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# Data Constituting the Forensic Characteristic of Convicts' Intentional Infliction of Harm to Life and Health and Their Correlations



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#### Abstract

Introduction: the article considers key data constituting the forensic characteristic of convicts' intentional infliction of harm to life and health (articles 105, 111, 112 and 115 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) in places of deprivation of liberty and their correlation. Purpose: based on the analysis and generalization of theoretical and practical materials, to formulate the most characteristic set of data that make up the forensic characteristic of these acts, as well as disclose their content. Methods: generalization, comparison, analogy, concretization, abstraction, as well as statistical and content analysis, and comparative legal research methods. Results: the article presents the percentage composition of various forensic data that help develop methodological recommendations for investigation and the practice of disclosure and investigation of crimes. The article shows how illegal actions are carried out without and with the use of means of committing crimes found at the scene of interpersonal conflict of convicts. A combined method presupposes the use of both physical strength of a person and instruments of harming life and health. Considering components of the method of committing crimes, the authors pay attention to correlations that help establish various circumstances of the crime commission. In particular, the authors express an opinion that in places of deprivation of liberty unofficial norms of behavior of convicts act as a general correlation of the commission of crimes against the person, including those that are the subject of this study. It is those cases when convicts relying on specific conditions and the contingent prepare devices to cause harm to life and health in advance, as if just in case, to stand up for themselves and respond to possible insults using such an object. The article clearly identifies the correlation between the crime scene and means and methods of the crime commission, as well as the correlation between the time and the crime scene. Conclusion: based on the available research, the authors' own ideas on these issues are substantiated.

Keywords: crimes against life and health; convicted person; deprivation of liberty; forensic characteristic; data; correlations; method of a crime commission; concealment; situation; scene; time.

5.1.4. Criminal law sciences.

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#### Introduction

Our research shows<sup>1</sup> that the content of the forensic characteristic<sup>2</sup> of convicts' intentional infliction of harm to life and health in places of deprivation of liberty (articles 105, 111, 112 and 115 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) is comprised of the following information related to crime commission methods, including preparation and concealment techniques - 80%; instruments (devices) serving to harm convicts' life or health – 56%; situation, in which the illegal act took place - 72%; scene and time of the crime commission - 76%; personality traits of the criminal – 92% and the victim - 86%; traces and objects left at the scene – 68%; motives that prompted to commit a criminal offense - 63%; and circumstances that contributed to criminal acts - 52%. It is the basic set of data that make up the forensic characteristic, some of them will be considered in more detail in the article.

The core

Data on the methods of committing crimes, including preparation and concealment techniques

Due to its theoretical and practical significance, the method of committing a crime has always been the subject of close attention of criminologists [1; 2; 3, pp. 8–14; 4]. Due to its information component reflected in the crime scene, it is also of interest to practitioners whose activities are related to the disclosure

<sup>1</sup> In 2019–2021, we studied 79 employees of the internal affairs bodies of the Russian Federation, including 42 investigators and 37 interrogators, as well as 62 investigators of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation from 6 subjects of the Russian Federation (Komi Republic, Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Kirov, Penza and Sverdlovsk oblasts) with experience in investigation crimes against life and health.

and investigation of crimes. Data on the method of committing the crime obtained during inspection of the scene of the incident help determine a set of circumstances that reveal the content of the process of committing an illegal act. If we forecast correlations of the method of committing a crime with other components of the crime, personality traits, then the amount of information useful for the disclosure of the crime increases significantly.

The mentioned provisions fully apply to the methods of convicts' intentional infliction of harm to life and health in places of deprivation of liberty. Regarding analyzed criminal acts, it is a set of certain actions, techniques, skills grouped into a certain behavior of an individual, whose intentions are realized in a certain way [5, pp. 125–126].

