

## 76th INTERPOL General Assembly

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State of the Organization address by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#)

[Operation VICO](#) is not an isolated success story, but is rooted in years of planning, preparation and hard work. Together, we have transformed an old and almost irrelevant organization into the INTERPOL of the 21st century or, as the President said, 'the INTERPOL of the future':

Our transformation began on September 11, 2001, when our staff at the INTERPOL General Secretariat became operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Not surprisingly, our 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week Command and Co-ordination Centre played a critical role in Operation VICO, which spanned three continents and three different time zones.

Our secure, state-of-the-art global communications system called [I-24/7](#) connecting each of our [186 member countries](#) permitted the exchange of the VICO images from Germany to the INTERPOL General Secretariat to all [National Central Bureaus](#) (NCBs), especially those in South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Germany and Canada.

Our cutting-edge databases, including [DNA](#) and image-based databases, helped police in the frontline throughout Operation VICO. When Germany's BKA downloaded the 200 VICO crime scene images and sent them to the General Secretariat, our global database containing over a half million unique child sex abuse images and our specialised unit in Lyon became the hub that provided police investigations in Thailand, South Korea, Canada, Vietnam and Cambodia with crime-scene evidence seized in another part of the world.

Our specialised crime unit, with experts from Norway, Ireland, Sweden and the UK, combined with experts from our 50-member-country-strong group dedicated to fighting the sexual abuse of children and the exploitation of that abuse over the Internet in order for Operation VICO to be created.

The continuous deployment over the last several years of Incident Response Teams ('[IRTs](#),' as we call them) to member countries following terrorist attacks, major crime events or natural disasters permitted us to dispatch an experienced IRT to Thailand, and it remains actively engaged right now in Thailand to help the Royal Thai Police as well as police in Canada, Cambodia and Vietnam gather and share evidence relevant to VICO.

Our expertise and resources are constantly being leveraged for the benefit of our member countries in a cost-effective manner. In Operation VICO, experts from the German BKA unswirled



Secretary General Ronald K. Noble told delegates his vision for the 21st Century was for the INTERPOL network to be more aggressive, alert, resourced and responsive.

VICO's face, and as part of a strategy approved by me personally, INTERPOL's Communications and Publications Office made sure that all NCBs, all police and all media worldwide received both the swirled and unswirled images. VICO's swirled image shows his criminal intent; no other case in the world of which INTERPOL is aware ever used this swirling technique. And every journalist with whom we have spoken has said that it was the showing of VICO's swirled face in the context of INTERPOL's first global manhunt for a suspected child predator that captured the world's attention, with over 12,000 news stories being produced worldwide in the first 24 hours following INTERPOL's global appeal on 8 October 2007.

Operation VICO became the platform from which INTERPOL could send a unified and clear message to international criminals wherever they might try to run or hide: that is, INTERPOL's network of 186 member countries' police services, our NCBs, our combined resources, expertise and technology will help to identify, locate, charge and apprehend criminals wherever they may be.

The global response capability of police working through INTERPOL displayed in Operation VICO has been designed with a worst-case scenario in mind: a worldwide manhunt for an unknown terrorist planning to kill millions of us using a biological or nuclear weapon. That threat is the one that should concern us the most and that threat cannot be addressed without a well-staffed, properly equipped and soundly financed INTERPOL network.

Let me give you other highlights of important achievements of police worldwide working through INTERPOL just this year:

In January 2007, Mexican law enforcement authorities suspected that 11 passengers from a flight originating in Madrid, Spain, were carrying fraudulent passports. A check of INTERPOL's databases led to the creation of a multi-country task force including Cyprus, Greece, Mexico, Poland, Spain, Turkey, the United States and staff from INTERPOL's Trafficking in Human Beings Unit and Command and Co-ordination Centre. Working together, we uncovered and helped dismantle an international human smuggling network that operated in Iraq, several European countries, the United States and Canada.

