

Forensic and Technical Services



“Documents are intimate brain-children of their authors. Unless questioned, they sometimes mislead, lie, cheat, and travel incognito.”

—from *Evidential Documents*, published by James V.P. Conway, former Postal Inspector and Examiner of Questioned Documents, 1959

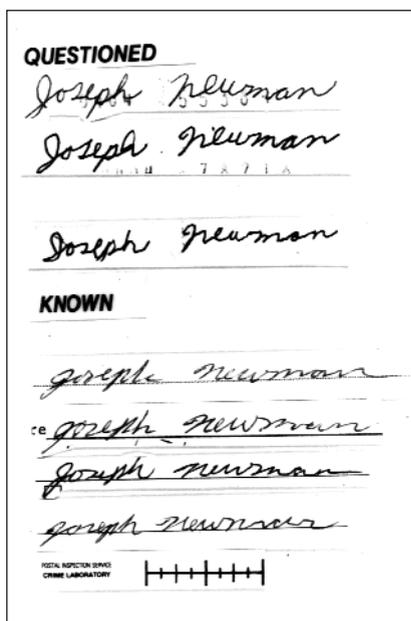
Solving cases and convicting criminals frequently depend on the unique support of scientific and technical personnel assigned to the Forensic & Technical Services Division. Forensic Analysts at the Postal Inspection Service’s National Forensic Laboratory in Dulles, VA, and four field laboratories provide expert examinations and testimony on evidence submitted by Postal Inspectors for document, fingerprint, chemical and physical evidence analysis. Lab personnel respond to the most critical and complex crime investigations and assist in processing and evaluating evidence. Postal Inspection Service chemists are on hand to provide scientific analyses of suspected controlled substances transported through the U.S. Mail.

This year, forensic staff assisted on-site with a mail bomb murder in California, the abduction of a postmaster in Tennessee and a multi-state investigation of the loss of a large quantity of registered mail from Arizona.

The Digital Evidence Unit (DEU) of the Forensic & Technical Services Division supports criminal investigations by assisting Postal Inspectors with the collection, preservation, recovery and analysis of computer-based evidence.

Using state-of-the-art hardware and forensic software, Inspectors and Analysts from this unit work with Postal Inspectors to execute search warrants and conduct forensic analyses of seized computers and related equipment.

DEU contributes to the successful resolution of investigations



Shown at left is a sample of “questioned” handwriting from U.S. Treasury checks believed to have been signed and cashed after the man who supposedly signed them was dead—allegedly killed by a suspect Ohio Postal

Inspector was investigating for mail fraud. An Inspection Service Forensic Document Analyst used the sample in her courtroom testimony to prove the signatures were tracings of the victim’s handwriting. She made transparencies of the questioned tracings to show that, if you superimposed the tracings over each other, you could see they all came from a single model—there was no variation in the writing. While Inspectors were unable to provide sufficient evidence their suspect was a murderer, the suspect was convicted of mail fraud and related charges and received the maximum sentence of 30 years in prison.

ranging from child exploitation to financial fraud and identity takeovers via the mail. In FY 2001, Postal Inspectors submitted 741 requests to DEU for the examination of evidence, a 20 percent increase from the past fiscal year.

The complexity of service provided by DEU staff was epitomized this year by our support on a national, multi-agency child pornography sting called Operation Avalanche, which is described in detail in the Child Exploitation chapter of this report. Forensic specialists coordinated the interagency searches, seizures and technical investigation of mainframe and personal computers and performed analyses of digital evidence on-site, as well as in the laboratory.

Postal Inspection Service forensic experts conducted 3,663 forensic examinations during FY 2001 and identified 1,354 violators of postal statutes. Forensic analysts also made 81 court appearances to provide expert testimony.

The Forensic & Technical Services Division also supports Postal Inspectors in complex surveillance and security endeavors. The division provides equipment, training and field responses to ensure the safety of personnel and allow for proper evidence-gathering. Specially trained Inspectors and technicians used their expertise to help resolve almost every high-profile case discussed in this report.

Staff members also oversee the selection, training and qualification of Postal Inspectors assigned to conduct polygraph examinations. Postal Inspector-Examiners scheduled 969 polygraph exams for 395 cases during the fiscal year and contributed to the solution of approximately 146 cases as a result of pre-test and post-test interviews conducted incident to the examinations.

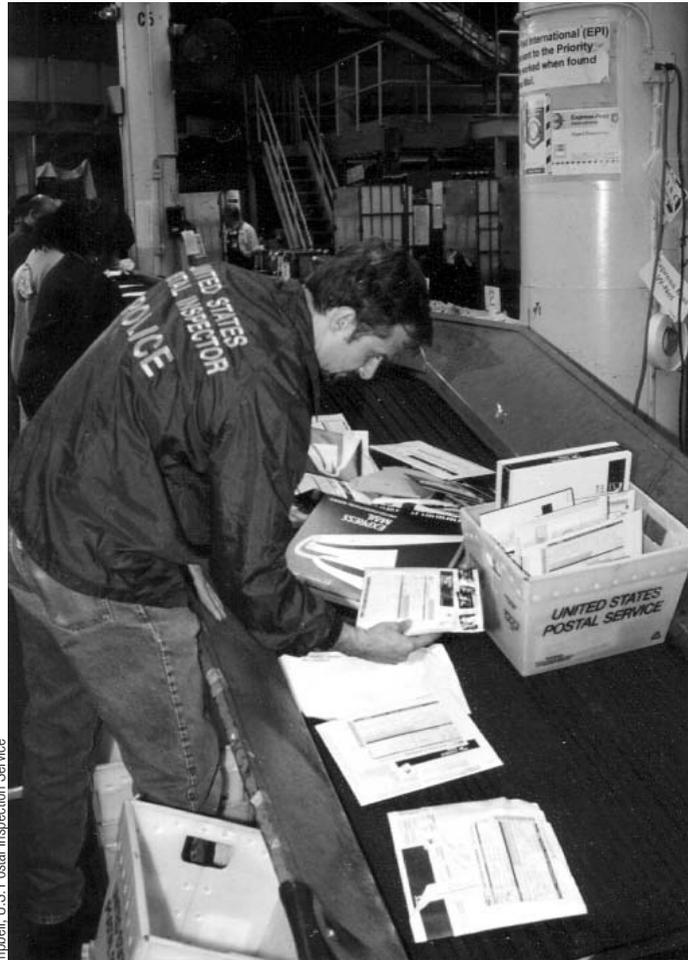


Photo by Robert J. Campbell, U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Suspicious items discovered in the mail are submitted to Inspection Service Forensic Scientists for examination.