

Bahrain security forum & exhibition Bahrain

24-25 February 2009

First plenary session speech by [Khoo Boon Hui](#), INTERPOL President

Baroness Symons;
Sir Ian;
Your Excellency Mr Titorenko;
Judge Bruguière;
Dear colleagues;
Ladies and gentlemen;
Good Afternoon:

It is a privilege to be here with you today and an honour to address such a distinguished audience.

2. I told you briefly this morning how, as the President of the only global police organization, I feel that an event like the Bahrain Security Forum and Exhibition provides us with the very rare occasion to have a broad and open discussion on how to address the security challenges that we collectively face today. These challenges require more than just greater efforts — they require our creative thinking and imagination. And that is why it is so crucial that we take a step back from our daily responsibilities and take the time to reflect together, share our ideas and look for new approaches.
3. I am very happy — and grateful to the organizers of this unique event — to now have the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.
4. This panel is titled 'Transnational Threats to Homeland Security: Global Perspectives'. If you will allow me, I would like to propose a small but significant change to that title, and if this is not possible then what I am about to propose will simply be the title of my own presentation. I would suggest renaming it 'Transnational Threats to Homeland Security: A Necessary Global Perspective'.
5. You can see where I am heading: today's transnational threats to our homelands compel us to go beyond national-centric answers of the past and force us to develop global solutions.

Developing global solutions to counter security threats

6. For decades we have been hearing that the world has become a global village, that our economies are interdependent, that our lives are intermingled with those of people we will never meet and who live at the other corner of the world and that, as a consequence, major problems and their solutions span much beyond any one single country's borders. The world is indeed flat – a reality that all of us are confronting during the current economic crisis.
7. Naturally the law enforcement community has also — at least in part — echoed this discourse. We constantly hear and say that we must work together, that we must adopt a multilateral approach, that we need to more closely coordinate our efforts, share more information, etc., etc. This is indeed nothing new.

8. But despite us knowing all this, it seems that we are still at the beginning of the journey towards adopting the Necessary Global Perspective. The result is that the threats are growing faster than our capacity to counter them.

Mumbai attacks

9. As the recent [Mumbai attacks](#) reminded us in a very painful way, the well-trained and highly-motivated extremists do not necessarily need extraordinary means to carry out spectacular and deadly attacks. They just needed to adapt the well known military tactic of “swarming” and honed through previous Al Qaeda attacks all around the world, to metropolis where access to transportation and real-time wireless communication networks facilitates such operations. A recent New York Times Op-ed has questioned whether our current manpower-heavy centralized elite counterterrorist forces are able to deal with such simultaneous attacks and suggests adopting the decentralized outposts tactic used by the US Army in Iraq. What are just as challenging are issues such as intelligence on and interdiction of cross-border intruders and of sense-making in the initial stages by the authorities receiving multiple reports of terrorist attacks. What have we learnt from the lessons of Mumbai and are we prepared to share with our counterparts around the world so that collectively we can make the world a safer place from [terrorist](#) attacks that threaten the safety of our citizens and can destabilize our economies?
10. This said, I did not come here to be a fear monger but rather to tell you how I believe we can best work together to prevent horrific events like the Mumbai attacks from happening again.
11. Let me start by giving you an example.

Positive response from Saudi Arabia

12. Two weeks ago, the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, requested that the INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon, France, issue an international security alert, known as an Orange Notice, for [85 individuals](#) suspected of plotting terrorists attacks against Saudi Arabia from abroad. The 83 Saudis and two Yemenis are wanted by Saudi Arabia on terrorism-related charges, including for links with al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan.
13. By sharing such sensitive information with police internationally, Saudi authorities are asking for the assistance of their colleagues worldwide to better protect Saudi citizens. They do so, because they understand that their country’s safety often starts beyond their borders, either in a neighbouring country or in a very remote one.
14. So when I speak about the radical change that we must implement in order to be truly effective in countering dangerous criminals and terrorists, I mean this: that police all over the world should adopt the same approach as the Saudi police and consider it as standard operating procedure.
15. But I must add that by doing what they did, the Saudi police were not only helping themselves, they were also helping police abroad better protect their own citizens. Because the suspected 85 terrorists named in the list may very well travel to third-countries to train, prepare or carry out terrorist attacks.

