

Reforms in The Field of Operative-Investigative Activities in New Uzbekistan: Transformation of Operative-Investigative Instruments and Modern Trends

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Received: 30 June 2026; **Accepted:** 26 July 2026; **Published:** 25 August 2026

Abstract: This article examines the reforms being implemented in the field of operative-investigative activities in New Uzbekistan, specifically the legal, institutional, organizational, information-analytical, technological, and personnel training changes, based on a chronological and systematic approach. The study scientifically substantiates the trend of transforming operative-investigative instruments from traditional tools for information gathering and crime detection into a complex system encompassing legal, institutional, digital-technological, information-analytical, special-technical, and personnel components. It also analyzes the strengthening of human rights guarantees and judicial oversight mechanisms within the framework of legislative changes, operative-investigative activities against organized drug crime, modern special-technical means, and the introduction of specialized training groups and dual education at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Based on international experience, the prospects for integrating criminal intelligence, intelligence-led policing, OSINT, electronic evidence, and predictive analytics into the national system are assessed, and scientific and practical proposals for improving operative-investigative activities are developed.

Keywords: Operative-investigative activities, operative-investigative instruments, institutional transformation, legal transformation, digitalization, information analysis, special-technical means, drug crimes, criminal intelligence, dual education, human rights, judicial oversight.

Introduction: The modern forms of crime and its transformational processes are fundamentally changing the demands placed on the activities of internal affairs bodies. Factors such as globalization, digitalization, the expansion of internet communications, the growth of organized and transnational crime, and the use of digital platforms in drug crimes necessitate new approaches to crime prevention and detection.

Under these conditions, operative-investigative activity gains special importance as a crucial component of the crime-fighting system. Its effectiveness depends not only on the capacity to conduct operative-investigative measures but also on the mechanisms for ensuring human rights.

In Uzbekistan, the legal basis for operative-

investigative activity is defined by the Law "On Operative-Investigative Activity." This Law establishes not only the special but also the legal regulation, information support, institutional structure, modern technologies, and professional competence of personnel. The Law defines the concept, tasks, and principles of operative-investigative activity, the subjects who carry it out, and the legal foundations for operative-investigative measures[1].

At the same time, measures implemented in the country after 2016, aimed at reforming the judicial and legal system, public security, internal affairs bodies, digitalization, and human rights protection, have also significantly influenced the substance and organizational mechanisms of operative-investigative activities. During this period, comprehensive measures were implemented to reorganize the activities of law

enforcement agencies in line with modern requirements, enhance their efficiency, and ensure human rights.

From this perspective, the period from 2016 to 2026 can be assessed as a period of comprehensive transformation of operative-investigative activities in its institutional, legal, information-analytical, technological, and personnel aspects.

By its nature, operative-investigative activity is a special state-legal activity. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that, on the one hand, this activity is aimed at the prevention, detection, and solving of crimes, while on the other hand, there is a possibility that certain constitutional rights and freedoms of an individual may be infringed upon during its implementation.

Therefore, the balance between efficiency and legality is of fundamental importance in this field. Among the tasks of operational-search activities, the law defines the tasks of ensuring human rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests, the security of the individual, society, and the state, and the prevention, detection, suppression, and detection of crimes[2].

It follows that interpreting operational-search activities solely as special activities aimed at identifying the person who committed the crime does not fully reveal their modern content. Its socio-legal function is inextricably linked to the early detection of criminal threats, their prevention, the suppression of crimes, and the ensuring of the security of the individual, society, and the state. This approach also requires a broader scientific assessment of the means and instruments of operational-search activities.

In this regard, the concept of "operational-search instruments" is used in the article in a broad scientific and legal sense. According to the author, operational-search tools are a system of legal, organizational, information-analytical, special-technical, and human resources tools used for the purpose of preventing, detecting, suppressing, and solving crimes, identifying wanted persons, and assessing criminogenic risks.

The methodological significance of this definition lies in the fact that the operational-search tool is interpreted not as a separate operational measure or technical tool, but as an integrated system of interconnected legal, organizational, information-analytical, technological, and human resources components that ensure the achievement of a specific goal. This approach allows for the assessment of the modern transformation of operational-search activities not only through organizational changes but also from the perspective of changes in its functional content.

They can be divided into the following five main groups:

legal instruments;

institutional and organizational instruments;

information and analytical tools;

digital and special technical instruments;

personnel and professional training tools.

This approach is a developed form of the complex classification proposed in the previous text, allowing for the evaluation of operational-search activities not merely as a set of individual activities, but as a multi-component legal-organizational-information system.

