



INTERPOL

# INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT TEAMS

To offer operational support and guidance to ongoing investigations



INTERPOL supports national law enforcement authorities in ongoing investigations through the deployment of Investigative Support Teams (ISTs) to provide case-specific investigative and technical support at the request of a member country.

An IST is typically composed of expert officers and analysts with specialized forensic, analytical and technical skills and crime area expertise from INTERPOL, member countries or external partners. Teams can be briefed, equipped and deployed within days, to provide a crucial rapid response. The composition of the team is tailored to the nature of the crime, the needs of the investigation and the requirements of the member country. Though ISTs can be deployed to support all types of criminal investigations, they are most frequently used in relation to environmental crimes.

Support which can be provided by an IST includes:

- Investigative and technical advice;
- Criminal intelligence analysis (telephone call data, financial records, criminal networks);
- Digital forensic analysis of seized electronic equipment;
- Identification and DNA analysis of seized wildlife and timber products;
- Language and technical support in interviewing suspects and victims;
- Database queries on entities identified or seized during an investigation (people, companies, vehicles, vessels, identity documents, firearms);
- Assistance on advanced investigative techniques, such as controlled deliveries;
- Expertise on specialist crime areas such as money laundering, anti-corruption and identification of forged and fraudulent documents.

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## REQUESTING AN IST

An INTERPOL National Central Bureau may request the deployment of an IST, on their behalf or that of another national agency, by sending a letter to the INTERPOL General Secretariat Environmental Security unit. The deployment request should include the following information to better determine the ability to assist and composition of the team: proposed dates and location of the deployment, the details of the case, including case file number and the lead agency, and the aim of the deployment.

## CASE EXAMPLES

### Fisheries Crime

In 2015, an IST comprising experts in fisheries crime, human trafficking and relevant languages was deployed to São Tomé and Príncipe to support an investigation into the sinking of a fishing vessel in national waters, to help determine the circumstances of the sinking, whether the vessel had engaged in illicit fishing prior to its sinking, and whether labor abuses of the crew had occurred.

Mobile phones and laptops seized from the vessel were analysed with the support of a second specialized IST. The investigation in São Tomé led to the conviction of three members of the vessel's crew to prison sentences and a fine of EUR 15 million, and paved the way for further investigations, arrests, fines and asset recovery efforts in Spain in 2016.

### Wildlife Crime

In 2015, Tanzanian authorities requested an IST to support their investigation into a seizure of elephant ivory trafficked across international borders. Experts in digital forensics, wildlife trafficking and criminal analysis reviewed the calls, images, videos and messages on the suspects' mobile telephones, identifying images of contraband timber, wildlife and minerals.

Subsequent analytical support identified new active members of the criminal network – including financiers, facilitators and traffickers – enabling the direction of proactive law enforcement resources in both Africa and Asia. The location of a fugitive wanted since 2014, and subject to an INTERPOL Red Notice, was also identified.



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