

Original article

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Organization and Activity of the Soviet Convoy Guard in the Early 1950s

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Abstract

Introduction: the article is devoted to the analysis of problems related to the organization and activities of the convoy guards of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR in the early 1950s. The chronological framework of the study is determined by the dates of the reorganization of convoy troops into convoy guards, as well as the unification of internal guards and convoy guards into a single military formation – internal and convoy guards of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR. *Purpose:* summarizing the experience of the convoy guard in the period under study, to supplement and correct the ideas developed in the history of domestic internal affairs bodies and the penitentiary system in particular. *Methods:* the article is prepared with the help of general scientific and historical research methods. The methods of materialistic dialectics, chronological, comparative, system analysis, statistical, etc. are also used. Archival materials of the Convoy Guard Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, most of which are first introduced into scientific circulation, help generalize the escorting experience. *Results:* the analysis of the regulation and practice of convoy guards of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR shows that the period under consideration was characterized by further improvement of the organization and activities of its units. In turn, this ensured implementation of crucial tasks to ensure activities of internal affairs bodies, state security and justice. Activities of the convoy guard leadership aimed at strengthening discipline, service and political training of personnel were of great importance. *Conclusion:* having the purpose of escorting prisoners, the convoy guard focused on servicing the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Justice and the Prosecutor's Office of the USSR. Thus, it ensured their work in matters of state security of the Soviet Union, fight against crime, as well as isolation of persons who violated Soviet laws. The main task of the convoy guard during the study period was to prevent escapes of the escorted contingents and at the same time to ensure the maintenance regime established for them.

Key words: convoy guards; Ministry of Internal Affairs; prisoners; escapes.

5.1.1. Theoretical and historical legal sciences.

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Introduction

Despite all the variety of literature related to the history and legal status of domestic internal troops, the problems under consideration are insufficiently studied. In the works of Z.A. Astemirov [1], F.Kh. Akhmadeev [2], G.S. Beloborodov [3], M.G. Detkov [4], A.I. Zubkov [5], V.V. Knyazev [6], I.I. Kizilov [7], A.Ya. Malygin [8], V.F. Nekrasov [9–11], P.P. Rasskazov [12], A.S. Smykalin [13], V.P. Tonkonogov [14], V.G. Timofeev [15], P.A. Fedorov [16] and others, the problems related to the history and legal status of the convoy guard are considered from the perspective of the organization of internal affairs bodies, internal troops and penitentiary institutions at various historical stages.

Activities of convoy troops in the pre-revolutionary period, during the Great Patriotic War and in the first post-war years are described by A.E. Epifanov [17–19], E.E. Krasnozhenova [19, 20], S.V. Kulik [20], M.M. Stepanov [19] and others. In these works, organizational and legal foundations of activities of the convoy guard during the period under study were slightly reflected and did not receive systematic and comprehensive research.

Results

To conduct investigation, judicial proceedings, and execute punishment, the Soviet state apparatus had prison, camp and other bodies associated with deprivation or restriction of liberty, while escorting was entrusted to the convoy guard.

During the 1917 October Revolution, the convoy guard that had previously operated was abolished during the breaking of the old pre-revolutionary state apparatus as an institution used in the interests of the tsarist autocracy and the exploiting classes. However, soon a special armed organization was required to protect penitentiary institutions and to escort arrested and convicted criminals.

On April 20, 1918, by order of the People's Commissar for Military Affairs, troops of the convoy guard were formed as part of the Red Army. They were subordinate to the Main In-

spection of the Convoy Guards of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs (Russian State Military Archive (hereinafter – RGVA). Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 103 flesh side)

The subsequent reorganization of convoy troops was carried out following transformations in the system of bodies of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation, and Sabotage (Cheka), the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU), the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and the Ministry of State Security (MGB). Guarding prisons and escorting prisoners, convoy troops ensured the fulfillment of the tasks assigned by the state to the bodies of internal affairs, state security and justice. On February 2, 1939, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (SNK USSR) adopted the Resolution "On the reorganization of the management of border and internal troops", according to which the Main Directorate of the NKVD USSR was separated from the Main Directorate of the Border and Internal Troops of the NKVD USSR. The latter was subordinate to the Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR for troops, and then directly to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 104).

