

## Florida Sheriffs Association, Annual Summer Conference

Remarks by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#) at Florida Sheriffs Association,  
27 July - Florida

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President of the Florida Sheriffs Association, Sumter County Sheriff Bill Farmer,  
Florida Sheriffs Association Executive Director, Steve Casey,  
Broward County Sheriff Al Lamberti, who is graciously sponsoring this Conference,  
Esteemed Sheriffs,  
Members of the Florida Sheriffs Association,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you. It is a great honor to address an organization that has proudly served the people of Florida since 1893. I thought INTERPOL had been around a long time, but you have us beat by 30 years!

I also believe that a "Happy Anniversary" of sorts is in order since the Florida Mutual Benefit Association became the Florida Sheriffs Association 100 years ago this year. While your name has changed, I am impressed to see that your commitment to excellence in law enforcement, public service and charity has not.

Twenty-five years ago, former President Ronald Reagan addressed the 54th INTERPOL General Assembly in Washington, DC.

That was, of course, way before 9/11 ... before anyone had heard of Al-Qaeda ... before anyone would have imagined that we would see the worst-ever mass murder of citizens of the US and many other countries on American soil.

It was well before the Internet and before the emergence of so many criminal threats that now increasingly test the ability of law enforcement at all levels to respond.

President Reagan said in 1985, and I quote: "Whether it's organized crime, narcotics trafficking, terrorism, or any other area of criminal activity, the increasing sophistication and power of criminal syndicates calls for a response from those who are pledged to uphold the law and protect society from the hardened criminal. And this is the work of INTERPOL."

His words would uncannily, precisely foretell the reality we currently face.

Today, 25 years later, INTERPOL knows that terrorists and transnational organized criminals are highly sophisticated. And we know they are tenacious and they are mobile – and they are always looking to exploit any potential gaps or weaknesses for a way in.

But President Reagan's resounding faith in INTERPOL – in all of you in law enforcement – to be able to respond to these challenges was deeply held. I watched his address to the 1985 INTERPOL General Assembly when preparing for this speech, and I was genuinely moved by his words of support for INTERPOL and his belief in the very important role that law enforcement officers play in protecting our citizens.

I would like to spend my time with you elaborating why the INTERPOL about which President Reagan spoke a quarter of a century ago is even more relevant and more essential to ensuring the safety and security of citizens around the world, including the citizens of the great state of Florida whom you as Sheriffs have taken an oath to protect.

In February 2008, a woman in the Dominican Republic allegedly shot and killed her boyfriend and fled to the US on the same day. Within hours, an international wanted persons notice was issued by INTERPOL and disseminated to police around the world.

Before going any further, I would like to explain this in more detail. We commonly refer to international wanted persons notices as INTERPOL Red Notices. We publish these notices and distribute them to police around the world when a judge in one of our 188 member countries has issued a warrant for the individual's arrest and has agreed that if the wanted person is arrested, the country in question will seek his extradition.

Although the INTERPOL Red Notice is sometimes called an international arrest warrant, in reality, it functions more like an APB, an all-points bulletin, in most of our member countries.

In 2009, more than 4,000 fugitives were located and arrested based on requests sent internationally via INTERPOL.

Going back to the case of the suspected murderer from the Dominican Republic, she entered the US in New York on a non-immigrant tourist visa. She then made her way to Orlando, where she got a Florida driver's license and identification card using a fraudulently obtained Social Security number and Puerto Rican birth certificate.

She managed to live among your citizens and evade capture for more than one year.

Eventually, through the sharing of information between the Dominican Republic and the US via INTERPOL, her new life with her new identity unraveled.

Just a little over a year ago, she was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents right here in Florida with the help of the US Marshals and Florida state law enforcement officials. When she was apprehended, the suspect had false identification and was preparing to flee the state.

She was one of 45 fugitives located or arrested during an operation coordinated by INTERPOL, code-named Infra-Red, targeting some of the world's most wanted fugitives.

