# UNIFIED METHODOLOGY FOR MILITARY FIELDFORENSICS (BATTLEFIELD FORENSICS) FOR DOCUMENTING WAR CRIMES

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**Summary**

The article examines the problem of the absence in Ukraine of a unified methodology for battlefield forensics as a specialized system for recording, collecting, preserving, and initially analyzing evidence of war crimes in conditions of active combat operations. It is argued that the application of adapted procedures of classical forensics does not ensure the proper admissibility and evidential value of materials in situations of constant danger, limited time, and risk of evidence loss. The content and features of battlefield forensics are revealed, its place in the system of criminalistics science and its correlation with international standards of evidence, in particular the requirements of the International Criminal Court, are determined. The international experience of NATO, the ICC, OHCHR, UNITAD, and analytical OSINT platforms that shape the current practice of documenting war crimes is analyzed. The principles of a unified methodology are formulated, the integration of classical and digital forensic tools is justified, and the structural stages of field documentation and key challenges for implementing the methodology in Ukraine are identified. Strategic directions for the development of a national battlefield forensics system are proposed, including the creation of interagency rapid response teams, digital recording protocols, and a national coordination center. It is concluded that a unified methodology for military field forensics is a necessary prerequisite for ensuring effective investigation of war crimes and the compatibility of evidence with international jurisdictions.

**Key words:** OSINT; geolocation data; drone reconnaissance; chain of custody; international standards of evidence; reconstruction of events; recording traces of war.

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## 1. Introduction

The Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has led to an unprecedented scale of violations of international humanitarian law, requiring a qualitatively new level of documentation of war crimes. Despite the considerable efforts of investigators, prosecutors, experts, and international partners, the recording of crimes in frontline and de-occupied areas is often carried out in extreme conditions: under shelling, without stable access, and under the threat of secondary mining or destruction of evidence.

In these circumstances, battlefield forensics–a set of special methods, tactical techniques, and technical means that ensure the collection, recording, preservation, and initial analysis of evidence directly on the battlefield or in the combat zone–becomes particularly relevant. The unification of such approaches is critical to ensuring the admissibility of evidence, its compatibility with international standards, and the effectiveness of future court proceedings.

In this context, battlefield forensics is not a set of separate practical techniques, but as a special forensic methodology that is being developed within military forensics as a separate branch of forensic science, determined by the specific subject of evidence, the conditions for collecting evidence, and the specific regime of admissibility of evidence in international criminal justice.

A comparative analysis of classical criminalistics and battlefield forensics reveals fundamental differences between them in a number of key parameters. The object of classical military criminalistics is a crime committed in peacetime, while battlefield forensics focuses on war crimes committed in active combat conditions. The conditions for conducting forensic activities are also radically different: classical forensics operates in conditions of relative stability and full access to the scene of the crime, while military field forensics is carried out in an environment of constant danger, limited time, changing operational conditions, and the risk of evidence being destroyed again. Differences can also be seen in the nature of the evidence: in the classical model, material traces predominate, while battlefield forensics operates with a hybrid evidence system that combines material and digital evidence with open source intelligence (OSINT) data. Finally, the procedural addressee of the evidence is also different: classical forensics is mainly focused on national courts, while the results of battlefield forensics must meet the requirements of both national justice and international criminal jurisdictions, in particular the International Criminal Court.

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**Analysis of recent studies and publications.** Contemporary scientific discourse in the field of battlefield forensics is shaped by comprehensive research conducted by Western and international institutions, including NATO CCDCOE, OHCHR, UNITAD, Bellingcat, and scientists working at the intersection of forensics, forensic medicine, digital technologies, etc. The works of T. Väisänen, C. Braccini, and other NATO CCDCOE researchers have developed approaches to the concept of "forensic triage" and presented procedural approaches to the recording and seizure of digital media in combat conditions, which laid the foundation for modeling mobile forensic processes in active combat zones. A significant contribution to the standardization of the digital component of evidence is the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations, developed by a team led by Alex Koenig, which for the first time systematically described the rules for collecting, verifying, and authenticating open digital materials, making them acceptable to international tribunals. The forensic medicine part of the methodology is based on the updated Minnesota Protocol (2016) and Istanbul Protocol, which set universal standards for investigating potentially illegal deaths, torture, and the handling of dead bodies,