In the first period of its existence, the convoy guard consisted of provincial and county commands, which were subordinate to the corresponding military commissariats. They were staffed on a voluntary basis, and commanders were elected. Further, convoy troops were staffed on a par with the Red Army units from among citizens of military age.

Over time, the organizational structure of troops became more perfect and harmonious. Ultimately, convoy troops were organized according to the type of formations of the Red Army. Their departments were consolidated into units (regiments, battalions) and units into formations (divisions, brigades). While troops were reorganized, the quality of their service,

combat and political training, and discipline improved (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 104).

On September 29, 1939, by order of the NKVD USSR, the Charter of the NKVD Convoy Troops Service was put into effect, which replaced the temporary charter of the USSR convoy guard of 1928. According to the Charter, these troops were part of the Armed Forces of the USSR and, as special troops, had the purpose of escorting persons detained for violating laws of the Soviet state, as well as guarding prisons. These provisions were fixed in the Regulations on convoy troops approved by the Order of the NKVD USSR on November 20, 1939 [6, p. 21].

With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the tasks of convoy troops were greatly expanded and become more diverse. At the same time, the conditions for their implementation became more complicated, especially in the frontline zone. In addition to the above, the tasks of convoy troops during this period included escorting prisoners of war from the fronts to rear camps, their protection both in camps and at work. In addition, convoy troops were involved in the protection of corrective labor camps, escorting and guarding their prisoners at the place of work. They escorted relocated prisoners and special cargo transported by rail, as well as guarded special facilities. In addition, convoy troops performed tasks to assist border and internal troops in operations to counteract enemy parachute landings, catch deserters and other types of service to protect the hinterland.

A number of units of convoy troops, by virtue of their official duties, took direct part in the fighting against the Nazis. In particular, this took place during the defense of Leningrad, Odessa, Rostov-on-Don, Voronezh, Stalingrad, etc. (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 105).

On May 6, 1951, convoy troops were reorganized into the convoy guard of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "Issues of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR" relieved them from protecting prisons of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the MGB, camps for especially dangerous state criminals, as well as war criminals from among prisoners of war. By order of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, these functions were transferred to the

Main Directorate of Camps and Places of Incarceration (GULAG) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR. The convoy guard began to only escort prisoners (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Pages 106, 107).

This resolution stipulated that the convoy guard was to escort prisoners according to the requirements of the prosecutor's office, judicial, investigative and medical authorities; from prisons to camps and colonies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; guard and escort prisoners at meetings of various judicial instances, including military tribunals, linear transport courts, as well as at their exit sessions; escort prisoners from places of detention to special points for exchange with scheduled convoys and their transportation to places of detention.

These changes led to changes in the organizational structure of the convoy guard. General management of official activities, training, education and staffing, as well as issues of providing personnel was carried out by the Main Directorate of the Convoy Guard of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR. It was headed by a chief with deputies for general issues, politics, and personnel (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 107). Political, service, training, personnel, organization and manning departments performed the tasks of managing units of the convoy guard. In addition to them, there were special services: communications, dogs, vehicles, apartment maintenance, medical, veterinary and the secretariat.

The convoy guard structure was composed of departments, separate detachments and divisions, subordinate to the head of the Guard Directorate. The department included the directorate, which consisted of the political department, command unit, personnel department, support services, communications, financial department, medical and veterinary. The head of the department had deputies for drilling, politics and logistics. Structural divisions of the departments were detachments and separate divisions, the number and numerical composition of which depended on the amount of official tasks performed. The structure of detachments was similar (RGVA. Archive 40. File 1. Case 335. Pages 108, 109).

Divisions consisted of the command unit and teams. The number of divisions in the detachments and teams in the divisions was not the same. All teams consisted of 3–4 groups, and each group was divided into 4 departments.

