.SIAK-Journal – Zeitschrift für Polizeiwissenschaft und polizeiliche Praxis

INTERPOL's Strategy for Combating Transnational Terrorism

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Terrorism has changed and evolved in recent years. Terrorist acts are no longer sporadic occurrences that only take place in conflict zones, but have become more frequent acts that can happen anywhere. The increasing ease of international travel is key to the spread of terrorism. At the forefront of addressing transnational terrorism is INTERPOL, the world's largest international police organization. Its tools and services assist police around the world in identifying and locating terrorists, and offering support following a terrorist attack. Among INTERPOL's most effective tools for identifying terrorists are its criminal databases, particularly those of DNA and fingerprint data; and its system of international police alerts called notices, particularly those alerting to imminent threats, wanted persons or individuals subject to United Nations Security Council sanctions. If a terrorist attack does occur, INTERPOL can send an Incident Response Team of experts to assist local police with the investigation. To address specific terrorism-related issues, INTERPOL created the Fusion Task Force, with six regional groups to examine trends and focus on concerns particular to each region. Acknowledging the growing threat of an attack using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons, INTERPOL has expanded its CBRNE Prevention Programme. Since terrorists are vulnerable when crossing international borders, INTERPOL has developed a comprehensive border management strategy that seeks to extend technological access to its databases directly to authorities at airports and other borders. By searching nominal and passport information against the data contained in INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database, police can instantly determine if a traveler is attempting to use a fraudulent travel document, or if the person is wanted by a national authority. A set of long-term training and capacity building programmes focus on counter-terrorism, and strong partnerships between INTERPOL and other regional and international organizations rounds out INTERPOL's expertise in this area.

TERRORISM: A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

At the beginning of 2011, the world was a vastly different place that has changed in ways that not even the most seasoned pundits envisioned. Some of the most notorious leaders and terrorists are no longer alive[1], but efforts to combat terrorism must continue unabated nonetheless.

During the past decade, we have witnessed a great shift in the nature of terrorism, and the problem has become firmly entrenched. Just consider: attacks in Madrid, London and Stockholm left the world surprised yet

again by the seeming capacity of terrorist individuals or groups to strike anywhere, at any time. "Home-grown terrorism" has become a household term (Thachuk et al. 2008). Citizens know they cannot continue to believe that terrorist violence is simply a threat plaguing far-off parts of the world with active conflicts, but can impact their daily lives at any moment. Quite the contrary: we realize the world is now open terrain, and that new terrorist groups, organizations and affiliations are sprouting up in unexpected places and with increasingly sophisticated modus operandi.

In our globalized world, the effortlessness of crossing borders and sharing information nearly instantaneously are exploited by terrorists. As an unexpected and perhaps even ironic example of terrorists embracing new technology and using it to their advantage, Al-Shabaab, operating out of famine-ridden Somalia, has a Twitter account (Allen 2011).

As the world's largest international police organization, INTERPOL has taken the lead in addressing transnational terrorism. By adhering to its mission of "preventing and fighting crime through enhanced international police cooperation", INTERPOL enables police worldwide to work together and provides access to the tools and services necessary for them to do their jobs effectively[2].

Because INTERPOL essentially plays a support role, it is not always easy to comprehend its significance, but it is crucial to successful law enforcement efforts in preventing terrorism, disrupting terrorists' movements and apprehending perpetrators of terrorist acts. INTERPOL's operational tools, services and programmes provide a unique platform for the worldwide fight against terrorism. The Organization's global criminal databases can help to identify terrorists and their means, while its system of notices, or global alerts, are used to

Source: INTERPOL

Figure 1: INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon

locate and apprehend them. Programmes such as the Fusion Task Force and comprehensive CBRNE initiative provide operational and investigative support, backed up by a solid capacity building regime to ensure that police worldwide are equipped with the skills to make the best use of it all.

