

Interpol and U.N. Back 'Global Policing Doctrine'

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Published: October 11, 2009

PARIS — Interpol and the United Nations are poised to become partners in fighting crime by jointly grooming a global police force that would be deployed as peacekeepers among rogue nations riven by war and organized crime, officials from both organizations say.

On Monday, justice and foreign ministers from more than 60 countries, including the United States and China, are gathering in Singapore for a meeting hosted by the two international organizations.

It is the first step toward creating what Interpol calls a "global policing doctrine" that would enable Interpol and the United Nations to improve the skills of police peacekeepers, largely by sharing a secure communications network and a vast electronic trove of criminal information, including DNA records, fingerprints, photographs and fugitive notices.

"We have a visionary model," said Ronald K. Noble, secretary general of Interpol and the first American to head the international police organization, which is based in Lyon. More than 187 member nations finance the organization.

"The police will be trained and equipped differently with resources," Mr. Noble said. "When they stop someone, they will be consulting global databases to determine who they are stopping."

Modern peacekeeping has evolved dramatically since the blue-helmeted U.N. military force won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1988. Since 2005, the number of police officers within the total force of 95,400 peacekeepers has more than doubled from about 6,000 to 12,200 in 17 countries.

U.N. police are already battling kidnappings and drug crime in Haiti and illicit lumber trading in Liberia. The aim of the joint effort is to increase the ability to track the movement of criminals around the world by sharing resources and common standards, according to Mr. Noble. He is also pressing ahead with plans for special electronic passports for the agency's staff of more than 600 Interpol investigators to speed border crossings.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is contributing more than \$2 million to finance the development of international global policing standards, according to Andrew Hughes, an Australian who currently heads the U.N.'s force of police officers.

The ambition is to create a series of networks to counter borderless organized criminal operations, Mr. Hughes said. Women, in particular, are being recruited, with a goal of reaching 20 percent of the U.N. force and the development of all-female units like the group of 140 peacekeepers from Bangladesh that is about to be deployed.

"We're working with refugees," Mr. Hughes said. "Many of the victims of atrocities are women, and they've had enough of men with guns and uniforms."

He said that among the most critical tasks for a global police force were combating illegal arms and drug trafficking. His own officers in West Africa have watched the growth of cocaine smuggling by Colombian and Venezuelan drug cartels through weakened countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia to the lucrative consumer markets in Europe.

The United States remains the biggest market for cocaine, according to the U.N.'s annual report on drugs and crime. But in the past three years, South American cartels have moved more drugs to Europe using transit points like Guinea Bissau, where the president and the head of the military were killed in sophisticated bombing attacks in March. Each year, at least 50 tons of cocaine from Andean countries passes through West Africa to the streets of Europe, where the drugs are worth almost \$2 billion, according to the U.N. report.

"Organized crime is a business that looks for opportunity to expand their market enterprise," Mr. Hughes said. "When you have a breakdown in police and courts and corrections, organized crime is ripe. We also see the toxic effect of corruption, because they are able to corrupt officials, which makes it difficult to build a functioning society."

In Afghanistan, where heroin and hashish trafficking is also a thorny issue, NATO announced plans this month to start training the local police — a move it has avoided in the past to concentrate on military responsibilities.

But Mr. Noble of Interpol says he takes a dim view of transforming warriors into beat cops, because the mind-sets are so different.

"We caution on making the delegation of civil police development tasks to military structures," Mr. Noble said, citing the example of an attack

that freed hundreds of Taliban from a prison in Kandahar, Afghanistan, last year. Although Interpol immediately asked for information about the missing prisoners, he said, “we were really shocked and dismayed to learn there were no fingerprints and photographs despite billions spent to train police there.”

With the meeting of justice ministers on Monday, which coincides with a general assembly of Interpol police members, the group is expected to debate the global police issue and to craft a declaration that would lead to an action plan for international police peacekeeping within 12 months.

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