defining requirements for autopsies, recording injuries, and conditions for finding bodies in conflict zones. The Bellingcat analytical school, led by Eliot Higgins, plays a significant role in the development of evidence-based practices. It has developed practical tools for geolocation, chronological verification, and correlation of open sources with field materials, confirmed by numerous investigations of crimes in Syria, Donbas, and Bucha. The organizational component of battlefield forensics has been significantly strengthened by the work of UNITAD, which describes in detail the models of mobile investigation teams, protocols for documenting mass graves, and systems for centralized storage of evidence for further international prosecution of criminals. Together, these works form an interdisciplinary foundation that combines digital, forensic, criminalistic, and organizational-legal components and demonstrates the urgent need to integrate international standards into the national system of documenting war crimes. At the same time, the analysis reveals a number of gaps, in particular the insufficient adaptability of existing methodologies to conditions of limited resources, the risks of repeated shelling, the lack of trained personnel, and the difficulties in ensuring the continuity of the chain of evidence preservation. That is why domestic scientists and practitioners need to develop a unified Ukrainian methodology that combines the provisions of the CCDCOE, Berkeley Protocol, OHCHR, and UNITAD, adapting them to the realities of modern warfare, providing for mobile work formats, abbreviated field recording protocols, digital documentation templates, and interagency coordination suitable for both national justice and the International Criminal Court.

The lack of a unified battlefield forensics methodology creates not only organizational difficulties but also procedural vulnerability of evidence, which manifests itself in an increased risk of its inadmissibility due to violations of standards for collection, preservation, and authentication, particularly in proceedings before the International Criminal Court.

**Research objective.** The study aims to substantiate and develop the conceptual foundations of a unified methodology for battlefield forensics, adapted to the conditions of armed aggression against Ukraine, taking into account international standards for documenting war crimes, the technological capabilities of modern forensics, and the needs of national law enforcement and military agencies. The study aims to identify the structural elements of such a methodology, refine algorithms for field collection, recording, preservation, and integration of evidence in combat conditions, and develop approaches to interagency cooperation, technological support, and professional training of specialists involved in documenting war crimes. The central task is to create a scientific basis for the implementation of uniform standards that ensure the admissibility of collected evidence in both national courts and international criminal jurisdictions, in particular the ICC.

**The scientific novelty of the research lies in** the formation of the conceptual foundations of a unified methodology for military field forensics, the justification of its structure, principles, and place in the system of forensic science, as well as in the identification of mechanisms for adapting international standards to Ukrainian conditions.

## 2. Result

**A system of principles for battlefield forensics has been formulated.** The development of a unified methodology for military field forensics is based on a number of key principles that ensure effective, safe, and standardized documentation of war crimes on the battlefield or in active combat conditions. Compliance with these principles is mandatory to ensure the admissibility of evidence in national and international courts, as well as to guarantee the safety of specialists working in the conflict zone. The first and most important principle is to ensure

the safety of experts and investigators who conduct inspections and collect evidence in the combat zone. Before entering the site of the investigation, it is necessary to check for explosive devices, mines, shells, and other dangerous elements *(OHCHR, 2020; United Nations, 2004).* Cooperation with sappers and specialized units is mandatory, as even the slightest mistake can pose a threat to the life and health of personnel (NATO CCDCOE, n.d.). Safety also requires compliance with personal protection rules, the use of protective equipment, and zoning of the territory to minimize risks *(Braccini et al., 2016; United Nations, 2004)*. In military field conditions, time is a critical resource. Therefore, every action taken by experts must be performed as quickly as possible, without compromising the accuracy and completeness of documentation. The speed of recording prevents the loss of important evidence due to further combat operations, destruction of objects, or changes in the environment *(Casey, 2020)*. To this end, standardized procedures for initial inspection, photo and video recording, and rapid methods of marking and preserving traces are used. An important aspect is the use of uniform forms of protocols and standards for recording traces, bodies, debris, ammunition, and weapons. Standardization avoids chaos in documentation and ensures the comparability of evidence and its integration into a common database. In addition, it guarantees that procedures comply with national legislation and international standards, which is critical for court proceedings and cooperation with international investigative bodies (United Nations, 2004; Higgins, 2021; *Russia's War on Everybody, n.d.).*

