ANOMALOUS DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED BY RUSSIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT IN CRIMINAL PROSECUTION

The Prosecution's Case Systematically Rests on Anomalous Documents

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Summary

In the materials examined, the prosecution's case against L. rests time and again on documents that the prosecution prepared itself and that diverge from independent documents about the same events. The conflict began with a commercial dispute over a supply contract: the counterparty did not pay for a delivery, and a commercial court later ordered it to pay the debt to the company that L. represented in the dispute. Meanwhile, a complainant whom the defence links to the counterparty went to the police, and L. was charged with attempted fraud on an especially large scale; on the strength of this charge he was twice put on the wanted list. Both wanted listings were built on anomalous documents, and a court found both unlawful. Even so, they cost L. more than two years: he was listed as wanted for at least 770 days. According to L., his legal fees came to at least USD 100,000 and his business losses to USD 800 million. The Summary sets out the parties' positions briefly; they are presented in full in Section 6.

Main findings. Having put L. on the wanted list in the first case, the investigator suspended the investigation "in connection with the search", although the suspension order itself gave L.'s address and telephone number, and during the months of that listing the district police directorate was corresponding with L. by email. A court found the opening of the first criminal case unlawful, yet the wanted listing remained in force for another 43 days, until the court declared it null and void as well. Even the prosecutor acknowledged that once the decision to open the case had been set aside, the wanted listing was "neither justified nor possible". The investigators then opened a new case over the same events.

The second wanted listing rests on the claim that L. was notified of a summons, failed to appear and is therefore absconding; yet even 47 days after the listing order the Interior Ministry's online service did not find L. among wanted persons, and only then did the police open a search file. Nothing but entries in an outgoing mail register, kept by the investigating authority itself, confirmed that summonses had been sent, but the district court initially found them sufficient. At the same hearing the district prosecutor's office stated that it had already informed L. of the wanted listing in its replies to his requests. However, the documents do not bear this out: the first such message to reach L. was sent by the city prosecutor's office only nine months after the listing order, after the hearing, and it read: "You are required to appear before the investigator." The February date of the listing order creates the appearance that by the time of the summons the deadline for appearing had long passed, and the finding that L. was absconding, the wanted listing and the suspension of the case all remained in force.

The appellate court set aside the district court's decision: the copy of the register did not show when, where or how the summons had been sent. When the complaint was heard again, the postal operator replied that no letters from the investigators had arrived at L.'s address, and the court found the second wanted listing unlawful: L. had not been properly notified, and the conclusion that he was absconding had been premature. The investigators cancelled the listing 107 days after the court's decision. Contrary to their own statements that L. could not be found, the district police directorate and the prosecutor's office corresponded with him by email during both periods in which he was listed as absconding, and the tax authority and a power grid company with a state shareholding formally thanked him.

Recommendations. When reviewing a complaint against a wanted listing within the 14 days allowed, a judge can start with the question the appellate court asked: whether the authority's record shows how the summons was sent. If it does not, the judge should request the postal operator's reply on

delivery and the Interior Ministry's records. Defence lawyers would do well to request this information in the first weeks of a wanted listing. The head of an investigating authority should cancel a wanted listing within the first days after a court decision that removes its basis, and the prosecutor supervising the investigation should check that this has been done. On receiving a request concerning a person whose wanted listings a court has already found unlawful, the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files can ask the authority that transmitted the data what evidence from outside the investigation confirms that the person was notified of the summons.

Intended Readership

This report is addressed to those who examine the documents of a criminal prosecution without access to the originals or to the full case file. First among them are judges and defence lawyers: the checklist of indicators allows a wanted-listing document to be checked within the two weeks allowed for reviewing a complaint. Organisations that monitor criminal cases can describe documents from different cases using one scheme: the document, its date, the record against which it is checked, and the date on which the discrepancy became visible.

For the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files and for National Central Bureaus, the report suggests what to ask the authority of the country that transmitted data to INTERPOL when a court has already found a person's wanted listing unlawful. For researchers in archival science and criminal justice, the report applies an old historians' technique to procedural documents: the date of a document is checked against a record made by someone else.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to establish how anomalous documents produced by the authorities affected the decisions to put L. on the wanted list, and what those decisions cost him.

By putting an accused person on the wanted list, the investigator instructs the police to find someone whose whereabouts are unknown (Article 210 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation No. 174-FZ of 18 December 2001, hereafter CCP). For that period the investigation can be suspended (CCP, Art. 208). On receiving the instruction, the police search unit opens a search file, that is, its own file on the search for that person (CCP, Art. 210; search unit report of 19 March 2025). A charge brought without the person being present is called a charge in absentia; this is how L. was charged both times (investigator's orders of 2 April 2023 and 9 March 2024). By an independent document we mean a record of the same event made by someone else, over which the authority that issued the document has no influence: a court decision, a reply from the postal operator, a reply from an official records service or a letter from a foreign authority.

