

Original Paper

UDC: 351.746.1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5572518>

Received: 5 March 2021

Accepted: 17 March 2021

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THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF BORDER POLICE IN DETECTING FORGED DOCUMENTS

Abstract

The production and use of forged documents are incriminated by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia as a tort that endangers legal instruments. The use of a forged travel document is the most sophisticated way of illegally crossing the state border, because it requires the application of a high level of technology, and thus significant financial investments. Exactly this fact is important when profiling controlled persons at the border crossing. Taking into consideration that these crimes usually go hand in hand with others, which by their nature have an international character as well, and above all the smuggling of people and vehicles, and as the most serious trafficking in human beings, reinforces the success importance of this segment in the overall border police activities. The efficiency of police officers at border crossings is equally conditioned by their technical equipment and training. According to criminal-law and criminalistic aspects of a problem presented here, the aim of this paper is to point out the role and importance of the border police in combating this and other crimes related to the drafting and use of forged documents, and accordingly, the need for special equipment

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and particular specialist training of police officers at the border crossing in order to successfully respond to complex challenges in everyday work.

Keywords: *state border, forgery, identity document, crime, travel document*

INTRODUCTION

In the period from 2016 to 2020, a total of 14,177 criminal charges were filed in the Republic of Serbia against adults for criminal offences against legal instruments (RZS, 2021). The share of criminal charges for these criminal offences in the total number (446,650) for the stated period is 3.17%, which is not negligible having in mind the connection of these criminal offences with the most serious criminal offences. Corrections are made in various ways on stolen and missing travel documents, in order to mislead a person from legal instruments with the help of such a false document. It is estimated that more than 50 million illegal migrants live in the countries of the European Union today, and it is assumed that this is only a third of the total number of those who enter the territory of the EU illegally every year (Migration Data Portal, 2021). Considering that about 500 thousand people enter the Schengen area illegally every year, it is clear how much the work of counterfeiters has increased. However, in addition to forgeries of travel documents, border police officers also encounter forgeries of other public documents, and most of them are so-called personal documents. Considering that about 500 thousand people enter the Schengen area illegally every year, it is clear how much the work of counterfeiters has increased. However, in addition to forgeries of travel documents, border police officers also encounter forgeries of other public documents, and most of them are so-called personal documents.

¹ RZS (2021). Republički zavod za statistiku Republike Srbije Republic (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia), <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-Latn/oblasti/pravosudje/punoletni-ucinioci-krivicnih-dela> (23.2.2021).

² Migration Data Portal, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/europe>. (23.2.2021).

Most personal documents are made in the form of electronic cards, which are now easily forged and increasingly difficult to detect. The fight against such disruption of the legal instruments of a country takes place in two levels - by introducing various protective elements in public documents, and by engaging law enforcement services in detecting forged documents and prosecuting the persons who make and use them. The Border Police have a special role in this process because it is the first state body that cross-border travellers encounter, and at the same time it is the target state body for counterfeiters that should be misled, and in that sense, this is a problem that deserves a special, not only practical but also theoretical attention.

According to criminal-law and criminalistic aspects of a problem presented here, the aim of this paper is to point out the role and importance of the border police in combating this and other crimes related to the drafting and use of forged documents, and accordingly, the need for special equipment and particular specialist training of police officers at the border crossing in order to successfully respond to complexed challenges in everyday work.

CRIMINAL-LAW FRAMEWORK

The legal definition of the term document

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia defines a document as "any object that is suitable or determined to serve as evidence of a fact that is relevant to legal relations, as well as computer data".³ From such a legal determination, it is not difficult to conclude that a document is not just a written act, but also any other case whose content proves something that has value for legal relations. These are markings that indicate a legally relevant circumstance, such as a boundary stone or registration plates on a vehicle.⁴ This is a broader

³ Krivični zakonik Republike Srbije [Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia], „Sl. Glasnik“ br. [Official Gazette No.] 85/2005, 88/2005 - ispr., 107/2005 - ispr., 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014, 94/2016 i 35/2019).

