



Vladimir Knyazev*

Chairman of Polygraphologist NGO

Olya Matselya**

International Cooperation Manager of the Special Training Centre for
Professional Advancement of Executive Employees and Specialists in Minsk
Belarus

History of Polygraph in the Republic of Belarus

История полиграфа в Республике Беларусь

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Since 2001 the polygraph has been widely used in the Criminal Investigation Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus to investigate various criminal cases. Earlier, the polygraph had only been used in the State Security Committee, where a specialist specially trained in Moscow used to conduct polygraph screening tests. However, due to the specialist's lack of experience in investigating criminal cases, the Belarussian Ministry of Internal Affairs asked colleagues from the Russian Federation to train such specialists separately.

* knyazev-vm@mail.ru

Positive results of polygraph examinations and screening carried out by polygraph specialists of the criminal investigation office led to the establishment of the Department of Psychological and Technical Support in Crime Investigation at the central administrative office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus which was announced on 14 March, 2002. By the end of 2002, such departments had been established in all regional centres.

After a series of heinous crimes was solved by the polygraph specialists from the criminal investigation office, polygraph has increased its popularity. Representatives of the Military Prosecutor's Office, State Border Service, Presidential Security Service, and other services relied on assistance of specialists of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in solving crimes and conducting screening in the agency.

Today, polygraph is used by almost all law enforcement and security agencies and services of Belarus such as the State Security Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Border Committee, Presidential Security Service, Investigation Committee, State Customs Committee, State Control Committee, and the State Medical Forensic Agency.

Each agency has its own regulations governing the procedure of polygraph usage.

Internal affairs agencies, which organise majority of polygraph examinations, apply decree No. 162 of 4 June 2008 On the approval of the Instruction on the arrangement of polygraph examination towards Belarussian citizens by internal affairs agencies, approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Instruction regulates the procedure of interrogating citizens with the application of polygraph as a part of investigation activities, and defines special psychophysiological research in professional psychophysiological selection of candidates to work in internal affairs agencies.

In addition to the aforementioned instruction, there is the Order approving the Instruction on the procedure of selection, training and access of internal affairs agencies officials to work with the polygraph, on the organisation of their work (defining technical requirements of the space in which citizens can be interrogated with the use of polygraph), and on the requirements concerning the drafting of documents and reports by the specialists, and on checking their work procedures.

According to the Instruction approved by this Order, only officials with higher education, at least 3-year experience in investigative activities, and certificates of good conduct can be selected for training for further work with the polygraph. All the candidates shall go through professional psychophysiological selection and interview,

and have their skills of logical thinking, communication as well as self-discipline, responsibility and other traits carefully studied. Upon graduation and on the grounds of the obtained diploma the commission set up in the Ministry of Internal Affairs authorises permits to work with the polygraph for one-year terms. The specialist holding a permit is allowed to interrogate citizens using polygraph under the supervision of a mentor, i.e. a specialist allowed to carry out polygraph interrogation independently. Activities on arranging, making tests, and preparing reports on polygraph interrogation must be conducted under the supervision of a specialist with more than one year's experience in the field. At the end of the year, a holder of a polygraph specialist permit submits polygraph interrogations and charts together with the recommendations of the mentor to the members of the commission for review and evaluation of his or her practical knowledge of the polygraph. Having studied all necessary documents, the commission holds an interview with the specialist. During the interview, his or her knowledge of conceptual issues indicated in the Instruction is ascertained. Conceptual issues determine what a polygraph specialist should know and how he should operate. Only then the commission decides whether a specialist could be allowed to interrogate people independently using a polygraph, or whether a candidate should be turned down. The specialists who have passed the exam successfully are issued certificates. After a certified specialist has conducted at least five hundred interrogations and after checking his polygraph skills, he or she can be issued a Polygraph Professional Card. The Polygraph Professional Card gives the specialist the right to teach and consult as well as the right to carry out research work in the field of polygraph interrogation tactics and development of new methods and practices of polygraph examinations. This is how the qualification of polygraph specialist is obtained.

The abovementioned documents strictly regulate preparation of interrogations and the work of a polygraph specialist in internal affairs institutions.