Positive response from Moroccan police

16. This is exactly what happened when a Moroccan national suspected of having been involved in the [2003 Casablanca](#) bombings was identified the following year in Iraq thanks to information shared internationally by the Moroccan police through INTERPOL.
17. What the Moroccan police did should also become standard police procedure.
18. The same thing applies for prison escapes.
19. We are all fully conscious of the fact that serious crime and terrorism are today global threats, caused by transnational crime organizations that require a global and cohesive response. But at the

same time a global operating procedure whereby countries would warn the international police community when dangerous criminals and terrorists escape from prison does not exist.

20. This is what I mean when I say that we are still at the beginning of the journey.

Yemeni example

21. In February 2006, 23 convicted prisoners including [13 convicted Al Qaeda terrorists](#) escaped from a prison in Yemen. Some of these escaped Al Qaeda terrorists had been convicted for their involvement in the attacks on the U.S.S Cole in 2000 and the French oil tanker Limburg in 2002.
22. I'm sure you will agree with me that the escape of convicted al Qaeda terrorists is not a national security problem alone but a serious international security problem.
23. INTERPOL's [Command and Coordination Center](#), whose work includes 24/7 screening of open sources in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, found out about the escape. INTERPOL then contacted the Yemeni Minister of Interior resulting in INTERPOL [Orange Notices](#) being issued worldwide to warn all our member countries about the fact that these dangerous terrorists were at large.
24. I am informed by the INTERPOL Secretariat that it monitors and acts upon prison escapes that have international links at the average rate of twice per month in all regions of the world. And it is extremely rare that national authorities will spontaneously decide to inform INTERPOL and the international police community without us asking them to do so.
25. Indeed, almost to the date a year ago, my own country Singapore also suffered an escape by a terrorist and the natural instinct of my colleagues was just to keep our neighbours and friends informed while we searched for the escapee within our sealed borders. Much to my relief, they managed to put out an INTERPOL alert in good time,
26. Dear colleagues, I am here to tell you that what the Saudi authorities did a fortnight ago is rare, all too rare, and that if we are to really take seriously the threats that we face, we need to realise that what is today an exceptional measure has to very soon become a systematic and even instinctive behaviour for law enforcement worldwide.

INTERPOL's role

27. This is where INTERPOL can make a significant contribution to global security. Let me now share some information about INTERPOL with you.
28. For those of you who may not know the Organization very well, INTERPOL is the only global police organization with [187 member countries](#). It maintains the only secure global police communications system [I-24/7](#) that connects the General Secretariat in Lyon with every one of our member countries through a [National Central Bureau](#). INTERPOL also maintains global [database](#), such as on stolen and lost travel documents, suspected terrorists, stolen motor vehicles, DNA, Nominals, and others. The Organization also provides criminal analysis and operational support to our member countries in a number of key criminal areas, including [fugitives](#), [terrorism](#), [drugs](#) and [organized crime](#). Finally, it delivers specialized training for police at all levels.
29. In our standard jargon, we say that INTERPOL 'facilitates' international police cooperation. I would go a step further and say that our aim is to systematize international police cooperation. In other words, our aim is to develop international police cooperation tools and mechanisms so that measures such as the global warning requested by Saudi Arabia are at the fingertips of any police force anywhere in the world.
30. But the main obstacle facing INTERPOL in reaching this objective is the still-dominant reflex within the law enforcement community to investigate at the national level first. Only if suspicion arises that criminal or terrorist activities may have an international dimension, do we then turn to

regional or global police cooperation mechanisms. I surmise that this arises from our tradition of secrecy resulting in the practice of sharing on a need-to-know basis.

31. This is what needs to change.

INTERPOL's philosophy

32. INTERPOL's philosophy is that since today's serious crime and terrorism often transcend international borders, information sharing and investigations should always have an international dimension. Just like a local investigator uncovering the criminal activities of an individual will almost automatically check if that individual is known by police elsewhere in the country, investigators should automatically check if a suspected criminal or terrorist is known outside of the country's borders.

Pooling resources together

33. Today, INTERPOL has in place the necessary tools, mechanisms and unique global experience that enable investigators worldwide to make near-real time security checks and to obtain complete, clear, cogent and timely information in support of their investigation.

34. For example, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any one country alone to obtain information about stolen or lost passports, which have been cancelled or invalidated by other countries. Knowing that terrorist groups and criminal organizations members use fraudulent documents and false identities to travel internationally, the enabling of border officials worldwide and the mechanism to systematically validate and verify whether a travel document has been declared stolen or lost is now critical to national and border security.