Analyzing this theoretical approach in conjunction with the dynamics of national legal and institutional reforms allows for determining the stages at which operational-search tools were formed and improved. From this perspective, it is advisable to analyze the main regulatory legal acts adopted between 2017 and 2025 in chronological order.

The Decree "On measures to radically increase the efficiency of internal affairs bodies and strengthen their responsibility for ensuring public order and the reliable protection of the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of citizens," adopted on April 10, 2017, at the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, became one of the important legal foundations for institutional reforms within the internal affairs system[3].

The decree pays special attention to improving the activities of criminal investigation, counter-terrorism, and extremism units of the internal affairs bodies, the rapid and complete detection and solving of crimes, the effective organization of search operations, and the clear definition of the units' tasks.

At the same time, issues of providing internal affairs bodies with qualified personnel, improving the professional skills, legal knowledge, and moral and ethical training of employees were identified as an important component of institutional reforms. In the tasks related to the activities of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, priority is given to the training of highly qualified and professional personnel, improving the professional skills and legal knowledge of the personnel, which indicates that this direction has a systemic character.

This approach has produced two important institutional outcomes for operational-search activities. First, the specialization of operational units has been strengthened. Secondly, attention was paid to directing operational personnel directly to operational tasks and reducing unnecessary tasks unrelated to their activities.

The decree defined tasks for the widespread introduction of modern scientific and technical means

and information and communication technologies into the activities of internal affairs bodies, creating an institutional foundation for the technological transformation of operational-search tools in subsequent years[4]. In this regard, this document can be evaluated as an important legal framework that formed the first stage of the institutional transformation of operational-search activities.

As a result of the Head of State's consistent policy in ensuring public safety and improving the law enforcement system, Decree No. UP-6196 dated March 26, 2021, "On measures to raise the activities of internal affairs bodies in the field of ensuring public safety and combating crime to a qualitatively new level," became a logical continuation of the institutional reforms initiated in 2017 [5].

The significance of this document lies in the fact that the fight against crime is not limited to responding to committed crimes, but is linked to a preventive approach based on identifying the causes and conditions of offenses in the context of the mahalla, family, and individual.

This approach also directly affects the content of operational-search activities. As a result, instead of the traditional "crime - information - detection - exposure" model, the importance of an approach based on the "risk - information - analysis - forecast - prevention - prompt decision - result" chain has increased.

In this process, the change in methods of working with operational information was of particular importance. In particular, attention has been paid to improving mechanisms for maintaining legal statistics and operational-accounting data, analyzing crime statistics, and working with operational data and special funds. Thus, at this stage, the trend toward transitioning from "information collection" in operational-search activities to "analysis of information and its use in forecasting decision-making" intensified.

In order to implement the tasks outlined in the decree, a resolution was adopted "On additional organizational measures to further improve the activities of internal affairs bodies in the field of ensuring public safety and combating crime" [6]. The significance of this decision can be assessed as a practical stage of organizational transformation from the perspective of operational-search activities.

It defines measures aimed at strengthening the organizational mechanisms of internal affairs bodies, the territorial approach, and comprehensive forms of ensuring public safety. Thus, UP-6196 and PP-5050 formed a chain of strategic reform — organizational mechanism — practical implementation.

Another transformation carried out by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of operational-search activities was the adoption of the Decree "On Approval of the Concept of Public Safety of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Measures for its Implementation" (November 29, 2021), which developed a comprehensive legal framework for ensuring public safety. This document, like previous reforms, should be regarded as the result of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's consistent policy aimed at ensuring public safety. It is important to evaluate this document from the perspective of the preventive function of operational-search activities.

This is because in the fight against modern crime, the tasks of operational-search units should not be limited to actions after a crime has been committed, but should be aimed at the early detection of criminogenic risks, their assessment, and the adoption of necessary measures in cooperation with prevention entities. In this sense, the overall result of the 2021 reforms can be assessed as "the formation of institutional foundations for the transition from a reactive operational-search model to a proactive one."

Within the framework of the President's consistent policy to protect human rights and freedoms, the Decree "On measures to further strengthen guarantees for the reliable protection of individual rights and freedoms in operational-search and investigative activities," adopted on June 10, 2024, holds a special place in the legal transformation of operational-search activities[8]. This Decree defines important measures aimed at strengthening mechanisms for the protection of human rights in pre-trial proceedings.