Each republican center had the department's management with a head unit, or separate units that were not part of the departments. Units and subunits of the convoy guard were located in regional centers (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 109).

Official activity of the convoy guard depended on the type of the penitentiary facility, subordinate to the MVD and the MGB. Due to different numbers and characteristics of prisoners, goals and conditions of escorting, the units guarding prisoners differed in their tasks, composition, and organization of the service. Convoys were named according the type of escorting (echelon, scheduled, through, special and urban) (RGVA. Archive 40. File 1. Case 335. Page 110).

Echelon convoys escorted large groups of prisoners to camps and colonies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Convicts were transported on separate trains, usually in freight cars, as well as on steamships or barges. Their main task was to protect prisoners and prevent their escapes. In terms of their numbers, echelon convoys exceeded all other types and were associated with the greatest expenditure of funds. Their service was considered the most difficult and required a special strain of moral and physical strength. This type of service in the convoy guard was the main one. The service in the echelon convoy lasted 2 months or more. The personnel undergone thorough training to successfully complete assigned tasks. In some cases, in the absence of railways and waterways, convicts walked along dirt roads or were transported by motor transport. The composition of convoys in these cases was similar to echelon ones (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 110).

Judicial, internal affairs and state security bodies often transported solitary prisoners or small groups of them from one locality to another. To ensure timely escorting of this contingent, the so-called scheduled convoys operated along all key railways and waterways, received prisoners from convoys of interested bodies, and handed over to them those transported to their destination. This procedure was regulated by the "Instructions for escorting and protecting prisoners in judicial institutions and at the exchange points by convoy guards of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR" of December 29, 1952 (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 134).

These convoys were called scheduled since they moved according to a certain plan, along established routes, on certain passenger trains or steamships, according to a fixed schedule. The exchange of prisoners was carried out at stations or piers, called exchange points. Scheduled convoys transported the contingent in custody and prisoners from prisons to trials and back, as well as escorted solitary prisoners and small groups of them from prisons and camps to various construction sites.

The scheduled convoy service occupied a very important place in the general complex of operational and service activities of the convoy guard in the studied period both in terms of the number of transported contingent and the importance of the transportation carried out. At the same time, in comparison with other types of escorting, it did not require the involvement of a large number of personnel. The importance of the scheduled convoy was proved by the close connection with bodies and institutions they serve.

Scheduled convoy chiefs were selected from among the officers and the most trained sergeants who knew the service well, were disciplined, morally stable, able to ensure high quality of service, maintain discipline and order in the convoy and create strict regime conditions for the escorted contingents within the limits of Soviet law. A lot depended not only on the training level of scheduled convoy chiefs, but also on their volitional and moral qualities. Practice showed that the absence of such often led to tragic consequences. So, in March 1952, one of the chiefs of the Baku–Rostov scheduled convoy could not maintain the regime and 8 prisoners attacked the convoy. His counteract attempts were rather hesitant (RGVA. Archive 40. File 1. Case 335. Page 94 flesh side).

Scheduled escorting was very important for ensuring the timely transportation of convicted prisoners from one prison and camp to another. This was especially true for staffing significant construction sites with a workforce of corrective labor camps. Previously, they were subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, but during the study period they were transferred to the Ministry of Justice and some other ministries.

This circumstance raised the role of scheduled and through escorting in 1952 and early 1953 due to the unfolding construction of grandiose hydraulic structures on the Volga and

other large-scale construction projects in the eastern and in the European part of the Soviet Union. Scheduled and through convoys ensured quick transportation of a large number of prisoners having relevant knowledge and skills to these construction sites (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 133).

Since June 1953, a large number of prisoners had been transferred, mainly to industrial camps, due to the release of many prisoners under amnesty and the associated liquidation of a number of camps and camp units.

These circumstances imposed great responsibility on the command and command units of departments and units of the convoy guard. They had to organize the scheduled escort service in such a way that all tasks of the Convoy Guard Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, as well as requests from local authorities for the transportation of contingents, especially to construction sites, were carried out unhindered, in a short time and were under constant control of command units (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 134).