Infra-Red at its essence is the simplest but most effective demonstration of international police cooperation. We bring together officers from all over the world to sit down, go through their files, and share information and assistance.

Three weeks ago, we launched a second Infra-Red operation for 450 persons who were convicted or wanted internationally. Already, 131 individuals have been arrested or located in 32 countries, and tips on 357 cases have come in from around the world. This operation involves police in 29 different countries on all five continents.

I highlight this arrest and this operation specifically because Florida is a state defined by mobility.

More than 84 million people visit your state each year, including more than 8 million from abroad. This number is projected to surpass 100 million within the next five years.

Of the 60 busiest airports in North America, seven are in your state.

According to US Census figures, Florida will overtake New York as the third-largest state, if it has not already done so.

Mobility brings about great economic and social benefits, but it also poses great challenges for police, here in Florida and throughout the world.

How do we welcome the many with good, honest intentions while slamming shut the doors on the few who may wish us harm?

From my perspective as Secretary General of INTERPOL – a position I have held for almost the last 10 years and a position that has given me the opportunity and the privilege to hear firsthand the concerns of law enforcement officers on my visits to close to 140 of our member countries – the smartest approach is also the most effective one.

First and foremost, I urge you and your agencies to take advantage of the international databases and international network of police available to you through INTERPOL.

In all of our member countries we have a designated focal point called a National Central Bureau, which is maintained and staffed by the national authorities.

In the US, for example, the National Central Bureau is located in Washington, DC. It is wholly staffed by US law enforcement officers, mostly federal agents.

The NCB in Washington exists to make sure that the right information gets to US law enforcement officials at the local, state and federal levels, and that the right information about fugitives or persons of interest to the US gets to your foreign counterparts in INTERPOL's 187 other member countries.

As an example of how this system works: in March 2008, a Canadian national was intercepted by Customs and Border Protection agents at Miami International Airport as he attempted to transit from Barbados to Canada.

Wanted by France for rape and sexual offenses against children, he was vacationing in the Caribbean when local police there recognized him from an INTERPOL Red Notice.

He fled Barbados after being questioned by police about the French charges, but seamless coordination between the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus in Barbados, France and the US ensured that US authorities were notified of his movements and that he was arrested as soon as he set foot in Miami.

He had been sought for arrest by France for three years, but in the course of the three-hour flight from Barbados to Miami on his way to Canada, he went from fugitive to future detainee thanks to international police cooperation via INTERPOL.

One of my main goals since becoming INTERPOL Secretary General has been to get the invaluable information contained in our databases directly into the hands of front-line officers, where it can be most useful.

This has been made possible by technical solutions we call MIND, for access to INTERPOL databases through mobile devices, and FIND, for access through devices in fixed locations.

Using FIND through the national law enforcement communications network known as NLETS, an officer here in Broward County – in fact, in any of Florida's 67 counties and almost anywhere in the country – can instantly access our databases of nominal records, stolen motor vehicles, and stolen and lost travel documents such as passports.

It is thanks to the efforts of our NCB in Washington that access has been provided to 18,000 domestic law enforcement agencies. That translates to one million users.

Since 2008, instant and automated access to INTERPOL databases has been possible at all international airports and seaports in the US to screen the passports of all arriving and transiting passengers. The Department of Homeland Security uses INTERPOL's network to conduct checks for all inbound international flights and Visa-Waiver pre-clearance, and the Department of State searches our databases before issuing any visas to foreign visitors.

These tools, this access, help to keep international criminals and people in possession of false, fraudulent or invalid passports out of the US and thus out of Florida.

Prior to granting instant and automated access to INTERPOL's databases to border control and visa-issuing officials, as recently as 2006, the US conducted fewer than one thousand searches per year of our database of stolen and lost travel documents.

The US is now behind only the UK in the number of searches of this database each year. US law enforcement officers performed more than 41 million searches in 2008, the first full year of widespread remote access. Last year, the US performed almost double that amount.

The figures are worth repeating because they are simply extraordinary: from less than one thousand searches in 2006 ... to more than 78 million just three years later in 2009.