⁴ Lazarević, Lj. (2006). Komentar Krivičnog zakonika Republike Srbije. Beograd: Savremena administracija, Art. 873-874.

meaning of the term documents in legal use, while in a narrower sense, a document is a written statement of a legally relevant circumstance, with the following essential characteristics:⁵

- must be a manifestation of the concrete will of the natural or legal person who issued it, regardless of the subject and manner in which it was issued, unless the law itself requires a special form;
- it must refer to some circumstance of importance for legal relations, in a way that, independently or together with other facts, influences their occurrence, change or termination;
- the issuer of the statement, who must be a legally capable person, must be unambiguously seen from the issued document.

There are a number of classifications of documents, and the most significant one is on private and public documents, with any document that is not public being defined as a private document. The Law on General Administrative Procedure (Art. 154) stipulates that a public document is a document "issued in the prescribed form by a state body within its competence, ie an enterprise or other organization within the legally entrusted public authority" and which "proves what it is confirmed or determined in it". The distinction from this legal definition of a public document leads to the fact that a private document is a document issued by a natural person or organizations and communities that are not state bodies. Accordingly, these documents do not have a pre determined form by law, nor do the statements of will and thoughts contained in them have presumptive force but are subjected to an appropriate procedure of free evaluation of evidence.⁶

The following divisions also stand out in criminal law theory:

- according to the aim: intentional and accidental documents, and
- according to the issuer: the original and transcript of the document.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Jovašević, D., Hašimbegović, T. (2000). *Krivična dela falsifikovanja*. Beograd: Zadužbina Andrejević, p. 23.

The purpose of issuing intentional documents is to serve as evidence in the legal instruments, and they contain a statement of will or thoughts that are directly legally relevant or indicate some legally relevant facts. Regardless of the fact that random documents do not contain a legally relevant fact, from their content, some label or incidental fact, a conclusion can be drawn about it.⁷

The original of the document is the original document, the one issued by the person designated as the issuer, while the reproduction of his statement is a transcript of the document. Since the transcript does not mean the statement itself, it has no probative value if it is not certified by the competent authority, indicating that it is true to the original in everything. If the original document was issued in several identical copies, simultaneously or by re-issuance by the same body, then it is not a transcript but a duplicate of the document that has the importance of the document.⁸

The police, customs and other services that make up the system of integrated border management⁹ encounter a large number of different public documents on a daily basis at border crossings. The most important for police officers are travel documents, ID cards, driver's licenses and traffic licenses.

In Article 2 of the Law on Travel Documents, the term is defined as "a public document that serves a citizen of the Republic of Serbia to cross the state border, to travel and stay abroad and to return to the country." Pursuant to the signed international agreements, and in accordance with Article 5 of the Law, citizens of the EU and BiH can also use a personal identification card for crossing the state border of the Republic of Serbia instead of a travel document. This law (Article 7) defines travel documents: passport, diplomatic passport, official passport, travel document, as well as travel documents issued on the basis of an international agreement. For members of ship's crews, travel documents are considered to be the shipping book for inland

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Lazarević, Lj. (2006), *Op. cit.*, Art. 875.

⁹ Dostić, S. (2008). Organizacija i nadležnost graničnih policija u regionu Zapadnog Balkana. *Bezbednost* 3/2008, p. 83.

waterway vessels, and the seaman's book for the crews of a seagoing ship.

Crimes against legal instruments

Criminal offences against legal instruments constitute a special group in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia, which includes Articles 355-358 in Chapter Thirty-two. Here, we will not deal with the legal nature of these crimes, but briefly point out the essential specifics of the same and, accordingly, their application in the practice of the border police. Considering the type of documents that are controlled when crossing the state border, the criminal acts that are committed on that occasion are covered by three articles of the Criminal Code - 355, 356 and 358.

