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FEATURES OF POLICE ACTIVITY UNDER MARTIAL LAW

The activity of the National Police of Ukraine under martial law becomes significantly more demanding, as law enforcement agencies are required not only to maintain basic public order, but also to adapt to the rapidly changing nature of warfare, hybrid threats, and destabilization. In wartime, police forces must protect critical infrastructure, provide security for civilian populations, and coordinate with military units under conditions of limited resources and high operational risk [1, p. 55]. Traditional policing paradigms are stretched by the need to respond to missile attacks, sabotage, mass internal displacement, and the breakdown of civilian systems.

A central responsibility of the police during wartime is to ensure public safety under extremely volatile conditions. Officers are deployed to guard strategic sites—such as energy facilities, power substations, and water treatment plants—as well as to accompany humanitarian convoys to deliver vital supplies. They also help organize and secure evacuation routes, coordinate with local authorities and volunteer groups, and ensure that civilians can move safely through danger zones [2, p. 78]. The presence of law enforcement in these contexts is crucial for preventing panic, looting, and further exploitation of vulnerable populations.

In areas recently liberated from occupation, the police play a stabilizing role. Upon entering such territories, officers' document evidence of war crimes, identify victims, verify the identities of those who remained, and investigate collaborators or infiltrators [3, p. 134]. This work is both forensic and deeply humanitarian: police must collect testimonies, process crime scenes, and support survivors, all while navigating damaged infrastructure, the threat of mines, and traumatized communities.

Simultaneously, the criminal environment under martial law shifts dramatically. There is a notable increase in property crimes, looting, illicit weapons trafficking, fraud, and even domestic violence, as civilians suffer from stress and displacement [4, p. 112]. The police must respond not only with more frequent patrols but also with specialized investigation teams. These teams must document offenses thoroughly, compile reliable evidence, and cooperate with military and international agencies to ensure that crimes committed during wartime are prosecuted and that accountability mechanisms function effectively [5, p. 214].

Checkpoint duty and control of transit routes become critical tasks. Police, together with armed forces and territorial defense units, inspect vehicles, verify identities, and prevent prohibited materials from moving through conflict zones [6, p. 77]. These responsibilities require officers to make split-second decisions regarding the use of force, arrest, or refusal of passage, often under conditions of limited communication and enormous pressure.

Addressing the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) presents an additional, complex challenge. Police officers are required to maintain order in temporary shelters, mediate conflicts over scarce resources, protect social groups especially vulnerable to exploitation (women, children, elderly), and ensure that rights are upheld even amid chaos [7, p. 145]. Effective communication and a high degree of empathy are paramount: officers must de-escalate tensions and build or maintain trust with people who have suffered trauma and loss.

International cooperation becomes an even more powerful force multiplier for the Ukrainian police during war. Through partnerships with foreign law enforcement agencies and international missions, the police receive technical support, protective gear, forensic equipment, and training in best practices. Joint programs help Ukrainian officers

implement advanced approaches for countering hybrid threats, cybercrime, and cross-border criminal networks [8, p. 188]. This collaboration strengthens institutional resilience and introduces standard operating procedures aligned with democratic policing.

The cyber police are particularly active in wartime, responding to a surge in cyberattacks, phishing campaigns, and attempts to infiltrate critical information systems. These officers monitor network traffic, trace malicious actors, conduct incident response, and share intelligence with international cyber centers [9, p. 42]. Their role is not only reactive but also preventive: they engage in proactive cyber threat hunting, vulnerability assessments, and awareness campaigns to protect civilian infrastructure and governmental systems.

Psychological resilience is another cornerstone of effective police performance in war. Officers are routinely exposed to high-risk situations, death, destruction, and the suffering of civilians. To support them, law enforcement agencies implement programs for mental health support, stress management, trauma debriefing, and long-term rehabilitation [10, p. 69]. These initiatives often include peer-support networks, professional counseling, and specialized training to help officers remain functional and humane under emotional strain.

Operational command and coordination also become more complex during martial law. Police leadership must integrate their activities with military command structures, civil defense authorities, and humanitarian organizations. This requires flexibility, rapid decision-making, and a strong sense of interagency cooperation [11, p. 102]. Moreover, chain-of-command protocols may be adapted to ensure that local police commanders can respond autonomously in fast-changing operational theaters without waiting for orders from higher headquarters.

Finally, adherence to legal and ethical standards remains critical, even in crisis. Police must uphold the rule of law, respect human rights, and use force only when absolutely necessary. Instances of misconduct — including corruption or abuse — are especially dangerous in wartime, as they undermine public trust and can fuel conflict. Therefore, internal accountability mechanisms, oversight by civilian authorities, and transparent reporting become even more vital [12, p. 76].

In conclusion, the National Police of Ukraine under martial law perform a vastly expanded role, combining traditional law enforcement with wartime functions. Their ability to operate professionally, ethically, and resiliently under extreme stress is essential for national stability, the protection of civilians, and the long-term rebuilding of the rule-of-law system.

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