You probably don't realize it, but every time you enter the US from abroad, your passport is checked against this database.

Last year, total searches by US law enforcement generated close to 4,000 hits.

A hit is a match between a passport record number presented by an individual seeking to enter or transit through the US with one reported as lost or stolen by one of our member countries.

Every hit presents an opportunity for law enforcement to identify and eliminate a threat or potential threat to the safety and security of citizens here in the US and around the world.

I have spoken about "mobility" in terms of criminals, but this also applies to your officers.

With more than 8 million foreign visitors to Florida each year, your officers need to be able to check the passport of any foreign national under investigation or of interest against INTERPOL's databases.

INTERPOL's network allows such mobile access. Whether at the border or in our streets, giving local, state and federal law enforcement officers access to INTERPOL's databases is fundamental to the security of citizens here and everywhere.

INTERPOL created its database of stolen and lost travel documents in direct response to the threat posed by terrorists using fraudulent passports to plan or carry out attacks in the US and in countries around the world.

Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, entered the US carrying a stolen Iraqi passport. Other terrorists and dangerous criminals have also been known to use stolen or fraudulently altered passports. The 9/11 Commission concluded in its final report that: "For terrorists, travel documents are as important as weapons."

Our database of stolen and lost travel documents has grown from less than 4,000 records in 2002 to more than 21 million records today, submitted by 149 member countries.

The US searched INTERPOL's database of names of persons of interest to law enforcement more than 33 million times last year, which resulted in close to 20,000 hit alarms.

In 2006 and 2007, before access to this database was expanded to all law enforcement in the US, officers searched this database about 30,000 times.

That's not 10 percent of the number of searches last year, or even 1 percent – it is less than .1 percent.

I am confident that the time will come when any law enforcement officer anywhere in the world will be able to check a passport, a name, a fingerprint or a DNA profile in INTERPOL's databases.

The time will come when searching INTERPOL's databases to find out whether a non-national is under investigation by the US or any other country becomes a standard operating procedure for law enforcement officers throughout the US, including sheriffs here. This won't require two separate searches of national and INTERPOL databases. It will be done automatically – like it should be.

And the time will come when law enforcement officers will be able to run checks not just at airports and other points of entry, but from any location where they have Internet access.

And searches of INTERPOL databases sanctioned by law enforcement will be conducted by hotels, travel agencies, rental-car companies, banks or any other business that fugitives might need to facilitate their criminal activities or to stay on the run or under the radar.

Imagine how this could revolutionize your work.

Just as national borders have become more and more meaningless to criminals – just as identities can be changed ... forged ... bought – we can no longer afford to see our responsibilities as beginning and ending at the county line, the state line, the national border or the ocean.

We must be able to keep fugitives and international terrorists and criminals off balance and subject to detection wherever they might be, particularly where they least expect it.

Let me return to Florida and give you another practical example of how this approach could keep your citizens and visitors safer.

In 2009, Florida recorded about 10,000 aggravated sexual offenses.

What happens to the DNA crime scene specimens that are recovered from these and other crimes like burglary, robbery, assault, battery and murder? Are they compared nationally? Are they compared internationally via INTERPOL? Do Florida sheriffs have a standard operating procedure requiring international comparison of unknown crime scene DNA specimens or DNA specimens from foreigners suspected of serious violent crimes and/or felonies?

I will tell you why these questions matter.

In less than two years, three women in three different cities in Southern California were violently assaulted and raped. Police were able to match DNA recovered from the last two incidents and make a positive identification. The same suspect was determined to have been responsible for all three attacks. An arrest warrant was issued in California, but the charged suspect could not be located.

Meanwhile, during a rape investigation in Salzburg, Austria in April 2009, Austrian authorities, as a standard operating procedure, submitted a DNA profile taken from the suspect, a non-Austrian national, at the time of his arrest to INTERPOL's database of almost 100,000 DNA profiles.

