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HYPERSONICS AND THE GLOBAL DISORDER

A HISTORY AND BRIEF OUTLINE OF INTERPOL'S ANTI-
TERRORISM EFFORTS

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Introduction

For almost half a century after its formation, the world's largest crime-fighting organisation refused to touch any case that began with the letter 'T' for terrorism. The abstinence from terrorism was, according to its officials, Interpol's greatest strength.¹ Interpol sustained pressure from various countries to continue its avoidance of terrorist cases which forced the countries to set up their own crime-fighting organisation which would deal exclusively with counterterrorism. The existence of competitors intruding on its mandates made Interpol reconsider its avoidance of terrorism. During the latter half of the 20th century, Interpol, due to immense external pressure and organisational insecurity, acquiesced and allowed itself to deal with peripheral cases which had mild terrorist connotations. Finally, in 1984, Interpol became entirely active in counterterrorism and now defines anti-terrorist activities as one of their most defining aims.²

Interpol is an independent, autonomous, and non-military organisation, which is to date, the world's largest crime-fighting body. It has 195 member countries whose representatives meet once a year to discuss the leading criminal challenges facing the world. Terrorism has been from its onset a highly menacing issue. Its lingering effects and unpredictable nature make it highly threatening, difficult to detect, and tougher to prevent. The attacks of September 11th, 2001, firmly established terrorism as the most defining issue of the 21st century and drastically altered counterterrorism efforts around the world.³ Interpol, as the world's premier policing organisation, is in a unique position concerning counterterrorism initiatives. Its autonomous nature allows it to be unperturbed by the political ebbs and flows of nation-states and its extensive reach, with bureaus in 195 countries, facilitates the great transfer of information among its member countries.

¹ Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, "Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): pp. 593-620, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

² Ibid.

³ Mathieu Deflem and Stephen Chicoine, "Policing Terrorism," *The Handbook of Social Control*, November 2019, pp. 235-248, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119372394.ch17>.

Interpol's anti-terrorism efforts, especially since 1984, have been effective. Its massive database and its infamous notice system continue to be useful in detecting and preventing terrorism. Interpol is not an executive body, i.e., it cannot make arrests on its own nor can it compel law enforcement authorities to do so, but an administrative body that can assist countries in fighting international crime. Interpol works in partnership with the United Nations, and other policing organisations like EUROPOL and ASEANOPOL, to conduct counterterrorism projects in various countries. Interpol also possesses its Incident Respond Team (IRT) and the Fusion Task Force (FTF) which provides on-ground investigative and analytical support to its member countries. The Stolen and Lost Travel Document (SLTD) database among many others, is immense and accessible to its member nations and useful in detecting terrorists and preventing their movement across borders. Interpol as the world's largest crime-fighting organisation plays a crucial role in countering terrorism and will continue to do so in the future. The counterterrorism initiatives of Interpol are immense and have been highly effective throughout history.

History

Interpol was officially formed in 1923 in Vienna, Austria, but its seeds had been sown a quarter century prior. The 1898 Anti-Anarchist Conference “is one of those events that has slipped into virtual historical limbo.”⁴ During the latter half of the 19th century, the anarchic ideas of Mikhail Bakunin began spreading across Europe resulting in a succession of anarchist movements. The unpredictability and rapidity of these movements greatly alarmed autocratic leaders who decided to meet on the 24th of November 1898 in Italy, Rome, to discuss and deal with the new threat. Fifty-four delegates representing the twenty-one countries of Europe alongside heads of police and police chiefs of various countries attended the conference and discussed ways to counter anarchism. The Conference helped develop a transnational network, promoted the use of modern police techniques, and encouraged international police cooperation.⁵ Importantly, the conference led to “an awareness that police professionals had shared knowledge, expertise, and norms” which

⁴ Richard Bach Jensen, “The International Anti-Anarchist Conference of 1898 and the Origins of Interpol,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 323, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948101600205>.

