



Opening Address

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International Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Leaders Forum

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Excellencies,
Generals,
Heads of Police Forces,
Distinguished Representatives from the United Nations and partner international organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is a great pleasure to be standing here, in the prestigious Australian Parliament House in Canberra, addressing such a distinguished gathering.

Allow me to first recognize the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Department of Defence for their wonderful hospitality and immense effort, which allowed this important Forum to happen.

As I speak, I see before me astonishing diversity in terms of expertise; working cultures; regions and nations.

Yet a single goal brought us together: stopping terrorists from harming those we have all sworn to protect, by combating one of its weapons of choice. One we have seen deployed – just as lethally – in too many battlefields and too many of our streets: Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

In my opening remarks, I intend to cover three main points:

First, why INTERPOL perceives the terrorist threat - and the IED threat in particular – as demanding urgent, decisive and coordinated international action;

Second, how INTERPOL has been and will be assisting member countries in that action;

And finally, why this Forum is a unique first step in taking our respective determination and efforts, and aligning them to achieve maximum impact in the field, worldwide.

Indeed, the terrorist threat is more imminent and complex than ever.

We see conflict zones around the globe proliferate, expand and – even more alarmingly – establish links between each other. Multiple fronts are available to transnational groups to strike, gain visibility and attract recruits worldwide.

The result is a landscape where approximately 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters have travelled to join groups such as ISIL from more than 100 nations; where terrorist propaganda can reach literally any connected individual in the world by a single click or swipe; where self-radicalization and lone wolves have turned from theory into action within our communities – as the events of Sydney reminded us last December.

Furthermore, more and more groups, from Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa to Southeast Asia, are shifting allegiances to mimic this model.

In parallel, the potential seed of independent terrorist cells, lacking command and control structures, is rooted in returnees able to bring deadly skills back to their countries.

In short, the terrorist threat is becoming better concealed, more internationally mobile, and deadlier.

Unsurprisingly, these attributes are reflected in the weapons chosen by terror to strike. IEDs are a case in point.

Images of a crowded market, security establishment, or a peaceful demonstration in the aftermath of an IED blast have unfortunately become part of almost every day's news.

Egypt, Thailand, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Philippines, Turkey, Indonesia, Iraq, Chad, Kuwait, Cameroon, Afghanistan – the list of recent attacks is too long, demonstrating of the global scale of the issue.

Terrorist groups scattered across different regions employ quasi-identical modus operandi in their IED attacks.

This points to one conclusion: experienced terrorists are crossing borders, and so is their ability to spread their know-how, thanks to the nexus to the rise of the foreign terrorist fighters' phenomena, and easy access to knowledge through the Internet.

More disturbingly, we see them refine their tactics. In select cases, the toxic chemical chlorine was employed in IED attacks, elevating the magnitude of the threat to unprecedented new levels.

Against this backdrop, I believe that urgent international action is needed, and I believe it must stem from close cooperation among national security and law enforcement agencies, across silos and national borders.

A key precondition to this is the existence of a neutral, trusted global platform allowing for such agencies to come together, share intelligence and coordinate action, with both security and flexibility, and without ever losing control over their information.

That platform was conceived almost a century ago, when INTERPOL first came to life. And today, INTERPOL offers a global architecture supporting capacities on a local level with our 190 National Central Bureaus, on a regional level with our seven regional Bureaus, and with a global perspective, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, thanks to our three Command and Coordination Centres in Lyon, Buenos Aires and Singapore.

With the terrorist threat reaching unprecedented heights, the operational value of this platform prompted the United Nations Security Council to identify it as the global channel for information sharing against foreign fighters, through Resolution 2178 (2014).

We have since actively engaged member countries, to forge the trust needed for data to flow internationally. At the end of 2014, identifiers on 1,000 foreign fighters had been shared via INTERPOL – a figure destined to reach 4,000 less than a year later.

Yet no matter how large the volume of data in our possession, in order to make a difference it will still need to be made available to the right officer, at the right place, and at the right moment.

This points to the fundamental importance of building capacity worldwide to ensure access to INTERPOL's network to the frontlines.

