

## GENERAL RULES OF FORENSIC TACTICS. PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION OF THE INVESTIGATION

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### Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются основополагающие принципы криминалистической тактики, особое внимание уделяется следственному планированию и организационным механизмам, обеспечивающим эффективное проведение досудебного расследования. В исследовании следственная тактика рассматривается как целостная система, сформированная процессуальным правом, возможностями оперативно-розыскной деятельности, криминалистическими технологиями и криминологическими закономерностями, лежащими в основе преступного поведения. Синтезируя существующие теоретические основы с современной следственной практикой, статья реконструирует, как рациональное планирование, адаптивные тактические решения, управление информацией и междисциплинарная координация определяют качество и надежность доказательственных результатов. В исследовании также рассматривается, как когнитивные стратегии следователей, ситуационное предвидение и антиципационный анализ минимизируют ошибки, снижают тактические риски и повышают устойчивость к противодействию со стороны подозреваемых. Методологически статья использует сравнительно-правовой анализ, изучение конкретных случаев и реконструкцию тактических решений, наблюдаемых в сложных уголовных расследованиях. Результаты показывают, что следственное планирование выходит за рамки формального планирования и функционирует как динамичный интеллектуальный процесс, основанный на оценке вероятностей, моделировании сценариев и процессуальной экономии. В заключении подчеркивается необходимость повышения методической грамотности следователей и укрепления научной базы тактических рекомендаций.

**Ключевые слова:** криминалистическая тактика, планирование расследования, уголовный процесс, принятие тактических решений, доказательственная достоверность, следственная стратегия, ситуационный

анализ, тактический риск, криминалистическая методология, оперативно-розыскная деятельность.

## Abstract

The article examines the foundational principles of criminalistic tactics with particular attention to investigative planning and organizational mechanisms that ensure the effective conduct of pre-trial inquiry. The study approaches investigative tactics as an integrated system shaped by procedural law, operational-search possibilities, forensic technology, and criminological regularities underlying criminal behavior. By synthesizing the existing theoretical frameworks with contemporary investigative practice, the article reconstructs how rational planning, adaptive tactical decisions, information management, and interdisciplinary coordination determine the quality and reliability of evidentiary outcomes. The research further highlights how investigators' cognitive strategies, situational foresight, and anticipatory analysis minimize errors, reduce tactical risks, and increase resistance to counteractions by suspects. Methodologically, the article employs comparative legal analysis, case-based examination, and reconstruction of tactical solutions observed in complex criminal investigations. The findings illustrate that investigative planning transcends formal scheduling and functions as a dynamic intellectual process grounded in probability assessment, scenario modeling, and procedural economy. The conclusion underscores the need for expanding methodological literacy among investigators and strengthening the scientific basis of tactical recommendations.

**Keywords:** forensic tactics, investigative planning, criminal procedure, tactical decision-making, evidentiary reliability, investigative strategy, situational analysis, tactical risk, forensic methodology, operational-search activity.

## INTRODUCTION

Criminalistic tactics constitute one of the most intellectually demanding segments of forensic science, where the procedural obligations of the investigator intersect with the psychological, organizational, and evidentiary requirements of an effective inquiry. The general principles of tactics emerged historically from practical necessity: investigators confronted with incomplete, contradictory, or hostile information needed reliable scientific strategies to orient their actions, structure investigative situations, and select the most appropriate means of obtaining truthful evidence. While criminal procedure law establishes the legal framework in which investigative actions may occur, it is criminalistic tactics that translate these procedural norms into purposeful, efficient, and risk-conscious behavior.

Investigative planning, as an integral component of this tactical system, reflects the degree to which the investigator anticipates the development of the case, predicts possible countermeasures by suspects, identifies evidentiary gaps, and designs a coherent sequence of actions. Despite its conceptual simplicity, planning in criminal investigation is not a linear administrative exercise. Rather, it is a multidimensional mental construct shaped by legal constraints, operational capabilities, resource availability, forensic technological tools, and evolving investigative situations. In many jurisdictions, investigators are formally required to maintain written plans, yet in practice these documents are merely the surface layer of a far deeper intellectual process involving continuous hypothesis generation, decision revision, and scenario testing.