Specifically, starting January 1, 2025, a procedure has been introduced for investigating judges to review certain issues regarding the issuance of sanctions during pre-trial proceedings in criminal cases. This situation directly affects the transformation of operational-search tools. Because along with the expansion of the capabilities of technology and special means, mechanisms of legal and judicial control over their use must also develop.

Therefore, the following formula can be proposed as an important principle of modern operational-search activities: The more technological capabilities are expanded, the clearer the legal guarantees and control must be. In this regard, the content of the decree signifies a legal and supervisory transformation of operational-search activities.

As a legislative continuation of the tasks defined by the Decree, the Law "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan Aimed at Further Strengthening Guarantees for the

Reliable Protection of Individual Rights and Freedoms" was adopted[9].

This law served to improve the legal mechanisms for protecting individual rights in pre-trial proceedings. The significance of separating this stage lies in the fact that the political and legal direction defined in the Decree was subsequently consolidated at the legislative level. Thus, the chain of decrees and laws represents a transition from a conceptual norm to a functioning legal mechanism for protecting human rights in operational-search and investigative activities.

The Decree "On Comprehensive Measures for the Effective Protection of Public Health and the Gene Pool of the Nation from Drug Addiction and Drug Crime," adopted as a result of the constant attention and concern of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev for protecting public health and the younger generation from the scourge of drug addiction, represents the latest stage in the transformation of operational-search activities[10]. This document defines the fight against drug crime not only as a task of law enforcement agencies but also as a comprehensive state policy covering prevention, medicine, education, the public, and international cooperation.

From the perspective of operational-search activities, the establishment of effective operational-search mechanisms against organized drug crime is of particular importance. This includes tasks such as identifying drug trafficking routes into the republic, transit routes, drug crime schemes carried out via the Internet, and clandestine drug laboratories.

These tasks require the simultaneous use of several instruments in operational-search activities: operational information, digital analysis, special technical means, financial analysis, and interagency cooperation.

Another important aspect of the decree is the focus on using modern technical capabilities in operational-search activities related to narcotic drugs. In particular, the task has been set to introduce modern technical means for the rapid examination of drug samples during operational-search activities in the internal affairs bodies.

The modern model of the operational-search instrument differs fundamentally from the traditional model. While the traditional model consists of sequential stages such as information collection, object identification, sampling, expert examination, and obtaining the final result, the model based on modern express technologies includes stages such as rapid information acquisition, express technical inspection, preliminary identification, analysis, legal assessment, and decision-making. Thus, while the classical model is

long-term and focused on the results of expertise, the modern model focuses on speed, action based on preliminary conclusions, and prompt decision-making.

Here, the technical tool does not automatically replace the final procedural evidence, but acts as a means of providing information and accelerating the rapid decision-making process.

The Decree and the National Program of Comprehensive Practical Actions for 2025–2026 attached to it pay special attention to the training of specialized personnel [11]. These reforms in the personnel training system at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are also being carried out based on the personal initiative and constant attention of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev aimed at training highly qualified, patriotic, and knowledgeable law enforcement officers.

In particular, mechanisms such as the formation of separate training groups for combating drug crimes from talented cadets studying in the specialty "Operational-Search Activity" at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the introduction of a special curriculum, the organization of dual education, practical training of cadets in relevant operational-search units, training in short-term courses in foreign similar educational institutions, monitoring of the educational process and referral of graduates to the relevant units of the operational-search service are provided.

Evaluating this approach as a set of simple educational activities is incomplete. From a scientific perspective, it manifests as an institutional mechanism for personnel specialization in operational-search activities.

At the same time, an important trend in the personnel training system is expressed in the transition from general professional training to a model of specialized competence. A modern operative is required to have a comprehensive knowledge of the characteristics of a specific type of crime, its mechanisms, information sources, digital technologies, special technical means, and legal restrictions.

On this basis, the professional trajectory of a cadet can be expressed in the form of a transition from general legal training to operational-search specialization, from it to specialization in a specific type of crime, at the next stage to dual education and practical training, and finally to specialized service activities. Consequently, these reforms involve the transformation of human capital alongside the technological transformation of operational-search tools.

Based on the above chronological and substantive analysis, operational-search tools can be divided into

five main groups.

Legal instruments are the fundamental basis for ensuring the legality of operational-search activities. These include laws, presidential decrees and resolutions, departmental regulatory legal acts, prosecutorial and judicial oversight mechanisms, and procedural guarantees. These instruments operate in harmony with each other, ensuring that this activity complies with constitutional principles and protects human rights and freedoms.