We call the first two wanted listings completed: a court found them unlawful. The third is still under way.

The tasks of the study:

1. For each document on which the decisions in L.'s two completed wanted listings relied, to establish what makes it anomalous, which record it diverges from, which decision relied on it and what that decision cost L.

2. For each anomaly, to establish when, and after which step by the defence, it became visible.

3. To compile the indicators of anomalous documents into a checklist, to name for each indicator what the document should be checked against, and to test the checklist on other documents.

1. Introduction

In L.’s case a court twice found a wanted listing unlawful. The first, declared on 3 March 2023, was held by the court on 19 October 2023 to be legally null and void. Earlier, on 6 September 2023, the court had found the opening of the case itself unlawful, and on 17 October 2023 the head of the investigative department set that decision aside (district court ruling of 19 October 2023). The court also took into account that the investigator had produced no evidence that L. had evaded appearing. Even the prosecutor wrote that once the decision to open the case had been set aside, the wanted listing was “neither justified nor possible”. The second, declared on 29 February 2024, was found unlawful on 7 May 2025: the postal operator replied that no letters from the investigators had arrived at L.’s address, and the court held that L. had not been properly notified of the summons (district court ruling of 7 May 2025). According to the district prosecutor’s office, the investigators cancelled the second listing on 22 August 2025, 107 days after the court’s decision. By that day L. had spent more than two years on the wanted list in total.

Zaitsev, Kashepov and Nudel (2020) write about the demand to remove from the legal system the “hooks” through which a commercial dispute is turned into a “commissioned” criminal case. L., too, had a commercial dispute. He represented a company in a dispute over a supply contract of 28 March 2022, and on 28 May 2025 the commercial court ordered the counterparty, an individual entrepreneur, to pay 113,076 roubles in debt and penalties. L. is accused of attempted fraud on an especially large scale: the investigators allege that 2,000,000 roubles were demanded from the complainant in the criminal case at a meeting on 3 June 2022 (investigator’s order of 2 April 2023). According to L.’s statements (for example, his application to the prosecutor’s office of 2 August 2025), the entrepreneur acted in the complainant’s interests, and the criminal case grew out of that dispute.

Replying to a request from L., the district police directorate wrote in a letter of 5 October 2023 that L.’s property claims against the complainant “are of a civil-law nature and are to be resolved in court”. The letter was written between the two criminal cases: a month after the court found the opening of the first case unlawful, and 35 days before 9 November 2023, when the investigative department of the same directorate, as the investigator’s order of 9 March 2024 states, opened a new case over the same events.

The subject of this report is the documents on which the wanted listings were built, their dates, the decisions that relied on them and the cost of those decisions to L. In the second wanted listing the central claim was that L. had been notified of a summons and had failed to appear. It was supported by the outgoing mail register: on the strength of it, the court in 2024 found that the summonses had been sent. However, outside the investigating authority the register entries are confirmed by nothing (district court ruling of 22 August 2024). The appellate court set that decision aside (appellate ruling of 5 February 2025). The case file contains other anomalous documents of law enforcement and security agencies as well. An order of the security agency dated 14 October 2022 lists an attached report “of 17 October

2022”, that is, a document that did not yet exist on the date of the order (security agency documents of October 2022). In the second wanted listing the police opened a search file only 47 days after the listing order, on the very day when the Interior Ministry’s online service did not find L. among wanted persons (search unit report of 19 March 2025; screenshot of 16 April 2024). In another set of proceedings against L., a deputy prosecutor set aside an order dated almost six months before the crime report that started the case, and the written instruction assigning the check of that report to a police officer is dated, on the copy, one day after the statement which that officer had already taken (documents of the proceedings in Region 2). The first report in this series noted that wanted-listing orders diverge from the Interior Ministry’s records (Limarau, 2026). We turn that observation into a checklist of indicators and, for each indicator, name what the document should be checked against.

The third wanted listing is continuing: the court reviewed its lawfulness on 14 August 2026, and its documents are collected at the end of the report as observations without conclusions. They show whether, after two court decisions, the same pattern is repeated: a charge in absentia, a wanted listing on the same or the following day, and an entry by the authority that nothing outside it confirmed (investigator’s orders of 2 April 2023 and 9 March 2024).

2. Existing Approaches and Their Limitations

Diplomatics, the historical discipline concerned with the authenticity and dating of documents, and digital forensics both know how to check the date of a document without examining the paper (Duranti, 1989; Vanini et al., 2024).