⁵ Ibid.

they could foster and strengthen independently of any political intervention from states.⁶ Over the next few decades, police heads of different countries began organising conferences outside the purview of states and due to the fear of intervention, these conferences were kept purely “non-political” in nature. In response to rising international crime, in 1923 in Vienna, police heads from twenty-one states and territories gathered in what was the Second International Criminal Police Congress and established the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC).⁷

The ICPC, to safeguard its autonomy, avoided dealing with any crime that might be “political” in nature and which might cause disturbance to nation-states. The ICPC was an apolitical, informal, and independent body that used to, apart from publishing a monthly journal, gather information about common criminals.⁸ Since the commission was founded in Vienna, the city became the headquarters of ICPC, supplying them with money and power. During the Nazi occupation of Austria in 1938, the functions of the ICPC were terminated, revived only after the World War ended, in 1946. Soon after, the name was changed to the International Criminal Police Organisation, ICPO-Interpol, and France, the only country supporting the revival of the organisation, was chosen to be the country of their headquarters. The ICPO, like the ICPC, refused to deal with any political crimes that they assumed might “compromise its neutrality, harm its reputation, and alienate its rapidly growing membership”.⁹ The non-political stance of Interpol is reflected in Article 3 of its constitution which strictly forbids the organisation from engaging in any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character.¹⁰ For most of the 20th century, this clause was interpreted in a manner that forbade Interpol from taking on any cases regarding terrorism.

⁶ Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, “Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): pp. 593-620, 603, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, “Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 608, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

¹⁰ “Constitution of the ICPO-Interpol,” <https://www.interpol.int/en>, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/content/download/590/file/Constitution%20of%20the%20ICPO-INTERPOL-EN.pdf>.

From Avoidance to Acquiescence

Article 3 of Interpol’s constitution is vague and does not specify what crimes are “political” in nature. Interpol later defined political crimes as acts "sometimes designated as crimes by national penal codes– membership in organizations, limitations on liberties of opinion or the press, insults to public authorities, endangering the security of the state, desertion, spying, the practice of a religion, proselytizing, and belonging to a racial group”¹¹ Since almost all terrorist acts “endanger the security of the state” or are mostly “racial” in nature, terrorism was classified by Interpol as a political crime and therefore outside its mandate. Thus, for almost half a century after its formation, the world’s largest crime-fighting organisation refused to be associated with the T word terrorism. Interpol’s officials were committed to their apolitical nature and believed “that the organization’s very existence hinged on its non-intervention in terrorism cases.”¹²

Interpol sustained great pressure to remain apolitical. West Germany, after the Munich Massacre of 1972, wherein members of the Palestinian terrorist group during the Summer Olympics in Munich infiltrated the Olympic Village and killed two members of the Israeli team, sought Interpol’s assistance to provide information regarding the suspected terrorists but Interpol refused, pointing to their prohibition from “political” affairs. Western European countries, who were then the biggest benefactors of Interpol, wanted the organisation’s involvement in counterterrorism, but Interpol rejected them by citing their sacred Article 3.¹³ The conservatism regarding terrorism during the early periods of Interpol could be due to the fear they harboured of provoking their member states due to political connotations of the act which might also affect the organisation’s “neutral” status. In response to Interpol’s obstinacy regarding terrorism, nation-states established their organisation which would deal primarily with terrorist activities. European states, in 1975, set up Trevi to counterterrorism and coordinate policing in the European Community (EC). The presence of a competitor irked Interpol and gave rise to organisational insecurity. The competitors

¹¹ Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, “Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 608, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

¹² Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, “Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 610, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

¹³ Ibid.

began encroaching in Interpol's territories and core mandates which forced Interpol to reconsider its "non-political" nature. Beginning in 1980, Interpol acquiesced and began taking on cases that were mildly political in nature, like the railway bombing incident in Bologna in 1980 and the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II. The word "terrorism" was still strictly forbidden, and Interpol instead referred to it as "violent crime by organised groups".¹⁴ In 1984, Interpol formally reinterpreted the meaning of "political" and the interpretation of Article 3 which finally allowed it to tackle terrorist cases. Interpol soon after began hunting Nazi war criminals and became involved in the controversial Rainbow Warrior case between France and New Zealand.¹⁵ In 1999, delegates at the Interpol General Assembly in Seoul declared antiterrorism to be "one of the main aims of Interpol's action in carrying out its general activities of police cooperation."¹⁶ Counterterrorism had become Interpol's central concern.