The Caribbean Association Chiefs of Police asked us to help the [2007 Cricket World Cup](#) host countries put in place a state-of-the-art passenger and passport control system. As a result, the Caribbean became the first region in the world to screen both passenger manifests and passports against INTERPOL's databases. As part of this regional security effort, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago all implemented our integrated border security system not only for the Cricket World Cup – they have continued to use this system and have since conducted over 3.5 million searches resulting in no less than 550 hits!

But the Caribbean also needed field support. Our President committed the South African Police Service's National Deputy Police Commissioner, 75 of its police officers as well as bomb-sniffing canine units to the Caribbean to help our brothers and sisters in the region and to help all of us. For the first time in history, police officials wore their national uniforms and hats bearing INTERPOL's insignia to show that they were there to help as part of the global police community.

When African countries and certain pharmaceutical companies alerted us to the problem of deadly counterfeit malaria pills believed to be originating in China, I traveled to Beijing to personally request China's Ministry of Public Security's assistance and received an immediate 'yes'. Within a few months, acting on information received from INTERPOL's anti-counterfeiting unit, China's police and NCB Beijing had taken down an organized crime group and seized 24,000 blister packs of counterfeit malaria pills.

In May 2007, Mauritania was confronted with a South American organized drug trafficking ring whose plane had delivered 600 kilos of cocaine to one of the country's airstrips. INTERPOL dispatched an Incident Response Team to Mauritania composed of police officers from France and INTERPOL staff from Abidjan and Lyon that helped identify and disrupt the network, which had

links to Belgium, France, Germany, Morocco, Spain, the UK and Venezuela.

Our joint efforts led to the issuance of several Red Notices, including one for the son of Mauritania's former president, arrested four weeks later here in Morocco.

In June of this year, the US alerted INTERPOL's [Command and Co-ordination Centre](#) that a Rwandan genocide fugitive had boarded a transatlantic flight departing the United States and bound for Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, France. We had only hours to work with NCB Paris, NCB Washington as well as with other police and immigration authorities and the Ministries of Justice in France, Rwanda and the United States to make sure that he would be arrested as soon as he exited the plane, and he was!

Last Wednesday, 31 October 2007, a Spanish court sentenced 21 terrorists for their role in the horrible March 11, [2004 train bombings](#) that occurred in Madrid, Spain, and which we all vividly remember. One of the defendants was Abdelmajid Bouchar, convicted for belonging to a terrorist organization and for having provided the explosives for the March 11 attacks. An important fact not mentioned in the press coverage of the trial: without the work of our NCBs in Spain, Serbia and Iraq and INTERPOL's General Secretariat in Lyon, Bouchar would probably still be a fugitive today.

Another fact rarely reported is that, frequently when arrests of international [fugitives](#) occur, police officers from INTERPOL NCBs are often the ones who actually transfer the fugitives. The case of Bouchar and former Peruvian President Fujimori are examples of this.

And, finally, just last week I met with the Inspector General of Police and Minister of Interior of Uganda to discuss INTERPOL's support for security for their hosting of the November 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that will convene 53 heads of government representing 30 per cent of the world's population. We expect that this initiative will make Uganda the first African country able to implement our [MIND](#) automated passport screening system that the President talked about this morning.

These examples show that INTERPOL is active on a global basis and can help every single one of its member countries make sure that dangerous fugitives are brought to justice and their citizens are protected. No country knows this better than our hosts here in Morocco. The Minister referred to the Casablanca bombings here in Morocco. Following this terrorist attack, INTERPOL's network helped locate in Iraq one of the suspects wanted by Morocco. Like most fugitives, he tried to conceal his true identity by using another name, but thanks to the exchange of fingerprints between police in Morocco, Iraq and the US, he became another captured suspected terrorist.

My dear colleagues, we might be tempted to congratulate ourselves for having brought the organization into the 21st century, but the path ahead is still long and still difficult. In the future, we will all have to further increase our operational response capability. We will have to make all of our NCBs operational 24/7; to expand our I-24/7 services beyond the NCBs; and to increase the importance of NCBs in their home countries and to ensure that NCBs have full and immediate access to all relevant national police databases back home.