**The integration of digital and traditional forensic tools has been justified.** The unified methodology provides for accurate recording of the scene of the incident using modern technologies: GPS navigation, drones, tactical navigation systems, and geographic information systems (GIS) (NATO CCDCOE, n.d.). Such documentation allows for the precise location of objects and traces to be established, ensures the chronology of events can be reconstructed, and creates a basis for the reconstruction of combat operations *(Braccini et al., 2016)*. Precise geolocation is particularly important for international judicial authorities, which require evidence that is clearly linked to a specific time and place *(OHCHR, 2020; United Nations, 2004)*. Evidence collection in modern conditions involves the integration of traditional and digital methods. This includes photo and video recording, the creation of 3D models of the scene, and the use of data from drones, satellite imagery, and intelligence *(Braccini et al., 2016; Higgins, 2021).* Digital convergence allows for the creation of a comprehensive picture of an event, its storage in digital form for further analysis, and the visualization of evidence in court proceedings *(OHCHR, 2020).* This approach significantly improves the quality of documentation and ensures greater evidentiary value *(Casey, 2020).* Collected material objects (weapon fragments, ammunition, personal belongings, biological traces) are subject to immediate preservation and chain of custody *(Eurojust, 2021)*. This involves marking, packaging, creating accompanying documentation, and monitoring the transfer of evidence to the pre-trial investigation center. Compliance with this principle is critical for the admissibility of evidence in national and international courts and prevents its deterioration or loss. The methodology is designed to be fully compliant with international protocols and standards, such as the Minnesota Protocol, Istanbul Protocol, and Berkeley Protocol *(United Nations, 2004; Casey, 2020)*. This ensures the mutual admissibility of evidence, the possibility of its use in international criminal proceedings, and the integration of Ukrainian practice with international mechanisms for investigating war crimes (United Nations, *2004;* United Nations, *2017;* OHCHR, *2020;* Eurojust, *2021;* Higgins, *2021;* NATO CCDCOE, *n.d.).* The use of such standards also allows for the improvement of the professional level of experts and ensures a high level of evidence.

**The structural stages of the unified methodology have been defined.** The unified methodology of military field forensics provides for a clear and consistent structure of actions aimed at ensuring effective documentation of war crimes *(OHCHR, 2020; United Nations, 2004)*. It includes several interrelated stages, each of which has its own significance and functional purpose, and compliance with them ensures the completeness, reliability, and admissibility of evidence in court proceedings *(Casey, 2020; International Criminal Court, 2013)*. This stage involves a comprehensive risk assessment and preparation for work in the combat zone. First, a preliminary survey of the territory is carried out, including an analysis of the presence of explosive objects, mines, ammunition remnants, and other dangerous elements. At the same time, coordination with the military command, law enforcement agencies, and sapper units is carried out to ensure safe access to the scene *(*NATO CCDCOE*, n.d.)*. Also at this stage, a mobile forensic kit is prepared, including photo and video equipment, GPS devices, drones, and means of packaging and marking evidence *(Braccini et al., 2016)*. A standardized methodology at this stage establishes requirements for the personal protection of experts and the organization of safety zones, minimizing risks to personnel *(United Nations, 2004; OHCHR, 2020)*. After the preparations are complete, a direct inspection of the scene is carried out. At this stage, the main task is to record all visible traces and objects that may become evidence. The inspection begins with panoramic photo and video recording of the area to obtain an overall picture of the event. Drones and 3D scanning systems allow the creation of accurate digital models of the object under investigation, which significantly improves the quality of documentation. An important component is the zoning of the territory, marking debris, bodies of the deceased, and the locations of ammunition, which ensures the reconstruction of events during analysis *(OHCHR, 2020)*. At this stage, material objects are directly collected and preserved. These include weapon fragments, ammunition remnants, personal belongings of victims, biological traces, digital media, and other objects that can confirm the fact of a war crime. The unified methodology establishes rules for packaging, labeling, and creating accompanying documentation for each object, which guarantees the preservation of evidence and its admissibility in court. Particular attention is paid to maintaining the chain of custody and recording the time, place, and circumstances of the seizure of each piece of evidence *(United Nations, 2004; International Criminal Court, 2013; Casey, 2020)*. One of the key features of battlefield forensics is the ability to conduct preliminary analysis on the battlefield. This includes rapid tests to identify explosives, preliminary ballistic assessment of debris and weapons, determination of the direction of fire, and preliminary reconstruction of events *(*Braccini et al., *2016;* NATO CCDCOE*, n.d.)*. Such analysis allows the main characteristics of the incident to be established and provides operational information for command and investigators *(Higgins, 2021)*. The collected data forms the basis for further detailed forensic examination in laboratory conditions. After the collection and initial analysis of evidence is completed, it is systematized and prepared for transfer to the central pre-trial investigation authorities. At this stage, a unified protocol is formed, which includes a detailed description of the scene, all material objects, digital data, photo and video recordings, a chronology of the experts' actions, and the chain of custody of the evidence *(Casey, 2020)*. This package of documents ensures the completeness and reliability of the materials that can be used in national and international court proceedings. The final stage of the methodology involves the secure transfer of evidence to the relevant investigative and expert units, as well as its integration into common databases *(*NATO CCDCOE*, n.d.)*. This ensures cooperation between different agencies, centralization of information, and its availability for further analysis and use in