9/11 and After

The attacks of September 11th, 2001 were universal and unifying. The extraordinary and harrowing nature of the attacks stirred countries and institutions everywhere and exacerbated people's perception of the threat of terrorism. The United States soon after began its War on Terror and invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. The US also introduced the use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" and legally approved various surveillance measures.¹⁷ The Department of Homeland security was also created in 2002 as a central counterterrorism unit. The measures against terrorism enacted by the United States following the September attacks were soon adopted by counterterrorist agencies around the world.

¹⁴ Fenton Bresler, *Interpol* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1993), 163.

¹⁵ Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, "Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 610, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

¹⁶ Deflem, Mathieu, and Lindsay C. Maybin. 2005. "Interpol and the Policing of International Terrorism: Developments and Dynamics since September 11." Pp. 175-191, 179, in *Terrorism: Research, Readings, & Realities*, edited by Lynne L. Snowden and Brad Whitsel. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

¹⁷ Deflem, Mathieu and Stephen Chicoine. 2013. "War on Terror." Pp. 987-990 in *Encyclopedia of White-Collar and Corporate Crime, Second Edition*, edited by Lawrence M. Salinger. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

9/11 severely affected Interpol's operations and their measure against terrorism. Ronald Noble, the secretary general of Interpol deemed 9/11 as "an attack against the entire world and its citizens" and vowed that the "lights at Interpol will never go out again".¹⁸ Interpol became operations 24 hours a day and 7 days a week and an 11 September Task Force came into being to coordinate intelligence related to terrorist attacks in the United States. The general secretariat of Interpol also established the Command and Coordination Centre (CCC) to serve as the first point of contact for any nation requiring immediate assistance in a crisis-like situation. In 2002, Interpol also introduced the I-24/7 global police communications system, which links all law enforcement officials in all member countries of Interpol, and announced the creation of the terrorism watch list which provided access to suspected fugitives and terrorists.¹⁹ A few weeks after the attacks, Interpol's general assembly passed resolution AG-2001-RES-05 which condemned the attack as a crime against humanity and commended the general secretariat for their "swift and decisive response" to the tragedy of September 11.²⁰

9/11 helped unite countries and organisations in their efforts to counterterrorism. In November 2001, Interpol established a relationship with EUROPOL, which is Europe's law enforcement agency, to foster cooperation regarding international crime and all things terrorism. In March 2002, Interpol also agreed to cooperate with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council to facilitate the exchange of information and technical cooperation with the Arab police.²¹ Following the attacks of September 11th, Interpol enacted substantial counterterrorism measures, in the form of a 24/7 global network system, the CCC, and increased coordination with law enforcement agencies around the world.

¹⁸ Fink, Naureen Chowdhury. "International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)." *Meeting the Challenge: A Guide to United Nations Counterterrorism Activities*. International Peace Institute, 2012., 90 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09638.17>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "AG-2001-RES-05 Resolution Subject - Interpol," accessed October 27, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/6183/file/GA-2001-70-RES-05%20-%20Terrorist%20attack%20of%2011%20September%202001.pdf>.

²¹ Deflem, Mathieu. (2007). *International Police Cooperation Against Terrorism: Interpol and Europol in Comparison*.

Counterterrorism Initiatives

Terrorism is one of the greatest worries of the 21st century. It has proliferated widely due to globalisation and increasing international travel. The attacks of 9/11 and 26/11 have exacerbated the threat of terrorism worldwide and removed the perception of “terrorism” being remote and distant. The increase in the rise of technology has also ensured that terrorist organisations are modernised, informed, and well-connected with the world. Since terrorism is such a complex phenomenon with varying intensity and degrees of significance, counterterrorism measure likewise warrants a multi-faceted approach to provide effective and appropriate responses on a local, national, and global level.²² Interpol as the world’s biggest crime-fighting organisation plays a crucial role in counterterrorism and has employed various anti-terrorism initiatives throughout history for facilitating the same.