Forging a Document (Article 355)

The subject of this criminal offence is the document from Article 112, item 26. of the Code, and according to the action, three forms of this criminal act are distinguished:¹⁰ forgery a document by making of a false or by modifying the original; use of a forged document as genuine; and acquiring a forged document for its use.

Forgery is alternatively determined, so for the existence of a criminal offence, either of the two listed actions is sufficient - making a false document or altering the original (unauthorized changes in the content of the document). The changes must be significant, such as to create a misconception about the legally relevant circumstances. By interpreting this legal provision, the court practice included forgery made in any object that is a document, so in addition to identification documents (travel document, ID card, driver's license) and unauthorized change of numbers imprinted on the engine or chassis of a motor vehicle is a criminal offence.¹¹ For its existence, it is also required to prove the intention to use a false document as an original, regardless of who will use it as such.

¹⁰ Lazarević, Lj. (2006), *Op. cit.*, Art. 875.

¹¹ Jovašević, D., Hašimbegović, T., *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

When using a forged document, the executor's awareness is required that the document is false or altered and that he nevertheless puts it in legal circulation. The position of Serbian court practice is that a forged document was used when it is showed to the person for whom it is intended, so the criminal offence is fulfilled by giving the document to a police officer for control when crossing the state border.

It is not essential whether the acquisition of a forged document was made by purchase, or in some other way (e.g. a gift), it is necessary to be aware that the acquired document is fake or altered, and that the acquisition was made with the intention of using it in legal transactions. So, if a fake or altered document is found in the travel bag during the inspection, it is about this form of crime, and if it is shown to the police officer as his own, then it is about using.

A more serious form of this criminal offence (para. 2) exists when a public document is forged, so a document that is presented during border control. An attempt to commit this criminal offense is also punishable (para. 3).

Special Cases of Forging Documents (Article 356)

The object of protection, the object of attack, the consequences of the act, the characteristics of the perpetrator, the form of guilt, and the amount of the threatened punishment are the same as in Article 355. The purpose of this separate article of the Code is to concretize specific forms of the criminal offence of forgery of a document, which appear in practice, and their interpretation could be disputable. These are the following cases:

- (1) Abuse of a blank form - occurs by unauthorized filling in of a paper, blank form or another object on which a person has put his signature, by a statement that has value for legal relations, by another person. The reason for signing is not important, but only that at that time the case did not have a fulfilled content.
- (2) Induction to sign a document by deception - arises from the abuse of trust, by inducing another person to put his signature on the document holding that he signs another document, i.e. some other content of the document and not the one that is untrue in the part in

which it refers to legally relevant facts. If it is a public document, it is a criminal offence under Article 358 of the Criminal Code.

- (3) Issuance of a document without authorization - exists when the signatory of the document falsely invokes the authorization of another person or a person who does not exist. If the perpetrator did not invoke the authorization, it will be a criminal offence under Art. 355.
- (4) Issuance of a document by deception about one's position, rank or title - exists when the document is true in terms of content and signature of the issuer, but untrue in origin because it was not issued by a person of position, rank or title necessary for the document to have probative value.
- (5) Making a document by unauthorized use of a stamp or sign - in the case of public documents, it exists when a stamp without the issuer's signature is sufficient for their probative value.

In the practice of the border police, the forms of criminal acts of forgery from this article of the Criminal Code occur in cases when registration plates from another vehicle have been previously placed on a motor vehicle, or unauthorized addition of the contents to a traffic licence or a driving license (eg permitted driving categories) into empty rubrics.

Inducing to Certify False Content (Art. 358)

This criminal offence has two forms of manifestation:

- misleading the competent authority in order to induce him to certify something untrue in a public document, minute book, or book and
- use of a false document, minute book, or book with the aim to mislead the competent authority.

