

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a general introduction to the field of forensic ballistics. The thesis is based on the analysis and comparison of numerous Czech and international monographies and articles, as well as on findings derived from a supervised visit to the Institute of Criminalistics Prague. As such, it provides a compact and up-to-date overview of forensic ballistics in the Czech Republic. The thesis is composed of eight chapters followed by a bibliography, an abstract and keywords.

Chapter One is introductory and lays out the purpose of the thesis, the goals and the methods used. Chapter Two takes a closer look at the history and evolution of forensic ballistics, both abroad and in Czechoslovakia. Chapter Three answers the question “What is forensic ballistics?” in detail. It contains a definition of forensic ballistics and provides a reader with information about the main purpose of forensic ballistics.

Chapters Four to Six are the core of the thesis. Chapter four deals with the objects examined by the forensic ballistics and is therefore subdivided into four parts, addressing each object separately: firearms, ammunition, objects struck by a bullet, and further material and immaterial objects. Chapter Five concentrates on ballistic marks and as such is subdivided into five parts: types of ballistic marks, places where they are usually found, gunshot residue, the process of securing of ballistic marks, and the Czech national collection of ballistic marks. Chapter Six, additionally subdivided into five parts, illustrates the most important methods used by the forensic firearms examination. It analyzes the procedure of firearm identification (individual and class based), the firearm and ammunition examination, and the ways of answering of various questions surrounding shooting incidents such as the trajectory of a bullet or the shooter’s distance.

This being a thesis written in a law school, Chapter Seven examines the legal side of forensic ballistics. It is subdivided into three parts. Firstly, it describes legal aspects of holding a firearm under the Czech law and looks at the upcoming regulations, secondly, it examines the role of firearms in the Criminal Code of the Czech Republic, and thirdly, it focuses on the experts in the field of forensic ballistics and their role in the criminal proceedings.

Conclusions are drawn in Chapter Eight. It reflects upon the aims of thesis, assesses them and tries to look at the future of forensic ballistics, suggesting new possible issues this field will have to tackle and making recommendations that would improve the level of the forensic ballistics in the Czech Republic.