Notices and Diffusion

Interpol is not an executive body, i.e., it cannot arrest nor detain any persons. The organisation plays a supporting role to its member nations, alerting them of suspected persons, and assisting them in carrying out the arrest. Interpol has a system of international alerts which are accessible to all member nations and used by the police to share information related to crime worldwide. Interpol has eight colour-coded notices, the most famous one being the red notice. The red notice of Interpol has gained celebrity due to its representation in popular culture. Contrary to popular belief, the red notice is not an international arrest warrant but instead an alert for an internationally wanted person. Red notices are issued based on valid national warrants requested by a member country’s National Central Bureau (NCB). All of Interpol’s notices are made available to view for all member countries. The orange notice is a security alert that warns of an event, a person, an object, or a process that represents a serious and imminent threat to public safety. The INTERPOL–United Nations Security Council Special Notice is issued for individuals and entities that are subject to

²² Deflem, Mathieu. 2008. “Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism Approaches.” Pp. 929-931 in *Encyclopedia of Social Problems*, edited by Vincent N. Parrillo. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council concerning Al-Qaida, the Taliban, and Liberia and the blue notice is issued to collect additional crime-related information about a suspected person.²³

Interpol's system of international notices to alert countries and share information among policing bodies worldwide is immense and valuable in detecting terrorists. Due to the list being freely accessible to all, regular citizens can update Interpol or their local policing body about the movements of suspected or wanted fugitives. Interpol has issued multiple notices throughout history to request more information and to notify countries regarding potential terrorists. After the attacks of September 11, Interpol issued red notices for the arrest of 55 persons which included Muammar Gaddafi and his son Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi, and blue notices to request further information regarding the 19 hijackers.^{24 25} Currently, there are 7125 red notices issued by Interpol which can be easily viewed on their website.²⁶

Global Databases

One of Interpol's greatest sources for fighting terrorism is its massive global database which is freely accessible to all member nations through I-24/7, Interpol's secure global communications system. I-24/7, established after the attacks of 9/11, connects all 195 member countries of Interpol with the headquarters in Lyon, in a secure network within which they can share important crime-related information. With almost all countries of the world constantly submitting and updating data, the I-24/7 has become invaluable in the fight against terrorism.

The Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database established in 2002 contains information on travel and identity documents that have been reported lost, stolen, or have been deemed invalid.

²³“About Notices,” INTERPOL, accessed October 28, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Notices/About-Notices>.

²⁴ Deflem, Mathieu & Hauptman, Samantha. (2013). Policing International Terrorism.

²⁵ Rossbach, Bernd (2013). INTERPOL's Strategy for Combating Transnational Terrorism, SIAK-Journal – Zeitschrift für Polizeiwissenschaft und polizeiliche Praxis (2), 14-23, 5, Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.7396/2013_2_B.

²⁶ “View Red Notices,” INTERPOL, accessed October 29, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Notices/View-Red-Notices>.

The SLTD was launched after member countries identified a “clear link between terrorist activities and the use of lost or stolen travel documents.”²⁷ The SLTD database was searched 1.7 billion times in 2021 by officials worldwide which resulted in 146,000 positive matches.²⁸ In addition to the SLTD are the fingerprint and DNA databases which are powerful forensic tools whose value in assisting member nations, identifying fugitives, and solving crimes are incontrovertible.²⁹ Interpol made more than 1,600 identifications in 2019 due to its massive fingerprint database. Currently, Interpol contains more than 220,000 fingerprint records and 247,000 DNA profiles in its database.^{30 31}

Macroscale Terrorism

The use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, or Explosive (CBRNE) agents by non-state actors, which include terrorists, is known as CBRNE terrorism. This form of terrorism involves the use of Weapons of Mass destruction (WMD) and can cause large-scale destruction which can lead to political instability and greatly impact the socioeconomic environment. Moreover, this form of terrorism can have a massive psychological impact on citizens.³² Thus, it is no wonder, that terrorist organisations have always been tempted to use CBRNE agents to carry out their attacks. The usage of CBRNE agents is extremely difficult to detect and prevent due to them being almost invisible. They are tougher to respond to since there exists virtually no cure or treatment for them. The use of CBRNE weapons has been limited throughout history, because of how difficult they are to procure, but significant. The subway sarin gas attack in Tokyo, Japan, on

²⁷ Huseyin Durmaz and Jennifer Hurst, “Interpol--Providing Support and Assistance to Combat International Terrorism,” in *Understanding and Responding to Terrorism* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2007), pp. 3-10, 8.