Institutional instruments serve the organizational and functional implementation of operational-search activities. This includes operational-search units, specialized services, interagency cooperation mechanisms, regional public security structures, and specialized educational institutions. In particular, interagency cooperation will strengthen information exchange and coordinated actions, while special training structures will increase human capital potential through the training of qualified personnel.

The analytical basis of the system consists of information and analytical tools - operational records, databases, criminological data, statistical analysis, risk assessment, and forecasting tools. They allow for an objective assessment of the criminal situation and the making of well-founded decisions.

In the process of modern modernization, digital-technological tools—digital traces, electronic data, information from open sources, digital platforms, automatic analysis tools, and artificial intelligence-based analytical systems—serve to increase information processing speed and reduce errors related to the human factor.

Finally, human resources tools - special training programs, dual education, specialized training groups, practice-oriented training, and international professional development programs - are aimed at developing the professional competence and practical skills of employees.

Today, the professional competence of an operative is not limited to knowledge of traditional methods for detecting and solving crimes. As a result of the digitalization process, new directions are emerging in operational-search activities, such as digital information sources, electronic data, analysis of open sources, identification of digital traces, processing of information arrays, analysis and forecasting of criminal connections. Therefore, in the training of operational personnel, along with legal knowledge, the formation of competencies in digital technologies, information analysis, forensics, and working with electronic evidence is becoming an objective necessity.

In conclusion, the instruments in the five aforementioned areas - legal, institutional, information-analytical, digital-technological, and human resources - form a unified mechanism that, in a mutually proportional manner, guarantees the stable functioning of the operational-search system in a legal, scientifically grounded, and technically supported manner. Thus, the concept of an operational-search tool is being transformed from "means" to "system."

Digitalization is one of the main drivers of modern operational-search activities. Individuals who commit crimes in the digital environment can use mobile devices, electronic communications, social networks, online platforms, electronic payments, and digital accounts. As a result, along with traditional material traces of the crime, digital traces are also formed.

This creates new tools for operational-search activities: OSINT;

digital criminal analysis;

work with electronic evidence;

integration of databases;

graphical analysis of criminal connections;

forecast analysis;

sort big data using artificial intelligence.

It should be noted that the existence of technological capability does not imply the right to its unrestricted application. Therefore, digital operational-search tools must be used in harmony with the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, judicial control, and accountability. The principle of legality means that use complies with the grounds established by law, while the principle of necessity means that it is objectively required to achieve a specific goal. The principle of proportionality ensures a balance between the means used and the expected result, while judicial control determines independent and impartial control, and accountability determines the responsibility of operational-search bodies.

Thus, the harmony of these principles is an important guarantee that the use of digital tools is carried out legally and with respect for human rights.

In the practice of foreign countries, operational-search activities are increasingly transitioning to an intelligence-led policing model, i.e., a police activity based on information and criminal intelligence. The main content of this model is not to react to a crime after it has been committed, but to identify high-risk objects, criminal networks, and trends in advance based on the analysis of available information.

In the practice of Eurostat, criminal intelligence, data centralization, and analytical tools are considered

essential elements of law enforcement activities. In the context of cross-border crime, rapid access to electronic evidence and its legal acquisition are of particular importance.

The following elements from foreign experience are particularly important for Uzbekistan:

intelligence-led policing;

OSINT;

work with electronic evidence;

criminal intelligence;

making informed decisions;

interagency information exchange;

digital forensics

However, it is advisable not to fully transfer these models to the national legal system, but to adapt them to the legislation and guarantees of human rights of Uzbekistan.

The results of the conducted analysis allow for the expression of reforms in a specific chronological sequence: the general logical sequence begins with institutional reform and manifests as a transition through stages of information-analytical modernization, preventive model, and scientific-analytical support to legal control, followed by technological modernization and personnel specialization. This consistency demonstrates the systemic and interdependent nature of the reforms: without creating an institutional foundation, information and analytical modernization will not be effective, and without analytical support, it will be impossible to implement preventive and scientific-analytical approaches; furthermore, the strengthening of legal oversight mechanisms ensures the implementation of technological modernization on a legal basis, while personnel specialization as the final stage guarantees the effective implementation of all reforms in practice. Thus, this chronological system provides a scientific justification for the necessity of continuous and consistent implementation of reforms in the field of operational-search activities.

The analysis shows that a number of scientific and practical problems remain in operational-search activities.

The first problem is that there is no single legal definition of the concept of "operational-search tool." Clarifying the legal and scientific content of this concept is of great importance for systematizing modern means of operational-search activities.

