



### D20 Retaliation Against a Police Officer, or Not? A Case Study

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn how to recognize signs of police retaliation at a crime scene and recognize clues that indicate staging of a crime scene. In addition, attendees will learn the importance of being aware of workplace events and how they may tie into future investigations.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing the importance of recognizing clues at crime scenes that may or

may not point toward the original hypothesis regarding what occurred. Knowledge of the characteristics often seen at crime scenes where there was police retaliation and crime scenes that were staged will be gained.

On a Sunday morning around 6:00 a.m., police were called to check an apartment where neighbors noticed there was an open door. Upon arrival, the police determined a burglary had occurred and crime scene investigators were called to process the scene. The burglary was located in a third floor apartment in a gated complex. When the CSI arrived at the scene, specific messages to the victim and a gang sign were observed written on the walls of the apartment. One message was obviously directed toward the police and was initially thought to be a message to responding officers. However, it was later determined that the victim of the burglary was a police officer who was on-duty at the time of the incident.

Because of the specific messages written on the walls, the condition of the scene and the time frame during which the burglary occurred, investigators initially hypothesized the burglary and vandalism was a result of retaliation against the police officer who occupied the apartment. Steps to ensure the safety of the police officer victim were immediately begun by the internal affairs and homeland security units. Detectives on scene canvassed the apartment complex and the victim officer's superiors were notified. In the meantime the roommate of the officer arrived on scene and was also interviewed by the detectives.

Throughout the scene investigation evidence that was inconsistent with the initial hypothesis of police officer retaliation was noticed. For example, several neighbors reported hearing three gunshots during the night, but no evidence of gunshots was found at the location. Additionally, while the incident had all the makings of a burglary, nothing appeared to be missing from the apartment. The officer's uniforms were intact and accounted for and there was not severe damage to any personal items (including weapons) located inside the apartment. Other hypotheses were suggested including a random occurrence of the burglar happening upon the officer's apartment and that juveniles living in the apartment complex committed the burglary. However, neither of those hypotheses fit the characteristics observed at the scene.

The crime scene was documented according to procedure and the investigation continued by detectives. Throughout the investigation more information regarding the history of the roommate's professional and personal life was gained and ultimately provided the clues needed to determine if the burglary was conducted by an offender retaliating against a police officer or by someone else. The keys to solving the investigation and reconstructing the crime scene were prior experience working retaliatory scenes and the knowledge of current events at the workplace regarding the police officer and the roommate. While a scene may initially appear to fit one hypothesis careful documentation and analysis of the evidence, along with a little workplace gossip, can turn the investigation toward a different conclusion.

**Staged Crime Scene, Police Officer Retaliation, Details**