



## Drug trafficking

Large-scale drug abuse and the problems associated with it affect much of the world and continue to grow in certain regions. The situation has become ever more complex for several reasons, such as the opening of borders between many countries due to political and economic changes; the emergence of a more affluent class of drug abuser with higher disposable income to spend a so-called 'recreational' drugs; a rise in demand and availability for almost all types of controlled substances; and changes brought about by globalization and rapid communications. However, the affluent classes are no longer alone when it comes to substance abuse. Indeed, low income populations, previously associated with locally produced substances such as cannabis and khat, have now adopted other substances, such as crack cocaine and methamphetamine, on an alarming scale.

The drug trade affects almost all INTERPOL's member countries, be it in a capacity as producer, transit or destination country. Certain countries play a role as providers of essential chemicals and precursors for clandestine laboratories situated thousands of miles away. Over the years the transportation industry has unwittingly offered new opportunities to drug traffickers by developing cheaper and faster conveyances, and the law enforcement community has had continually to devise new counter-trafficking strategies.

The volume of illicit drug production, for instance more than 800 metric tonnes of both cocaine and heroin produced annually in a handful of countries, has provided criminal organizations with unprecedented opportunities to generate enormous profits which are at times used to finance other criminal or even political activities.

### *Enhancing international co-operation*

INTERPOL's primary drug intelligence role has been and continues to be the identification of new drug trafficking trends and criminal organizations operating at the international level and to alert INTERPOL National Central Bureaus (NCBs) to their criminal activities. Investigations into the production of illicit drugs and the street-level sale of drugs are handled by the relevant local and national authorities.

INTERPOL provides several types of support to national and international police bodies concerned with countering the illicit production and trafficking of controlled substances and precursor chemicals. For example:

- Collecting and analysing post-seizure data provided by member countries and national drug law enforcement agencies;
- Issuing drug alerts via I-24/7, INTERPOL's secure global police communications system, to warn the law enforcement community of unique cases, new trafficking techniques or emerging trends - within minutes, information and images can be distributed to NCBs all over the world and then shared with national drug law enforcement agencies;
- Producing analytical studies to highlight criminal links between reported cases;
- Running regional or global conferences on specific drug topics, to assess the extent of a particular drug problem, share the latest investigative techniques and strengthen co-operation within law enforcement communities;
- Organizing investigative training courses for national drug law enforcement agents.



INTERPOL also maintains close working relationships with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other international and regional organizations, such as the World Customs Organization, involved in drug-control activities.

### ***Projects and operational support***

INTERPOL's criminal intelligence officers focus on the most commonly used and trafficked narcotic drugs – cannabis, cocaine, heroin and synthetic drugs – as well as precursor chemicals and doping substances. Examples of ongoing projects are:

- ***Project Drug@net*** – to tackle the growing area of drug trafficking via the Internet.
- ***Project COCAF*** – to monitor commercial air routes trafficking cocaine between Africa and Europe. COCAF was initiated in 2006 and is believed to have contributed significantly to a marked decrease in trafficking between the two regions since mid-2008.
- ***Project White flow*** – the smuggling of bulk shipments of cocaine from South America to West Africa in private aircraft and sea freighters has revealed the prominent role played by organized crime groups. Project White flow aims to disrupt the supply routes, identify members of these criminal organizations and bring them to justice. Operation Cans, carried out in January 2009, co-ordinated the roles of police and magistrates in Europe and Nigeria and resulted in the arrest of two major cocaine traffickers in Nigeria.

INTERPOL also responds to and helps co-ordinate international drug investigations by organizing operational working meetings and dispatching expert teams to assist national investigators subsequent to a significant drug seizure (Incident Response Teams).

An IRT in July 2008 assisted police in Guinea Bissau following a cocaine haul from a seized plane. INTERPOL co-ordinated the investigative activities including checks in INTERPOL's databases, the issue of a Red Notice for the extradition of one of the pilots, the deployment of a canine unit and forensic analysis of phones and computers. The evidence collected by the IRT confirmed the involvement of a South American organized crime group and helped the authorities in Guinea Bissau build a solid case against the traffickers.



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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.*