criminal proceedings *(Higgins, 2021)*. Compliance with international standards at all stages guarantees the admissibility of evidence in courts, in particular in the International Criminal Court and other international judicial bodies *(United Nations, 2004; International Criminal Court, 2013; OHCHR, 2020)*.

**Key challenges for implementing the methodology in Ukraine have been identified.** The introduction of a unified methodology for military field forensics in Ukraine faces a number of significant challenges, which are due to both the objective circumstances of combat operations and the structural features of pre-trial investigation bodies and military units. An analysis of these challenges makes it possible to identify priority areas for the development and adaptation of the methodology to national conditions, as well as to ensure its compliance with international standards. One of the main challenges is the limited number of highly qualified specialists capable of working in conditions of active combat operations. Working on the battlefield requires a combination of knowledge of forensics, military tactics, security, and working with modern technological tools such as drones, GPS navigation, and digital evidence collection systems. Training such personnel requires specialized training, simulation exercises, and integration into interagency training programs. A lack of sufficient specialists can lead to delays in documenting crimes, loss of evidence, and increased risk to personnel. Effective implementation of the methodology requires modern technical equipment that allows for rapid and accurate evidence collection in the field. These include mobile laboratories equipped for preliminary analysis of explosives and biological traces, thermal imaging cameras for recording traces at night, 3D scanners for creating digital models of crime scenes, and drones for aerial photography and georeferencing of evidence. Inadequate technical equipment limits the efficiency of work, the accuracy of documentation, and the ability to integrate evidence into digital databases, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of investigations. Another important challenge is the lack of a sufficiently clear regulatory framework governing the application of the methodology and ensuring cooperation between different agencies. In order to implement a unified methodology, its provisions must be enshrined in departmental acts, instructions, and standards covering the activities of the prosecutor's office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine. It is important to create uniform procedures governing the collection, recording, preservation, and transfer of evidence, which will avoid duplication of efforts, improve the quality of documentation, and ensure the admissibility of evidence in national and international courts. The Ukrainian methodology should be integrated with international standards for documenting war crimes, in particular, it should comply with the requirements of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international investigative bodies. This involves preparing evidence in a format that is accepted internationally, ensuring a clear chain of custody, standardized photo and video recording, accurate geolocation, and chronology of events. International integration also involves cooperation with expert groups, participation in training programs, and exchange of methodological materials, which raises the professional level of Ukrainian specialists and guarantees the evidentiary value of the materials. A distinctive feature of working in an active combat zone is the high risk of repeated shelling and destruction, which significantly limits the time available for inspecting the scene and collecting evidence. This requires experts to combine maximum efficiency and accuracy, using methods for rapid recording and preservation of materials. The threat of repeated attacks also requires planning safe access routes, zoning the territory, and using remote inspection methods, such as drones and mobile digital systems, to minimize risks to personnel. Thus, the successful implementation of the methodology in Ukraine requires a comprehensive approach that covers personnel,

technical, regulatory, and international support, as well as the adaptation of procedures to the realities of combat operations. Addressing these challenges is key to establishing an effective system for documenting war crimes and ensuring further justice at the national and international levels *(OHCHR, 2020; Casey, 2020; Higgins, 2021; Istanbul Protocol (UN); Russia's War on Everybody, n.d.; NATO CCDCOE, n.d.).*