The need to strengthen the theoretical basis for investigative planning has become increasingly urgent as criminal schemes grow more sophisticated, transnational, and technologically mediated. Traditional investigative routines—interrogations, searches, seizures, identifications—remain essential, but their tactical application requires an understanding of cognitive psychology, risk assessment, information theory, and behavior prediction. A tactically sound investigation ensures that procedural actions are not only lawful but also logically consistent, minimally intrusive, and evidentially productive. Poor planning, by contrast, leads to duplicated efforts, procedural mistakes, evidentiary contradictions, and defensive advantages for suspects.

The intellectual core of planning lies in the investigator's ability to interpret the initial data and reconstruct a plausible model of the crime's mechanism, participants, and consequences. This reconstruction then becomes the basis for predicting how the investigative situation may evolve under different tactical choices. The investigator must foresee where resistance might emerge, which witnesses may be pressured, which evidence is likely to be concealed or destroyed, and which operational measures can neutralize such threats. Thus, tactical thinking resembles a series of informed anticipatory judgments grounded in empirical forensic knowledge and professional experience.

The significance of criminalistic tactics is especially evident in complex investigations involving organized crime, corruption, cyber-offenses, or violent crimes with limited direct evidence. In such cases the investigator must orchestrate the work of forensic experts, operational units, prosecutors, and sometimes international partners. The complexity of these interactions reinforces the need for well-developed planning skills: only through structured coordination can the investigator ensure that

evidentiary opportunities are not missed and that operational actions align with procedural requirements.

This article aims to re-evaluate the conceptual foundations of criminalistic tactics and propose a scientifically grounded understanding of investigative planning as a dynamic and adaptive process. By synthesizing doctrinal literature, practical case analysis, and methodological insights, it offers a nuanced explanation of how rational planning improves evidentiary integrity, mitigates tactical risks, and enhances investigative effectiveness.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

Scholarly writing on criminalistic tactics reflects a long evolution from descriptive manuals to theoretically enriched frameworks that integrate law, psychology, and forensic science. Early forensic scholars such as Gross and Locard emphasized the investigator's observational skill and logical reasoning, laying the foundation for later theories of tactical thinking. Over time, criminalistics expanded beyond the cataloging of techniques and evolved into a discipline concerned with the optimization of investigative decisions under conditions of uncertainty.

Contemporary literature generally converges around several core propositions. First, tactical decisions cannot be divorced from the procedural form: legality and admissibility of evidence are prerequisites for any tactical operation. Scholars argue that tactical sophistication is meaningless if it compromises procedural legitimacy, as evidenced by court rulings that invalidate improperly obtained evidence. Second, planning is widely recognized as an essential cognitive tool that shapes the structure of the investigation. Many authors highlight the role of planning in preventing tactical errors, reducing the influence of cognitive biases, and ensuring the economy of investigative actions.

The literature also explores the situational nature of investigative tactics. Researchers note that the same procedural action—interrogation, search, inspection, or confrontation—may require different tactical solutions depending on the specifics of the investigative situation: suspect behavior, witness psychology, crime type, environmental conditions, and available resources. This situational perspective reflects the influence of psychology, especially theories of decision-making and communication. The ability to adapt tactics based on situational cues is increasingly viewed as a defining feature of effective investigative practice.

Another strand of literature examines the integration of operational-search information into investigative planning. While operational data cannot replace procedural evidence, it often provides essential context that guides tactical choices.

Scholars warn, however, that reliance on operational information must be tempered with caution, as such information may be incomplete, intentionally misleading, or derived from confidential sources whose reliability varies. Proper tactical planning therefore requires the investigator to differentiate between evidentially verified facts and operational assumptions.

Recent contributions emphasize digital challenges: cybercrime investigations demand new tactical approaches related to data preservation, digital trace identification, and cross-border information exchange. Many authors observe that traditional planning models grounded in physical crime scenes require substantial adaptation in the digital domain. Yet the underlying principles—logical sequencing, predictive analysis, risk minimization—remain consistent across domains, underscoring the universality of tactical planning.