Despite small volumes (within 2–3% of the total number of the escorted), the escort of other categories of contingents, namely exiles, special settlers, family members of traitors to the motherland, juvenile delinquents, etc., required serious attention of command units of departments and units of the convoy guard (RGVA. Archive 40. File 1. Case 335. Page 134).

The main purpose of the scheduled convoy was still escorting suspects from prisons, police stations and linear departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as transporting convicts to places of serving sentences individually and small groups. At the same time, transportation of specialists from among prisoners to construction sites became of paramount importance.

Scheduled convoys traveled by rail in special prison wagons. The latter consisted of passenger cars with cells equipped for detaining prisoners, as well as compartments for the head of the convoy and escorts, kitchens for cooking food for the convoy. On steamships, convoys occupied separate cabins or holds.

Ensuring the regime of detention of prisoners and other contingents in a prison wagon or on a steamship in accordance with the established procedure included the following: careful preparation of the convoy for the task,

firm knowledge of their rights and obligations towards prisoners; constant study of the contingent both when receiving, boarding the car (steamer), and during escorting; isolation of the contingent from citizens; reasonable placement of the escorted in cells of the carriage (cabins, compartments of the hold of the steamer); strict control over prisoners' observance of the order and rules of conduct established for them; providing the escorted with food, water and boiling water; ensuring the safety of convicts' personal belongings (especially special settlers and family members of traitors to the motherland); providing them with possibility to visit restrooms; applying measures of influence to violators of the detention regime; constant monitoring of convoys' work to ensure a strict regime of the escorted.

During the period under study, the Directorate of the Convoy Guard noted a number of gross violations of the contingent maintenance regime on the part of scheduled convoys, since commissioned officers paid insufficient attention to this issue. So, on October 8, 1952, a scheduled convoy of one of the divisions allowed cohabitation of its personnel and prisoners with accompanied (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 179).

On January 17, 1953, by order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, as well as instructions for the planned escort service, the prevention of escapes of escorted contingents under any circumstances was stated as the main task and main requirement for the convoy guard. "Service without escapes" was declared not a slogan, but a practical combat task. Most officers, sergeants and privates of the convoy guard performed their duties in good faith, showing resourcefulness and skill when serving in convoys. So, in 1952, the head of the scheduled convoy of the 54th detachment Sergeant Lebedev got into a crash and, despite severe injuries of almost the entire convoy, managed to prevent the escape of prisoners. Skilful actions were demonstrated by the convoys in 1952–1953; they counteracted to 13 prisoners' attacks (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 136).

At the same time, practice showed that the issue of ensuring the reliability of security had not always become central in the daily work of command units of departments and units when organizing scheduled escorting. One of the weak points in the work of both scheduled and

other convoys, which significantly reduced the reliability of security, was a low-quality search of received prisoners. In turn, this gave them the opportunity to keep knives, saws and other metal objects that could serve as weapons in attacks and other bandit manifestations. So, at the beginning of 1953, when receiving 20 “criminal-bandit” prisoners from the convoy in the prison, 11 “huge-sized” knives were exacted during the search (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 117).

According to the established procedure, all prisoners received by the scheduled convoy from oncoming convoys, police, prisons, camps and colonies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were subject to the most thorough search. The necessity of this measure was dictated by the fact that prisoners tirelessly used various methods and tricks to keep various items with them for attacking the convoy or escaping. Command units of the convoy guard had to conduct a daily in-depth study of prisoners’ tricks in order to elaborate advanced methods of work.

A thorough search of prisoners and their belongings in the prison car was usually carried out in a free cell, and in its absence – in the corridor. For a personal search, prisoners had to take off their outer clothing and shoes. Female prisoners were not searched by the convoy, only their belongings. Prisoners prone to escape were searched personally by the chief of the convoy, or his assistant (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 183).