In the practice of the border police, this criminal offence occurs in the first form by using someone others travel document as its own, and for its existence, it is not necessary for a police officer to certify such a travel document with an entry or exit stamp since the attempt is punishable as well. If a police officer performed such verification even though he knows

that it is someone else's travel document, he would commit the criminal offence of Forging an Official Document, from Art. 357 of the Criminal Code. If the verification was performed because of a police officer's mistake, depending on the circumstances, conditions may be met for calling a police officer to disciplinary responsibility because the nature of official tasks at the border crossing is such that he must not be misled due to his negligence.

CRIMINALISTIC ASPECTS

Protective elements

In order to detect a forged public document, or at least to suspect that it is a forgery, the police officers who control it must be well acquainted with the features of the original document because only those who can recognize the original document can recognize the forgery too.

When it comes to motor vehicles, the numbers of the chassis and the engines have a certain shape and place of embossing, for which there are schematic representations at the border crossing for different vehicle models.

When it comes to personal documents, knowledge of the original document includes knowledge of the legally prescribed form and security features that guarantee the authenticity of such a document. The prescribed form of the form includes the physical form and size of the document, the number and arrangement of pages, the colour of the cover, markings and inscriptions.

The essential protection against forgery of these documents consists of numerous protective elements, which are made differently depending on the issuer of such a document, but in principle, there are certain standards that all countries adhere to.

The starting point for creating these documents is the material being worked on (paper or card). Travel documents are made on special paper that does not contain an illuminator, so such paper does not give glare.

The quality of printing is one of the protective elements, and screen printing is considered the least safe, primarily due to the fact that it is the cheapest and thus the most accessible to a wider circle of counterfeiters. Due to the effect of boiling, intaglio printing is complicated and expensive for forgers and it is most often used on the inside of passports. It is a stabbing print that can be recognized under magnification by the fact that it rises on the surface. A similar effect is created by carbon printing, and the Hungarians were the first to use it. It is a technic in which pieces of plastic are applied by spraying, but in the beginning, the first forgery appeared only after a month. Iris printing is especially difficult for counterfeiters because there are no sharp edges, the colours flow smoothly into each other. The microprint is of high quality, but it is also easy to imitate, and it is used on the inside pages, as a signature line or as a security tape. The decorative print is not recognizable to the naked eye because it is imprinted in the paper during drafting, and its protective function is reflected in the fact that it reveals whether the image has been changed or some data has been deleted. Serial numbers are protected by various methods of embossing (high printing technique, needle-like and laser perforation).

In addition to the above, as protection elements are most often used: *watermark*, *cinigram* (two-dimensional image - it has a Czech vignette), *hologram* (three-dimensional image - in Arabic passports), *image sculpting* (at different angles two different images - Swedish ID card), *laser engraving* (German passport), *impregnation with gold foil* (on the outer cover of the passport), *cinofilm* (on foil that goes over the photo and can never be completely separated from it), and *optically variable elements* (derived from the type of colour, which contains strong small metal parts, so different colours are obtained from different viewing angles - new Polish driver's license). A special type of protection in the travel document and on the Schengen visa is machine lines, which are made in three different formats, and they consist of combinations of numbers that refer to certain data from the document.

The biometric passport of the Republic of Serbia has seven levels of protection and falsifying it is especially difficult by adding a fingerprint. It can be conditionally divided into three ways of forging personal documents:

- (1) Total forgery - the document is completely forged so that it resembles the original.
- (2) Partial forgery - some details have been changed in the original document, and the following is done:
 - mechanical erasure,
 - chemical erasure,
 - by adding or copying written marks,
 - by replacement of whole parts of documents,
 - by pasting unwanted entries, or even pulling out a page. The so-called "royal class" is a replacement for the image.
- (3) Completed stolen blank original document.

In addition to the stated ways of misusing personal documents at the border crossing, in practice, the use of someone else's travel document often occurs, so that the perpetrator identifies himself with the original travel document of another person. This became more frequent with the appearance of biometric passports, which are difficult to falsify, but not impossible only because the price is very high then.

Having in mind the experience so far, the opinion prevails in criminal expert circles that the Chinese are the greatest masters among counterfeiters in the world, and the Bulgarians in Europe.

