

Interpol's Efforts to Counter the Global Threat of Terrorism

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Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of Interpol, I extend condolences to the Spanish people for today's horrific attack on innocent citizens. Let me summarize briefly the services that Interpol provides in the anti-terrorist area and in so doing to explain why I believe that Interpol has become essential to every effective national, regional, and global anti-terrorist effort.

Interpol – with 181 member countries – is uniquely positioned to address the issues raised by the threat of terrorism. Nevertheless, defining and expanding Interpol's role in the anti-terrorism efforts of our members has been difficult, given the nature and secrecy of terrorism investigations, even more so since September 11.

Investigations of terrorist organizations and activities are inherently sensitive given the nature of the threat, geo-political considerations, and concerns about sources of information. Moreover, terrorist investigations often involve both the law enforcement and intelligence communities, which operate in fundamentally dissimilar ways, with different legal standards and governing paradigms.

As a result, the major issue that confronts Interpol in this area is the extent to which countries are prepared to cooperate by sharing counter-terrorism information. At the General Secretariat we have adjusted our working arrangements and our services to try to meet this challenge. Our basic premise is that when countries actively participate in global anti-terrorist efforts, not just national or bilateral efforts, it reduces the risks of terrorists attacks conversely, not participating increases the risk.

Let me touch on six recent developments at Interpol that have strengthened our anti-terrorist efforts.

- First, Interpol has restructured the counter-terrorism program to focus on new projects and initiatives, such as the fusion task force, at the general secretariat in Lyon, France. Initiatives such as the fusion task force and with the same pragmatic approach have produced practical results such as the largest global database of suspected terrorists and forged and stolen travel documents.
- Second, Interpol has built a state of the art global communications system called i-24/7 that permits the instant exchange of sensitive police information 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Police can now send and receive photographs and fingerprints of suspected terrorists around the world in seconds; the i-24/7 system is expandable so it can be placed in any site or city in any country. This is an essential condition for the possibility for police co-operation.
- Third, Interpol has created a command and co-ordination centre that also operates around the clock – 365 days a year – where we can receive, process and deliver critical police information from 181 member countries in all of Interpol's four official languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish). This is an operational centre that is unique in the world.

- Fourth, Interpol has implemented an electronic system for what Interpol calls its red notices, which are the equivalent of a worldwide lookout system. This means if an arrest warrant is issued in member countries such as the UK, Argentina, Egypt, or china, then Interpol can create a red notice and circulate a notification that this person is sought by a country for any serious crime. The process for issuing red notices used to take months – it can now be done in less than a day.
- Fifth, Interpol has updated its policy on the crimes for which red notices can be issued. As of the 18 November 2003, Interpol red notices can be issued for the crime of “membership in a terrorist organization” even though the person sought for arrest have not yet committed any ordinary law crime. This is a new and important policy change that will help police around the world to keep citizens safer by helping police to apprehend and extradite more terrorists.
- Sixth, orange notices are security alerts to inform members and selected international organizations and entities of the characteristics of threats like letter bombs. Our first one was issued one week ago. It gave characteristics of a letter bomb addressed to the mayor of Florence with photos and a full description within hours after receiving this information from Interpol Rome.

I would like to expand on the first of these initiatives, namely Interpol's counter-terrorism program. Recognizing the difficulties in investigating terrorism cases in an international environment, we wanted our analytical work in this area to be more incisive and useful to member countries, so in September 2002, we created the Fusion Task Force (FTF). It was assigned to develop innovative ways to assist our member countries in their investigation of terrorism, without necessarily requiring that our member countries reveal their most sensitive information. We believed that Interpol's large country membership could be viewed as a strength rather than a weakness. We planned to use the diversity of our membership as a catalyst to collect information on a global basis that could never be collected on national basis. In particular, we sought to identify members of terrorist organizations and the logistical networks that support them. This approach succeeded. Our data mining projects have shown that organized crime continues to both provide logistical support and be an important funding mechanism for terrorist activity.