IDENTIFICATION OF TERRORISTS: GLOBAL DATABASES

Global databases of criminal information form a cornerstone in the fight against international terrorism (INTERPOL 2012). INTERPOL hosts numerous such repositories, including databases of nominal information, particularly on international fugitives and suspected terrorists; fingerprints; DNA; firearms; stolen and lost travel documents and more. All these databases are accessible via I-24/7, INTERPOL's secure global communications system that connects police in its 190 member countries to each other and to the General Secretariat in Lyon, France. They are the only such databases that exist on such a wide and international scale, an incontestable added value that only INTERPOL provides to the global law enforcement community.

With its network of member countries submitting new data into its databases on a daily basis, INTERPOL has amassed a vast collection of criminal information on

individuals, wanted international fugitives and individuals suspected of terrorist activities. The databases are multi-character, enabling member countries to provide and search information in a wide range of languages. Countries can submit queries and receive nearly instant notification of the results. INTERPOL allows countries to place restrictions on their data and who can view it, thereby providing flexibility regarding sensitive information.

In the field of forensics, which is widely regarded as one of the most reliable methods of identifying a terrorist (Committee on Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Sciences Community 2009), INTERPOL's fingerprint database currently holds more than 172,600 sets of prints and crime scene marks from 174 countries[3]. The database has grown tremendously in both size and usage in recent years, as the Organization upgraded its technology to facilitate the comparison of prints and enlarge the database's capacity.

The value of this database is incontrovertible: in 2012 alone, more than 1,100 submissions matched with entries already in the database, aiding investigations worldwide. On a strategic level, INTERPOL is dedicating concerted efforts to further augment the database's content. For example, ongoing projects are seeking to obtain fingerprints (as well as other identifiers and evidence) from foreign nationals fighting in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

Similar to the fingerprint database, INTERPOL's DNA database is another powerful forensic tool that increases annually in terms of profiles and therefore its ability to assist law enforcement worldwide in identifying suspects and solving crimes. As with fingerprints, one search of INTERPOL's DNA database compares a record against data contributed by many national law enforcement agencies – an efficient use of resources to obtain reliable police infor-

mation. At the end of 2012, the database contained more than 136,000 DNA records, which were searched by police more than 19,000 times during the year.

NOTICES: INTERNATIONAL POLICE ALERTS

Working in parallel to the databases is INTERPOL's system of colour-coded notices, which are international alerts used by police to share critical crime-related information. The most well-known of these is undoubtedly the Red Notice, though it is often incorrectly referred to as an "international arrest warrant". In reality, a Red Notice is an international wanted persons alert that is based on a valid national arrest and/or extradition warrant. The authorities of the country where the subject is wanted can request that the individual be arrested or detained, but that is subject to the national laws in the country where the subject is located. Some countries choose to treat a Red Notice as an arrest warrant; others do not.

Source: INTERPOL

Figure 2: Copy of a Red Notice

Aside from the Red Notice, INTERPOL has a wide array of eight different types of notices, each tailored to a particular usage. Regarding terrorism, the most pertinent are the Red Notice, the INTERPOL-UN Security Council Special Notice and the Orange Notice.

Of the 29,451 currently valid Red Notices, including 8,136 issued in 2012, some 1,600 include terrorism-related offenses. Extracts of approximately 10,000 Red Notices have been made available by the issuing countries and can be searched by the general public on INTERPOL's website. This is an important source of information, as INTERPOL receives daily tips from the public on the whereabouts of wanted fugitives.

Building upon INTERPOL's capacity to disseminate notices to member countries and international tribunals, in 2005 the Organization formally joined forces with the UN Security Council in a joint endeavor: the publication of Special Notices for individuals and entities subject to sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council concerning Al-Qaida, the Taliban[4] and Liberia. The INTERPOL-UN Security Council Special Notice alerts law enforcement that an asset freeze, travel ban and/or arms embargo applies to an individual or entity. Currently, 365 Special Notices are posted on INTERPOL's public website.

The notice is one of several forms of cooperation INTERPOL has with international bodies in the field of international justice. It also works closely with the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the Special Court for Liberia, which can request Red Notices for individuals wanted for committing crimes in their jurisdictions, notably war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 1998).