The founder of the forensic doctrine of the crime commission method, G.G. Zuikov, included "a system of interrelated actions for the preparation, commission and concealment of a crime determined by a set of objective and subjective factors" in its content [6, p. 16]. Thus, according to G.G. Zuikov, the method of committing a crime includes three components: actions (behavior) to prepare, commit and conceal a crime. F. Ermolovich expanded this approach by adding the circumstances specifying the method of committing the crime. In his opinion, it includes a system of "deliberate actions for the preparation, commission and concealment of a crime, covered by a single criminal plan, determined by psychophysical qualities of the criminal's personality (his/her accomplices) and selective use of appropriate conditions, place, time, as well as taking into account possible actions (inactions) on the part of the victim, other persons" [7, pp. 54–55].

Developing the doctrine of the method of committing a crime, researchers came to the idea of constructing an appropriate classification. Various grounds were used, including components (the content), where the leading

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The criminalistic characteristic as an information model of the crime commission, represented by a set of typical data, serves as the basis for the formation of the investigation methodology. It is especially important at the initial stages of investigation (preliminary and initial), because, as a rule, during these periods, authorized officials making decisions about the investigation have a certain lack of information. The specified information about the commission of similar crimes helps put forward reasonable versions and determine optimal ways to investigate a specific crime.

role was assigned to the behavior and actions of the criminal. As a result of the research, the types of crime commission methods were divided into "complete structural" and "incomplete structural". So, O.N. Aleksienko and A.V. Vardanyan write that "the incomplete structural method covers only two of the three options for achieving a criminal result, either actions for the preparation and commission of a crime, or actions for the commission of a crime and concealment of one's involvement in the crime" [8, p. 36]. Thus, a complete structured method should include all three components indicating its intensity and meaningfulness: character of the preparation and subsequent actions of the criminal, intent, behavior after the commission of an illegal act.

According to our data, in 36% of cases (of the total number of crimes), the method of causing intentional harm to life and health by convicts was complete structural and included a complex of various actions, differing both in content and direction. Preparation for the commission of the studied group of crimes included a complex of various actions, which, depending on the specific situation, were single or combined. First, they were connected with the search for crime instruments. The criminal, after forming an intent to harm life or health, took pains to find an instrument (device, object) for committing a crime. Duration of the search depended on the situation and the time interval separating the formation of a criminal intent from its immediate implementation. If the intent to cause harm to life or health arose in the convict suddenly (domestic assault), then there was no time to create a favorable environment for the crime commission, as a result of which the criminal situation developed haphazardly. The most likely instrument, as a rule, was an improvised object that was nearby at the time of the illegal act commission.

On the contrary, if the intent had arisen earlier and had been a secret for the "victim", then the person attempting to commit an illegal act had a certain time reserve to specify the time and scene of the crime, search for an instrument (device), and think over the method of committing a crime. In such cases, considerable time was spent on preparing an instrument (device)

for the crime commission and they were very different (small pieces of metal (of various geometric shapes), nails of large length, and pieces of wire from durable metal were sharpened, garrotes were made from parts of clothing and underwear, and shanks were made from spoons or art supports). To cause harm to life or health, plates of various metals were placed (inserted) in the sock or on the sole of shoes. Hiding places were found to store these objects in a certain place or parts of clothing, shoes, and interior objects. Here we observe the correlation between the time of the preparation for committing a crime, the instrument (device for defense or attack), and the place of its concealment and rapid pulling out.

When preparing the crime commission, an offender specified the route of movement of a future victim within the industrial and residential zone, his work and sleeping places, close environment, and the moment when there were no eyewitnesses in a certain place and time interval (or there was a minimum number of them, preferably from among like-minded people).

When studying investigative practice (without special analysis), we found out the correlation between the scene - the instruments used - the crime commission method. Depending on the crime scene in correctional institutions, convicts used various objects, means, devices, instruments of crime, or nothing. In penal isolation cells and cell-type rooms, convicts used their muscular strength without any crime instruments - strangulated with hands or forearms, kicked and punched. In some cases, convicts used garrotes made from parts of clothing, as well as sharpeners made from spoons and nails, which they managed to carry into these premises. So, the more limited the space for convicts to move (the more limited his contacts with a diverse environment and people), the more specific (primitive) the instruments for causing harm to life and health and the ways of its implementation.