**Strategic directions for the development of a national battlefield forensics system have been formulated.** The development of a national methodology for military field forensics requires a comprehensive approach that combines international experience, modern technologies, personnel training, and the creation of interagency mechanisms for interaction *(OHCHR, 2020; Higgins, 2021; Russia's War on Everybody, n.d.).* Ukraine is currently in a unique situation where the practical need to document war crimes necessitates the accelerated formation of its own battlefield forensics system, adapted to the conditions of active combat operations, high frontline mobility, and significant risks to personnel *(United Nations, 2004; United Nations, 2017).* In this context, five key strategic directions can be identified that should form the foundation of a future unified methodology.

Ukraine should use the experience of leading international institutions that have been working for decades in the field of documenting mass crimes. ICC practices ensure standards for the competent collection, description, and processing of evidence, with a view to its subsequent acceptance in international courts *(Higgins, 2021; United Nations, 2004).*

NATO, on the other hand, provides examples of military field procedures (SOPs) and integrated models of interaction between security units, intelligence, and investigative teams in combat zones *(Russia's War on Everybody, n.d.; NATO CCDCOE, n.d.).*

UNITAD has a successful track record of working in high-risk environments, demining, and documenting ISIS crimes in situations of protracted conflict. EUAM Ukraine ensures the localisation of these standards, taking into account Ukrainian legislation, procedural requirements and real logistical capabilities. The integration of this experience creates the basis for a methodology that will not only be universal, but also acceptable to both national courts and the ICC *(International Criminal Court, 2011; Higgins, 2021; Russia's War on Everybody, n.d.; United Nations, 2017; NATO CCDCOE, n.d.).*

One of the key tasks is to create unified protocols that ensure uniformity in the description of the scene, the bodies of the deceased, damage to infrastructure, traces of weapons, ammunition fragments, and other material objects. Such protocols should be available in digital format, compatible with mobile applications, and integrated into the databases of the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Standardization increases the accuracy of recording, minimizes errors, and simplifies the further movement of evidence within the chain of custody. In addition, digital forms allow for the automatic linking of geolocation, time, identification numbers, and multimedia files, which is especially important in combat conditions, where work is carried out quickly and at risk of repeated shelling *(OHCHR, 2020; Casey, 2020; Higgins, 2021; United Nations, 2004).*

The methodology can only function if there is trained personnel capable of working in highly stressful situations. A multi-level training system needs to be created: basic courses for military personnel who are the first to arrive at the scene; specialized programs for investigators, prosecutors, and forensic scientists who work directly with evidence; highly specialized training for forensic experts, sappers, and bomb disposal experts; joint training with international institutions (ICC, UNITAD, EUAM) to ensure compliance with international standards *(Casey, 2020; United Nations Security Council, 2022; United Nations, 2017).*

Systematic training ensures that the evidence collected is legally relevant, technically sound, and suitable for further examination and court proceedings *(Higgins, 2021).*

Effective military field forensics is impossible without the use of a wide range of digital recording tools. The arsenal of essential technologies includes: drones for aerial photography, video recording, and inspection of hazardous areas; GIS systems for creating spatial models and displaying the relative positions of objects; mobile applications for collecting evidence with secure data transfer and automatic metadata tagging; 3D scanning of the scene and objects, which significantly increases the accuracy of event reconstruction; forensic databases of enemy ammunition capable of identifying shell types, detonation traces, and weapon characteristics *(OHCHR, 2020; Russia's War on Everybody, n.d.; NATO CCDCOE, n.d.).*

The combination of these tools creates a "digital military footprint" – a set of evidence that can be analyzed, synchronized, and reproduced in the form of an evidence model for national and international courts *(OHCHR, 2020; Higgins, 2021).*

Successful documentation of war crimes requires operational cooperation between various security and justice agencies: the Prosecutor General's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, military units, intelligence services, sappers, and medical services. The creation of specialized "interagency rapid response teams" ensures: synchronized arrival at the scene immediately after shelling or combat engagement; rapid securing of the area; professional recording of evidence within the "window of opportunity," which often ranges from a few minutes to several hours; standardization of data and compliance with the chain of custody; the ability to quickly use evidence for counterintelligence, assessment of enemy tactics, and international prosecution. The creation of such teams allows the documentation of war crimes to be transformed from a fragmented practice into a systematic state policy integrated into military and post-war justice processes.