In September 2011, at the height of the search for Muammar Gaddafi and on the request of the Prosecutor for the ICC, INTERPOL issued a Red Notice for his arrest for alleged crimes against humanity, including murder and persecution. Similar Red Notices were also issued for his son Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi and former director of military intelligence Abdullah Al-Senussi.

INVESTIGATIVE AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT TOOLS

Notices are not only key to the identification of criminals, but also for a second level of support – operational and investigative services. Here too, INTERPOL has developed a robust programme, including tailored tools and services, regional initiatives and expertise in forms of terrorism that require a dedicated approach, such as the prevention of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism.

Prison breaks by definition imply the escape of convicted criminals, and in many instances these can include terrorists. INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble has lamented that "Unfortunately, there are no established protocols at the national level in most countries to alert the police internationally when a prison break occurs", and this presents an unnecessary danger to the public (INTERPOL 2008). An effective way to disseminate this information is by issuing an INTERPOL Orange Notice, which serves to warn of an event, person, object or process representing an imminent threat and danger to persons or property. Orange Notices can be circulated globally or regionally, to law enforcement only or to the public at large.

Case in point: when the Taliban in April 2011 succeeded in allowing nearly 480 prisoners to break out of a prison in Kandahar, Afghanistan, INTERPOL's tools and services, i.e. our I-24/7 global communications system and our Notices, were put into action almost immediately. At the request of the INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) in Kabul, the Organization was able to publish Orange Notices for 417 of the escapees, some of whom were members of the Taliban.

The basis for the global alerts was provided to the INTERPOL General Secretariat thanks to a programme established between NCB Washington and NCB Kabul regarding information sharing on terrorism-related issues.

The vital identifying information was exchanged between the two countries and the INTERPOL General Secretariat via the I-24/7 network, an excellent example of international police cooperation through INTERPOL's channels. The notices were ultimately published by the Organization's Command and Coordination Center in INTERPOL's four official languages – Arabic, English, French and Spanish – and circulated to all member countries, ensuring that the information reached the widest possible law enforcement audience as quickly as possible.

As previously mentioned, Orange Notices can also be used to alert law enforcement to dangerous objects such as bombs or firearms. A recent example illustrates the added value INTERPOL provides in such cases.

On 7 December 2011, a letter bomb was sent to the Frankfurt, Germany headquarters of Deutsche Bank, addressed to the bank's Chief Executive Officer Josef Ackermann. It was allegedly sent by the Italian anarchist group "Federazione Anarchica Informale" (FAI).

INTERPOL established links between this case and similar previous attacks committed with explosives, compared the most recent findings with other Orange Notices and shared the information with the German NCB in Wiesbaden. With the assistance of NCB Wiesbaden, INTERPOL's Command and Coordination Center rapidly published an Orange Notice with details of the letter bomb and circulated it to law enforcement in member countries.

INTERPOL's 24/7 operational capacity also enables it to rapidly deploy experts to assist with crisis situations, such in the aftermath of a terrorist incident. The first INTERPOL Incident Response Team (IRT) was deployed in October 2002 to Indonesia following a terrorist bombing on the island of Bali. Since then, the Organization has deployed more than 70 teams, 20 of them for terrorism-related incidents. The following are two examples that garnered worldwide attention.

In July 2010, during the finals of the FIFA World Cup, Al-Qaida struck a restaurant in Kampala, Uganda where fans were watching the match on television. The suicide bombing left more than 70 people dead and around 70 others injured.

Upon the request of the Ugandan authorities, INTERPOL deployed an IRT to the country to assist with the investigation. The team comprised a regional terrorism expert, two disaster victim identification experts, a data/communication expert and a regional criminal intelligence analyst. The deployed experts used the physical remains of the bombers to reconstruct photos of their possible appearances. INTERPOL then circulated Black Notices (alerts to seek information about unidentified bodies) in a bid to identify the attackers.

