

INTERPOL INTERNATIONAL



Connecting police – securing the world

Interpol is the world's largest international police organization, with 186 member countries. Created in 1923, it facilitates cross-border police co-operation, and supports and assists all organizations, authorities and services whose mission is to prevent or combat international crime.

The General Secretariat is located in Lyon, France and operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Police from almost 80 countries work together in any of the four official languages; Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Interpol also has six regional offices, in Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Kenya, Thailand and Zimbabwe, and a liaison office at the United Nations in New York.

Each Interpol member country maintains a National Central Bureau (NCB) staffed by national law enforcement officers. The NCB is the designated contact point for the General Secretariat, regional offices and other member countries requiring assistance with overseas investigations and the location and apprehension of fugitives.

Interpol's constitution prohibits 'any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character'. The intention is to facilitate international police co-operation even where diplomatic relations do not exist between particular countries. Action is taken within the limits of the laws existing in different countries and in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Interpol's three core functions

- 1 Secure global police communications services** – The ability of police to exchange data quickly and securely is a cornerstone of effective international law enforcement. Interpol developed the I-24/7 communications system which connects the General Secretariat, NCBs and regional offices, creating a global electronic network for the exchange of police information and providing member countries with instant access to Interpol databases and other services. Member countries are also being encouraged to expand access beyond NCBs to officers in the field to help prevent dangerous criminals and illegal goods from crossing their borders.
- 2 Operational data services and databases for police** – Interpol manages databases which give police worldwide access to information that can assist investigations or help prevent crime. They contain information on nominal data of criminals, fingerprints, DNA profiles, child sexual abuse images, stolen or lost travel documents, stolen motor vehicles and stolen works of art – all accessible through the I-24/7 system.
- 3 Operational police support services** – Interpol seeks to enhance the role of NCBs and regional offices and increase the General Secretariat's responsiveness to their needs. This includes the development of emergency support and operational activities centred on the organization's priority crime areas; public safety and terrorism, drugs and organized crime, trafficking in human beings, financial and high-tech crime, and fugitives.

CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION



Operational services and support

Command and Co-ordination Centre

Based at the General Secretariat, the Command and Co-ordination Centre (CCC) operates around the clock. It links the General Secretariat, NCBs and regional offices, and serves as the first point of contact for any member country faced with a crisis situation. CCC staff monitor open-source information and messages exchanged between member countries to ensure the full resources of the organization are available whenever and wherever needed. This can include the deployment of incident response teams or disaster victim identification teams to the sites of terrorist attacks or natural disasters.

Database solutions

Interpol launched its stolen and lost travel documents database in 2002 after identifying a clear link between terrorist activities and the use of fraudulent travel documents. It now contains more than 12 million records from 100 countries and has helped police officers identify more than 2,000 travel documents as lost or stolen, including several high-profile cases involving suspected terrorists and war criminals. Interpol also works with member countries to develop technical solutions to expand access to the database beyond the NCB to officers at key locations such as airports and border crossings. A recent innovation enables front-line officers to access information in this database – and those of stolen motor vehicles and wanted persons – via member countries' national servers through a fixed or mobile integrated network database (FIND and MIND).

International notices

Each year, Interpol issues more than 3,000 notices, a key tool for international police co-operation. For wanted or missing persons, they contain identity details, physical description and, where possible, photographs and fingerprints. There are seven notices, which alert law enforcement authorities of:



Red – wanted persons



Blue – individuals of interest in relation to a crime



Green – warnings and intelligence about serious criminals



Yellow – missing persons



Black – unidentified bodies



Interpol-United Nations Security Council Special Notice – groups and individuals who are the targets of UN sanctions against Al Qaeda and the Taliban



Orange – potential threats from disguised weapons or other dangerous materials





Some key activities

Terrorism

Preventing and fighting terrorism is one of Interpol's highest priorities. The organization maintains lists of known or suspected terrorists, has implemented several projects in regions which are considered especially vulnerable to terrorist activity and brings together specialised officers to address the threat. The growing possibility of terrorists launching attacks with biological or chemical weapons presents a particularly urgent call for action. A dedicated unit at the General Secretariat works to implement anti-bioterrorism projects with the close co-operation of NCBs and regional offices.

Child sexual abuse images

Interpol's Child Abuse Image Database contains hundreds of thousands of images of child sexual abuse submitted by member countries. Using image recognition software, it can connect images from the same series of abuse or images taken in the same location with different victims. Investigators have been able to identify and rescue several hundred victims using the database, which has been endorsed by the G8 and other intergovernmental bodies.

Organized crime

Interpol runs two projects, Millennium and AOC (Asian Organized Crime), to tackle Eurasian and Asian organized crime groups, which are expanding their geographic reach and scope of activities. Project Millennium, developed at the request of the G8, provides analytical support and intelligence to member countries on transnational organized crime groups and their membership, hierarchy, areas of operation and modus operandi. To date, more than 4,200 names, organizations and companies related to Eurasian organized crime have been added to the Millennium database, while the newly-launched AOC is working to identify Asian organized crime groups operating throughout the world.

Cyber crime

Interpol is taking a leading role in educating and training global law enforcement officers in an effort to stay ahead of criminals who exploit new and emerging technologies for financial gain. Recent efforts have focused on 'phishing', where criminals try to acquire sensitive information such as passwords or credit card details through e-mail or instant messaging by pretending to be legitimate business representatives. Also of concern are BotNets, unsecured computers controlled by cyber-criminals which can stimulate the creation of malicious code or can be used for identity theft. Organized criminals can exploit these networks to perpetrate fraud, theft and extortion.

Fugitives

At the request of member countries, Interpol circulates electronic notices and 'diffusions', which contain identity details and judicial information on wanted persons. Unlike the more formal notice, a diffusion – a wanted persons message – can be sent immediately by an NCB to some or all member countries. Interpol issued more than 15,000 wanted persons notices and diffusions in 2005, resulting in more than 3,500 arrests. Interpol's co-operation with the International Criminal Court, the tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone helps to ensure that some of the world's most wanted suspected war criminals are brought to justice.

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