Today, the number of polygraph interrogations carried out by specialists in internal affairs structures is counted in thousands each year. By the end of 2014, specialists had conducted 40,601 polygraph interrogations, contributing to the solution of 4984 criminal cases, of which 873 were acts of murder and attempted murders (in 120 cases people were considered missing), 443 were cases of grave bodily hurts (including ones that led to the death of victims), 100 were cases of rape, 553 – of armed assaults and robberies, 2011 – of thefts (home burglaries, and car and other thefts), and dozens of other cases concerned combatting commercial crimes, trafficking of illegal drugs, and similar cases. Moreover, polygraph interrogations revealed more than 568 crimes that were unknown, or which the examined had not been sus-

pected of until the moment of polygraph investigation. The numbers do not include the solved cases in whose course polygraph investigations put an end to groundless suspicion against the innocent and helped to channel the investigation in such a way that they finally contributed to solving these cases.

Initially, internal affairs structures generally resorted to polygraph interrogation for special investigative activities to obtain necessary information contributing to solving criminal cases. The results of polygraph interrogations were of probabilistic nature and were not used as evidence in court, but since 2002 the results have often been presented to the court and taken into consideration by the judge, forming the internal conviction on the validity of facts that are to be proven during criminal case investigations. One of the first cases, where such results were decisive for pronouncing the sentence, was the interrogation concerning A.V. Kashpur, a taxi driver declared missing on 14 January 2002. A.I. Shakhrai, a police investigator, had revealed the crime before the body was found.

In October 2002 polygraph specialists from the Psychological and Technical Support in the Investigative Activities Department (PTSIAD) of the Criminal Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted the first judicial psychophysiological forensic expertise on a criminal case taken to court (murder of K.A. Koryavaya, reported missing on 10 November 2011).

In December 2014 the State Committee of Forensic Enquiries set up the Department of Psychophysiological Research dealing with psychophysiological researches in criminal cases against sexual freedom and immunity.

To perform high quality work while investigating and solving criminal cases and conducting forensic psychophysiological assessments, a polygraph specialist should have the knowledge concerning the work of the police agents, investigators and experts, operative-investigative activities, criminal procedures, criminalistics, and other special disciplines. Moreover, a specialist should study peculiarities of methods of investigating different types of crimes.

In this respect, the educational standard in higher education (N 1-93 01 74) on advanced training of special agents on the “psychological and technical support of investigative activities” specialisation with “specialists in psychophysiological research” qualification was designed and put into force. The training lasts for approximately 1000 hours spread over 20 months and is held at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

To provide professional security and support polygraph specialists with updated information, to analyse and disseminate advanced forms and methods of work, to improve professional skills and international cooperation in polygraph interrogations, a non-governmental organization Polygraphologist was set up in Minsk in 2004. It brings together experienced polygraph specialists mostly from various law enforcement agencies and some specialists that conduct private interrogations.

The Polygraphologist NGO works extensively with the Educational Institution Special Training Centre for Professional Advancement of Executive Employees and Specialists that provides special and counterterrorism training of special operation forces of Belarus and other countries. In cooperation with the Centre, the Polygraphologist conducts training of polygraph specialists in state agencies of different countries and of private polygraph specialists.

Training courses have been conducted for different law enforcement agencies and private specialists from Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, Kazakhstan, and some other Asian republics; while forensic experts have been trained for the Republic of Azerbaijan . Together, the Special Training Centre together and Polygraphologist trained polygraph specialists for Security Council of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

During polygraph training, the practice of using polygraph in different countries is taught, and the rich personal experience of polygraphers in staff screening, and in different criminal cases and employee investigations is shared.

Nowadays there are more than 70 operative specialists working for law enforcement agencies, a great deal of them operate within the system of internal affairs agencies, and around 10 specialists are occupied with polygraph research and interrogations for private commissions.

Some major companies employ polygraph specialists on permanent basis, other companies invite a specialist to solve particular issues from time to time, when necessary. Although polygraph interrogations were earlier held as part of staff investigation, nowadays staff vetting is of highest priority as company managers realise that it is better to prevent serious violations of law and crimes than to have to solve them later.

The above tells the history of 15 years of application of polygraph in the Republic of Belarus as it steadily continues to strengthen its positions in various spheres of the country.