Since the nineteenth century diplomatics has distinguished the day a decision was taken from the day it was written down, and it finds this gap wherever the date of a document is incompatible with its other data (Duranti, 1989). Diplomatics draws another distinction that matters for this case: a document of a public authority can be genuine in form and legally valid and yet report something that did not happen (Duranti, 1989). Digital forensics checks the time recorded by the computer itself against a time stamp set by someone else (Vanini et al., 2024).

Forensic document examination estimates the age of an entry from the original, but it still cannot date an entry precisely, and methods based on analysing the solvents in ink work only for entries no more than three to four months old (Weyermann et al., 2011). The defence receives wanted-listing documents years later and as copies, so what remains open to it is checking them against independent documents. A practising defence lawyer writes that courts review wanted listings “as a rule, in a formal manner” (Pavlova, 2023).

Work on INTERPOL and its Commission for the Control of Files centres on the risk that an international wanted listing creates for the individual. A Red Notice, an international request for arrest, creates a risk of arrest when travelling, can cost a person the ability to rent housing, open a bank account or find work, and damages their reputation (Calcara, 2021).

We carry dating by independent record over to the procedural documents of wanted listings and, where possible, check them against a document that can be requested without access to the case file.

3. Legal Framework

3.1. Grounds for a Wanted Listing and Judicial Review

The investigation is suspended if it is not known whom to charge, or if the accused has absconded or the accused's whereabouts have not been established for other reasons (CCP, Art. 208, Part 1). Absconding is something the investigator must establish and prove: a person absconds when they have been officially notified of their status in the case, for example that they are the accused, and deliberately fail to appear before the investigator (Zaytseva, 2026).

The results of operational search activity, that is, the covert work of the police and security agencies, may serve as the reason and grounds for opening a case and are passed to the investigator under the rules of criminal procedure law (Federal Law No. 144-FZ of 12 August 1995 on Operational Search Activity, Art. 11). The order transmitting them lists the attached documents, so its date shows which documents the agency already had on that day.

A judge reviews a complaint against a wanted-listing order within 14 days (CCP, Art. 125, Part 3). INTERPOL's Rules on the Processing of Data place responsibility for the accuracy of data on the National Central Bureau and the entity that transmitted them (Art. 12; Schöndorf-Haubold, 2008).

3.2. Consequences of Wanted Status

Wanted status comes to light during identity checks and when a person applies for a passport or for a certificate on criminal prosecution (Federal Law No. 3-FZ of 7 February 2011 on the Police, Art. 13; Administrative Regulations approved by Order of the Interior Ministry of Russia No. 773 of 16 November 2020, para. 150; Administrative Regulations approved by Order of the Interior Ministry of Russia No. 660 of 27 September 2019, para. 76.7). The police may check the documents of anyone they consider to be wanted, bring that person in to establish their identity and detain them until they are handed over to the authority looking for them. Without a court decision, such detention lasts no longer than 48 hours (Arts. 13 and 14 of the Law on the Police). The law allows an accused person who has been found to be detained under the rules on detaining a suspect (CCP, Art. 210, Part 3). An application for a passport in itself triggers a check against the wanted-persons records, and if the applicant is wanted, the police duty unit is notified (Interior Ministry Order No. 773, paras. 127 and 150). The wanted listing appears in the Interior Ministry's certificate on criminal prosecution (Interior Ministry Order No. 660, para. 76.7), and employers require such a certificate when hiring for work that is closed to people under criminal prosecution (Labour Code of the Russian Federation, Art. 65). The listing itself is visible to everyone: on the Interior Ministry's website anyone can find a person by surname, first name and year of birth (Interior Ministry of Russia, 2026).

A departmental instruction allows an international wanted listing to be declared only after a federal one or at the same time, and only if there is information that the person has left the country, has ties abroad or intends to leave (Instruction on the Organisation of Information Support for Cooperation through INTERPOL, approved by Order No. 786/310/470/454/333/971 of 6 October 2006, paras. 114-116). Together with an international wanted listing, the person is placed under watch at border crossing points (ibid., para. 124). A court may remand an accused person in custody in absentia only if that person is on an interstate or international wanted list (CCP, Art. 108, Part 5).

4. Methodology

4.1. Case Documents and the Method of Verification

For each document we checked whether there is independent confirmation of what it states. The report is based on copies of documents available to the defence: decisions of the district court of Region 1 and the city court of Region 1 on complaints against wanted listings, investigators' orders, security agency documents of October 2022, reports and replies of the search unit of the district police directorate, replies of the authorities to L.'s requests, a screenshot of a reply from the Interior Ministry's online service and a letter from the Belarusian aviation security authority. From L.'s own application we take only the authority's receipt stamp: it shows by what date the defence already knew about the search unit report (L.'s application of 29 September 2025). Quotations from Russian documents are given in our translation.