Detection of forged documents

Given the growing specialization of counterfeiters, in addition to the necessary knowledge of the protective elements of public documents encountered during the control of persons and vehicles at the border crossing police officers must approach such control with maximum seriousness in order to raise the level of personal ability for detecting even the

smallest details. Superficial control of public documents at the border crossing is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, you need to speed up the control of passengers and vehicles during periods of the year when there is extremely high traffic across the border crossing (New Year's holidays, summer holidays), and on the other hand, you may miss serious signs of potential irregularities in controlled documents and items. Holders of forged documents choose either very busy border crossings or the days of bad weather and border crossings that are not covered, counting on the superficiality of police officers, caused by these circumstances. So, in addition to the way in which the control is performed, the approach to that task is very important for the detection of forged documents, because the responsible police officer will find a personal motive for professional work entrusted to him, even in difficult working conditions. In that way, the initial advantage of the user of the forged document is removed, after which the success in detecting the forgery depends on the way the police officer acts. The manner of document control and the technique of detecting forgeries are largely determined by two factors: the professional qualification of the police officer and the technical equipment for performing that task. Through participation in numerous national and international courses and seminars, specialist training of elected representatives of the Border Police Administration and all regional centres within it is performed. Participants of such courses and seminars have the obligation to further transfer the acquired knowledge to police officers, direct executors of border control and work on combating cross-border crime, not only through special forms of theoretical classes but also through daily work engagement at border crossings of their police stations.

Irregularities on some of the protective elements can even be noticed with the naked eye (control numbers, border stamps), but for more serious work, the use of technical aids is necessary. The technical equipment available at the border crossings for the purpose of determining the identity of personal documents with the originals consists of magnifiers, UV lamps and the Projectina Docubox Dragon device, as well as the VDR-1 reader for travel documents. This reader has various lightnings that facilitate the visual

inspection of the travel document, notices the illogicality of numbers in the machine lines, and in the case of travel documents with a chip, it also displays a photo in the original.

Under the magnifying glass and with the help of a UV lamp, counterfeits of lower quality can be detected, where it is easier to notice colour overflow, mechanical damage caused by screen printing, perforation, scalpel scraping, poor gluing of pictures or entire pages, as well as irregularities on border seals. The UV lamp always recognizes a forged watermark, a document forged on plain paper that has optical illuminators in it, as well as chemical damages. Special papers without optical illuminators have ameliorous fibres in them, which can be seen under a UV lamp, but in essence, they do not reveal much because they do not have a pattern that is remembered, and in Croatian passports, they can even be seen with the naked eye. These fibres are easily imitated by amplifying UV reactive dye. Because of all this, it is considered unreliable to rely only on UV lighting.

However, with the Projectina Docubox device, it is a completely different case. It is an extremely reliable device, with a wide variety of possibilities, for the functionality of which it is important that a database of original documents can be formed in the device itself, in order to compare them with the document being controlled. There is not a single security element that cannot be controlled by this device under various lights and angles. The forged document can be scanned (so-called freezing), and then the scanned part can be enlarged in order to determine the irregularities that prove the forgery by overlapping with the original. Such enlarged sections can be memorized, photographed and printed in colour on laser printers, in order to be attached to the criminal report as evidence. These devices are also highly valued in the circles of forensic experts for forgeries.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Interpol's database, SLTD, contains about 99 million records of reported missing travel and identification documents, and this database was searched 1.4 billion times in 2020 alone, with 120,372 positive matches or "hits" (Interpol). This indicates the need for broad international security activity and coordination in order to combat this form of criminal activity. In addition to the participation of the international community in the professional training of police officers for border control and equipping the border police with the necessary technical means to improve their work, international cooperation in combating criminal offences of forgery also takes place through data exchange.¹²

At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Europe, held on 7 December 2004, a decision was made obliging all member states to quickly report all cases of stolen and missing international travel documents so that this information would be available to all through the Interpol database, ASF-STD.¹³