The world was left nearly speechless by the multiple attacks in November 2008 that struck Mumbai, India and left more than 190 people dead and some 300 others injured. INTERPOL deployed IRT teams to Mumbai and New Delhi in India, and to Islamabad in Pakistan at the request of the authorities concerned.

INTERPOL assisted in the massive investigation by conducting searches of its databases, which led to nearly 40 possible matches, and the subsequent issue of three Red Notices and one Blue Notice plus 13 INTERPOL diffusions (less formal alerts) for wanted terrorists and fugitives. The Organization also ensured active follow-up on several important investigative leads in other countries, including in Europe.

FUSION TASK FORCE

To address region-specific terrorist groups and terrorism matters in a global context, INTERPOL created a Fusion Task Force in 2002. Today, more than 167 countries participate in the six regional task forces that meet annually and bring together specialists to exchange information, examine trends in each region and discuss case studies. These working groups provide an operational basis from which to launch investigations, with the aim of ultimately dismantling terrorist networks.

In 2011, in the framework of Project Kalkan, the group which focuses on Central and South Asia, one of Saudi Arabia's most wanted individuals and the subject of an INTERPOL Red Notice issued in 2009 at the country's request, was located and arrested in Turkey. In addition to issuing the Red Notice, INTERPOL helped confirm the individual's identity via fingerprints and photos exchanged through I-24/7 channels. It is interesting to note that, upon his arrest, the suspected terrorist was carrying the passport of another individual, who also happened to be the subject of a Red Notice for a terrorism-related offense.

Every year, the number of Fusion Task Force contact officers who are part of the INTERPOL network increases. In 2002, the programme began with 44 contact officers. Presently the number stands at 277, coming from more than 120 countries in all regions of the world, and is still growing. Recent increases are largely credited to the development of Project Baobab in East, West and Southern Africa. Through the project, INTERPOL has been able to provide increased and tailored support to African law enforcement faced with terrorist activity. Considering the increasing threats posed Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and other groups, the need could perhaps never be greater.
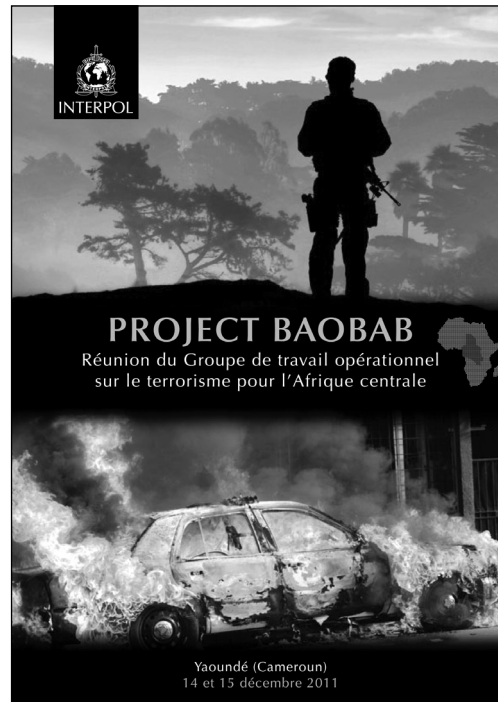
Figure 3: Project Baobab

Since October 2010, under the auspices of Project Baobab, INTERPOL has held four specialized working group meetings, one in each region of sub-Saharan Africa, bringing together dedicated counter-terrorism investigators[5]. The aims of the meetings are three-fold:

▶ To share INTERPOL terrorist threat assessments and other analytical information;
▶ To demonstrate how transnational case-specific information can be shared via INTERPOL;
▶ To enhance the contact amongst participating law enforcement.

Future meetings will continue to build upon this momentum and ensure that as many officers in the region as possible are educated on the latest counter-terrorism strategies and best practices.

CBRNE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

INTERPOL has also developed specialized programmes led by international experts

to help prevent and respond to instances of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear terrorism, or attacks involving explosives.

Scenarios of CBRNE terrorist incidents vary and require sophisticated means, and not all terrorist groups have the capability or resources to launch such an attack. But the eventuality of a mass casualty attack using chemical, radiological or other such materials, as well as the destruction it would cause, would be catastrophic and therefore cannot be ignored by the law enforcement community (McHale 2012).