We separate the authorities' claims according to what confirms them. If the other party acknowledges a fact or an independent document confirms it, we present it as a fact. Everything else we present with a reference to whoever makes the claim: "the order states", "the court found", "according to the prosecutor's office's reply". We assess decisions in L.'s favour in the same way, by the documents on which they are based.

4.2. Anomalies and Independent Documents

For each anomaly we recorded the document and its date, the date it is compared with and the source of that date, the decision that relied on the document, the consequence for L., and the step by the defence after which the anomaly became visible. The indicators are compiled into a checklist of ten items. In the data table accompanying the report they are designated by the codes CA-01 to CA-10, in the same order.

4.3. Scope of the Study

We treat the search unit report of 19 March 2025 as an observation. We do use the date on which the search file was opened, taken from the same report, because it relates to the second wanted listing.

The main limitation of the report is that we know the case only from copies of the part of it that is available to the defence. Handwritten figures in dates and stamp impressions on which an anomaly depends need to be checked against the originals (letter of the Belarusian aviation security authority of 16 May 2025; documents of the proceedings in Region 2).

L. is identified by an initial; officials, courts and organisations are named by their roles, and the regions of Russia are designated Region 1, 2 and 3. Case numbers, registration numbers and addresses are not given.

5. Factual Outline of the Two Wanted Listings

Both wanted listings followed the same pattern, and a court found both unlawful (investigator's orders of 2 April 2023 and 9 March 2024; district court rulings of 19 October 2023 and 7 May 2025).

5.1. First Wanted Listing. Documents of 2022 and 2023

The first case began with documents of the security agency passed to the investigators in October 2022. The order of the head of the security agency transmitting the results of operational work is dated 14 October 2022 and lists an attached report “of 17 October 2022”, that is, a document that, by its own date, did not yet exist on the day of the order. Meanwhile, a report with the same registration number among the case documents is signed on 13 October 2022, and in both documents the day of the month is written in by hand. The case was opened on 27 October 2022, and on 6 September 2023 the court found its opening unlawful (district court ruling of 19 October 2023).

On 27 February 2023 the investigator suspended the investigation, stating that it was not known whom to charge. Nevertheless, three days later, on 2 March 2023, the investigation was resumed and L. was charged in absentia, and the next day he was put on the wanted list (investigator’s order of 2 April 2023). On 2 April 2023 the investigator suspended the investigation again, this time “in connection with the search” for L. On 19 October 2023 the district court found the wanted listing unlawful: it held all actions taken in the unlawfully opened case to be legally null and void and took into account that the investigator had produced no evidence that L. had evaded appearing.

5.2. Second Wanted Listing. Documents of 2023, 2024 and 2025

As the investigator’s order of 9 March 2024 states, the new case over the same events was opened on 9 November 2023. The second wanted listing was declared on 29 February 2024, the day L. was charged in absentia (district court ruling of 7 May 2025), and the investigation was suspended on 9 March 2024. The courts reviewed the lawfulness of the listing three times: on 22 August 2024 the district court dismissed the complaint, on 5 February 2025 the appellate court set that decision aside, and on 7 May 2025 the district court, with a different judge presiding, found the listing unlawful. According to the district prosecutor’s office’s reply, the head of the investigating authority cancelled the listing on 22 August 2025.

5.3. Consolidated Chronology

Table 1 brings the documents of both wanted listings together in a single sequence by date.

Table 1. Documents and decisions in L.’s two wanted listings

Date	Event	Document
13 October 2022	Operational check report	security agency report
14 October 2022	Materials passed to investigators	security agency order
27 February 2023	Person “not identified”	investigator’s order
2 March 2023	L. charged	investigator’s order
3 March 2023	First wanted listing	investigator’s order
2 April 2023	Investigation suspended	investigator’s order
6 September 2023	Case opening unlawful	court ruling
5 October 2023	L.’s claims deemed civil	district police letter
17 October 2023	Case opening set aside	head of investigations’ order
19 October 2023	First listing unlawful	court ruling
9 November 2023	New case opened	investigator’s order
10 November 2023	Summons entry	investigating authority register
15 November 2023	Summons entry	investigating authority register

Date	Event	Document
29 February 2024	Charge and second listing	investigator’s orders
9 March 2024	Investigation suspended	investigator’s order
16 April 2024	No match in Ministry service	Interior Ministry service reply
16 April 2024	Search file opened	search unit report
22 August 2024	Complaint dismissed	court ruling
5 February 2025	Court decision set aside	appellate ruling
7 May 2025	Second listing unlawful	court ruling
22 August 2025	Listing cancelled by investigators	district prosecutor’s reply

Source: case materials.