Finally, the literature underscores the importance of reflexive analysis in investigative tactics. Post-investigation assessments help refine tactical guidelines and improve investigational methodology. Despite growing attention to evidence-based policing and forensic analytics, many authors argue that tacit knowledge—intuition, professional experience, and interpersonal competence—continues to influence tactical decisions. This duality between formal guidelines and personal investigative style remains a recurrent theme in scholarly debate.

The methodological framework of the study combines doctrinal legal analysis, comparative examination of forensic tactics in different investigative systems, and interpretive reconstruction of tactical decision-making processes. The research draws upon criminal procedure codes, forensic manuals, judicial decisions, and documented investigative cases to identify the principles governing rational investigative planning.

A doctrinal approach enables a systematic interpretation of procedural norms that frame the legal boundaries of tactical actions. By analyzing statutory requirements and evidentiary rules, the study clarifies the constraints within which investigative planning must operate. Procedural guarantees—such as legality, proportionality, and respect for rights—constitute the normative skeleton around which tactical choices are constructed.

Comparative analysis provides additional insights by contrasting investigative planning practices across different legal traditions. In some systems, planning is highly formalized through obligatory written plans, supervisory approval, and detailed procedural guidelines. In others, planning is embedded in a more flexible discretionary model, where the investigator's autonomy plays a dominant role. This comparative lens

highlights the influence of institutional culture, organizational structure, and resource availability on the development of tactical principles.

Case-based reconstruction serves as another methodological pillar. By examining completed investigations, the study identifies recurring patterns in tactical decision-making: the role of initial information, the sequence of actions, the anticipation of suspect behavior, and the coordination between procedural and operational units. Particular attention is given to how investigators respond to unexpected developments, contradictions in testimony, evidence destruction attempts, or strategic silence by suspects. These reconstructions reveal the adaptive capacity of tactical planning and its dependence on real-time analytical revision.

Furthermore, the methodology incorporates elements of cognitive psychology, especially theories of decision-making under uncertainty. Investigators operate in complex informational environments where time pressure, emotional stress, and incomplete data can distort judgment. By integrating psychological insights—confirmation bias, overconfidence, anchoring—the study explains why tactical guidelines must address not only procedural efficiency but also cognitive reliability. A well-constructed plan acts as a cognitive scaffold, helping the investigator avoid errors arising from intuitive but inaccurate judgments.

Finally, the research employs elements of situational modeling. Hypothetical investigative scenarios are constructed to demonstrate how different tactical choices may produce divergent outcomes. These models illustrate the interplay between investigational foresight, evidence availability, and tactical risk. Such modeling is particularly useful for understanding high-risk operations such as searches, detentions, and confrontations where tactical miscalculations can compromise the evidentiary value of actions or endanger participants.

## **RESULTS**

The study reveals several substantive findings regarding the structure, purpose, and practical value of investigative planning within the general system of criminalistic tactics. First, planning significantly improves the logical coherence of investigative actions. Investigations frequently unfold in non-linear ways: new information emerges, suspects change behavior, witnesses retract statements, or unexpected evidence surfaces. A well-designed plan establishes a conceptual map that helps the investigator navigate such instability without losing analytical continuity. It also reduces procedural redundancy by preventing repetitive or unnecessary actions.

Second, planning enhances the reliability of evidentiary outcomes. Many tactical failures stem not from insufficient knowledge but from poor sequencing—conducting

actions too early, too late, or without adequate preparation. For example, conducting an interrogation before verifying physical evidence may inadvertently reveal investigative knowledge to the suspect, enabling them to adjust their testimony. The results demonstrate that investigators with structured planning practices are more successful in obtaining internally consistent and judicially sustainable evidence.

Third, the study demonstrates that planning mitigates tactical risks. Modern investigations frequently involve individuals who possess legal literacy, technological sophistication, or external support networks. Such factors increase the likelihood of evidence tampering, witness intimidation, or misinformation. A predictive plan allows investigators to anticipate these counteractions and implement preventive measures, such as timely searches, protective protocols for witnesses, or covert operational monitoring.