## 3. Conclusions

Thus, battlefield forensics should be considered not as an auxiliary tool of criminal proceedings, but as an independent criminalistic methodology of wartime, forming a new paradigm for proving war crimes. The development of Ukrainian military field forensics methodology is a critically important element in ensuring the effective documentation of war crimes related to armed aggression against Ukraine. The analysis allows us to formulate a number of fundamental conclusions about the current state and prospects for the development of this field.

First, the current system for collecting and recording evidence of war crimes remains fragmented, as it is based primarily on adapted civil forensic procedures that are not fully suited to the conditions of active combat operations. Unlike classic criminal proceedings, military field documentation requires immediate operational efficiency, increased attention to personnel safety, technological mobility, and the ability to work in conditions of infrastructure destruction and lack of full access to the scene. This requires the creation of specialized methodological approaches focused specifically on battlefield conditions.

Secondly, adaptation of international experience has shown that universal elements of the ICC, NATO, UNITAD, and EUAM methodologies can only be fully implemented in Ukrainian practice after they have been adjusted to take into account national specifics, including the peculiarities of legal regulation, Russian shelling tactics, the intensity of hostilities, and the level of technical equipment of investigative and military units. Thus, the Ukrainian methodology should not be a mere compilation of foreign standards, but their scientifically based adaptation and development.

Thirdly, interagency coordination is a key factor in the successful functioning of the methodology. Current practices show that the lack of a unified procedural approach between the OGP, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine leads to gaps in the chain of evidence preservation, duplication of work, loss of important information, and a decline in the quality of materials submitted to the International Criminal Court. Therefore, the formation of interagency rapid response teams and the creation of uniform digital protocol templates is not a recommendation but an objective necessity for modern military justice.

Fourth, the use of modern technologies–drones, GIS systems, 3D scanners, mobile applications, and forensic ammunition databases–is one of the most effective tools for improving the accuracy of recording and reconstructing events. Studies of the practice of documenting war crimes in Syria, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, and other conflicts show that technological convergence of data significantly increases the likelihood of evidence being accepted by international courts and strengthens the evidence base in terms of forensics, forensic medicine, and geospatial analytics.

Fifth, achieving real effectiveness of the methodology is impossible without systematic training of specialists. Field criminologists, investigators, experts, and military personnel must have special skills in working in dangerous conditions, using technical means, complying with the chain of custody, and properly documenting war crimes in accordance with international standards. Current research shows that without standardized and systematic training, even the best technological solutions will not ensure quality results.

Based on the conclusions, it is advisable to propose the following recommendations: develop and approve at the state level a unified methodology for military field forensics, which would include standardized protocols, algorithms of actions, and technological requirements; create permanent interagency rapid response teams (OGP-MVS-SBU-ZSU) to ensure the prompt recording of war crimes in the combat zone; introduce a national digital complex called “Field Documentation,” which will contain unified protocol templates, media recording tools, automatic geolocation, and secure data storage; integrate battlefield forensics training programs into the professional development system for investigators, prosecutors, experts, and military personnel, including training with the participation of the ICC, UNITAD, and EUAM; create a state or interagency forensic database of enemy ammunition and weapons to speed up the identification of weapon types, firing devices, and killing mechanisms; improve the technical support for field teams, in particular by purchasing drones, 3D scanners, mobile laboratories, and secure digital information exchange tools; institutionalize cooperation with the International Criminal Court by ensuring that national procedures are brought into line with the Minnesota Protocol, Istanbul Protocol, and Berkeley Protocol. A unified methodology for military field forensics is a necessary component of effective documentation of war crimes in Ukraine in the context of armed conflict. Its development and implementation will improve the quality and admissibility of evidence, ensure the compatibility of pre-trial investigation materials with international standards, strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies in frontline areas, and strengthen the evidence base for national and international judicial institutions. The proposed structure of the unified methodology can be used as a basis for the development of interagency regulations and training programs aimed at developing military field forensics in Ukraine as a separate area of scientific and practical activity. It is advisable to establish a national coordination center for battlefield forensics, which will provide methodological guidance, standardization of protocols, staff training, and interaction with international criminal jurisdictions.

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