6. Mechanisms

Both times the investigator charged L. in absentia and put him on the wanted list the same or the next day, and the claim that L. had absconded rested on the authority’s own documents (investigator’s orders of 2 April 2023 and 9 March 2024). The court removed the basis of the first wanted listing by finding the opening of the case itself unlawful (district court ruling of 19 October 2023). The second was built on the claim that L. had been notified of a summons, had failed to appear and was therefore absconding.

6.1. Second Wanted Listing. Notified, Failed to Appear, Absconding

The claim of absconding rests on documents of the investigating authority and on the words of the prosecutor. However, until December 2024 not one of its steps is confirmed by a record outside that authority. In Table 2 each step is set beside what records outside the authority show.

Table 2. Steps of the absconding claim and records outside the investigating authority

Date	Claim	Document	Outside the investigating authority
10 and 15 November 2023	Summonses sent	investigating authority register	no letters arrived
24 Nov 2023, 5 Dec 2023, 9 Jan 2024	Compulsory appearance failed	prosecutor’s objections	no data
29 February 2024	Absconded, charged in absentia	prosecutor’s objections	court found premature
16 April 2024	Search file opened	search unit report	no match in Ministry service
22 August 2024	Told of listing in replies	prosecutor’s words in court	first letter in December
5 December 2024	You are required to appear	city prosecutor’s reply	received by L.
7 May 2025	L. not notified	court ruling	postal operator’s reply

Source: case materials.

The claim that L. had been notified relied on the outgoing mail register that the investigating authority kept itself, with entries about summonses of 10 and 15 November 2023. On 22 August 2024 the district court found that the copies of the summonses and the register confirmed that they had been sent, and wrote that it was “unquestionably established” that the wanted listing had been declared on proper grounds. On 5 February 2025 the appellate court set that decision aside: the copy of the register did not show when, where or how the summons had been sent.

The postal operator did not confirm the register entries: when the complaint was heard again, it replied that from 1 November 2023 to 1 April 2024 no mail from the investigators had arrived at L.'s address (district court ruling of 7 May 2025).

The earliest summons to appear before the investigator that, according to the documents, reached L. is dated 5 December 2024, nine months after the listing order. On that day the city prosecutor's office replied by email to L.'s requests, stated that the case had been suspended "in connection with the search for you", and wrote: "In this connection, you are required to appear before the investigator." Back on 22 August 2024 the district prosecutor's office had told the court that in the replies to L.'s requests "it was explained that, since he had absconded…, he had been put on the wanted list" (district court ruling of 22 August 2024). However, the earliest such message among the documents available to the defence is that December letter, which arrived after the hearing (city prosecutor's office reply of 5 December 2024). In December, then, the prosecutor's office summons to the investigator a man who, according to the documents, has been listed as absconding since February, and the February date of the listing order creates the appearance that L. missed the deadline for appearing long ago.

On 7 May 2025 the court did not accept the claim of notification. It held that L. had not been properly notified that he was required to appear, so the conclusion that he was absconding had been premature. After the district court's decision of 22 August 2024 the wanted listing remained in force for another 258 days, until the decision of 7 May 2025, and for exactly one year, 365 days, until its cancellation by the investigators on 22 August 2025, as reported by the district prosecutor's office.

6.2. Interior Ministry Records. Discrepancy with the Listing Order

The order putting L. on the wanted list for the second time was issued on 29 February 2024, while the search file, according to the police report, was opened only on 16 April 2024, 47 days later (district court ruling of 7 May 2025; search unit report of 19 March 2025). On that same day the Interior Ministry's official online service, queried by the defence, did not find L. among wanted persons (screenshot of 16 April 2024).

The courts did not assess this date: they decided the case on the register and the postal operator's reply (district court rulings of 22 August 2024 and 7 May 2025). The defence learned of the date about 17 months later: the report of 19 March 2025 that gives it was in the defence's hands no later than 29 September 2025 (L.'s application of 29 September 2025).

6.3. The Cost of the Decisions

L. was listed as wanted for at least 770 days, more than two years: 230 days in the first wanted listing, counting only until the court's decision, and 540 days in the second, until its cancellation by the investigators as reported by the district prosecutor's office (district court rulings of 19 October 2023 and 7 May 2025).

The wanted listing was public. In 2023 the court noted that L. was recorded in the Interior Ministry database as having absconded from the investigation, and at the same hearing the defence lawyer stated that the entry was visible on the Interior Ministry website and called it a violation of L.'s constitutional rights (district court ruling of 19 October 2023). According to the complaint, L. learned of the second wanted listing from the media (district court ruling of 7 May 2025).