INTERPOL has a long-standing experience in the field of bioterrorism. Since 2005, the Organization has carried out a series of prevention and response training courses across the globe and published pre-planning and response guides in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian. Project Geiger, launched in 2005 and now a joint initiative with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), focuses on analysing data and identifying trends, facilitating information exchange, institutional and international capacity building, and supporting member countries to prevent and respond to the threat of nuclear trafficking and terrorism. It includes a database containing more than 2,500 cases related to nuclear and radiological smuggling.

Building on this experience, INTERPOL launched a comprehensive CBRNE Programme in 2011, with the financial help of a multi-year grant from the Alfred P. Sloane Foundation. There are three main pillars of INTERPOL's programme strategy in this field: intelligence analysis, prevention programming and operational support services. With prevention of a CBRNE terrorist attack an essential element, activities of the programme include conducting threat assessments and analysis; increasing the awareness of national law enforcement agencies of CBRNE issues; delivering train-

ing sessions; and helping member countries create national prevention strategies.

With its expertise and global outreach, INTERPOL serves a unique role by bringing together the various agencies that each have an essential role in preventing a CBRNE attack, and enhancing their capacity to respond to such an attack. Partners in this field include the IAEA, the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Europol and the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

TRAINING: MERGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Training and capacity building are fundamental, not only to the CBRNE Programme but to all of INTERPOL's activities. Since establishing a training directorate in 2007, INTERPOL has developed a comprehensive set of capacity building and training tools for law enforcement worldwide. Operational training courses cover all specialized crime areas, including terrorism, as well as the use of investigative support tools such as forensic techniques and the use of INTERPOL's databases.

INTERPOL is presently engaged in a major, three-year multi-phase capacity building project on counter-terrorism focusing on Asia, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions. These training programmes will bring together counter-terrorism experts, as well as members of INTERPOL's NCBs, Regional Bureaus and the General Secretariat. Courses already completed include a two-week training course on implementing the UN Security Council Sanctions against Al-Qaida and the Taliban, held at the Regional Bureau in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and a train-the-trainer course on the use of INTERPOL notices in terrorist-related incidents, held at the General Secretariat in Lyon.

The project will also provide technical equipment to certain participating count-

ries, serving to enhance their access to INTERPOL's tools and services by allowing them to connect to I-24/7 from border points and other remote locations.

EFFECTIVE BORDER CONTROL STRATEGIES

To connect the tools and services effectively together, it is crucial to consider their concrete, practical application in the field where terrorists are vulnerable when moving about – border control points. Throughout the world, there are numerous uncontrolled borders exploited by terrorists (Shelley/Picarelli 2002). In the European Union, with its open and fluid movement, it is particularly relevant that law enforcement remains vigilant at all points of entry.

Sound border control measures – whether at land, air or sea border points – are therefore essential to a successful counter-terrorism strategy. This is a strategic opportunity for law enforcement because terrorists are vulnerable to being identified when crossing borders. Law enforcement must therefore invest in ways to exploit those occasions to identify and stop terrorists. Here too, INTERPOL has developed a set of solutions.

The foundation of INTERPOL's border control services is its Stolen and Lost Travel Document (SLTD) database, created in 2002 in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. Today, the database contains more than 35 million documents from 166 countries.

In 2012, law enforcement around the globe made more than 733 million checks of this database. These queries yielded 31,884 detections of improper usage of travel documents. While this is indeed impressive, much more can and should be done. It is estimated that of the 1.1 billion international travelers in 2011, the travel documents of about 500 million people were not checked against INTERPOL's SLTD database. In the view of INTERPOL Secretary General Noble (Associated Press 2012), those are far too many instances of risk.

