

Counterfeiting by PC foiled by central banks

CRIME | Leading hardware and software makers voluntarily adopt banks' deterrence system

BY ALEXANDER HIGGINS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

GENEVA — The world's major central banks have collaborated with leading hardware and software companies to keep personal computers from being used to make counterfeit money.

Work begun nearly four years ago by the so-called Group of Ten central banks resulted in the "counterfeit deterrence system," according to the statement from the Bank for International Settlements in Basel.

"Several leading personal computer hardware and software manufacturers have voluntarily adopted the system in recognition of the harm that counterfeit currency can cause their customers and the general public," said BIS, known as "the central bankers' central bank."

The BIS agreement became a source of public debate earlier this year when software maker Adobe admitted altering its Photoshop program to discourage counterfeiters. The issue has angered computer users who worry it will lead to censorship and future restrictions on other types of images, such as copyrighted or adult material.

An official familiar with the development of the technology said the system is based on special coding on bank notes, which especially is included

complete image of a bill. That driver is included in almost 90 per cent of the printers available today, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Adobe, maker of the widely used graphics program Photoshop, acknowledged in January that it quietly added the technology to the software at the request of government regulators and international bankers.

Photoshop now refuses to display images of coded currency and advises the user to consult rules against copying bank notes, the official added.

A third step that will be added later this year is software that will make scanners refuse to scan images of currency, the official said.

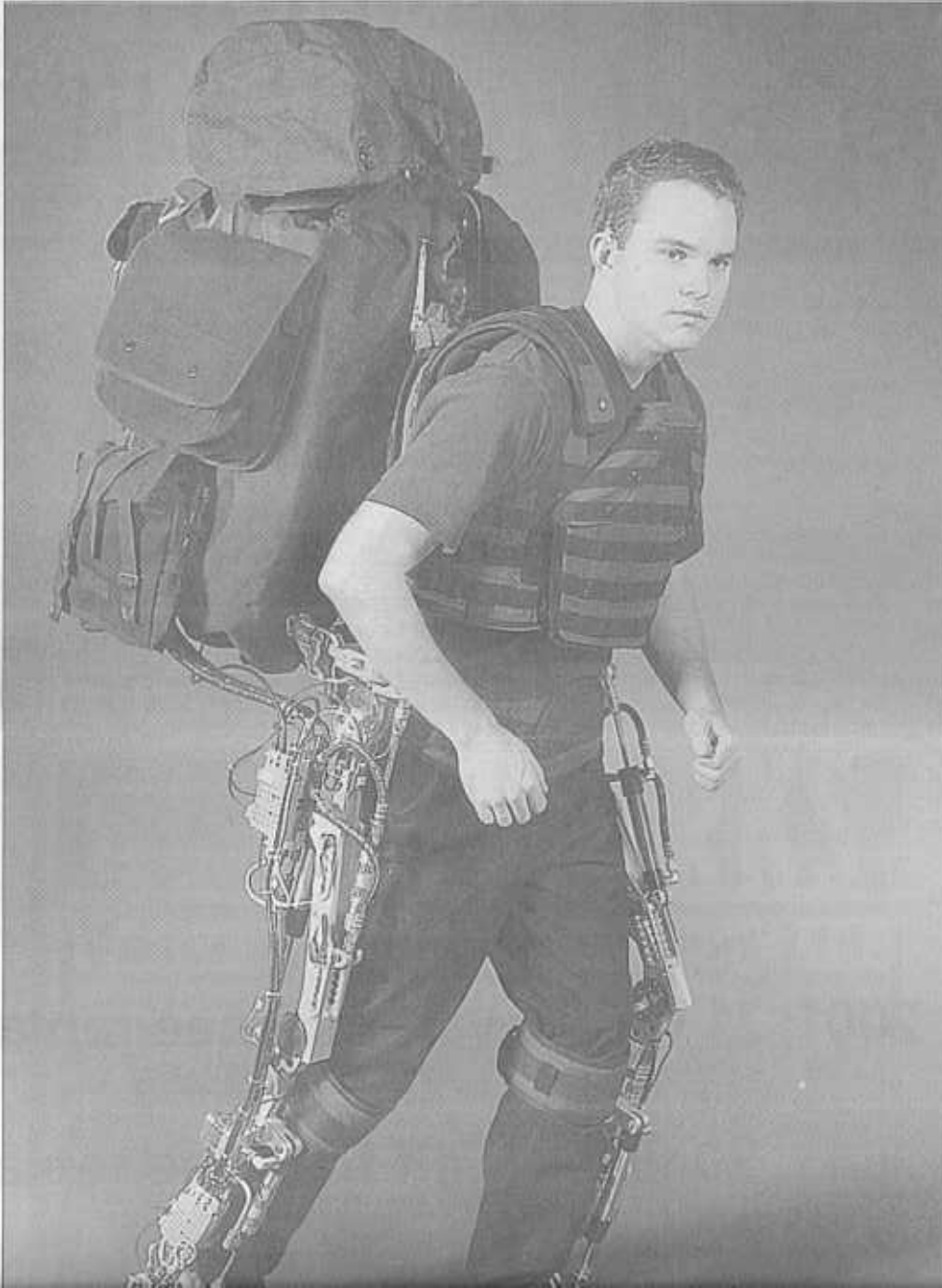
The bank statement said no one could use the technology to track the use of a personal computer or digital imaging tool.