Both times the wanted listing remained in force even after the court decision that removed its basis. The court found the opening of the first case unlawful on 6 September 2023, yet the listing remained in force for another 43 days, until the court's decision of 19 October 2023. The court found the second listing unlawful, and the investigators, according to the district prosecutor's office's reply, cancelled it 107 days later. That decision took three court rulings (district court rulings of 22 August 2024 and 7 May 2025; appellate ruling of 5 February 2025).

According to the order of 2 April 2023, L. was not detained and no preventive measure was imposed on him. The cost of the wanted listing lay elsewhere. The charge remained in force, while the case did not move and never reached trial: both times the investigator suspended the investigation, stating that everything that could be done without the accused had already been done (investigator's orders of 2 April 2023 and 9 March 2024). The law stops the limitation period from running while the accused is absconding (Zaytseva, 2026). On the investigators' position, that period was not running. However, the courts did not establish that L. had absconded (district court rulings of 19 October 2023 and 7 May 2025).

The defence cost money. From July to November 2023, the months of the first wanted listing, third parties paid 579,135 roubles for legal assistance to L. The payment descriptions do not allow this sum to be divided between the cases, so it shows only the order of magnitude of defence costs in those months (payment documents for July to November 2023).

6.4. The Absconding Argument. The Authorities' Correspondence with L.

In its position for the hearing on the third wanted listing, the investigation justifies that listing on the ground that L. was outside Russia. In 2025 the prosecutor, in objections to the complaint against the second listing, asserted that L. had absconded and ignored the summonses, and that three orders for compulsory appearance, that is, for bringing him to the investigator by force, had produced no results (district court ruling of 7 May 2025). The court's ruling of 7 May 2025 also sets out the words of the district prosecutor: the prosecutor's office replied to L.'s requests by email, informed him of the wanted listing in those replies and passed his email address to the investigator, "however, by means of operational search measures… it did not prove possible to establish [L.]'s whereabouts".

The authorities were able to contact L. The order of 2 April 2023, which suspends the first case in connection with the search for L., itself gives his registered address, his residential address and his mobile telephone number. The district police directorate, whose investigator had declared L. to have absconded, nevertheless corresponded with him by email during the months of the first wanted listing: on 18 September 2023 it informed him that the time for considering his request had been extended, and on 5 October 2023 it replied on the merits. During the second wanted listing the city prosecutor's office replied to L.'s requests by email (city prosecutor's office reply of 5 December 2024). In January and February 2025 the tax authority twice formally thanked L., and a power grid company with a state shareholding also formally thanked him and invited him to come in person by 28 February 2025.

6.5. The Time Factor

The defence saw each discrepancy only after its own request, complaint or examination of court materials (L.'s application of 29 September 2025; district court ruling of 7 May 2025). The discrepancy that became visible fastest, after the same 47 days, was the one the defence checked itself in the Interior Ministry's online service (screenshot of 16 April 2024). The others came to light when the authorities or the postal operator released documents, a year and a half and almost three years after the date of the

document (L.’s application of 29 September 2025; L.’s motion to exclude evidence of 29 September 2025).

Table 3. Date of the document and date the discrepancy became visible to the defence

Document	Date of document	Visible to defence	Gap	Defence step
Order citing report “of 17 October 2022”	14 October 2022	by 29 September 2025	about 35 months	documents held by defence
Second listing order	29 February 2024	16 April 2024	47 days	query to Ministry service
Search file	16 April 2024	by 29 September 2025	about 17 months	supervision documents in court
Outgoing mail register	November 2023	by 7 May 2025	about 18 months	request to postal operator

Source: case materials.

Both security agency documents were in the defence’s hands no later than 29 September 2025, but the discrepancy in their dates becomes visible only when they are placed side by side (L.’s motion to exclude evidence of 29 September 2025).

7. Operational Checklist of Indicators

For each indicator, Table 4 names what the document should be checked against: for some indicators it is a record of a third-party authority, for others a document of the same authority or the original.

Table 4. Indicators of an anomalous document and records for checking

No.	Indicator	Check against	Example in the case
1	Reference to a later-dated document	document referred to	order of 14 October 2022
2	Document postdates the action it should precede	date of the action	2020 instruction
3	Reply predates registration of the request	registration of the request	observation
4	Incoming stamp predates the document	original stamp	observation
5	Information from a later paper	date of the source	observation
6	Listing order absent from Ministry records	records service reply	order of 29 February 2024
7	Search file opened on day of records check	records service reply	2024 search file
8	Order set aside predates the crime report	date of the report	2021 prosecutor’s order
9	Authority asserts the opposite days later	court decision	27 February and 2 March 2023
10	Undated document, date given by another authority	act of another authority	no data

Source: case materials.

The note “observation” means that the example exists only among the documents of the third wanted listing, which are described without conclusions. Indicator 10 concerns an undated document:

another authority, for example a court in its decision, gives it a date, and whether the document existed on that day cannot be checked from the document itself.