To complement the SLTD database, INTERPOL created another valuable source of information for border control: Travel Documents Associated With Notices (TDAWN). When member countries provide INTERPOL with the valid passport number of individuals subject to notices, that information can be checked through the TDAWN system. A simple query can provide a potential hit on about 16,400 subjects of Red Notices and 200 subjects of INTERPOL-UN Security Council Special Notices, if and when they travel using that passport. The message is clear: by registering documents in INTERPOL's global database and thereafter conducting systematic checks at border points, member countries can take an important step to secure their borders.

INTERPOL therefore actively encourages its member countries to deploy access to its tools and services at border control points. To facilitate this extension, INTERPOL created its FIND/MIND integrated solutions[6]. This technology enables frontline officers in the field to directly access the SLTD, TDAWN and other databases at any time and from any location, using either fixed or mobile connections depending on circumstances. Considering how quickly queues at international airports can grow, FIND/MIND's ability to respond to a query in just seconds makes it a truly efficient border control tool.

To date, 103 countries worldwide have deployed FIND/MIND[7]. Switzerland (2005) and France (2007) were among the first to connect to FIND/MIND and they remain among the top users of the SLTD database, along with the leading searcher, the United States, which connected to the system

in 2008 and made more than 221 million searches of the database in 2012 alone.

PARTNERSHIPS

To make efficient use of its expertise, avoid duplication and leverage resources, INTERPOL engages in partnerships with other regional and international organizations and law enforcement agencies. On the global level, INTERPOL has worked closely with UN bodies for many years. In addition to the various UN Sanctions Committees, it is actively engaged with the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and its Executive Directorate (CTED). On numerous occasions, INTERPOL's officers have joined the UN team to examine member countries' counter-terrorism strategies and adherence to UN resolutions pertaining to terrorism.

Regionally, Europol is a key partner. A Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed by the two organizations, and a joint operational action plan that foresees unprecedented cooperation in the area of terrorism was agreed (INTERPOL 2011). The African Union is another strong partner on issues related to terrorism and other specialized crimes, and the Organization also works closely with the Common-

wealth of Independent States (CIS) Anti-Terrorism Center in Central Asia.

A FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH

There is a general notion that counter-terrorism work requires a law enforcement approach which is different than that used to fight other forms of crime, or that terrorism-related information is somehow more "top secret" than information related to other crimes. One often hears the phrases "specialized units", "levels of confidentiality" or "caveats on sharing of information" when dealing with incidents of terrorism. While highly sensitive information and meticulous sharing of intelligence and evidence are inherent to counter-terrorism work, we see that for law enforcement, it still comes down to the most basic, traditional approach: the right information needs to get into the hands of the right officers at the right time.

Through its criminal databases, notices and other tools, INTERPOL has developed some of the key requisites for an effective counter-terrorism strategy which, when used to their fullest potential by member countries, continue to have a true and measurable impact on enhancing global security.

[1] *Alfonso Cano, leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), was killed in an anti-guerrilla operation in November 2011; Osama Bin Laden, killed May 2011; Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leader Anwar al-Awlaki, killed in September 2011.*

[2] *Further information about the organization can be found on its website: www.interpol.int.*

[3] *All data as of 31 December 2012, unless otherwise noted.*

[4] *Formerly the 1267 Sanctions Committee.*

In 2011, the UN Security Council divided the 1267 Committee sanctions regime into two distinct sanctions regimes: one concerning Al-Qaida (1267 and 1989 Committee) and one concerning the Taliban (1988 Committee).

[5] *5–6 October 2010 in Kampala, Uganda; 11–14 April 2011 in Dakar, Senegal; 12–14 July 2011 in Pretoria, South Africa; 14–15 December 2011 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.*

[6] *Fixed INTERPOL Network Database (FIND) offers access to INTERPOL's*

databases through the online integration and communication between existing national servers and the INTERPOL server, via the I-24/7 network. Mobile INTERPOL Network Database (MIND) offers 'offline' access to INTERPOL's databases for countries that, for whatever reason, cannot use the fixed connection of FIND.

[7] *Nineteen in the European Union. Three are in progress (Greece, Poland and Sweden). EU countries not connected: Hungary, Cyprus, Ireland, Luxemburg and Malta.*

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