INTERPOL's initiatives (SLTD, MIND/FIND)

35. That is why INTERPOL created its global Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database, which currently contains over 16 million documents submitted by 145 countries. In order to make possible a systematic use of this database, INTERPOL developed a technical solution, called the [MIND/FIND](#) system, that enables officers in the field, particularly border officials at ports of entry, to check a person's travel document against INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Document database to ascertain, in real-time, whether any of INTERPOL's member countries has reported the document as stolen or lost.

36. Not only has the progressive implementation INTERPOL's MIND/FIND system resulted in a tremendous increase in the number of checks conducted in the SLTD database and in the positive hits generated — over 14,000 just in 2008! — but it has engaged a crucial development in how countries secure their borders against the use of fraudulent documents. The 42 countries that have so far installed this system have enabled their border control to systematically screen incoming travelers' documents against INTERPOL's global database. This is an immense shift in how countries protect their borders because it allows border officers to detect whether someone is carrying a fraudulent document even when that person does not appear suspicious in any way. Even a small country like mine has by connecting its border control checkpoints to the database become one of the top 10 users of the system and have enabled us to better protect our citizens.

37. I do not think I need to tell you how important it is for our common security that this system is installed in as many countries as possible and that all countries regularly submit their national information to INTERPOL to keep the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database updated.

38. But for our action to be systematic and effective, we realise that this global security infrastructure that we are developing is only as strong as its weakest link. And so we cannot afford to leave any country aside.

INTERPOL's initiative (Project OASIS)

39. It is for this reason that INTERPOL launched project [OASIS](#).

40. OASIS stands for “Operational Assistance Services and Infrastructure Support” and it is a comprehensive strategy to enhance in a sustainable way the capacity of INTERPOL member countries to effectively address crime threats nationally, regionally and globally.
41. The OASIS capacity-building strategy comprises three essential components: (1) providing training to enable police officers at different levels to develop additional skills, (2) providing infrastructure to ensure that police have all the necessary tools and technology to communicate securely and in real time and check global police databases, and (3) providing support for cross-border police operations.
42. Put simply, OASIS is designed to strengthen police capacity where it is most needed.
43. Thanks to the generous support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have recently launched throughout Africa the first regional implementation of this programme, which will run over a total period of four years.

Promoting a global approach

44. I strongly feel that such solidarity of the international community is essential to global security and hope that other INTERPOL member countries will also consider investing in their own security by helping raise police capacity in the countries that need it most.
45. This global approach is also behind INTERPOL’s growing partnership with the [United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operation \(DPKO\)](#).
46. Weak links are not just countries that are less resourced than others. They are also countries suffering or recovering from conflicts. In this respect, recent experiences have evidently demonstrated the need to associate military troops with police personnel in peacekeeping and peace-building operations. As a result, more and more world leaders and prominent political figures are affirming the critical need for police to play a pivotal role in consolidating peace and building sustainable security.
47. Countries suffering or recovering from conflicts today require a greater police deployment effort by the international community and INTERPOL understands that it is its duty and responsibility to assist the United Nations in this, because it is for the benefit of national, regional and global security.

Conclusion

48. I conclude by recognizing the efforts of our host country, Bahrain, which has contributed more than its fair share to regional and global security. In August 2008, Bahraini authorities arrested and promptly deported a suspected Filipino terrorist believed to be the mastermind behind the Superferry14 bombing in 2004 near Manila Bay, considered the world’s deadliest terrorist attack at sea, with 116 lives lost. Having fled to the Middle East soon after the bombing, he assumed various identities and settled in Bahrain for 2 years before feeling safe enough to apply for a bank loan. He did not reckon with the prowess of Bahrain’s Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing Unit which uncovered that he was not only wanted for various crimes in his home country, but was also on the United Nation Security Council list of suspected terrorists.
49. More recently in January this year, Bahrain also received from the Danish Navy 5 Somali pirates who were captured after a foiled attempt to board a Dutch Antilles-registered vessel. They were promptly handed over to the Netherlands facilitated by INTERPOL.
50. As President of the INTERPOL, I commend our hosts for providing 2 recent examples that illustrate the importance of screening suspects against our databases and the need for enhanced international partnerships between the police and the military.
51. I look forward to your comments and questions. Thank you very much for your attention.