8. Application and Further Research Agenda

8.1. Testing the Checklist beyond the Two Wanted Listings

To test the checklist on someone else's case, we took a published decision on a complaint against the wanted listing of another person, the appellate ruling of the city court of Region 3 of 24 August 2023. The only dates the decision gives are those of the listing order, the first-instance decision and the appeal. This is not enough for the checklist: each of its indicators checks a document of the authority against another record, and the authority's documents themselves are not in the decision.

In Region 2 we applied the checklist to the documents of separate proceedings in 2020 and 2021 in which the complainant named L. as an accomplice in embezzlement. On 28 January 2021 the deputy prosecutor of Region 2 set aside the order opening the case. At the beginning of the prosecutor's order the date on which the case was opened is given correctly, 21 January 2021, but the operative part sets aside an order "of 29 May 2020", that is, one dated almost six months before the crime report of 16 November 2020 that started the case. The complainant's statement records that a police officer began taking it on 16 November 2020 at 15:30, while the written instruction assigning the check to that officer is dated, on the copy, the following day. In another set of proceedings concerning L., then, the checklist revealed discrepancies under the indicators "order set aside predates the crime report" and "document postdates the action it should precede".

8.2. Implications for Judges, Prosecutors, Defence Lawyers and INTERPOL

When reviewing a complaint against a wanted listing within 14 days (CCP, Art. 125, Part 3), a judge can check whether the authority's record shows when, where and how the summons was sent: this question was enough for the appellate court to set aside a decision based on the register (appellate ruling of 5 February 2025). The judge can then request the postal operator's reply on delivery of the summonses and the Interior Ministry's records as of the date of the listing order, and compare that date with the date of the first summons whose delivery is confirmed outside the authority. The document recording the opening of the search file can be requested from the authority itself. In L.'s case the outcome of the second wanted listing was decided by the postal operator's reply, but 258 days passed between the court decision based on the register and the decision based on that reply (district court rulings of 22 August 2024 and 7 May 2025). For defence lawyers, the checklist indicates what to request at once and what to preserve: a reply from a records service should be saved together with the text of the query and the date and time of the reply.

A wanted listing whose basis a court decision has removed remains in force until it is cancelled: in L.'s case the first for another 43 days (district court ruling of 19 October 2023), and the second, according to the district prosecutor's office's reply, for another 107 days. The head of the investigating authority should cancel such a listing within the first days after the decision, and the prosecutor supervising the investigation should check that it has been cancelled and removed from the Interior Ministry's records.

So far L.'s case is connected with INTERPOL only procedurally: on 27 August 2026 L. applied to the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files for access to the data concerning him. A court

found both of L.’s wanted listings unlawful, and the second was built on an entry by the authority that the postal operator did not confirm (district court rulings of 19 October 2023, 22 August 2024 and 7 May 2025). For this reason, when they receive a request concerning such a person, the Commission and National Central Bureaus should ask the authority of the country that transmitted the data, and is responsible for their accuracy (Art. 12 of INTERPOL’s Rules), which record outside the investigating authority confirms that the person was notified of the summons and when the wanted listing was entered in the records.

8.3. Follow-up Observations

L.’s third wanted listing is continuing, and following it makes it possible to record every date before the proceedings are concluded. On 14 August 2026 the district court dismissed the defence’s complaint, and the defence lawyer appealed against that decision. The documents of the third listing are described in the same way as those of the completed ones, but without conclusions. In Table 5 their dates are set beside the dates they diverge from.

Table 5. Dates in documents of the third wanted listing and dates for comparison

Document	Date in document	Compared with	Date compared
Search unit report	19 March 2025	letter from Belarus	16 May 2025
Time in the report	14:06	letter from Belarus	14:02 and 15:30
Incoming stamp on the letter	18 February or 18 May 2025	date of the letter	16 May 2025
Search unit reply	27 January 2026	registration of the request	30 January 2026
Investigators’ position	15 August 2026	date of the hearing	14 August 2026

Source: case materials.

The search unit report of 19 March 2025 gives the details of L.’s foreign passport and information with the date and time 19 February 2023, 14:06. The report states that this information was received as operational intelligence on 18 March 2025. Yet the only foreign document in the case file containing such information, the letter of the Belarusian aviation security authority, is dated almost two months after the report, and a report of the same unit of 16 March 2026 names this letter as its attachment. The time in the report, 14:06, matches neither 14:02 nor 15:30, the times the letter gives for the same day. The month on the letter’s incoming stamp needs to be checked against the original. Asked about the origin of the information, the investigating authority replied that it “does not possess the said information” (investigating authority reply of 13 July 2026). The letter itself became available to the defence no earlier than 14 August 2026, when it appeared in the court’s file.

