

GUEST EDITORIAL



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Training for Law Enforcement Personnel

A nation already accustomed to satellites and space flight—and long since comfortable with computers and electronic communications—cannot permit law enforcement to remain static. This is as true in the field of forensic science as in any other area of the profession. The scientific criminal investigator, as well as the personnel in every crime laboratory across the United States, faces the challenge of increasing responsibility—responsibility made more complex by increasingly sophisticated criminal activity.

One way to meet that challenge successfully lies in advanced training of law enforcement personnel in the field of forensic science. It also requires intensified research and development of forensic science techniques and methods for law enforcement.

To assist crime laboratory personnel at the state and local levels in meeting that challenge, the FBI inaugurated a program of scientific training for law enforcement personnel in 1974. Today this program offers a wide spectrum of forensic science training to the law

enforcement professional. It includes basic courses in criminalistics, and it extends to advanced methodology in instrumental analysis and biochemistry. The latter courses encompass new developments in these specialized fields of science.

To date, approximately 2000 individuals from crime laboratories throughout the United States have completed courses in the program and returned to their respective agencies. The specialized knowledge garnered by each will be shared with members of his own agency.

The steadily increasing number of requests from crime laboratory personnel at both the local and state level to attend these courses is but one indication of the program's success. However, the very number of these requests compounds our own problem—the problem of space. Currently, the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia, has no area utilized solely for the purpose of forensic science training. Some forensic laboratory courses are taught in a space in the basement of the dining building. This space, temporarily modified for the purpose, has never been adequate.

As the need to provide such specialized training to law enforcement personnel was a most significant one, the FBI proposed the construction of a facility dedicated solely to forensic science training and research at the FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia. The Administration responded favorably, and on 2 Aug. 1977, President Carter signed Public Law 95-86. This Law approved construction of a \$3.5 million Forensic Science Research and Training Center. Actual construction of the project should begin in mid-1979 and it is estimated that the facility should be completed toward the close of 1980.

This Forensic Science Research and Training Center, now on the horizon, will afford law enforcement's scientific personnel a modern facility adequate for research and training in the vital forensic science field.

The facility will encompass approximately 2600 m² (28 000 ft²) of working space for staff and students. Approximately 830 m² (9000 ft²) of this space will be dedicated to research efforts on the part of the permanent FBI research staff, research personnel representing academia, and those from other specialized areas in the field of forensic science. The remainder of the space will be utilized for training purposes.

A large multipurpose classroom will be a vital part of this research and training complex. Seating as many as 250 students, this room will accommodate special seminars and large groups. The facility will also encompass two smaller classrooms. One, a small multipurpose room, will accommodate 30 students. The larger of the two will be a microscope classroom. These classrooms will contain the wide spectrum of scientific and audiovisual equipment necessary to make each highly functional in forensic science training.

The research program associated with this facility will have three objectives:

- (1) to develop new and reliable scientific methods which can be applied in forensic science,
- (2) to study technical problems confronting forensic scientists and develop methods to overcome these problems, and
- (3) to evaluate current technology and ascertain its application to forensic science.

The new facility will provide a forum enabling us to meet the major objective of our training program in scientific areas. This is simply teaching presently known and newly developed forensic science techniques to personnel in the medicolegal profession. These include medical examiners and federal, state, and local crime laboratory personnel.

Courses in subjects such as biochemical methods, chromatography, instrumental analysis, microscopy, and other related topics are currently offered to these law enforcement professionals. An indication of the caliber of instruction provided can be found in the fact that certain academic courses in forensic science have been accredited by the University of Virginia at the graduate level.

Under existing conditions, only one scientific course accommodating 10 to 14 students

can be held at the FBI Academy at any one time. The new facility, however, will make it possible for numerous courses to be taught and will enable us to train as many as 60 students at a time.

It is in this perspective that the need for, and value of, the facility now on the horizon becomes obvious. Upon completion of the building, we anticipate that the large and growing backlog of applications for training in the forensic science courses now being offered will soon be ameliorated. In addition, new courses, presently unavailable because of inadequate scientific and technological accommodations, will be offered. This should help to meet other special training needs of the personnel manning many of the nation's crime laboratories.

Both the research and training to be conducted at this new facility have but one goal—to upgrade and expand the forensic science capabilities that are available to the law enforcement profession. We in the FBI cannot accomplish this task without help. We will need positive contributions from others—from the forensic science community, from academia, and in some instances, from the private sector.

With cooperation and hard work from all concerned, the Forensic Science Research and Training Center may well achieve its promise—that of becoming law enforcement's own National Academy of Forensic Science.