Fourth, planning fosters interdisciplinary coordination. Effective investigations require integrating forensic expertise, digital forensics, criminal intelligence, and operational units. Without structured planning, these components tend to function in isolation, resulting in fragmented evidence and missed opportunities. The findings indicate that coordinated planning sessions involving different units increase evidentiary completeness and procedural economy.

Finally, planning contributes to investigator accountability and transparency. Written plans provide a verifiable record of decision-making processes, enabling supervisory review and judicial evaluation. This transparency reduces the likelihood of arbitrary actions and strengthens public trust in investigative bodies.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings highlight an inherent tension within investigative practice: while planning is indispensable for ensuring rationality and coherence, investigations remain deeply dependent on situational adaptability. The discussion therefore focuses on how investigators reconcile structural planning with the dynamic, unpredictable nature of criminal inquiry.

One of the key insights is that planning should not be understood as a rigid blueprint but as a flexible cognitive tool. Static plans fail because investigative situations do not unfold neatly; suspects react strategically, evidence behaves unpredictably, and operational constraints fluctuate. The most effective tactical plans thus resemble modular structures: they outline the main strategic directions while allowing tactical adjustments as new information emerges.

Another important dimension concerns the cognitive function of planning. Investigators often operate under cognitive pressure, and the absence of planning

exacerbates susceptibility to biases. A structured plan counteracts these distortions by forcing the investigator to articulate hypotheses, justify actions, and evaluate alternatives. This process enhances analytical discipline, especially in complex cases where unstructured intuition may lead to premature conclusions.

The discussion also underscores the relationship between planning and legal oversight. In systems where investigative actions undergo strict judicial scrutiny, planning must integrate procedural defensibility. Tactically beneficial actions that lack procedural justification expose the investigation to evidentiary invalidation. Accordingly, planning becomes a tool not only for strategic efficiency but also for procedural safeguarding.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration plays a prominent role. Modern investigations involve specialists with diverse expertise, and planning provides the framework for aligning their contributions. Without coherent planning, forensic examinations may be requested belatedly, operational units may pursue misaligned objectives, and investigators may overlook technological evidence requiring rapid preservation. Thus, planning emerges as the organizational backbone of collective investigative effort.

Finally, planning has pedagogical implications. Training programs that treat planning as a bureaucratic formality fail to prepare investigators for the intellectual demands of real investigative situations. Planning must be taught as an analytical methodology grounded in probability assessment, scenario modeling, and evidence-based reasoning. These insights suggest the need for updated educational standards and integrated tactical training modules.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study reaffirms that criminalistic tactics, when properly conceptualized, represent a scientifically grounded system that shapes the effectiveness, reliability, and legality of investigative actions. At the core of this system lies investigative planning—a dynamic and intellectually rigorous process that synthesizes procedural norms, forensic knowledge, psychological insight, and situational foresight. Far from being a mere administrative requirement, planning functions as a methodological instrument that structures the investigator's reasoning, minimizes tactical risks, and enhances evidentiary coherence.

The conclusion underscores that planning must be flexible enough to accommodate the fluidity of investigative situations while maintaining a coherent strategic direction. A balanced approach recognizes that planning cannot eliminate uncertainty but can provide the structural support needed to navigate it effectively. By

embedding cognitive discipline, procedural foresight, and interdisciplinary coordination, planning strengthens the scientific integrity of investigative practice.

Given the increasing complexity of contemporary crime—including digital offenses, organized schemes, and transnational networks—future research should focus on refining planning methodologies to incorporate technological innovations such as digital forensics, behavioral analytics, and predictive modeling. Additionally, educational systems for investigators should integrate planning not as a peripheral topic but as a central competence essential for professional readiness.

In sum, the development of criminalistic tactics and investigative planning reflects a broader evolution toward evidence-based, analytically grounded, and legally sound investigative practice. The ongoing refinement of these principles remains essential for ensuring that criminal investigations meet the demands of modern legal systems and societal expectations for justice.

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