It is worth emphasizing that in places of deprivation of liberty traditions (unofficial norms of convicts' behavior) often act as a *general* correlation of crimes against the person, including those that have become the subject of this study. We are talking about those identified cases when convicts, guided by specific traditions (unofficial behavioral norms), prepared devices for attack and defense in advance, as if just in case, to stand up for themselves or respond to possible insults using such an object. For this reason, in the process of studying the practice, we identified 44% of the cases when intentional infliction of bodily harm was carried out with the help of various instruments, means, and devices.

In 64% of the cases (of the total number of crimes) the method of intentional infliction of harm to life and health by convicts was incomplete structural. Crimes of this group were committed by convicts without any preparation. The revealed pattern suggests that the intent to harm life and health arose spontaneously under the influence of certain factors (conditions and circumstances). This can be connected with the emergence of an interpersonal conflict that occurred between persons serving a sentence of imprisonment. In relation to the incomplete structural method, crimes instruments were not specially prepared. They were the following:

- working tools intended for metal working,
  raw materials for the manufacture of finished
  products (pieces of metal pipe, metal rods, calipers, files, hammers, sledgehammers) 12 %;
- production tools designed for sewing, construction, plumbing, and shoe repair work, without additional devices for inflicting bodily injury (scissors, shoemaker's knives, trowels, mason's hammers, plumber's gas keys) – 8 %;
- parts or household equipment intended for cleaning premises and territories (handles from shovels, rakes, brooms, and mops) – 16 %;
- household equipment or its components (cutting boards, heated iron, kettles, metal spoons), as well as food packaging items (cans of stew and canned food) 4%. It is worth mentioning that the specific situation of the correctional facility determines more frequent infliction of harm to life and health with household items in normal conditions (40 % of the cases) [8, p. 37];
- objects that happened to be at the scene of the accident (parts of a brick, asphalt, or stone, parts of boards or metal pipes) – 8 %;
- interior items and equipment of residential premises (stools, ladders, bed frames) -

- 5%. Practice shows that bed shackles can be specially unmounted in advance (rivets are cut down). Being unfixed, they can serve as means for protection or attacking;
- other objects or liquids used as means of harming health or life (boiling water, dried bread, hair clipper) 17%.

Intentional infliction of bodily injuries to the victim (punching, kicking and hitting with instruments of crime) occurred in 30% of the cases (of the total number of crimes). This is a combined way of committing crimes in question, which consists in a disorderly combination of physical strength of legs, arms and some specially prepared instruments, or found at the place where illegal acts are committed. The sequence of strikes depends on the distance at which the subject of the crime and the victim are located, as well as the pattern developed by training (convicts often visit gyms where they run special training sessions for themselves). It can be a kick, a punch, and after that hitting with some kind of tool or object (a handle of a household tool).

Intentional infliction of damage to life and health without the use of instruments and means by attacking with hands, feet, and head amounted to 26% (of the total number of crimes). For comparison, we note that under normal conditions, when committing crimes against life and health, kicks and punches account for 17.4% [8, p. 37].

It should be borne in mind that among those serving a sentence of imprisonment there is a category of persons who are constantly engaged in special physical exercises, including mastering the techniques of boxing, hand-tohand combat, kickboxing, Thai boxing, and army hand-to-hand combat. To do this, there are appropriate "trainers", or skills are acquired independently, starting with the study of specialized literature. As a rule, there are premises and free time for this. The administration of the correctional facility should monitor the category of convicts, since they sometimes either try to test their skills on other persons with whom they have hostile relations, or do so at the request of their close circle. They explain their illegal behavior by the need to protect their friend from harassment and insults of other convicts. Let us emphasize once again that these convicts master special techniques not only to keep fit, but also to stand up for themselves (here we observe again the role of specific traditions of places of deprivation of liberty).

The method of committing crimes related to the intentional infliction of harm to life and health by convicts in places of deprivation of liberty is characterized not only by instruments (devices), but also the number of persons taking part in illegal activities (alone or in a group of persons) [9, p. 7]. According to our data, 84% of the crimes under consideration were committed by convicts alone, and 16 % – by a group of persons.

