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**THE ROLE OF FORENSIC MEDICAL SERVICES OF AZERBAIJAN
REPUBLIC IN CASES OF NATURAL CALAMITIES, TERRORIST
ACTIONS AND OTHER URGENT SITUATIONS-ORGANIZATIONAL
PRINCIPLES OF JOINT ACTIVITIES OF FORENSIC MEDICAL
SERVICES AND THE LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.**

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Abstract Disastrous natural calamities, large-scale catastrophes and terrorist actions are characterized by a sudden and unexpected character and lead to numerous human victims. As a rule this fact seriously aggravates the work of local medical service and the law-enforcement agencies. Nowadays not a single society can totally guarantee itself from the danger of natural calamities, terrorist actions and emergency situations. Taking into consideration peculiarities of our country and also aware of the international experience a brand new set of preventive measures was elaborated by forensic experts of Azerbaijan in close cooperation with the law-enforcement bodies. The basic purpose of these sets of actions is to relieve the consequences of such kinds of unpredictable cases.

Terrorist actions, natural calamities and large-scale technological catastrophes and accidents are among the unfortunate features of our contemporary epoch. They end up with numerous human casualties, external situations and destruction of material values, cruelly disturbing traditional modes of life of large groups of the population and creating severe ordeals for them.

Each seat of calamity has its own peculiarities in terms of its scale, mechanism of initiation of destructive factor and quantity of victims. These peculiarities determine the scale of urgent relief and assistance to be rendered.

An unexpected appearance of a great mass of victims at a certain given moment inevitably causes great tension in the activities of regional services, frequently disorganizing the general system of the medical service's management and inadequate correlation of acute requirements of medical assistance and limited possibilities available in this field.

Not only regional, but general state resources are needed with the view of timely and efficient combating of the consequences of such kinds of situations involving numerous human victims.

Prior to the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, terrorist actions and crimes similar to them were actually unknown in Azerbaijan. For the last four years the Azerbaijan Republic has existed as an independent state doing its best to adopt the most advanced traditions and progressive features applied in developed democratic states of the world.

However these past years have vividly proven the complexities of the transitional period. Numerous factors, both the internal and external ones, are used to impede Azerbaijan in its democratic reforms. Extremist actions are very frequently used as a tool for these purposes.

Combatting various types of extremism, terrorism and organized crime has grown into one of the basic problems for the Azerbaijan Republic during this current period.

Taking into consideration national particularities and contemporary economic possibilities of our country, we would like to submit the following case as a vivid example.

The worst Metro tragedy in world history took place in Baku on October 28, 1995. It shocked the world by the number of victims, exceeding all the previous tragedies of this kind. It was only the timely and efficient mobilization of forensic and expert services of the Azerbaijan Republic and precise management of their activities undertaken jointly with the law-enforcement agencies that made it possible to identify and undertake the necessary forensic examination of the dead bodies. A total number of 292 dead bodies were thoroughly examined, 152 of them male and 140 female including 36 children (minors prior to 16 years).

Analysis of results of forensic examination indicated acute poisoning by fumes as the reason of death in 285 cases.

Only in 7 cases the death was caused by electric shock.

Examination of 160 hospitalized victims of the tragedy and their witness testimonies revealed 2 cases of GBH (grave bodily harm) life-endangering. In all other cases GBH were qualified by duration of disease, i.e. 55 persons got smaller degrees of GBH, 103 persons - easy GBH with short-time health disorders.

Taking into consideration the summary of facts noted previously and proceeding from the consequences of this catastrophe we considered that the reorganization of all the expert services was of the utmost necessity. The brand new organizational structure relevant to requirements of the transitional period of the newly formed democratic society in Azerbaijan is to be formed by all means.

We are currently planning to create special Immediate Reaction Groups (IRG) both in the capital of our country, as well as in other urban and rural areas. These groups should include medical personnel in charge of the first intensive medical relief, together with forensic experts and officers of law-enforcement bodies.

As soon as the first alert signal caused by an external emergency situation is received, the Ad Hoc Center located at the central police department will pass this information to the Immediate Reaction Group which in its turn will undertake the relevant necessary activities in each case upon arrival at the scene of accident.

A noteworthy fact is that members of each of these special groups will get adequate training, taking into consideration such aspects as terrain (e.g. urban or rural area, forests, mountainous region, etc.). The number of members for each individual Immediate Reaction Group is determined by the quantity of population at the place of location. In places of minor quantity of inhabitants the staff of Special Groups will be reduced. Precise and well-adjusted inter-action between each member of the Group is one of the basic principles in the Groups' organization.

Each organization concerned with the formation of the Group is in charge of equipping its corresponding representative to be appointed to the Immediate Reaction Group. Operations in conjunction with the Fire service are also being worked out.

Various means of transportation are to be placed at the Groups' disposal.

In particular we would like to stress the functions of forensic experts of the Groups in question. Immediately upon arrival at the scene of accident the forensic service will arrange the mobile unit (set) including independent source of power and water supply, 4 folding tables, as well as other accessories and tools necessary for examination of dead bodies together with onetime-use sectional elements and parts of clothing for its participants. Compulsory special uniform is also provided for cases of particularly dangerous infections. The set also includes special means of protection against some fumes and noxious substances.

Emergency medical relief and hospitalization assistance should be rendered by forensic experts together with other medical personnel.

Selection of dead bodies and a mobile mortuary are to be organized by a forensic expert jointly with the law-enforcement personnel. Dead bodies should be stored at mobile rolling stretchers. Identification of dead bodies and adequate notes should be undertaken as the first step of the work.

The following phase of forensic expertise is to determine the cause of death.

Evacuation of dead bodies to stationary morgues with a view to their preservation and in order to be subsequently released to the relatives, constitutes the third stage of forensic experts' functions.

No doubt, with the Special Group in charge of external situations, this project will enable the rapid reduction of human casualties and material detriment inflicted by natural calamities and other unexpected tragic events. Of course, the Group being created in the Azerbaijan Republic for the period of transition is far from being perfect, however its further permanent development and improvement are foreseen.