"Consumers will not notice any difference in the performance or effectiveness of products equipped with this technology," it said.

The Group of 10 banks represent the world's largest economies. There are actually 11 countries in the group: the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Canada and Italy plus Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Altogether 27 central banks and note-printing authorities joined in the

To lighten the load on a long road



Unions seeking growth despite U.S. jobs drain

Employment crisis 'has become national disaster,' AFL-CIO president says

BY LEIGH STROPE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAL HARBOUR, Fla. — U.S. organized labour, facing setbacks in bargaining, membership and politics, is in the fight of its life to remain relevant to workers.

Labour leaders meeting at a luxury seaside resort here said they must do a better job of organizing new members to overcome steep losses in manufacturing and the movement of white-collar jobs overseas.

"The fact is that union membership hasn't kept up with job loss," AFL-CIO president John Sweeney said.

"The jobs drain and the steady assault by the Bush administration has made a hard challenge harder. Manufacturing job losses in particular have socked not only our members but our industrial unions."

About 400,000 new members were organized last year, he said. But American union membership is at a modern low, with 12.9 per cent of the workforce belonging to unions last year. That's down from 13.3 per cent in 2002, according to the Labour Department's Bureau of Labour Statistics.

In the private sector, only 8.2 per cent of U.S. workers were union members last year.

American factories have lost 2.8 million jobs since President George W. Bush took office in January 2001. Over all, after job gains in other fields are added in,

ing hardware and software companies to keep personal computers from being used to make counterfeit money.

Work begun nearly four years ago by the so-called Group of Ten central banks resulted in the "counterfeit deterrence system," according to the statement from the Bank for International Settlements in Basel.

"Several leading personal computer hardware and software manufacturers have voluntarily adopted the system in recognition of the harm that counterfeit currency can cause their customers and the general public," said BIS, known as "the central bankers' central bank."

The BIS agreement became a source of public debate earlier this year when software maker Adobe admitted altering its Photoshop program to discourage counterfeiters. The issue has angered computer users who worry it will lead to censorship and future restrictions on other types of images, such as copyrighted or adult material.

An official familiar with the development of the technology said the system is based on special coding on bank notes, which currently is included only on major currencies.

Printer "drivers" — the software that makes printers work with PCs — recognize the code and refuse to print the

Adobe, maker of the widely used graphics program Photoshop, acknowledged in January that it quietly added the technology to the software at the request of government regulators and international bankers.

Photoshop now refuses to display images of coded currency and advises the user to consult rules against copying bank notes, the official said.

A third step that will be added later this year is software that will make scanners refuse to scan images of currency, the official said.

The bank statement said no one could use the technology to track the use of a personal computer or digital imaging tool.

"Consumers will not notice any difference in the performance or effectiveness of products equipped with this technology," it said.

The Group of 10 banks represent the world's largest economies. There are actually 11 countries in the group: the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Canada and Italy plus Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Altogether 27 central banks and note-printing authorities joined in the Central Bank Counterfeit Deterrence Group, the working group that developed the system, the BIS statement said.



Homayoon Kazerooni, director of USC Berkeley's Robotics and Human Engineering Laboratory, designed the Lower Extremity Exoskeleton to assist soldiers or firefighters bearing heavy loads over long distances. 'The design of this exoskeleton really benefits from human intellect and the strength of the machine,' Kazerooni says. The exoskeleton consists of mechanical metal leg braces that include a power unit and a backpack-like frame. The braces are attached to a modified pair of army boots and to the user's legs.

come steep losses in manufacturing and the movement of white-collar jobs overseas.

"The fact is that union membership hasn't kept up with job loss," AFL-CIO president John Sweeney said.

"The jobs drain and the steady assault by the Bush administration has made a hard challenge harder. Manufacturing job losses in particular have socked not only our members but our industrial unions."