Prohibited items, valuables, and money in excess of the amounts allowed for storage found during the search were taken away by the convoy and recorded by its chief in the travel journal. The owner of the items was given a receipt. According to the Directive of the Directorate of the Convoy Guard of February 20, 1953, non-compliance with the established procedure entailed the loss and theft of prisoners’ belonging and was regarded as a violation of Soviet legality (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 164).

The escorted used the slightest disorganization and weakening of the detention regime to attack the convoy. Mostly the convoy was attacked when accompanying prisoners to the restroom. In 1952, for example, 10 such cases were recorded (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 180). In this regard, the command and command units took pains to study prisoners’ tricks to conceal these items from the

convoy; increase vigilance and train personnel in more advanced search methods and techniques; and strengthen control over convoys’ activities to receive and search prisoners. There was “a sharp reaction” to any slightest manifestations of irresponsibility and complacency on the part of the convoy (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 137).

The chief of the scheduled convoy was responsible for ensuring a proper quality service, managed convoy’s activities and ensured the detention regime. The reception of convicts started with a survey of claims and a detailed verification of the identity of each prisoner according to a personal file certificate. In case a prisoner had any claims or complaints to the prison administration, the convoy chief was obliged to suspend the admission procedure until such were resolved.

The convoy refused to accept those who could not follow the doctor’s prescriptions; those who had declared a hunger strike; cripples requiring outside help when traveling (if the prison administration had not provided accompanying persons for this purpose); women who were 6 months pregnant and over (according to the doctor’s certificate); those who were drunk; those who had not passed sanitary treatment and the established quarantine period; those who were unsatisfied with food according to the established norm; those who were dressed out of season (taking into account climatic conditions). When receiving convicts in prison, the chief of the convoy had to clarify the presence of groups hostile to each other, as well as prisoners prone to escape, in order to organize their transportation in separate cars and proper placement in a prison car or steamer (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 160).

If prisoners were brought to the station to prison wagons by an oncoming convoy, then the chief of the scheduled convoy started accept prisoners directly at the wagon. At the same time, he was obliged to carefully study characteristics of the delivered prisoners fixed in personal file certificates and information of the chief of the oncoming convoy (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 162).

Scheduled convoys were to strictly observe Soviet legality, prevent rudeness, illegal actions and requirements in relation to the escorted. In the light of the measures carried out by the party and Soviet bodies in the field of improving state and economic management during the

period under study, the relevance of compliance with the rule of law increased significantly.

During the period under study, the fulfillment of this task was achieved by daily and persistent work of clarifying the basics of the Soviet corrective labor policy to the personnel. At the same time, each serviceman was called upon to understand personal responsibility for the exact and strict implementation of the order and rules of transportation established by the Soviet laws.

At the same time, some convoy guards violated Soviet legality, beat and insulted the escorted, embezzled or stole their personal belongings. Prisoners were often refused to be taken to the restroom. On February 4 and 5, 1953, for example, in the scheduled convoy on the route of Chelyabinsk – Novorudnaya, the prisoners were forced to defecate in cells, using the dishes they had (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 139).

Convoys neglected cases of theft and loss of prisoners' personal belongings. An irreconcilable struggle was waged against such manifestations. So, in March 1952, in the scheduled convoy on the route Kharkov – Novosibirsk, his chief violated the order of placement of escorted special settlers. As a result, a bag with personal belongings totaling to 1,944 rubles disappeared. By decision of the head of the Directorate of the Convoy Guard, this amount was recovered from the perpetrators from among the command of the unit and the convoy and sent to the victim (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 140).

The issue of strengthening discipline in convoy guards was also important. Unfortunately, according to the command of convoy guard units, the state of the personnel discipline deteriorated noticeably during the study period. It was scheduled and through convoys who most often violated discipline regulations. In this regard, the struggle for strengthening discipline and increasing the personnel's responsibility for the conscientious performance of official duty and the accurate and precise implementation of the Soviet Army statutes and service instructions remained one of the key tasks of political departments of convoy guards in their daily activities for the management of the service, training and education of the personnel (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 141).

