EDITORIAL

Since our inaugural newsletter, the INTERPOL Firearms Programme has made many advances. The INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS) has grown in numbers and has started to show positive results as hits were recorded in the system. In this issue, we provide a glimpse of current and ongoing activities, iARMS project news and vital firearms-related issues.

The INTERPOL Firearms Programme provides National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and law enforcement agencies with useful tools and services to assist in investigating transnational crimes involving firearms, including iARMS, the INTERPOL Ballistic Information Network (IBIN) and the INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table (IFRT). Tremendous response has been received from all 190 INTERPOL member countries on how to access and use these tools to assist in information processing and investigations.

The success of any criminal database is determined by the system’s ability to help users to solve and link crimes which would otherwise not be connected. As a global records management system, iARMS has the ability to assist NCBs and law enforcement agencies to cooperate at the international level and also expedite firearm-related investigations at the national level.

I hope that the INTERPOL Firearms Programme newsletter will become a valuable information resource for all those engaged in the investigation of firearm-related crimes.

Jeffrey Stirling
Coordinator, Firearms Programme
INTERPOL General Assembly endorses iARMS

The 82nd INTERPOL General Assembly, which took place in Cartagena, Colombia in October 2013, passed resolution encouraging member countries to make optimal use of the iARMS system.

The resolution recognized the value of iARMS in allowing countries to instantly access, request and submit vital data on illicit firearms, and encouraged all member countries to make the most efficient use of the database as possible by promoting its widespread use by national law enforcement agencies. This includes entering data on all known lost, stolen, trafficked or smuggled firearms; ensuring all data is kept up to date; and promptly responding to requests for firearm trace information.

iARMS logs first ‘hit’

The iARMS system recorded its first hit in the summer of 2013, matching a firearm seized by police in Panama to one stolen in Costa Rica 18 months earlier. This positive result underlines the importance of sharing information on illicit firearms through INTERPOL’s networks, and has encouraged more countries to enter their data into iARMS.

Once iARMS uncovered the link between these two cases, authorities in Costa Rica and Panama were able to share information to help identify potential firearm trafficking routes between the two countries and the criminal organizations which could be involved. Without iARMS, police might never have discovered the link between the seemingly unrelated cases.

Since the first hit, iARMS has recorded three more hits and 327 international firearms traces have been answered, enabling law enforcement agencies around the world to communicate and share information on firearms investigations.

More countries connect to iARMS

Currently, 124 countries now have access to the iARMS database. More than 300,953 records have been created.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Countries connected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean and Central America</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East/North Africa</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>16</td>
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iARMS OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Meetings and Conferences

A total of 22 meetings and conferences were held during this period where iARMS was presented, notably the 5th Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects at the UN Headquarters in New York. Approximately 200 people from UN member countries attended this conference. iARMS information was distributed at the 10th Annual Heads of NCB Meeting in Lyon, where delegates were briefed on the latest activities and on-the-spot iARMS database training was conducted.

Training sessions

The Firearms Programme has held a number of training sessions for police worldwide, with the goal of enhancing their skills in the use of the iARMS database.

Portugal – training for 10 participants at the Police Training College in Lisbon, held at the request of the NCB. Focused on records creation, searches and trace request management.

European NCBs – second event for European NCBs, held at the INTERPOL General Secretariat. Some 18 participants attended from 17 countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, Norway, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain and Sweden.

Southern Africa – held at the INTERPOL Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, the training session gathered 26 participants from 12 countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

NCB France – A one-day training course was held for iARMS users at NCB Paris. A total of 10 participants from the Ministries of Interior and Justice, and the NCB attended.

Central Africa – iARMS users from six countries – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Togo – attended a training to assist NCBS with uploading data and sharing information in a timely manner.
INTERPOL Ballistic Information Network (IBIN)

The IBIN network currently includes 16 countries: Barbados, Belize, Denmark, Ecuador, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hong Kong (China), Ireland, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. Along with Greek IBIS data from 1997–2012. IBIN now contains some 262,000 records. In addition, Mexico and Swaziland have recently committed to join IBIN, and we expect other countries will follow in 2014. IBIN has already proven its value by enabling law enforcement agencies to carry out international criminal investigations that they would not have otherwise realized were connected. IBIN currently has 31 confirmed hits: 26 between Portugal and Spain, 3 between Sweden and Denmark, 1 between Sweden and Norway and 1 between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. During 2013 and 2014, in 13 high-profile international criminal cases, INTERPOL provided substantial assistance between IBIN and non-IBIN members, such as an effort to identify possible links between ballistic evidence recovered at these crime scenes and other transnational crime scenes.

International Standards on Small Arms Control promote the use of INTERPOL resources

In 2012, the United Nations developed International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) which provide practical guidance to policy-makers and practitioners on putting in place effective controls on small arms and light weapons. The standards are framed by existing global agreements designed to curb the illicit small arms trade and build upon best practices developed at the regional level. INTERPOL contributed technical expertise to assist the UN in developing the standards, which highlight and promote the use of key INTERPOL resources including the IFRT, iARMS, IBIN, INTERPOL Orange Notices, our I-24/7 secure global police communications system, related criminal databases and online firearms identification training.

Workshop on tracing illicit small arms and light weapons

INTERPOL co-hosted a workshop on illicit small arms and light weapons in Istanbul, Turkey in May, along with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. Some 25 participants from Belgium, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and United Kingdom participated in the workshop, as well as partner organizations. Participants received a live demonstration of iARMS and its tracing capabilities, and were able to practice creating records and trace request management through the iARMS training portal. Conflict Armament Research also presented its iTrace system for tracing conflict weapons.

INTERPOL hosts Crossfire meeting

INTERPOL hosted the Crossfire meeting in November 2013. The meeting brought together firearms experts and investigators from the following countries: Belgium, Finland, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Crossfire focuses on preventing firearms trafficking and smuggling between European countries and is a strong partner of INTERPOL.

Upcoming Events

iARMS Users Database Training for European NCBs 13-14 November 2014 Lyon France.