



D22 The Evolution of Polygraph in the People's Republic of China

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the legal system that has facilitated the growth and application of the polygraph process in the People's Republic of China (PRC), as well as significant contributors and the probable future for polygraph in China.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a glimpse of how an applied forensic science began in, and is used by, a country comprising approximately one fourth of the world's population.

In 1947, United States Army asked the Michigan Department of State Police to assist in the training of military officers from the forces of the Kuomintang, the Nationalist Chinese party who were at war with the communist following World War II. In 1990, Dr. Palmatier, then a PhD candidate at Michigan State University and a Detective Sergeant with the Michigan State Police, was the first foreigner to be asked by the PRC to present information regarding the assessment of credibility using the polygraph process.

In 1991, Dr. Palmatier traveled to China where he gave several seminars and demonstrated the use of an analog polygraph instrument to members of the Ministry of Public Security, the armed police and members of the military. The relationships formed continue today and provide a unique insight into the entire history of China's quest to procure, develop, and apply the polygraph process for the purposes of assessing credibility.

This presentation begins with a short discussion of the Chinese legal system, which is substantive in nature, and why it is conducive to the use of polygraph as compared to Western legal systems, which are procedural in nature and questionably focused on the truth. This is followed by a discussion of the actual history, which began in 1947, but was used by the Kuomintang to root out communists during the 1947 – 1949 Civil War, which created a great deal of skepticism regarding the validity of the polygraph by the communist (i.e., new China or the PRC).

Following the Civil War, the People's Republic of China first explored the possibility of polygraph testing in the 1960s by purchasing an instrument from the West, but their efforts were cut short by the Cultural Revolution and the idea of polygraph died until 1980. In 1989, China began a program focused on the development of a viable computer-based polygraph instrument and the following year invited Dr. Palmatier to speak in China.

Although it started out slow, over the next 21 years use of the polygraph process and its related methodologies have continued to grow. Some police universities in China offer graduate programs focused on the polygraph process and its use in many contexts. All levels of government, law enforcement, procurator's offices, courts, military, and the Ministry of State Security have varying levels of polygraph ability. Estimates suggest that today, the People's Republic of China administers somewhere between a low of 30,000 and a high of 60,000 examinations each year; and the use continues to grow exponentially.

Surprisingly, even though the United States government does not prohibit the teaching of any subject related to the assessment of credibility using the polygraph process, the United States Department of Commerce still prohibits the exportation of any American polygraph instrument to that country. This has only spurred China's development of its own instruments and purchase of instruments from countries other than the United States.

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