# Crime Pattern of Use/Possession of Forged Documents

## Modus Operandi

At present, most of the forged travel document users were detected at the Airport. Various kinds of forged travel documents were used and many different modus operandi were adopted. They can roughly be classified into the following three categories -

(a)     simply entering and departing Hong Kong on the strength of forged travel documents. This modus operandi has been increasingly uncommon in the past few years as a result of the continued effort of immigration officers at control points and the increasing vigilance of airline staff in Hong Kong;

(b)     passing through Hong Kong immigration clearance on the strength of genuine travel documents, and then switching to using forged travel documents or other persons' boarding passes inside the airport transit lounge; and

(c)     travelling through Hong Kong on the strength of forged travel documents in direct transit without seeking entry into Hong Kong. Under this modus operandi which is most popular, illegal migrants would stay in the airport transit lounge and connect onward flight to their next transit point or ultimate destinations.

2.     In the past, most of the forged travel documents detected were used by Mainland residents for seeking residence or employment in Hong Kong or overseas, such as USA, Canada, Schengen States, Japan, Australia, etc. Some were used for other purposes like travel convenience and concealing identity. In recent years, some foreign nationals were also intercepted in Hong Kong while using forged travel documents to seek entry into overseas countries. The number of suspected forged travel documents detected in 1999 broken down in accordance with the users' nationality is as follows -

| Nationality of User | No. of Forged Travel Document | % over Total |
|---|---|---|
| Mainland residents | 2624 | 74.3% |
| Pakistani | 145 | 4.1% |
| Filipino | 127 | 3.6% |
| Bangladeshi | 116 | 3.3% |
| Sri Lankan | 85 | 2.4% |
| Others | 433 | 12.3% |
| Total | 3530 | 100% |

## Types of Forged Travel Documents (T/D) Detected

3.    In recent years, with the aid of the advanced equipment, the qualities of the forgeries had improved significantly. The use of computer technology in the production of counterfeit travel document has become very common. In recent years, photo-substitution/bio-data-page substitution is the most common method of forgery.   This represents 48% of the total detection in 1999. A breakdown showing the types of suspected forgeries detected in 1999 is below:-

| Types of forged T/D detected | Number of T/D |
|---|---|
| Photo/bio-data-paged substitution | 1704 (48%) |
| Unlawful procurement (including stolen T/D) | 570 (16%) |
| Counterfeit | 481 (14%) |
| Forged visa/stamp endorsement on genuine T/D | 352 (10%) |
| Others (e.g. inner-page substitution, unlawful alteration, impersonation) | 423 (12%) |
| Total | 3530 (100%) |

**Routes used by Mainland Illegal Migrants**

4.　　Mainland illegal migrants are usually arranged to travel in devious routes, despite the fact that there are now direct flights flying between several major airports in China (e.g. Beijing and Shanghai) and their destinations (e.g. Tokyo, New York and Vancouver). It is believed that the major reason for travelling in a circuitous route is to distract the attention of the immigration authorities of the destination countries. Other reasons may include ad hoc adjustments in relation to tightening/slackening of immigration control or high/low air-traffic seasons at different transit points.

5.　　In addition to the above routes that are commonly adopted, an unknown number of Mainland illegal migrants are smuggled overseas in much more complicated and devious routes. They would usually use genuine travel documents to proceed to their starting points, like some cities in Asia, Africa, South America and Central America. Then they would wait for the further arrangements of the smuggling syndicates there before beginning their long journeys to their ultimate destination. The process of smuggling an illegal migrant to his ultimate destination could, in some cases, possibly take about one year.


Immigration Department
March 2000