Later that year, through the cooperation of city, county, state and federal agencies, US law enforcement officials sent the DNA profile from the California cases to INTERPOL for comparison – and a match was made with the one DNA profile submitted by Austria!

Subsequent DNA and fingerprint comparisons by US, Austrian and INTERPOL officials confirmed that the suspects in the alleged crimes were in fact the same individual, an Afghani national.

He was arrested in January of this year in Austria, where he had been living under a different name, and was extradited to the US within a month.

The suspect is known to have resided in at least Afghanistan, Canada, England and Germany in addition to Austria and the US, using several aliases, so INTERPOL is working with all of our member countries to determine whether he is connected to other unsolved crimes.

It was thanks to the foresight of the local police and county sheriffs in California that the DNA profile on a cold case was shared through INTERPOL – thereby not only advancing their own investigation but also helping to ensure that the suspect wouldn't be able to continue to victimize women in other countries.

I have discussed how the INTERPOL network connects law enforcement around the world with the latest cutting-edge tools and services.

But there is one additional asset for law enforcement that was around at the very beginning stages of your organization and is still as important today, and that is the support of the public.

The Florida Sheriffs Association counts some 100,000 private citizens among its members. That is an awesome resource any law enforcement agency would be lucky to have.

I know this because the public has been instrumental to some of INTERPOL's most successful operations.

Besides the operation Infra-Red that I mentioned earlier, between 2007 and 2008, INTERPOL launched two global appeals for assistance in identifying men who appeared in images of child sexual abuse on the Internet.

In both instances, anonymous tips from the public helped lead police to the men. One arrest, which involved the participation of law enforcement in 13 different countries, occurred 11 days after the launch of the appeal and the other, within just 48 hours.

Time proved critical in both cases, because one of the men taught English to young children and the other, who lived in New Jersey, played Santa Claus during the holidays. They had easy access to children and – as Sheriff Grady Judd of Polk County will tell you – even minutes matter in cases like these.

We have also recently reached out to the public to assist in the identification of the suspected suicide bombers who carried out an attack in Kampala, Uganda, during the World Cup soccer championships in South Africa earlier this month.

And let us not forget the vigilant member of the public who noticed a suspicious vehicle parked in Times Square two months ago and, rather than going about his business, he chose to alert a police officer.

Were it not for his actions, we could be having a very different kind of gathering under very different circumstances right now.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During all of my years of public service, as an Assistant and Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the US Department of Justice, as Undersecretary for Enforcement in the US Department of Treasury, and as the

Secretary General of INTERPOL, I have experienced firsthand the strength and quality of US law enforcement at all levels.

I am immensely proud of this, because I know the work of police here in Florida and throughout the US makes citizens in all of our member countries safer.

And you should be proud of this, too.

Let me close by referring again to former President Reagan's address to the INTERPOL General Assembly.

He said: "INTERPOL's record of achievement...is unparalleled, and...the United States Government pledges to you and your organization its full support."

And I am very pleased to say that the support from the US has grown stronger under each successive presidential administration.

We do not take this support lightly. The US government, US law enforcement and the American people have put their trust in INTERPOL, and we will continue to do all we can to ensure that we are worthy of that trust.

Before taking any questions that you might have, I would like to offer my special thanks to Brian London, the Deputy Chief Financial Officer of Law Enforcement for the State of Florida, for inviting me to speak here today.

There is scarcely an area in law enforcement he has not touched. He has served as a US Marine, California Highway Patrolman, US Secret Service agent, US Customs officer, an agent with the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, and an INTERPOL officer.

We both arrived at INTERPOL in 2000. I was honored to promote him to the second-highest-ranking post at INTERPOL, where he frequently represented me during my absences. Since his departure, he has remained a good friend to INTERPOL and a great friend to me.

Where INTERPOL is today is in many ways a direct result of his wisdom, his vision and his commitment, and you all are very, very lucky to have him here.

Distinguished colleagues,

I thank you for having given me the opportunity to address such a respected organization as the Florida Sheriffs Association. It has been a real honor and privilege.

Thank you and Godspeed.