About 400,000 new members were organized last year, he said. But American union membership is at a modern low, with 12.9 per cent of the workforce belonging to unions last year. That's down from 13.3 per cent in 2002, according to the Labour Department's Bureau of Labour Statistics.

In the private sector, only 8.2 per cent of U.S. workers were union members last year.

American factories have lost 2.8 million jobs since President George W. Bush took office in January 2001. Over all, after job gains in other fields are added in, net job losses in the U.S. economy have reached 2.2 million.

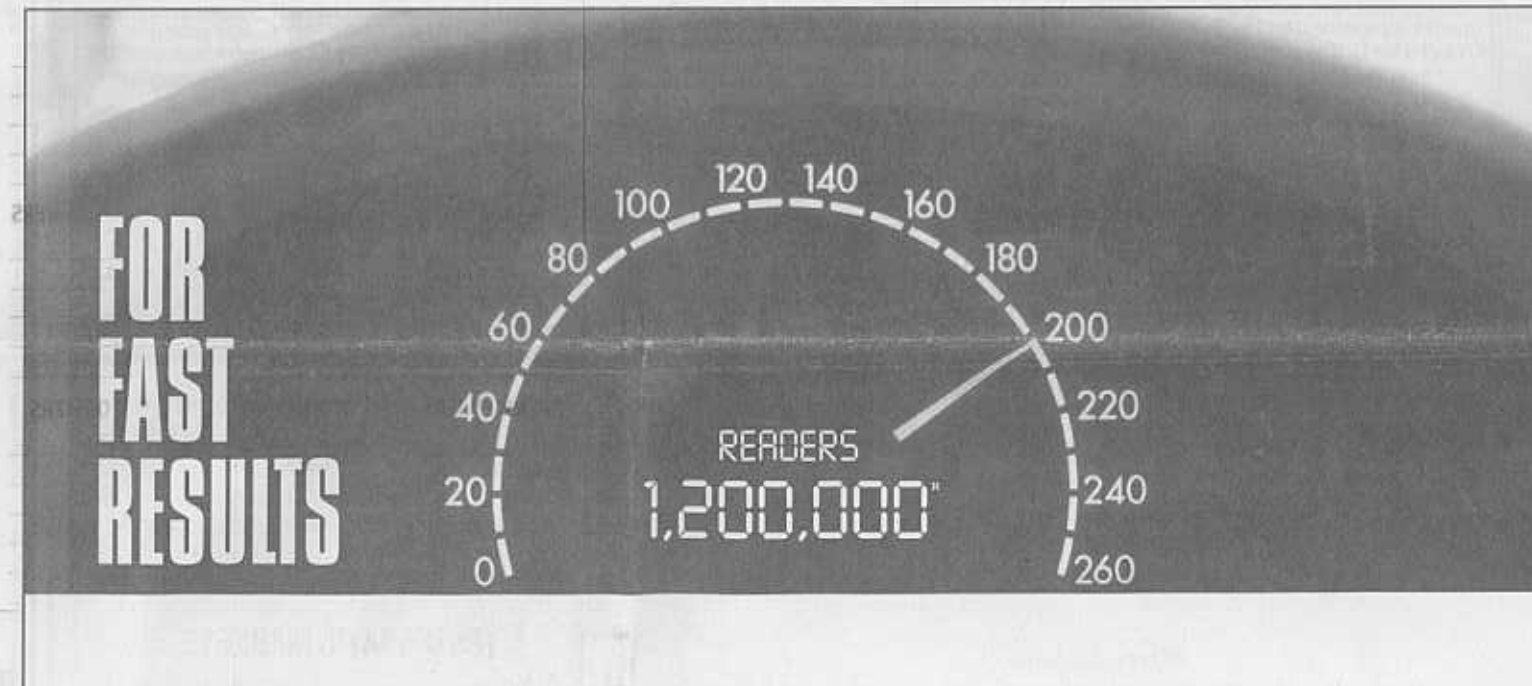
Meanwhile, labour is recovering from a brutal primary election that pitted unions against each other in their support of Dick Gephardt and Howard Dean, both of whom fizzled.

A dispute that union leaders called their most important campaign for the future failed this month to produce contract gains for grocery workers in California. The agreement requires employees to pay for health benefits for the first time and contains no raises. It also creates a two-tier system that provides lesser benefits to some workers.

At this week's meeting, "at the top of our list is the jobs crisis that has become a national disaster," Sweeney said.

Overseas outsourcing is becoming a hot issue this election year.

As many as 14 million white-collar jobs could be affected, either by being outsourced to other countries or hit by lower wage pressures, according to a study by the University of California, Berkeley.



Here's classified offer