



Questioned Documents Section – 2011

J17 Guide for the Development of Forensic Document Examination Capacity

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about a guide developed by an international panel to provide practical assistance for the establishment or upgrading of forensic document examination capacities in two categories of service providers: (1) immigration and border control agencies; and (2) forensic science laboratories.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting a holistic approach to document examinations encompassing identity, security, and other types of documents without security features. This guide will assist both donor and beneficiary countries in their efforts to design, build, and strengthen forensic document examination and intelligence dissemination capacities.

Fraudulent identity and security documents are integral prerequisites for the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, terrorist mobility, facilitating the smuggling of drugs, weapons and other goods, and committing fraud. Fraudulent documents are the grease that eases cross-border crime of all types. They include fraudulently obtained, illegally issued, forged, and counterfeit documents.

Security documents refer to documents containing incorporated security features within the document to protect the value of the document. Many identity documents contain security features such as passports, identity cards, and driving licenses. Other examples of security documents include currency, social security cards, travel visas, and lottery tickets, etc.

Identity documents are any documents which may be used to verify aspects of a person's personal identity. Some countries require individuals to carry a government issued identity card, while other countries may accept a driver's license as an effective means of proof of identity.

Many countries in the world recognize that forensic document examination is vital to immigration and border control security and have a forensic document examination facility. Although the ability to detect and disseminate intelligence about fraudulent documents is vital to border security, there are still countries lacking this capacity. Moreover, there is a lack of awareness among relevant criminal justice practitioners of the benefits that forensic document examinations may provide to assist border control security and immigration facilities.

Traditionally, forensic document examination units are part of a forensic science laboratory. These units examine and compare handwriting, typewriting, printing processes, inks, and other document characteristics which may or may not include document security features. To respond to the detection of fraudulent identity and security documents specifically, many countries have established additional specialized structures. These structures are often under the immigration service and border control agencies and are housed in port-of-entry facilities.

Some countries have a sophisticated forensic document examination capacity both in their national forensic science laboratory and under immigration or border control services. Other countries have a more limited forensic capacity under their immigration and border control services and more advanced document examinations are done at the national forensic science laboratory. Still others rely entirely on their national forensic science laboratory for the examination and analysis of all documents.

Several levels of infrastructure development ranging from basic to advanced capacity are covered. The focus is on staff skill and educational requirements needed to perform forensic document examinations and to provide court testimony, intelligence alerts and training. Recommendations on forensic equipment, reference

collections and databases as well as general guidance for designing, establishing, and maintaining a forensic document examination facility are included. This guide should not be used as a simple checklist of equipment and materials to be obtained but rather as an aid for developing capacity in the area of document examinations.

Document Examination, Intelligence, Capacity Building