There is the *correlation* between a number of persons (a group of persons) taking part in the crime and other circumstances of the illegal activity: the object (expected victim) of criminal encroachment; goals of the crime and tasks that accomplices fulfil; instruments to harm victim's life and health – the role of each accomplice; scene and time of the crime; the route for removing accomplices from the scene; the nature of the destruction of evidence; behavior after the crime (intensity of concealment); and the formation of an alibi.

All of the above is included in the subject of preparation for the commission of a crime and, as a rule, usually established during investigation. Other relations are observed there – the situation of the crime commission.

By its content, the preparation process for the commission of crimes provided for in Articles 105, 111, 112 and 115 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation is independent. A convicted person (classifying himself as the so-called authorities, or close to them), realizing a criminal plan, does not intend to independently implement an illegal act and assign it to a person (there are cases when not he but his inner circle commits a crime), who is under an obligation. In such situations, a detailed briefing is given to the one who will make illegal actions.

Crime concealment methods are actively used by persons serving sentences in the form of imprisonment. This is also connected with the previous experience of committing crimes, their own behavior during court proceedings and the experience of fellow inmates in pre-

trial detention centers and correctional facilities. The analysis of practice shows that in 75% of the cases convicts actively obstructed the investigation by destroying traces and instruments of committing a crime, giving false testimony or refusing them, falsifying evidence, and influencing other convicts to give false testimony. By their target orientation, concealment techniques represent one of the forms of countering investigation and establishing the truth in criminal proceedings [10, p. 234].

The methods to conceal infliction of intentional harm to life and health committed by convicts in places of deprivation of liberty are certain actions aimed at hindering the investigator and the inquirer from obtaining information significant for establishing the truth, its distortion or destruction. In some cases, these techniques, as we have already noted, are included in the structure of the crime commission method, that is, when the attacker (attackers) has a single criminal intent covering all stages of the illegal activity (preparation, commission and concealment). In others, the intentions to conceal criminal acts of these persons arise suddenly, due to changed circumstances (at various stages of criminal proceedings).

There are the following key concealment methods used by convicts after committing crimes related to our research subject: destruction, concealment of traces, instruments of crime and other incriminating objects; creation of a false alibi by a criminal or other persons; exclusion (withdrawal) of the direct participation of individual convicts from the crime mechanism (when the criminal act was committed in a group); distortion of information about the event of a crime (staging of a non-criminal event, reporting injury as a result of falling from a height of one's own height, and others); concealment, and destruction of a human corpse.

Data about the crime situation.

Any crime, whether intentional or careless, takes place in a certain situation [11–17]. On the one hand, it has a direct impact on the course and dynamics of the crime, substantiating its mechanism as a whole, and on the other hand, it indicates patterns of the formation of traces and their carriers during the illegal act investigation.

To date, there is a significant number of definitions of the concept "crime situation" in criminology. The most complete and meaningful is the definition proposed by N.P. Yablokov. In his opinion, the crime situation is a system of various kinds of objects, phenomena and processes interacting with each other, characterizing conditions of the scene and time, material, climatic, industrial, domestic and other environmental conditions, as well as other factors of the objective reality that determine the possibility, conditions and circumstances of the crime commission [18, pp. 38-39]. Describing the situation, this scientist implies the surrounding (external) environment of the event of an illegal act, and also identifies its individual objects, phenomena and processes that are interconnected with each other. It seems that this is correct, and for the study of the process of committing crimes against life and health committed by convicts in places of deprivation of liberty, it is essential. The surrounding (or external) environment, in which a criminal act is committed, and further investigation is conducted, is specific and determined by the type of regime of the correctional facility, its territorial location, area, accumulation of a large number of persons with criminal experience, the profile and intensity of production activities, and the typical nature of all communications of these institutions that predetermine the situation of the crime commission.

Territorial limitations and closeness of a correctional facility make it possible to detect an illegal act, a criminal, traces and other objects that are important for its disclosure and investigation in the shortest possible time. At the same time, a limited area and a large concentration of convicts on it complicates the preservation of material traces (blood stains, finger marks, shoes), instruments and an original crime situation [19, p. 260].