The second problem concerns the legal status of digital data. The procedure for obtaining, storing, analyzing, and subsequently using digital data is not yet

sufficiently clear, and more advanced legal mechanisms are required in this regard.

The third problem is the imbalance between technological development and legal regulation. Technologies often develop faster than legal norms, as a result of which, although new tools appear in practice, the legal framework regulating them may be delayed.

The fourth problem is related to personnel competence. A modern operational officer must not only possess legal knowledge but also possess the necessary competencies in the fields of digital technologies, information analysis, electronic evidence, and financial analysis.

The fifth challenge concerns the balance between human rights and technological capabilities. As operational-search tools expand, the likelihood of their impact on privacy increases, which is a serious issue requiring special attention in this field.

The aforementioned problems require a comprehensive approach from both theoretical and practical perspectives to ensure that operational-search activities fully meet modern requirements.

Based on the research results, the following scientific and practical proposals are put forward.

First and foremost, it is advisable to introduce the concept of "operational-search instruments" into scientific and legal circulation and define it as a complex system consisting of legal, organizational, information-analytical, technological, and human resources components. At the same time, it is necessary to improve the legal mechanisms for obtaining, storing, analyzing, and using digital information in operational-search activities, as well as to develop legal and technological mechanisms for interagency information exchange.

In the analytical direction, it is important to expand the mechanisms of predictive analysis and criminological assessment. Regarding personnel training, it is recommended to apply the experience of specialized training groups introduced at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs based on the Decree to other types of crime, to transform dual education into a permanent model for training operational-search personnel, and to include digital criminalistics, OSINT, information analysis, cybercrime, and financial analysis modules in the training programs.

In addition, it is necessary to strengthen legal control and accountability mechanisms for the use of modern special technical means, and to develop an integrated model of operational-search and financial analysis in the fight against drug crimes. Finally, when evaluating

the effectiveness of operational-search activities, it is necessary to use not only the number of crimes solved, but also the degree of crime prevention, early detection of risks, information quality, and compliance with human rights.

The implementation of the above proposals will serve to further strengthen the legal, institutional and technological aspects of operational-search activities, as well as their effective implementation in full accordance with modern requirements.

In conclusion, a chronological and substantive analysis of the reforms implemented in Uzbekistan between 2016 and 2026 shows that changes in the field of operational-search activities are manifesting not as a set of separate regulatory updates, but as an interconnected and consistent complex transformation process. All the reforms analyzed above are being implemented based on the consistent policy and personal dedication of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev aimed at protecting human dignity and rights, ensuring public safety, and raising the law enforcement system to the level of modern requirements.

While the institutional foundation of this process was established by the 2017 Decree, the 2021 Decree raised the mechanisms for public safety, prevention, information-analytical, and operational-accounting access to data to a new level. While Resolution No. PP-5050 strengthened these strategic directions from an organizational perspective, Decree No. UP-27 further developed the comprehensive conceptual foundations for ensuring public safety. In turn, the relevant Law served to strengthen human rights guarantees in operational-search and investigative activities, increase the role of judicial control, and improve procedural mechanisms. The 2025 Decree created an important legal basis for bringing operational-search activities to a new technological and personnel level, especially in the field of combating drug crimes.

It should be noted that the formation of specialized training groups for combating drug crimes from talented cadets studying in the "Operational-Search Activity" specialty at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as the introduction of special programs, dual education, and practical training mechanisms, creates a new model for forming specialized human capital in this field. It is precisely these reforms in the personnel training system that, as noted above, are being implemented at the direct initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, aimed at training knowledgeable, qualified, and modern law enforcement personnel.

Based on the analysis conducted, the following scientific conclusion can be drawn: in 2016–2026,

operational-search activities in Uzbekistan tended to transform from a complex of traditional operational measures into a comprehensive system with mutually integrated legal, institutional, information-analytical, digital-technological, and human resources components. The most important feature of this transformation is that the concept of "operational" is now defined not only by prompt action, but also by the ability to promptly obtain information, analyze it, assess and forecast criminogenic risks, make legal decisions, and ensure human rights.

In this sense, the formula for the further development of operational-search activities can be expressed as follows: reforms, operational-search tools, information analysis, digitalization, technological modernization, personnel specialization, legal supervision, and forecasted operational-preventive activities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that the promising model of modern operational-search activities should be based not on the principle of "more operational measures," but on the harmonious unity of the principle of "quality information, modern technology, specialized specialist, scientific analysis, legal supervision" - which, in turn, is the practical expression of the principle "for human dignity" defined by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in the field of law enforcement.

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