Only then will our 186-member-country network be in a position to respond in real-time to a hit or enquiry from any country anywhere in the world.

Being successful in high-profile or urgent cases alone is not enough. We must meet the highest standards in every single case. To achieve this, we will have to radically change two aspects of what we do: the way we share information and the way we search our global [databases](#). A bold initiative that we call 'I-link' will transform the way that police work internationally in this regard just like I-24/7 has transformed the way that police communicate internationally. You will hear more about this tomorrow.

The more we examine the challenges confronting us in the 21st century, the more that we see the need for a systematic and coherent global police training strategy, the more that INTERPOL has to step out and be heard, so we have added [training](#) as our fourth core function.

Our efforts to create the world's first [Anti-Corruption Academy](#) near Vienna, Austria, continue on schedule and serve as a reminder that the police community recognises that, unless we target and fight corruption, our entire strategy and effectiveness at enforcing the rule of law and enhancing international police co-operation will fail.

We have begun to lay the foundation for the creation of Global and Regional Anti-Crime Centers, because the specialised and complex nature of 21st-century crimes requires bringing together police, analysts and private-sector experts to focus our efforts on serious and emerging crime areas.

This will require the support and the leadership of the police chiefs in all of our 186 member countries.

Let me take a moment to recognise those Heads of Police who have been appointed since our last General Assembly. Would the police chiefs from the following countries please stand: Aruba, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Hong Kong, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Italy, Latvia, Monaco, Nigeria, Poland, and Thailand. Would any others not named please stand. On behalf of our President, Executive Committee and all of our member countries, I wish to warmly welcome all of you to this General Assembly. I would also like to ask our Executive Committee to stand and be recognised for their support during my tenure as Secretary General.

I also would like to ask all Heads of NCBs to stand and be recognised.

As we all know, policing is very much about people – dedicated individuals who on a daily basis make tremendous sacrifices to protect citizens and societies. Nothing is more important than an organization's continued investment in its people. INTERPOL continues to invest in its people. The highest compliment for an organization is to see that highly qualified and dedicated people want to join it to take it to even higher levels.

This is the case with INTERPOL, and I could not be prouder of the staff with whom I work at INTERPOL's General Secretariat each and every day.

Mr President,  
Madame le Ministre,  
Monsieur le Ministre,  
Members of the Dais,  
Members of the Executive Committee,  
Chiefs of Police,  
Heads of NCB,  
Distinguished colleagues,

You have placed great trust and confidence in me as your Secretary General. I have made my dream for INTERPOL no secret. When I speak to you about my vision for the INTERPOL of the 21st century, I speak about a more aggressive, more alert, more resourced and more responsive network of 186 member countries' police services and NCBs. When I first became your Secretary General in 2000 this was nothing more than a dream, but the entire world must now acknowledge that the INTERPOL network of the 21st century is a step closer to making that dream reality.

In closing, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks on behalf of INTERPOL's 186 member countries to you, Mr Minister, and to the Kingdom of Morocco for graciously hosting this [General Assembly](#). Your organizing committee, your police colleagues and your fellow citizens are meeting even our highest expectations. I also congratulate Morocco on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of your joining INTERPOL.

Let me now welcome and thank France's Minister of Interior, Madame Michèle Alliot-Marie, for joining us today. We all know about your extraordinary support and commitment to enhancing international police co-operation to keep citizens in France and the world over safe. Minister Alliot-Marie has made it a personal priority of hers to ensure that as INTERPOL creates Global and Regional Anti-Crime Centres, they will be built upon a solid relationship with our host country. Madame le Ministre, we thank you especially for this personal commitment on your part.

My dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is my hope that by the end of this General Assembly, we will have persuaded all of you that the INTERPOL of the 21st century is the reality, not fiction.

INTERPOL is your organization and that of every police officer in the world. You are the ones who give it unlimited potential, so we share a joint responsibility and challenge.

We must make sure that from your newest recruit to your most senior manager, they feel a part of INTERPOL and that we remain a dynamic, relevant and dedicated network of all police and law enforcement staff worldwide.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Muchas gracias. Shoukran.