In places of deprivation of liberty, criminals and their entourage, as a rule, have the opportunity to observe the progress of the work of the investigator, the inquirer and other authorized persons on the territory of the institution, receive necessary information about the investigation and the conduct of certain procedural and investigative actions, operational-search,

regime and other measures from other convicts. Taking into account this specifics, these persons may develop different ways to counteract the investigation.

Despite this, the limited territory of the correctional facility contributes to prompt identification of persons who have committed illegal acts. In other words, there are *correlations* between the situation and the circle of convicts who may be suspected of committing crimes against life and health, as well as between a certain scene, time, and method. These are persons of the same squad, living in the same room, working in the same shift, at the same facility, housed in one isolated area, as well as those who have previously committed similar criminally punishable acts in a certain way [20, p. 65].

Territorial limitations of the correctional facility, its closeness, as well as a significant concentration of people in a particular territory, make it possible to quickly get information about the crimes themselves related to intentional harm to life and health. This efficiency is ensured by the round-the-clock supervision of convicts. Such supervision is carried out in cells, dormitories, production facilities, as well as on the territory of residential and industrial zones by employees of the correctional facility. Our research shows that in 43% of the cases, information about the crimes of the considered group was received by the police department on duty within one hour, in 38% – from one to three hours, and in 19% - from three or more hours.

In places of deprivation of liberty, it is possible to quickly obtain information characterizing the criminal, the victim and other participants. Such information about convicts is concentrated in their personal files stored in the special accounting units of the correctional facility, as well as operational, educational, and medical units, psychological service or other departments and services. The information characterizing the convicted person facilitates preparation of the investigation subjects for conducting separate procedural and investigative actions [21, p. 88].

Having studied the process of committing crimes in places of deprivation of liberty for a

considerable time, we have come to a conclusion that there are *correlations* between the specifics of the situation of a particular correctional facility, social environment, criminal activity, illegal activity mechanism, and convicts' behavior during the investigation. All of the above determines additional (concrete) specifics of the investigation of crimes and presence of effective interaction [22] of the inquirer and the investigator with operational commissioners and representatives of the security service of the facility, in which the crime was committed

Hence, information about the situation in which convicted persons commit crimes related to intentional harm to life and health in correctional facilities is one of the important and necessary characteristics of these illegal acts. Despite the fact that the situation is very specific in places of deprivation of liberty, but it is closely related to other components of the forensic characteristic of crimes provided for in Articles 105; 111; 112 and 115 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, in particular the scene and time of the crime commission.

Data on the scene and time of the crime commission

According to V.A. Obraztsov, if the investigation subjects lack this information, it negatively affects identification of the criminal and other circumstances of the criminal act committed [23, p. 91].

In the context of our research, a correctional institution is a crime scene. According to Part 1 of Article 74 of the Penal Code of the Russian Federation, it is correctional facilities, juvenile correctional facilities, prisons, medical correctional and others. In turn, correctional facilities, depending on the regime of serving a sentence, are divided into penal settlements, facilities of general, strict and special regimes (Part 2 of Article 74 of the Penal Code of the Russian Federation). The analysis of practice shows that 91% of the crimes related to intentional harm to life and health was committed by convicts in correctional facilities. This is due to the fact that correctional facilities make up the bulk of all penitentiary institutions, in which over 90% of the persons serve sentences in the form of imprisonment [24, pp. 6-23]. The majority of

the analyzed criminal acts was committed in correctional facilities of strict (65%), special (17%), and general (14%) regimes, as well as penal settlements (4%). Approximately similar data are given by S.V. Rastoropov, investigating crimes provided for by Article 111 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (64% – strict, 24% – special, and 12% – of general regimes) [25, p. 68]. The revealed pattern is confirmed by the official statistics demonstrating that correctional facilities of strict and special regimes keep those convicted of grave and especially grave crimes, committed repeatedly. Besides, such correctional facilities have a higher concentration of convicts, as well as close interpersonal contacts.