With regard to forged documents, by the Decision of 27 March 2000 on improving the exchange of information to combat the forgery of travel documents,¹⁴ the EU Council established a system for the exchange of information between the Member States. Today, the system of international exchange of data on forged travel documents takes place through the so-called. Early Warning System (EWS), which includes Serbia. The EWS form has been standardized, through which all users of this system (in which all border police stations for the control of crossing the state border are connected) are acquainted with the newly discovered forged documents in electronic form. This system and data on the forms of detected

¹² Dostić, S. (2008), *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹³ OSCE, Ministerial Council, Decision No. 4/04 – Reporting lost/stolen passports to Interpol's automated search facility/stolen travel document database (ASF-STD), MC(12) Journal No. 2, Agenda item 8, 7 December 2004.

¹⁴ EU Council Decision of 27 March 2000 on the improved exchange of information to combat counterfeit travel documents, Official Journal L 81 of 1 April 2000.

forged documents can be seen on the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia Of Serbia.¹⁵

International cooperation in the detection of stolen, missing and forged documents is being improved on a daily basis, and the latest form has been achieved by connecting with the Interpol operational base, which has significantly facilitated and accelerated the handling of border crossings.

CONCLUSION

Between crime and the services that fight against it, there is an eternal struggle of outwitting in terms of promotion, on the one hand, modus and means of execution, and on the other hand, technical equipment and professional training for the suppression of criminal activities. The role of the border police in combating crime must not be underestimated, as the everyday reality warns us, in which criminal acts are revealed at numerous border crossings, but also between them, which are a serious threat to the security of citizens, legal and economic system. Crimes against legal traffic, which are mostly committed by forging documents, are most often accompanied by other cross-border crimes, such as various forms of smuggling - people, narcotics, weapons, goods, motor vehicles, animals, but also human trafficking (Dostić, 2007:150).¹⁶ Except for these purposes, forged documents serve perpetrators to attempt to leave the country to avoid criminal liability or serving a prison sentence. Criminality erased state borders a long time ago, its market is the world, and counterfeiters play a big role in that deleting borders. The growing importance of their role in international criminal frameworks forces them to find ways on a daily basis to bring forged documents as close as possible to the original ones. Therefore, the detection of forged documents at border crossings is often not possible without adequate

¹⁵ <http://www.mup/domino/falsifikati.nsf/index.html?OpenFrameSet>.

¹⁶ Dostić, S. (2007). Uloga granične policije u borbi protiv trgovine ljudima, *Bezbednost* 3/2007, p. 150.

technical equipment. Also, with or without specialized devices for detecting forged documents, education of police officers performing border control, not only in knowing the nature of crimes against legal traffic but also in terms of operative actions on detecting them, must be a permanent obligation.

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Legal acts

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Апстракт

Израда и употреба фалсификованих исправа је инкриминисана Кривичним законом Републике Србије као деликт који се угрожава правни саобраћај. Употреба фалсификоване путне исправе је најсофистициранији начин илегалног преласка државне границе, јер захтева примену високог нивоа технологије, самим тим и значајна финансијска улагања. Управо та чињеница је значајна приликом профилисања контролисаних лица на граничном прелазу. Имајући у виду да ова кривична дела најчешће иду уз нека друга, која по својој природи имају и међународни карактер, а пре свих кријумчарење људи и возила, и као најтеже трговина људима, појачава се значај успешности овог сегмента у укупној делатности граничне полиције. У складу са кривичноправним и криминалистичким аспектима проблема који је овде представљен, циљ овог рада је да укаже на улогу и значај граничне полиције у сузбијању овог и других злочина који се односе на израду и употребу фалсификованих докумената и, у складу са тим, потребу за посебном опремом и посебном специјалистичком обуком полицајаца на граничном прелазу како би успешно одговорили на сложене изазове у свакодневном раду.

Кључне речи: државна граница, фалсификат, лични документ, кривично дело, путна исправа