On 27 January 2026 the search unit refused to give the defence copies of the report and of the search file documents. The reply itself states that the request was registered on 30 January 2026, three days after the reply. The investigators’ document “Position on the criminal case”, prepared for the hearing scheduled for 14 August 2026, is dated 15 August 2026.

8.4. Further Research Agenda

The agenda includes the following tasks:

- to check against the originals the handwritten dates and stamps on which the anomalies depend, above all the incoming stamp on the Belarusian letter and the written instruction in Region 2;
- to request from the Interior Ministry information on when the order of 29 February 2024 was entered in its records, so as to check the service's reply of 16 April 2024 independently of the screenshot;
- to apply the checklist to the cases of other people where the documents of a complaint against a wanted listing are available;
- to include the third wanted listing in the analysis once a court has finally ruled on its lawfulness.

9. Conclusion

In the materials examined, the prosecution's case against L. is built time and again on documents that the prosecution itself prepared and that diverge from independent documents about the same events. The conflict began with a commercial dispute over a supply contract. Then a complainant whom the defence links to the counterparty went to the police, and L. was twice put on the wanted list. A court found both wanted listings unlawful.

The case file contains the following anomalous documents of law enforcement and security agencies:

1. An order of the security agency dated 14 October 2022 lists an attached report "of 17 October 2022", that is, a document that did not yet exist on the date of the order (security agency documents of October 2022).
2. The order of 29 February 2024 putting L. on the wanted list for the second time proceeds from the premise that L. had been notified of a summons and had absconded. However, the earliest summons to appear before the investigator that reached L. arrived only on 5 December 2024, nine months later, in a reply from the prosecutor's office to his own requests (city prosecutor's office reply of 5 December 2024). As early as August 2024 the district prosecutor's office told the court that it had already informed L. of the wanted listing, but the documents do not bear this out (district court ruling of 22 August 2024).
3. Nothing but entries in the outgoing mail register kept by the investigating authority itself confirmed that summonses had been sent in November 2023, while the postal operator replied that no letters from the investigators had arrived at L.'s address (district court rulings of 22 August 2024 and 7 May 2025).
4. The search file was opened 47 days after the listing order, on the very day when the Interior Ministry's online service did not find L. among wanted persons (search unit report of 19 March 2025; screenshot of 16 April 2024).
5. In another set of proceedings against L., a deputy prosecutor set aside an order dated almost six months before the crime report that started the case, and the written instruction assigning the check of that report to a police officer is dated, on the copy, one day after the statement which that officer had already taken (documents of the proceedings in Region 2).

The wanted listings cost L. more than two years: he was listed as wanted for at least 770 days. Both times the listing remained in force even after the court decision that removed its basis: for 43 days in

the first case and 107 days in the second (district court rulings of 19 October 2023 and 7 May 2025; district prosecutor's office reply of 1 October 2025). Contrary to their own statements that L. could not be found, the district police directorate and the prosecutor's office corresponded with him by email during both periods in which he was listed as absconding, and the tax authority and a power grid company with a state shareholding formally thanked him. According to L., his legal fees came to at least USD 100,000 and his business losses to USD 800 million.

A judge reviewing a complaint against a wanted listing should first ask which record outside the investigating authority confirms that the person was notified of the summons, and the head of the investigating authority should cancel a wanted listing within the first days after a court decision that removes its basis.

Sources

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Objective of the Study

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22 August 2024 sets out the entries of the investigating authority’s outgoing mail register and the words of the district prosecutor; the ruling of 7 May 2025 sets out the prosecutor’s objections and the reply of the postal operator).

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Investigator’s orders of 2 April 2023 and 9 March 2024 suspending the investigation in connection with the search for the accused.

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Reply of the city prosecutor’s office of 5 December 2024; reply of the district prosecutor’s office of 1 October 2025.

Screenshot of a reply from the Interior Ministry’s official “Attention, Wanted!” service of 16 April 2024.

Letter of the Belarusian aviation security authority of 16 May 2025.

Letters to L. from the tax authority of 29 January 2025 and 18 February 2025 and from a power grid company with a state shareholding of 10 February 2025.

Documents of the proceedings in Region 2: crime report of 16 November 2020 with written instructions, statement of the complainant of 16 November 2020, order of the deputy prosecutor of Region 2 of 28 January 2021.

Defence documents: L.’s application to the prosecutor’s office of 2 August 2025; L.’s application to the investigating authority of 29 September 2025 with receipt stamp; L.’s motion to exclude evidence of 29 September 2025 with the investigating authority’s receipt stamp; payment documents for legal assistance to L. from July to November 2023; L.’s application to the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL’s Files of 27 August 2026; the defence lawyer’s appeal against the district court ruling of 14 August 2026.

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