I am referring to tools such as INTERPOL alerts – known as Notices and Diffusions – flagging suspected terrorists when in transit; or INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Document Database

(SLTD), allowing the screening of passengers who may be carrying revoked or fraudulently obtained passports.

These and other INTERPOL tools can be integrated into national border control systems, placing key information at the fingertips of immigration officials. And of course, the best strategy to maximize their impact is their systematic use - as recognized by the United Nations Security Council, the European Union and the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

I was also extremely pleased with the recent announcement by US Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson on the plan to require the use of the INTERPOL SLTD database to screen travellers crossing the borders of members of the United States Visa Waiver Program.

Indeed, information sharing, capacity building and the systematic deployment of that capacity in the field constitute the cornerstone of INTERPOL's model.

This applies to INTERPOL's efforts with regard to the specific threat of IEDs.

Since 2012, our Chemical and Explosives Terrorism Prevention Unit has been offering a comprehensive support package to assist police in member countries worldwide prevent and respond to the malicious use of chemicals and explosive materials.

An example is the Chemical Anti-Smuggling Enforcement Programme – or “CHASE” - a global effort to counter the international smuggling of chemical precursors used in the manufacture of explosives and IEDs.

With both its training and operational elements, CHASE increases the capacity of police, as well as customs, immigration and border security agencies to work both within and across borders in a multi-agency fashion.

On the information sharing side, in early 2015 INTERPOL launched the Watchmaker initiative.

Project Watchmaker provides operational and specialized support to all 190 member countries through the issuing of INTERPOL Notices and warning messages on individuals known to manufacture or employ IEDs.

Under the Watchmaker Initiative, INTERPOL has so far issued more than 600 Notices, including almost 300 Red Notices for wanted persons involved in IED incidents and 71 INTERPOL-United Nations Security Council Special Notices related to individuals targeted by UN Security Council sanctions regimes.

In parallel, INTERPOL Purple and Orange Notices – focused on *modus operandi* and objects presenting imminent threat to public safety - are issued to share technical information on IEDs, based on information directly provided and updated by member countries authorities.

Finally, over the past few years, INTERPOL has also been supporting diplomatic action in the fight against IEDs, by representing the global law enforcement community within the framework of the United Nations' Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and its “Group of Experts” focused on Protocol 2 in particular.

Out of these efforts, there are several key lessons drawn by INTERPOL which I believe are at the core of our gathering here today.

First, that invaluable experience and intelligence are readily available today, thanks to the dedication of those at the frontlines of counter-IED efforts, and thanks to you – their leaders.

Second, that to achieve the ultimate goal of preventing terrorists from using IEDs against your nations, this information must be mobilized effectively and systematically. Law enforcement and border security agencies must be alerted to the transnational movement of bomb makers, enabling action to be undertaken as most appropriate.

Let me provide you with a real-life example. The conviction, last May, of Anis Abid Sardar - a London cab driver with a past in the manufacturing of IEDs targeting US forces in Iraq in 2007.

Two months after that attack, Sardar's fingerprints were taken as he re-entered the United Kingdom via Heathrow Airport. Seven years later, FBI officials matched those same fingerprints on two other bombs that were recovered from the 2007 IED attacks.

Such is the power of information sharing. Yet this is only one example of what we could achieve together by synchronizing the efforts of civilian law enforcement, military and diplomatic channels to a comprehensive global response to the IED threat.

I believe the potential is even greater. A general consensus exists on the lack of a global coordination framework aligning the efforts of national and international stakeholders worldwide, against the IED threat. Indeed, a single, holistic strategic framework is still needed, to apply the "Whole of Government" approach to this challenge.

This is why we are gathered here today. To help bridge this gap between civilian law enforcement and military communities, and to forge new links between counter-IED and counter-terrorism efforts worldwide.

Let an ambitious vision guide us through this event. Not only to identify those responsible for the next blast; not only to make sure they are located and brought to justice; but most importantly, to successfully prevent another attack through intercepting the components necessary to build yet another IED.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the exceptional partnership between INTERPOL, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Department of Defence that this Forum showcases by excellence.

I wish you best of luck during the next few days, and I look forward to witnessing the fruitful outcomes of this Leaders Forum.

Thank you.