Through convoys transported prisoners in prison wagons or on steamboats without ex-

changing them on the way. Such convoys were appointed in cases when it became necessary to escort prisoners in directions not served by scheduled convoys; to unload prisons and exchange points, in cases when scheduled convoys, due to their limited capabilities, were unable to perform this work; and to escort prisoners to the points of formation of echelons from places of detention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Through escorting was carried out mainly according to the instructions of the Directorate of the Convoy Guard due to the limited number of prison wagons, used mainly for scheduled escorting. Through convoys performed their service as well as planned ones. The essential difference between them was that through convoys in most cases traveled by freight trains and not according to the schedule. Their routes were determined on a case-by-case basis without exchange of prisoners along them. Nine people were engaged in scheduled and through convoys (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Pages 112, 112 flash side).

Periodic checks of the practical performance of the service were of great importance in ensuring the proper quality of service by convoy guard units. These were organized in such a way that at least 50% of the scheduled and through convoys were controlled en route, usually on stretches or remote stations, and in different sections. Exhaustive measures were taken to correct revealed shortcomings and their execution was monitored. It is worth noting that the quality checks of convoys were severely criticized by the higher command. In general, the control was assessed as sufficient in terms of its coverage and low in its quality. As noted, often checks were extremely superficial; inspectors neglected shortcomings and no one asked them for the quality of their work. In one of the detachments, for example, for 5 and a half months in 1953, 490 types of convoys were checked. At the same time, not a single flaw was revealed in any of them, which clearly did not correspond to reality. In this regard, the command of convoy guard units faced the task to struggle against even slight manifestations of complacency in the leadership of the service. Everyday control over the service and continuous work to improve its quality were recognized as the best means of combating them (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Page 157).

Special convoys were designed to protect and escort especially dangerous state crimi-

nals. Transportation of this contingent was organized in separate cells of prison wagons of scheduled convoys. The special convoy service was independent of the scheduled convoy, in accordance with a special order of the NKVD USSR issued in 1939. In each individual case, the special convoy personnel was selected and instructed by the commander of the unit or the chief of the command unit (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Pages 113 flash side, 114).

Urban convoys escorted prisoners to judicial institutions and protected them during trials, delivered prisoners to exchange points to hand them over to scheduled convoys, as well as escorted accepted contingents to places of detention. These tasks were carried out at the points of deployment of convoy units and sub-units.

According to the nature of service, convoys were divided into city convoys that transported prisoners from prisons to the courts and back; judicial that guarded prisoners during trials; on-coming that handed over prisoners to scheduled convoys and escorted them to prisons.

As a rule, prisoners were escorted in prison vehicles. Ordinary covered vehicles could be used in their absence and for the delivery of prisoners to circuit courts outside the city.

Escorting prisoners to circuit courts and service at exchange points were considered the most difficult and dangerous due to possible escape of prisoners. Special attention was paid to their organization on the part of commanders of the convoy guard units. The Ministry of Inter-

nal Affairs of the USSR and the Directorate of the Convoy Guard attached great importance to the city escort service, especially in remote, separately deployed teams. The latter were subject to reformation for their organizational strengthening and recruitment with the best personnel (RGVA. Archive 40. List 1. Case 335. Pages 114, 114 flash side).

On March 12, 1954, the internal and convoy guard were merged into a single military formation. To manage it, there was established the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR subordinate to the Main Directorate of Internal and Convoy Guard (GUVKO) [15, p. 37]. The history and legal status of the new system require special consideration.

Conclusion

During the period under study, the convoy guard of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR fulfilled its main task of escorting prisoners. It was released from performing unrelated functions and focused on servicing the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Justice and the Prosecutor's Office of the USSR. Escorting and protecting prisoners, the convoy guard ensured state security, struggled against crime and isolated society from persons who violated Soviet laws.

Key tasks of the convoy guard during the study period were to prevent escapes of the escorted contingents and at the same time to ensure the maintenance regime established for them.

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