²⁸ “Stolen and Lost Travel Documents Database,” Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database, accessed October 28, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Databases/SLTD-database-travel-and-identity-documents>.

²⁹ Rossbach, Bernd (2013). INTERPOL’s Strategy for Combating Transnational Terrorism, SIAK-Journal – Zeitschrift für Polizeiwissenschaft und polizeiliche Praxis (2), 14-23, Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.7396/2013_2_B.

³⁰ “Fingerprints,” INTERPOL, accessed October 29, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Forensics/Fingerprints>.

³¹ “DNA,” INTERPOL, accessed October 29, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Forensics/DNA>.

³² “CBRN Terrorism: Threats and the EU Response,” January 2015, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/54572_4/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)545724_REV1_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/54572_4/EPRS_BRI(2015)545724_REV1_EN.pdf).

March 30th, 1995, was an act of domestic terrorism by members of the cult movement Aum Shinrikyo which resulted in 13 fatalities and about 6,300 casualties.³³ The sect of Aum Shinrikyo also tried and failed between the years 1990-1995 to use botulinum toxin and anthrax as a means of attack. The 2001 anthrax letter attacks in the United States, which began a few weeks after 9/11, were also significant and led to the death of five people with many more casualties.

Interpol's measures against CBRNE terrorism focus primarily on prevention. The cross-border smuggling of CBRNE materials can be detected and prevented using Interpol's identification databases and the dissemination of Interpol's "best practices" using the I-24/7 communications network can help intercept the movements of suspected terrorists. In addition to these, Interpol has the CBRNE Prevention Program which consists of three units; RadNuc, BioT, and ChemEx.³⁴ The Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism Prevention Unit (RadNuc), founded in 2010, is focused primarily on the detection and prevention of the acquisition of CBRNE materials by terrorist organisations. The Bioterrorism Prevention Unit (BioT), operational since 2005, is involved with intelligence and operational support and the Chemicals and Explosives Terrorism Prevention Unit (ChemEx), founded in 2012, is focused on the prevention of chemicals and explosives terrorism.³⁵ The gravity of CBRNE terrorist attacks is immense due to the dangerous short-term and immense long-term impacts. Interpol, in response, has set up the CBRNE Prevention Program which in addition to the I-24/7 network system and global databases can detect and prevent the smuggling and use of CBRNE agents by terrorist groups.

Operations and Projects

Interpol focuses on six crime areas: (1) corruption, (2) fugitives, (3) drugs and organized crime, (4) public safety and terrorism, (5) trafficking in humans, and (6) financial and high-technology crime. The public safety and terrorism (PST) sub-directorate was created after the attacks of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Angelina, Harutyunyan. "CBRN Terrorism: Response Mechanisms of INTERPOL" Cranfield Defence and Security

³⁵ Ibid.

September 11th to focus exclusively on and assume a proactive role in counterterrorism measures.³⁶ The Fusion Task Force (FTF) was created within the PST in 2002 “to address region-specific terrorist groups and terrorism matters in a global context”.³⁷ The FTF works with member countries to collect and share information regarding the activities of terrorist groups and assists in investigating terrorist attacks. The FTF currently has projects in six regions – Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe – and have, in recent years, “proven to be a valuable asset in assisting countries to arrest individuals who were either planning or financing terrorist attacks.”³⁸

Fusion project Kalkan in central Asia is an example of one of the projects carried out by the FTF. Project Kalkan which began in 2004 is one of the most successful projects regarding counterterrorism conducted by Interpol. Due to the project, fourteen terrorist groups operating in the central Asian region have been profiled and more than seventy terrorists have been arrested.³⁹ As part of the project Kalkan, one of Saudi Arabia’s most wanted individuals was located and arrested in Turkey.⁴⁰ Some examples of other counterterrorism projects conducted by Interpol include project IWETS, created to track the trade and use of illicit firearms seized by law enforcement agencies worldwide, project Geiger, which is a part of RadNuc and maintains a database of illicit traffic in radiological and nuclear materials, and project IMLASS which stands for Interpol Money Laundering Automated Search Service and can automatically compare suspected money-laundering and terrorism-financing queries with Interpol’s databases.

