

4th Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - 3-5 February 2008
Speech by INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble

An urgent need to better respond to the global problem of Counterfeiting and Piracy (03 February 2008)

Your Highness,
Mr. Ahmed Butti Ahmed, Director General of Dubai Customs,
M. Danet, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure for me to join you here in Dubai for the [4th Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy](#).

Since the first Global Congress was held in 2004, global awareness about the nature and extent of counterfeiting and piracy has grown. While piracy and counterfeiting remains a significant crime challenge for law enforcers and the business community worldwide – with an estimated 200 billion US dollars' worth of counterfeited and pirated products traded internationally just in 2005 – the robust partnership between the public and private sector member organizations represented on the Global Congress Steering Group and other stakeholders has made a difference. It is clear governments, international organizations, police, customs, cross-industry representative bodies and affected industries now treat counterfeiting and piracy with the seriousness it deserves.

The strength of any partnership is the sum of its parts. To achieve this, it is necessary for each member organization to pull its weight and ensure strategic intention is translated into concrete action. INTERPOL's fundamental role within the Global Congress Steering Group is to provide guidance and support to the international police community in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy.

INTERPOL has consistently done this by facilitating and coordinating collective action to help police in our member countries curb the activities of transnational organized criminals who derive significant profits from these often life-threatening crimes, using its [I-24/7](#) global police communications system. INTERPOL also aims to act as a catalyst for action.

The last year has seen the completion of several major regional law enforcement IP crime interventions conducted by police in member countries in partnership with the private sector and INTERPOL. In June 2007, the coordinated efforts of police and customs authorities led to hundreds of arrests and the seizure of counterfeit and pirated goods in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay valued at over 35 million US dollars. Another operation commenced in October 2007 in the same five countries with additional support from Bolivian authorities.

Indications suggest seizures will be in excess of 55 million US dollars when the current operation in South America is concluded next month. The experience customs and police agencies have gained from previous operations has contributed to the increase in the level of seizures. It has also resulted in better communication, cooperation and coordination.

Operations in Southeast Asia carried out by police in China and Myanmar with support from INTERPOL led to the well-publicized neutralization of a criminal conspiracy responsible for the industrialized manufacture and distribution of counterfeit anti-malarial medicines throughout the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Less well-known is Operation Storm, whose aim is to maximize the intelligence dividend arising from the success in Southeast Asia. Storm is a ground-breaking operation in eight countries in Southeast Asia targeting distribution networks for counterfeit medical products in the context of the World Health Organization - International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Task Force (IMPACT).

It is a truly pioneering operation because it is the first time that national police, customs, public health authorities, drug regulatory bodies, health charities and international organizations including INTERPOL and WHO have come together for such an ambitious undertaking.

The countries involved are Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Operation Storm is complicated, and it will be some time before the results are known. However, it is unequivocal evidence of the determination of INTERPOL and the World Health Organization to work together to target immoral transnational organized criminals who manipulate counterfeit medicines without concern for the harm they inflict on innocent people suffering from life-threatening but often curable diseases. I will return to this subject shortly.

Other operational highlights include a growing INTERPOL focus on the activities of criminals who systematically use the Internet to infringe copyrights. An example is the closure of the OiNK Web site, which was one of the world's largest sources of pre-release music.

The OiNK investigation illustrated how INTERPOL can play a key coordination role between police and the private sector to ensure police interventions occur simultaneously in different countries, in this instance, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This capability will be enhanced in 2008 to provide private-sector stakeholders with greater access to support for Internet-based investigations.

Another important development was the introduction of a complementary two-tier INTERPOL [Intellectual Property \(IP\) crime](#) training program to deliver counterfeiting and piracy education where it will be most effective. Firstly, in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, INTERPOL held the 2007 International Law Enforcement IP Crime Conference in Canada in June, where a practical three-day IP crime training agenda was delivered to over 400 participants from 48 countries.

The 2008 International Law Enforcement IP Crime Conference following the same approach will be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia from June 24-26 this year. Thereafter, the training package will be deployed in other INTERPOL regions.

The second training initiative was introduced in November 2007. The IP Crime Training Course co-hosted by the Italian Guardia di Finanza and INTERPOL was aimed at police middle managers with responsibility for investigating IP crime. Twenty-seven participants from 15 countries, including a customs officer and representative of a drug regulatory body, attended the five-day course and returned to their home administrations better prepared to lead the fight against counterfeiting and piracy. In 2008, three other courses are scheduled in Europe and South America, with the aim of training more than 100 middle managers to give them the tools to make a difference.

In 2007, we also saw the creation of the INTERPOL Database on International Intellectual Property (DIIP) Crime. The database is intended to fill the information void identified by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). With the exception of customs counterfeit and pirate seizure data collated by the World Customs Organization and the European Commission, there is an absence of reliable data to illustrate the true regional and global extent of the problem.

However, typically, multinational companies affected by counterfeiting and piracy know the extent of their problems and collect a significant amount of data and evidence to support civil actions against those who infringe intellectual property rights.

Thereafter, that expensive resource is often redundant and not put to work for either the benefit of the industry concerned or other industries that are systematically targeted by the same transnational organized criminals.

We believe that the private sector is serious about reducing the impact of counterfeiting and piracy. It should therefore no longer be acceptable to invoke ill-informed data protection arguments for not sharing information. It does after all affect the bottom line and, in some instances, threatens the very existence of some private sector entities. In many jurisdictions, it is perfectly legal to disclose data to the police to prevent or detect crime. All that is required is the determination and collective willingness to do so for the common good.

The INTERPOL Database on International Intellectual Property (DIIP) Crime is a stand-alone, secure system with information-handling protocols to protect the confidentiality and proprietary interests of private-sector information.

In the near future, INTERPOL will publish a recommended minimum global standard for the collection of information on counterfeiting and piracy by the private sector. It is intended to encourage industries that do not currently collect such information to do so with the express purpose of sharing it with INTERPOL.

The last development is that the number of INTERPOL dedicated staff assigned to IP crime has increased to five officers. This has led to a higher level of support we can provide to police, our private-sector partners and other stakeholders. We hope to enhance this as resources become available.

All forms of counterfeiting and piracy are serious crimes, particularly when produced and distributed on an industrialized scale by transnational organized criminals. However, I want to focus the last part of my remarks on medical product counterfeiting. INTERPOL is determined to intervene in the flow of life-threatening counterfeit medicines from Southeast Asia and the Indian sub-continent into Africa.

These are not limited to those which purport to cure or offset the symptoms of malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, but also others which can be equally fatal for the consumer.

Over the last six months INTERPOL has steadily increased its resource commitment to the World Health Organization's IMPACT program. INTERPOL is serious about bridging the gap between police and the public health sector to help police intervene in transnational medical counterfeiting and maximize opportunities to consistently deliver the successes we have seen in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

To achieve this, the relationship between INTERPOL and the World Health Organization must be further reinforced. I am able to announce today that an officer from the INTERPOL IP Crime Unit will be seconded to the World Health Organization's IMPACT program for the mutual benefit of both organizations and, more importantly, for all stakeholders, not least the innocent and vulnerable consumers that are preyed upon by these ruthless criminals.

In conclusion, I have made an effort to illustrate how INTERPOL has steadily increased its efforts and resource commitment to combat counterfeiting and piracy over the last 12 months. The investment has delivered tangible results. However, there is still an urgent need for us all to better respond to the global problem of counterfeiting and piracy.

INTERPOL will continue to develop initiatives and programs in those areas where it can have a positive influence. I would ask everybody here to also identify how we can individually and collectively take responsibility for achieving even greater wins.

Thank you.