the same time, the safety of the specified property was not checked during the inventory [1, p. 2].

In the Republic of Bashkortostan, as a result of the untimely actions of employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Beloretsky district regarding the sale of seized wood, the possibility of compensation for damage caused in 3 criminal cases totaling 316.5 thousand rubles was actually lost. Three employees of this department have been disciplined [3].

Secondly, there is a violation of the accounting procedure for physical evidence, including those entailing their loss.

In July of this year, the Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia received a report on the loss of physical evidence in the SU of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Orel region, established by the Commission of the KRO of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Orel region [1, p. 5].

During the visit to the specified unit, it was confirmed that there was a shortage of tobacco products totaling more than 2.1 million rubles, seized in a criminal case initiated under paragraph "a" of Part 6 of Article 171.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, and transferred for safekeeping to the premises of the convoy battalion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Oryol region and the Ministry of Internal Affairs Russia's "Livensky".

In violation of the instructions of the Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, the actual availability and conditions of their storage were not

checked by the staff of the SU Account. At the same time, in accordance with the information provided by the management of the SU of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Orel region, according to the results of the audit, there was no shortage of physical evidence.

In connection with these circumstances, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation in the Orel region initiated a criminal case on the grounds of a crime under Part 1 of Article 285 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

Similarly, in the SU of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Central Administrative District of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Moscow, as part of the consideration of the appeal of Ch. The loss of seized material evidence has been established - 1,132 rolls of textile products worth 87.6 million rubles, which were placed in the warehouse of Mechbaza LLC in Moscow. As established, in violation of the requirements of the Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia dated December 30, 2016 No. 946 "On the organization of activities in the internal affairs bodies of the Russian Federation to ensure the safety and accounting of physical evidence and other seized items and documents" [14], no storage agreement was concluded with the specified company. Throughout the entire time, officials of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Central Administrative District of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Moscow did not check compliance with storage conditions.

As part of a targeted visit in July-August 2024 by the commission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia to check the organization of storage of physical evidence, the facts of their loss were revealed in the investigative units of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Ural Federal District.

So, during an inspection from the Kurgan Law Enforcement Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, the loss of one of the three physical evidence was found in transport. Despite the violations identified during the internal audit, disciplinary measures were not applied against the guilty officials by the leadership of the SB. When checking the actual availability of physical evidence stored in the Tyumen Law Enforcement Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for transport, the loss of three objects was established. At the same time, the management of the Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Ural Federal District provided the

Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia with similar information about the absence of a shortage during audits [1, p. 3].

In addition, as the audit showed, due to the lack of proper control by the management of the company, systemic violations of the requirements of the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, as well as their issued regulations governing this activity, are allowed together with the investigators, which creates prerequisites for their loss.

Thirdly, the failure to comply with procedural decisions.

In particular, according to the data of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Chuvashia, 8 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia "Tsivilsky" were brought to disciplinary responsibility for failure to take measures against physical evidence and non-enforcement of court decisions on them (in 358 completed criminal cases). In Saratov, the deputy head of the department for investigating receipts in the territory of OP No. 5 in Saratov was disciplined for a similar violation; in Sverdlovsk, the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation "Asbestovsky" was brought to disciplinary responsibility. In the Kirov region, 94 bottles of vodka, whiskey and cognac were lost due to violations of the order of storage of alcoholic beverages. The Deputy head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Kirov, the head of the SU, was severely reprimanded.

Since 2013, the Criminal Police Department in the North-Western Federal District has continued to store money, weapons and other material evidence in 65 completed criminal cases. There are similar violations in the Republics of Kalmykia (in 338 cases) and Tatarstan (in 544 cases).

Fourthly, the storage of unaccounted for or orphan property.

Thus, the Control and Audit Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia revealed 4,687 violations in 28 regions, non-compliance with procedural decisions regarding physical evidence in relation to more than 9,000 seized objects. As a result, there is an overfilling of storage areas with seized property. Moreover, it was also established that 481 facts of storage of unaccounted-for property were established in 6 territorial bodies, including those that cannot be identified with the materials of inspections and criminal cases.

A narcotic drug weighing over 1 kg was stored in the Kemerovo region, which was registered as destroyed. Similar violations were detected in the Chuvash Republic, the Voronezh Region and in 6 other territorial bodies in 11 criminal cases and inspection materials.