Some of the recent and ongoing projects of Interpol regarding counterterrorism include:

³⁶ Todd Sandler, Daniel G. Arce, and Walter Enders, “An Evaluation of Interpol’s Cooperative-Based Counterterrorism Linkages,” *The Journal of Law and Economics* 54, no. 1 (2011): pp. 79-110, <https://doi.org/10.1086/652422>.

³⁷ Rossbach, Bernd (2013). INTERPOL’s Strategy for Combating Transnational Terrorism, *SIAC-Journal – Zeitschrift für Polizeiwissenschaft und polizeiliche Praxis* (2), 14-23, Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.7396/2013_2_B.

³⁸ Al-Rikabi, Mustafa Kadhim. *The Role of the INTERPOL in the Counterterrorism in Iraq 2003-2017*, 190. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2021.

³⁹ Huseyin Durmaz and Jennifer Hurst, “Interpol--Providing Support and Assistance to Combat International Terrorism,” in *Understanding and Responding to Terrorism* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2007), pp. 3-10.

⁴⁰ Rossbach, Bernd (2013). INTERPOL’s Strategy for Combating Transnational Terrorism, *SIAC-Journal – Zeitschrift für Polizeiwissenschaft und polizeiliche Praxis* (2), 14-23, 19, Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.7396/2013_2_B

- Project Sharaka – The project focuses on tackling terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa in eight countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia and is funded by the European Union.
- Project Scorpius – Scorpius, 2017 to 2019, was jointly funded by INTERPOL and the Government of Canada and was aimed at preventing and disrupting terrorism and related transnational crime in South and Southeast Asia.
- Operation Flash Pact – Interpol’s recently concluded counterterrorism project was a pan-African operation in collaboration with AFRIPOL which took place in two phases in July and September. The operation was aimed at strengthening border control, identifying suspected terrorists, and dismantling the networks behind them.⁴¹

Recent Developments

Interpol had its 90th general assembly in New Delhi India, from the 18th of October to the 21st of October 2022. Interpol general assembly is the world’s premier law enforcement forum, and this is the second time since 1997 that the 195-member-strong body is holding such a large conference in India. The general assembly was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah and was attended by delegations from every member country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his inauguration speech, mentioned terrorism as one of the most harmful globalised threats facing the world today. Terrorism, he mentioned, not only in the physical space but also digital, in its presence through “online radicalisation” and “cyber threats”.⁴² Every nation is working towards countering this new form of terrorism but working within boundaries is not enough. In order to fight this threat of cyber terrorism on an international level, Interpol, during the 90th general assembly, unveiled the world’s first global police metaverse. The metaverse is specifically designed for law-enforcement officials worldwide and is introduced to

⁴¹ “Counter-Terrorism Projects,” INTERPOL, accessed October 29, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Terrorism/Counter-terrorism-projects>.

⁴² “PM’s Speech at the 90th Interpol General Assembly,” Prime Minister of India PMs Speech at the 90th INTERPOL General Assembly Comments, October 18, 2022, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-speech-at-the-90th-interpol-general-assembly/.

increase cooperation. The service for the metaverse is provided by Interpol's secure cloud and allows its users to take training courses on forensic investigation among other policing activities. Users can also virtually tour Interpol's general secretariat headquarters in Lyon, France.⁴³

During the general assembly, Interpol also presented its first-ever global crime trend report, which highlights current and emerging threats at both the global and the regional level which due to their extent and scope pose a threat to transnational security.⁴⁴ The analysis points to five broad crime areas; organized crime, illicit trafficking, financial crime, cybercrime, and terrorism. Regarding terrorism, Interpol focused primarily on Jihadist terrorism and how the Islamic State-affiliated groups continue to gain influence and conduct attacks, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. They also discussed the rise of far-right terrorism in western countries, most notably in North America and Europe.

Terrorism is a dynamic and multi-faceted threat and counterterrorism measures must accordingly be dynamic and focus their activities on the local, national, and global levels. The threat of terrorism is exacerbated due to digitalisation and terrorist groups using modern and advanced forms of technologies like drones and encrypted messaging services. To combat this threat, Interpol stressed the importance of increased cooperation between member countries in the form of "effective data and intelligence sharing, multilateral cooperation, inter-agency coordination, and the exchange of good practices."⁴⁵ Interpol's general assembly will convene next in 2023, in Austria, Vienna, to celebrate 100 years of the founding of the International Criminal Police Commission.