The most common crime scenes are dormitories for convicts (42%); industrial premises, such as workshops and sites (20%), local (isolated) areas of dormitories for convicts (12%), dining rooms and adjacent territories (8%); quarantine facilities for the reception of newly arrived convicts (5%); medical and household facilities, such as bathhouses and medical units and adjacent territories (5%), territories associated with the execution of disciplinary punishment, such as punitive isolation cells and cell-type premises (3%), cultural and leisure facilities, such as clubs and gyms and adjacent territories (3%), and other places of correctional facilities (2%).

Based on the empirical data provided, dormitories are the most typical place where crimes against life and health are committed. This circumstance can be explained by the fact that in a relatively small, closed territory there is a significant number of convicts, many of whom are characterized by emotional instability, irritability, inadequate emotional reactions, conflict in different situations, desire for dominance, self-affirmation, and suppression of others [26, p. 71].

Despite the limited territory of the correctional facility and the concentration of a significant number of people on it, convicts planning to commit crimes of the group under consideration also try to use certain places characterized by privacy, desolation, low illumination and low visibility by video recording equipment. This allows the attacker (attackers), first of all,

to avoid eyewitnesses of the incident and any interference on the part of employees of the correctional institution, as well as to further destroy material traces, instruments of the crime and escape from the scene. Depending on the time of day, these places in penitentiary institutions are household rooms, food storage rooms, washbasins, toilets, personal belongings storage rooms, stairwells, corridors, changing rooms, showers, storage rooms, and other small and remote rooms [27; 28, p. 118].

Any phenomenon and event, including infliction of intentional harm to life and health by convicts in places of deprivation of liberty, cannot exist outside of time. It should be considered not only as a calendar date, a specific time of the crime commission, but also as a set of other time data: the time of the year, day, convict's stay in certain places, etc. This helps quickly identify the perpetrator, eyewitnesses of the incident and other witnesses, as well as to find out other evidence sources [29, p. 110].

The analysis of criminal cases shows that 59% of the crimes provided for in Articles 105, 111, 112 and 115 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation were committed by convicts during the period when the majority of the commanding staff was outside the correctional institution: as a rule, from 17.00 to 08.00 hours of the following day. In the evening (from 17.00 to 22.00 hours) 28% of the crimes were committed, at night (from 22.00 to 06.00 hours) – 51%, and in the early morning (from 06:00 to 08:00 hours) – 21%.

The study of criminal cases revealed a *correlation* between the time interval from 22.00 to 06.00 and the organized nature, thoughtfulness of illegal activity, concealment of traces, and absence of eyewitnesses of the crime. There is also a correlation between the preparation and the specified time of the illegal activity. Committing a crime in such a time interval allows an attacker (attackers) to surprise the victim, deprive him/her of the opportunity to choose

tactics of effective defense against an attack, avoid eyewitnesses of the incident, intervention of correctional facility employees, destroy traces, instruments of the crime and leave the scene as secretly as possible.

Crimes related to intentional harm to life and health, committed in the period from 08.00 to 17.00 hours (working hours of the commanding staff and employees of the correctional facility), in most cases (41%) are spontaneous, caused by the development of short-term conflict situations among convicts.

#### Conclusion

Summing up the above, we highlight the following.

- 1. The forensic characteristic of intentional infliction of harm to life and health by convicts in conditions of places of deprivation of liberty is comprised of methods of committing crimes, including preparation and concealment techniques; instruments (devices) used to cause harm to the life or health of convicts; situation in which the illegal act occurred; scene and time of the crime; characteristics of the personality of the offender and the victim; traces and objects left at the scene; motives that prompted the criminal encroachment; and circumstances that contributed to criminal acts.
- 2. Based on the analysis, generalization of theoretical and practical materials, we have shown key correlations between the crime commission method and physical fitness of the offender; crime scene and instruments; intent realization method; time and scene of the illegal activity; group nature and crime mechanism. It is also worth mentioning that in places of deprivation of liberty, unofficial norms of convicts' behavior act as a general correlation of crimes against life and health. We are talking about those identified cases when convicts, focusing on specific conditions, the contingent of those serving sentences, prepared devices for harming life and health in advance, as if just in case, to stand up for themselves and respond to possible insults with a help of this object.

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