It should also be pointed out here that the heads of some investigative units were unable to provide lists (acts) of weapons, motor vehicles, alcoholic beverages, cash and jewelry at the time of the inspection. The inventory report of the material evidence stored in the room was an inventory of the premises signed by the head of the Department, without a date. In the column "decision made" there were no marks about the date and information about the demand for a verdict. In the storage room of the seized property, books No. 1 and 2 do not comply with the requirements established by the above Rules and the Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia dated December 30, 2016 No. 946 "On the organization of activities of the internal Affairs bodies of the Russian Federation to ensure the safety and accounting of physical evidence and other seized items and documents", the signatures of the employees who handed over and received the items are missing, and receipts are filled in and not issued, according to paragraph. 6 of these Rules (according to established practice, items are transferred and accepted for storage when the investigator issues a decision on the deposit of physical evidence, which contradicts the requirements of the law).

Fifthly, non-compliance with the deadlines for the transfer of material evidence to its destination in criminal cases that have been terminated and reviewed by the courts [7, pp. 395-406].

In particular, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kalmykia kept material evidence on 40 criminal cases considered more than 10 years ago. The Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Altai Territory has not executed court decisions regarding physical evidence in 591 criminal cases. Starting in 2013, three divisions of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation for the North-Western Federal District continued to store cash, foreign currency, valuables, weapons and other material evidence in 65 completed criminal cases, the procedural decisions on which have been executed. Narcotic drugs have not been destroyed in 3 criminal cases in the presence of court decisions that have entered into force. The Ministry

of Internal Affairs of the Chuvash Republic has established the presence of more than l kg of narcotic drugs destroyed according to the acts in 2021-2022.

Sixth, these are violations of the procedural procedure for the destruction of physical evidence. So, in the information and reference materials of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, it is indicated that this mainly concerns narcotic drugs. Thus, at the time of the inspection, a narcotic drug in the amount of 1058.38 grams (marijuana), which was registered as destroyed, continued to be stored in the Kemerovo Region. In Primorsky Krai, the Khasansky district police department and Nakhodka revealed possession of marijuana weighing 4,100 grams and 1,524 grams, respectively, which, according to the certificates, were destroyed at the time of the inspection [10].

These facts indicate not only the improper activities of the investigators themselves to ensure the safety of material evidence, but also the lack of proper procedural control by the heads of the investigative authorities.

It should also be noted here that all the identified shortcomings are revealed as a result of various types of inspections and inspections, which are carried out both on a planned basis and suddenly. They have a positive effect, as they show obvious gaps in this area of activity, both for investigators and their immediate supervisors, and allow them to "work on mistakes" and take prompt measures to preserve physical evidence.

Summing up the interim results regarding the main causes of violations of the procedure for ensuring the accounting and preservation of physical evidence, we emphasize that above we have identified the facts of bringing to disciplinary responsibility not only investigators, but also, quite understandably, the heads of specific investigative units.

We conducted a survey of the heads of investigative units on the question of what main difficulties they see regarding the issues of proper organization of work with physical evidence in general in the internal affairs bodies.

Having analyzed the information received regarding problematic issues related to difficulties in organizing the seizure, transportation, storage, accounting, issuance, transfer, return and destruction of physical evidence, other seized items and documents in the internal affairs bodies, we classified the responses of the interviewed heads of investigative bodies as follows:

- gaps in the regulatory legal framework governing the storage and destruction of seized items and documents based on materials from pre-investigation inspections, as well as the timing of the transfer of physical evidence from procedural units to specialized storages or to the owner;
- insufficient staffing of the rear units involved in accounting and storage of physical evidence;
- the discrepancy in the equipment of the physical evidence storage chambers (special storages, special rooms) available in the subordinate territorial bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation at the district level;
- the lack of a unified electronic accounting system for physical evidence, seized items and documents, with the exception of weapons.

These circumstances naturally need to be seriously studied from the point of view not only of the activities of the investigative units headed by the heads of the investigative bodies, but also in general of the activities of the entire system of internal affairs bodies on the issue of ensuring the accounting and preservation of physical evidence, which, as we have repeatedly said, are "mute" witnesses of criminal acts committed and constitute a significant part all evidence collected during the preliminary investigation to prove the subject of the crime, art. 73 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the authors substantiate and prove the conclusion that the consequences of improper procedural control by the head of the investigative body over the investigator's activities to ensure the accounting and preservation of material evidence are the numerous facts used in practice to bring to disciplinary responsibility not only investigators, but also the heads of specific investigative units themselves.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

How to cite this article (APA)

Ivanov, D., Vasyukov, V., Sharov, D., & Ermakov, S. (2026). PROCEDURAL CONTROL OF THE HEAD OF THE INVESTIGATIVE BODY OVER THE ACCOUNTING AND STORAGE OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE. *Veredas Do Direito*, *23*(6), e235824. https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v23.5824