⁴³ <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/INTERPOL-launches-first-global-police-Metaverse>

⁴⁴ "Interpol General Assembly Closes as Organization Moves towards Its 100 Year Anniversary," INTERPOL, October 21, 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/INTERPOL-General-Assembly-closes-as-Organization-moves-towards-its-100-year-anniversary>.

⁴⁵ "2022 INTERPOL GLOBAL CRIME TREND SUMMARY REPORT," Interpol, October 2022, <https://www.interpol.int/en>, 11.

Conclusion

Interpol's counterterrorism initiatives throughout history have been functionalist in nature. The organisation originally came into being in response to the rising threat of anarchism in Europe. Police representatives of the European countries came to realise that they have shared knowledge and expertise in the field of crime-fighting and decided to establish the ICPC. To avoid interference from nation-states, which would affect the functioning of the "boy club", they decided to be independent and avoided taking on cases that are "political" in nature. After WW2 ended, the ICPC became the ICPO-Interpol, and their political avoidance was crystallised in their sacred Article 3. Interpol was becoming the premiere international crime-fighting organisation at precisely the very moment countries around the world began viewing terrorism as an increasingly important international threat.⁴⁶ Interpol classified terrorism as political and thus outside its mandate. The avoidance of Interpol led countries to create their terrorist fighting organisation. Interpol was wary of the competition which was increasingly encroaching upon its core mandates. The rising organisational insecurity forced Interpol to begin taking on somewhat political terrorist cases. In 1984, Interpol became entirely involved in counterterrorism and soon classified it as one of its main concerns.

In order to tackle terrorism, Interpol, possesses in its arsenal, many resources. Interpol's notices and diffusions is a system of international alerts used to notify member nations about suspected transnational terrorists. The notice system can also be used to request more information on a suspect or a crime which countries can update and access through Interpol's secure global communications network, I-24/7, which connects the member countries with Interpol's headquarters. Apart from these Interpol also has its massive global databases which include the SLTD and the fingerprints and DNA databases among others, which can be easily accessed by its members to detect and prevent the movements of terrorist organisations. Interpol has a special CBRNE prevention program as well which focuses exclusively on the prevention of terrorism using CBRNE agents. Interpol has carried out many counterterrorism projects and operations

⁴⁶ Michael Barnett and Liv Coleman, "Designing Police: Interpol and the Study of Change in International Organizations," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 609, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00380.x>.

throughout history some of which include Fusion project Kalkan, project Geiger, and the recently concluded operation Flash Pact.

Interpol's counterterrorism measures are immense but there is criticism of how they carry out the initiatives. To avoid breaching Article 3, Interpol can waste months in differentiating between criminal terrorist offences and politically motivated terrorist activities.⁴⁷ Due to its massive membership of 195 countries most of which are politically and ideologically at odds with one another, the decision of taking or acting on a case becomes convoluted and thus can be highly time-consuming. To avoid this, law enforcement agencies sometimes use an alternative channel of communication which would allow them to exchange information quickly and efficiently and to avoid security problems inherent in an organisation with a such massive and diverse membership.⁴⁸

Interpol is the world's largest crime-fighting organisation and due to its autonomous nature is placed uniquely to deal with the threat of terrorism. Some measures for Interpol to consider and undertake in the future could be introducing and inputting new methodologies for information sharing and crime fighting taking into account the fast-changing landscape and adaptive nature of terrorist activities and strengthening cooperation with NCBs of member countries to implement counterterrorism measures which are independent of those countries legal systems. Interpol could also, by reducing the time spent on suspicion and specifying which threats are "real" or constitute "political", focus more on requirements-based intelligence sharing.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Angelina, Harutyunyan. "CBRN Terrorism: Response Mechanisms of INTERPOL", 6, Cranfield Defence and Security.

⁴⁸ Arnold P Jones, "Counterterrorism: Role of Interpol and the U.S. National Central Bureau" (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, June 1987), <https://www.gao.gov/pdf/product/76685>, 26.

⁴⁹ Angelina, Harutyunyan. "CBRN Terrorism: Response Mechanisms of INTERPOL", 7, Cranfield Defence and Security.

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