



INTERPOL's activities against the foreign terrorist fighter threat

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The phenomenon

Terrorist groups are increasingly radicalizing and inciting individuals worldwide to leave their homes and become foreign terrorist fighters, leveraging the Internet and social media for recruitment and creating a truly global security threat.

Individuals – often young people – are being lured from communities worldwide to travel to conflict zones in the Middle East to join terrorist groups operating primarily in Iraq and Syria, and increasingly in Libya. They sometimes utilize fraudulent identity documents to reach their destinations undetected. Those who return to their countries of origin pose even greater security risks, as they can exploit military skills they learned abroad to carry out attacks on their home soil.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178

In September 2014, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2178 recognizing INTERPOL's efforts against the foreign terrorist fighter threat through information sharing via its I-24/7 secure communications network, global databases and notices, in addition to its counter-terrorism efforts and procedures to track stolen and forged identity papers and travel documents.

The UNSC further encouraged INTERPOL to support national, regional and international measures preventing the transit of foreign terrorist fighters.

INTERPOL offers a range of activities, databases and services that support the fight against this global threat. INTERPOL's work in this area also addresses radicalized individuals who undertake terror plots in their home country.

INTERPOL: a global hub

INTERPOL's Counter-terrorism Fusion Centre is a global hub for intelligence on transnational terrorist networks shared by member countries worldwide. A dedicated project on foreign terrorist fighters was established in July 2013 to address this phenomenon.

Information sharing is key to identifying foreign terrorist fighters and preventing them from crossing borders. INTERPOL actively encourages member countries to exchange timely information via its secure channels, and, for example, has been working closely with its National Central Bureau in Washington, USA since 2006 against this threat.

The success of rapid information sharing is clear. In December 2014, three individuals – two men aged 18 and 27, and a 15-year-old boy – wanted in Spain on terrorism-related charges were arrested in Bulgaria at a border checkpoint with Turkey, just hours after INTERPOL issued an alert. They were believed to be heading to join insurgents in Syria.

Another individual wanted for terrorist offences was apprehended in Lebanon on his way to Syria in October 2014, thanks to Belgium's decision to issue an international alert through INTERPOL.

Collecting and analyzing information

INTERPOL currently holds database records of some 5,000 suspected foreign terrorist fighters contributed by 52 member countries – an increase of 500 per cent in the past year. The number of records of individuals suspected of all terrorist offences also increased by 500 per cent since 2002 to 12,000.

INTERPOL'S ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTER THREAT

From these records, dedicated analysis is delivered to INTERPOL's membership, combining, evaluating, and sharing intelligence on the capabilities, means, and emerging trends of foreign terrorist fighters.

INTERPOL's international alerts

Member countries provide information via INTERPOL's system of international police alerts to warn each other of suspected foreign fighters or terrorists. They remain in control of the data transmitted or stored via INTERPOL's files.

INTERPOL diffusions are the primary channel used by member countries to circulate restricted information. Issuing entities can select which other countries receive a diffusion, based on tactical and operational security needs. More than 2,100 diffusions for foreign terrorist fighters have been issued in the past two years.

When information needs to be circulated as widely as possible, INTERPOL's colour-coded notices are used:

- ▶ **Red Notices** are issued to all countries for individuals wanted by national authorities, seeking their provisional arrest with a view to extradition. Since 2013, some 670 Red Notices have been issued for suspected foreign terrorist fighters.
- ▶ **Blue Notices** are issued to collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a crime. **Green Notices** provide warnings and intelligence about persons who have committed criminal offences, while **Yellow Notices** help locate missing persons.

Border security: a line of defence

A robust border management programme is the first line of defence in preventing foreign terrorist fighters from travelling. INTERPOL offers a number of tools and services to help member countries enhance security at their borders, and works with national authorities to extend access to its I-24/7 secure communications network to border points to ensure these tools are accessible on the frontlines:

- ▶ **Nominal database** – holds personal data and criminal information of individuals wanted by a member country.
- ▶ **Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database** – containing more than 52 million records from 169 countries, this database allows border officials to immediately determine if a travel document is registered as lost or stolen.

- **Travel Documents Associated with Notices (TDAWN)** – contains information on travel documents linked to individuals who are subject to an INTERPOL notice.

Operational exchange

INTERPOL brings together investigators for operational exchange in a working group on foreign terrorist fighters. Comprising member countries from all regions and other international organizations, it meets regularly to foster international cooperation and exchange information on ongoing investigations.

Looking ahead

As the number of profiles of foreign terrorist fighters continues to grow, a priority for INTERPOL is to focus on expanding its efforts so that actionable law enforcement information is readily accessible at border points, particularly in key regional areas involving foreign terrorist fighter routes.

Raising the tactical and situational awareness of countries bordering conflict zones in the Middle East through intelligence-driven analysis will also be important as more intelligence becomes available.

To ensure member countries are able to utilize the available tools to the greatest extent possible, INTERPOL will increase its training efforts to build capacity within the regions most affected by the phenomenon.



INTERPOL

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