Interpol received a lot of data about ordinary crimes and terrorism. It goes into one big data base the FTF extracts information from the databases for the benefit of Interpol's member countries. We engage in proactive searches and analysis to retrieve, compare, and collate information that aids member countries in determining whether identified organizations, suspects or techniques pose a risk to them. We have produced 12 reports that include the results of this data-mining. One important concept, which we continue to this day, was that these reports would go to all 181 member countries and provide them with information to assist not only in ongoing investigations, but also establish their own counter terrorism programs. For many of our countries, that includes providing them with alerts, general intelligence on terrorist groups and members, and information that they can use to expand their own intelligence programs. The FTF concentrates on membership of selected terrorist organizations and their links to organized crime groups and criminal activity, such as the use of stolen passports and other identity and travel documents facilitating terrorism and the financing of terrorism, particularly by NGOs or charitable organizations. One new focus of the FTF since last summer has been Project Tent, which focuses on the collection of information on individuals who have attended terrorist training camps.

We have more than 110 countries actively participating in one way or another in our counter terrorism program and we've more than tripled our files on individual terrorists listed since 2001, from 412 suspected terrorists to 1595 person files entered into our database at the end of 2003. Messages to the FTF have actually come from more than 90 countries, with information on terrorists representing 50 different nationalities.

Unfortunately, due to the sensitivity of information in ongoing terrorism cases, I cannot tell you all of the successes we are currently experiencing within the terrorism field. What I can say is that one of our successes has been to increase level of intelligence sharing among countries, particularly as the FTF set up a network of police officers directly involved in the fight against terrorism spread over five continents. As an example, we have had great success in receiving both intelligence and cooperation in ongoing investigations in such diverse countries as Algeria, Libya, the UK, Kenya, the United States, Belgium, Mali, France, Italy, Turkey, Morocco, Iran, Lebanon, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Croatia, Portugal, and the list could go on and on.

Because of the success of the program the Fusion Task Force was merged with our Public Safety and Terrorism sub directorate in August 2003. In the past six months we have initiated regional projects for Africa, Central Asia, South America, and Southeast Asia. These projects are designed to both assist in capacity building and training in the region, and also to give analytical support for that region regarding specific terrorist groups.

We have just issued a terrorist arrest report for 2003. The collection of this information and the publishing of this compilation has led to an increased reporting of not only of terrorists arrested, which has added to our database, but we have also collected photographs, fingerprints, and tracked emerging trends and travel patterns.

Another new initiative is Project Dirty Bomb. In co-operation with the US Department of Energy, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Customs Organization, we are compiling a detailed assessment of information relative to the theft and diversion of nuclear and radiological materials. We have also started a pilot project for several countries with the U.S. Department of Energy to provide them with radiation detection instruments and training in the use of this equipment.

All of these initiatives have the same specific objectives in mind –

- Increase information on terrorism groups and assist countries on the identification of suspected terrorists operating in their countries;
- Build member countries capacity with training and analytical support to counter emerging terrorism threats;
- Support member countries in investigating terrorist incidents;
- And assist in the development of better liaison between law enforcement, customs, intelligence services and the military.

The terrorist threat evolves and changes continuously. Law enforcement therefore must constantly develop its understanding of terrorists, their organization, and their infrastructure. The majority of terrorist groups have developed transnational associations and capacity across a range of activities including arms, financing, recruiting and training. In all cases it is the increasingly transnational and

globalized nature of terrorist activity that poses challenges to national criminal police administrations. The more knowledge authorities have about all aspects of the terrorist threat, the better equipped these authorities will be to counter them.

It is a cliché, but nonetheless true, that police forces throughout the world must co-operate in order to counter regional and global terrorism. Interpol provides the tools on which that co-operation depends.

What I have heard today is that we also have an enormous potential for co-operation with international organisations. I have talked with several of you about the possibility for increased co-operation. I encourage others to think about co-operating with Interpol – with one caveat however. The limit on our current resources means that we may not be able to respond right away.