



People smuggling

A growing global crime

People smugglers procure, usually for financial or material gain, the illegal entry of an individual into a country of which he is neither a citizen nor a permanent resident.

Illegal migration and people smuggling are not new phenomena, but the last two decades have seen dramatic changes in their form. Globalization, rapid world population growth, environmental factors and increased urbanization have driven more migrants to seek better employment or living conditions, reduced the costs of migration and facilitated the organization of people smuggling.

People smuggling takes place on all scales but INTERPOL's focus is on organized networks, due to their international dimension. The modus operandi of criminal organizations is increasingly sophisticated, with numerous other crimes linked to people smuggling, such as identity-related crimes, corruption, money laundering and violence (including debt bondage and murder).

For organized crime groups, smuggling humans across borders is a low-risk, high-profit business. People can be smuggled by air, sea or land, often by complex routes which can change rapidly if detected by law enforcement officers. The welfare of the migrants is rarely a consideration; they are frequently subjected to inhumane conditions, and thousands die annually en route to their destinations.

Smugglers' fees are paid either entirely in advance, or partially upfront with the remaining amount settled by relatives in their home country, or by the migrants shortly after arrival. Loans are often provided by underground associations connected to the smuggler. Once payment for the smuggling operation is completed, the relationship between the illegal immigrant and the smuggler is generally terminated. People smuggling differs therefore from human trafficking, where the migrants are often exploited on arrival into another country, usually for forced labour or prostitution.

Dismantling the criminal networks

INTERPOL's unique position in the international law enforcement community enables it to assist in dismantling the criminal networks behind people smuggling. INTERPOL provides immediate operational assistance to its member countries using its extensive databases, criminal intelligence resources, training and technical expertise.

INTERPOL intervenes and engages with member countries where appropriate, shifting its focus to those geographical regions where people smuggling becomes most problematic as trends change.

Currently, Africa is a priority for INTERPOL following a recent surge of incidents where West African countries were found to be the source or transit states for people smuggling.

Enhanced assistance and focus are also being applied to Asia, as the region contains source, transit and destination areas for people smuggling syndicates.

INTERPOL



INTERPOL's resources

INTERPOL has developed additional tools which can facilitate the exchange of information among law enforcement officials in member countries and help co-ordinate action. The following tools are accessible to authorized users of I-24/7, INTERPOL's global police communications system:

- The Human Smuggling and Trafficking (HST) message provides a standardized format for reporting cases of trafficking between member countries and to INTERPOL's database.
- MIND/FIND technical solutions enable frontline law enforcement agencies dealing with people smuggling (border police, immigration) to receive instant responses for queries on stolen or lost travel documents.
- The INTERPOL Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database forms the basis of Project Dismantling Smuggling Networks (DSN), an integrated and enhanced approach to border security management which assists member countries in targeting smuggling activity across different types of crime.
- The International Contact Directory for People Smuggling Issues contains contact details for individuals responsible for people smuggling and illegal migration issues within INTERPOL National Central Bureaus around the world.

INTERPOL also hosts an annual Global People Smuggling Conference where key stakeholders can engage as part of a holistic strategy in combating the complex web of people smuggling issues.

International co-ordination

INTERPOL works closely with key bodies whose common mission is to combat people smuggling, including Europol, Frontex, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the International Organization for Migration, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.



www.interpol.int

Contact information

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For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the Interpol National Central Bureau in your country.