

## First Plenary Session, G8 Justice and Interior Ministers Meeting

Munich, Germany, 24 May 2007

Remarks by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#)

Distinguished Minister Schauble and Minister Zypries for the German Presidency,  
Distinguished Ministers of Interior and Justice of the G8 countries,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak with you about the International Child Sexual Exploitation database, or ICSE, that we are in the process of creating.

This project was initiated by the G8 Lyon/Roma Law Enforcement Projects Sub-Group, which commissioned and carried out a feasibility study for the creation of the database in 2001. The study was funded by the [European Commission](#) and it was undertaken by the G8 member countries, along with INTERPOL and [Europol](#).

In 2003, the study concluded that there is an urgent need for an automated database of child sexual abuse images that would be directly accessible by specialised investigators throughout the world. The study also concluded that this is legally and technically possible, and that it should be managed by INTERPOL to ensure global operability.

In light of these conclusions, you – the Justice and Interior Ministers of the G8 countries – endorsed this initiative in your 2005 meeting in Sheffield, United Kingdom, agreed to fund it, and asked INTERPOL to develop and implement it.

### **VICO case**

Let me briefly tell you about an ongoing case that demonstrates why this automated database has been a key component in solving cases of child sexual abuse. It also shows how INTERPOL can make their work more effective, can help to rescue more children, and can help to arrest more perpetrators.

The case is named VICO, which stands for Vietnam and Cambodia, two of the countries where the predator has committed his crimes.

The VICO file contains approximately 200 images, originally found by the German Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) in 2004 through Internet monitoring. The perpetrator can be seen in 70 images, 27 of which depict the sexual abuse of children. He is seen with at least 12 different child victims – boys who appear to range from seven to 13 years of age. All child victims appear to be from Southeast Asia.

Through analysis of the images, INTERPOL and the BKA were able to extract a number of important investigative leads.

From the images, which depict explicit sexual abuse, we were able to determine the hotel in which some of the abuse occurred, which is in Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam, and a timeframe of when it occurred. The

possible date of abuse was determined to be 29 March 2002, as this date appears in the so-called 'exif information' which is automatically produced by digital cameras when photos are taken.

The hotel where the abuse occurred was identified by a leaflet standing on the bedside table (in which the name of the hotel, Dai Hoang Kim, appeared) and which is clearly visible in one of the pictures. Verification of the hotel room was made with the Vietnamese police. The staff was questioned and the guest lists were retrieved and checked against passport pictures, but unfortunately, no positive identification could be made.

We were also able to locate a second crime scene, because other images from the same series were identified as having been taken at a particular harbor in Cambodia. That determination was made by Cambodian police officers during an INTERPOL Victim Identification Workshop in Bangkok. Unfortunately, the Cambodian police had no further leads to work with.

In all of the pictures where the perpetrator is seen, his face has been altered in order to prevent identification. Our colleagues from the BKA worked on the pictures, however, and were able to reverse the alteration, so that the perpetrator's face could be recognised.

INTERPOL shared these pictures through its dedicated network with 50 specialised police officers in 20 countries, but without a positive result. As a next step, the images were then sent to all INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, but again without result. Germany then issued an INTERPOL Blue Notice for the suspect in September 2006, but the suspect to this day remains unidentified.

The man that can be seen in the VICO series has been sexually abusing at least 12 children in at least two different Southeast Asian countries since at least 2002.

### **International Child Sexual Exploitation Database (ICSE)**

There are important lessons to be learned from this case. They demonstrate the value of providing specialised officers around the world with access to images. In this instance, specialised officers were able to use the images to determine locations where some of the abuse occurred and the date of the crime, and they were able to expose the face of the perpetrator.

But it also demonstrates how difficult it is to investigate this type of crime – all we have is images, and without [fingerprints](#), [DNA](#) or any other identifying element, it is difficult to identify the perpetrator.

Consequently, it is crucial to develop better tools to more effectively fight this form of crime. The International Child Sexual Exploitation Database (ICSE) that the G-8 has endorsed and partially financed is such a crucial tool.

But we need to go even further in our efforts to prevent travelling child sex offenders from continuing to do harm. The VICO case deals with an offender who has been abusing children since 2002 and has not been stopped, despite intensive police efforts, not the least by Germany. I believe that we must make every possible effort to stop these abusers, and this is why INTERPOL is planning to create a dedicated domain on its website to seek help from the public in identifying sex offenders and the locations where they commit their crimes. This initiative will ensure that each time the ICSE database points to an unidentified child abuser, we have a mechanism and process in place through which we can seek help from the public, while ensuring that the information reaches the appropriate police service.

Using INTERPOL's [I-24/7](#) global secure police communications system will enable specialised investigators to have direct and encrypted access to the images contained in the current INTERPOL Child Abuse Image Database and to a large number of other images made available by specialised units from participating countries, thanks to enhanced technology that will allow for automatic or facilitated uploads from national databases to the ICSE database.

During the G8 Ministers meeting under the French Presidency in Paris in 2003, I asked for your support for developing the International Child Sexual Exploitation database. At that time, the INTERPOL database contained 350,000 images. We had managed to help rescue 102 children from 18 different countries. Now, the INTERPOL Child Abuse Image Database contains over 500,000 images and has made the rescue of 535 child victims from 29 countries possible.

This is already a great result, but we will all agree that it is not nearly enough given the thousands of children who suffer such abuse.

This is why this project is of major importance to international law enforcement.

The implementation of ICSE is advancing at good speed and it is anticipated that a minimum of three countries – Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom – will be connected by the end of 2007 to pilot the beta version of the database. During 2008, more G8 countries will be connected, along with other INTERPOL member countries and law enforcement partners.

### **Funding**

Since the G8's endorsement of the initiative in 2005, a total of about €1.5 million has been pledged towards the project by five of the G8 countries (Canada, Germany, Japan, the UK and the US). However, per the initial G8 project feasibility study, the total requested amount was €3.2 million. So funding is short by about €1.7 million. I have not allowed the shortage in pledges of funding and actual funding to delay this important initiative. We continue to proceed on the assumption that we will receive both pledges and funding for the full amount needed. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that following discussion with the Norwegian Minister of Justice Knut Storberget and the National Police Commissioner Ingelin Killengreen, Norway's National Police has pledged €300,000 over two years towards the development of this database. We hope that other countries will follow this example.

In closing, I make myself available once again to answer any questions that you might have.

Thank you.