J6 What's In Your Basement? A Counterfeiter's Workshop

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be introduced to the variety of items found at a counterfeit crime scene and understand how common household items may be used to produce counterfeit banknotes. Attendees will be given a brief overview of one of the many processes used to associate counterfeit banknotes to a genuine pattern banknote in addition to other counterfeit banknotes.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing a thorough discussion of a typical counterfeit crime scene and the forensic evidence that should be collected for examination. The author will use an actual case to demonstrate the method of association by defects to a common source.

A counterfeit crime scene could be located almost anywhere; hotel room, car, basement, or bathroom. The counterfeiter may use chemicals, art supplies, computers, printers, and home-made "machines" to accomplish the task. The counterfeit crime scene is highly dependant on the innovative ideas and resourcefulness of the counterfeiter, so a simple machine may be obtained and modified slightly or designed from its inception to meet the needs of the counterfeiter. Many household items may be used by a counterfeiter to simulate the security features on a genuine banknote; such as a glitter pen to simulate the color shifting ink. All these items must be considered when collecting and examining the evidence at a crime scene.

The most widely used method for identifying US currency is the simple act of touching and handling the note because the banknote has a distinctive feel to it. This has encouraged many counterfeiters to "bleach" low denomination genuine banknotes and print higher denomination images on the genuine paper. The process of bleaching involves chemicals that remove the ink from the banknote as well as retaining the red and blue security fibers. The case presented will demonstrate how the counterfeiter designed and built an electronic "bleaching" machine to remove the ink from genuine $1 banknotes then printed $50 and $100 counterfeit banknotes with an inkjet printer.

The use of digital technologies for producing counterfeit has risen due to their universal accessibility, low cost and ease of use. Computers, printers, copiers, and scanners assist the criminal without the large expense of an offset printing press. The author will discuss the concept of reproducible defects and how it relates to the technologies used by today's counterfeiters. Due to the distinctive nature of the genuine printing process, comparisons between counterfeit banknotes can be achieved and in turn counterfeit banknotes can be associated to a particular source. The case presented will demonstrate how the original genuine banknote can be linked to a computer image, the computer image linked to a printout of that image and finally the printout linked to a counterfeit banknote. The ability to prove that a counterfeit banknote was produced from a particular image is an effective way to link multiple counterfeit banknotes to a single source; thereby increasing the monetary responsibility of the counterfeiter once apprehended.

Crime Scene, Counterfeit, Currency

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