



INTERPOL AS A MECHANISM OF INTERNATIONAL POLICE COOPERATION: LEGAL FRAMEWORK, TOOLS, AND PRACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

This article examines the activities of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) as a key mechanism of international police cooperation in the context of growing transnational crime. It analyzes the legal foundations of INTERPOL's functioning, its organizational structure, system of notices, and the role of National Central Bureaus. Particular attention is paid to the principles of political neutrality, the protection of human rights in the process of international investigations, and the effectiveness of cooperation with national law enforcement agencies. Using the experience of the Republic of Uzbekistan as an example, the study identifies directions for improving INTERPOL's operations and strengthening international security.

Keywords: INTERPOL; international police cooperation; notices; transnational crime; legal status.

Introduction

In today's world, crime remains one of the most acute and destructive global challenges, affecting millions of lives. Murders, rapes, torture, abductions, and other grave offenses not only shatter the destinies of individuals but also undermine the very fabric of society, instilling fear and distrust among people. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), approximately **437,000 intentional homicides** were committed worldwide in



2012 [1]. Has this figure changed significantly since then? The 2023 Global Study on Homicide by UNODC revealed that **in 2021, more people died from homicide than from armed conflicts and terrorism combined** — an average of **52 victims per hour** [2]. In total, more than **455,000 people** lost their lives at the hands of others.

In Uzbekistan, the number of registered intentional homicides and attempted homicides amounted to **496 cases in 2021, 397 in 2022, and 363 in 2023** [8]. And this represents only one category of crimes that threaten public relations aimed at ensuring the safety of life, health, sexual freedom, and other inalienable human rights.

As crime increasingly transcends national borders, combating it becomes impossible without **coordinated international efforts**. In this context, international organizations play a crucial role in the fight against crime — and foremost among them is **INTERPOL**, the focus of the present study.

The purpose of this research is to provide a **comprehensive analysis of the activities of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)** as a significant institution in the system of international security, with an emphasis on the legal foundations of its functioning, key areas of operation, and the practical outcomes achieved in combating transnational crime.

In preparing this paper, **general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis** were employed. The methodological basis included the study of **official legal acts regulating INTERPOL's activities**, as well as materials published on the official websites of international organizations, particularly INTERPOL itself. Reports, press releases, and analytical papers containing current data on the scope and trends of crime were reviewed, along with practical examples of INTERPOL's cooperation with other institutions. Special attention was given to **statistical data on crime levels both globally and within individual states, including the Republic of Uzbekistan**.

1. Scientific and Theoretical Section

The history of INTERPOL dates back to **1914**, when the **First International Criminal Police Congress** first voiced the idea of creating an international body for police cooperation. Representatives of law enforcement agencies from



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twenty-four countries gathered to discuss methods of collaboration in solving crimes, techniques for identifying offenders, and extradition procedures.

After the end of World War I, this concept was revived by **Johannes Schober**, the head of the Vienna Police. His initiative led to the establishment of the **International Criminal Police Commission** in **1923**, with its headquarters in Vienna. Initially, the Commission was conceived as an auxiliary mechanism to support future International Criminal Police Congresses. However, as those congresses ceased to exist, the Commission evolved into an independent body. By that time, **thirty countries** were already participating in its activities.

Today, **INTERPOL** stands as the **largest international police organization in the world**, uniting **196 member countries** [3].

The idea behind the establishment of the **International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)** in 1923 was rooted in the necessity of uniting the efforts of national police authorities in combating crime. The initial focus was on developing mechanisms for international cooperation in such areas as extradition, arrests, identification of individuals, and the creation of a centralized criminal records system. Remarkably, even after a century, these fundamental principles remain relevant and continue to form the backbone of INTERPOL's operations.

1.1 Structure and Organs of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

According to its **Constitution**, the structure of INTERPOL comprises **five key components**:

1. The **General Assembly**,
2. The **Executive Committee**,
3. The **General Secretariat**,
4. The **National Central Bureaus (NCBs)**, and
5. The **Advisers**.

Each of these organs performs distinct functions, ensuring the efficiency, coordination, and political neutrality of international police cooperation.

The **General Assembly** is the **supreme governing body** of the Organization. It consists of delegates appointed by member states and enjoys broad powers,



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including defining the organization's policies, approving the annual work program and budget, electing officials, and coordinating cooperation with other international institutions. The Assembly holds **annual sessions**, and **extraordinary sessions** may be convened when necessary. Each member state has **one vote**, regardless of the size of its delegation. Decisions are generally made by a **simple majority**, except in cases requiring a **two-thirds majority**. The **Executive Committee** serves as the **governing and supervisory body** between sessions of the General Assembly. It consists of the **President**, **three Vice-Presidents**, and **nine Delegates**, elected with regard to equitable geographical representation. The Committee prepares the agenda of Assembly sessions, oversees the work of the General Secretariat, proposes strategic initiatives, and performs other functions delegated by the Assembly. Importantly, the members of the Executive Committee act **in the interest of INTERPOL as a whole**, rather than representing the interests of their respective states.

The **General Secretariat** is the **permanent administrative and operational organ** of INTERPOL, responsible for implementing the decisions of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee. It functions as the **organization's operational, analytical, and information center**. The Secretariat is headed by the **Secretary General**, who is elected for a **five-year term** and may be re-elected. The Secretary General manages personnel, oversees daily operations, presents strategic proposals, and coordinates with National Central Bureaus and international partners. Both the Secretary General and the staff are required to **uphold political neutrality** and remain independent from the influence of individual governments.

From the earliest stages of INTERPOL's formation, it became clear that effective international cooperation required **direct and rapid communication** among the police agencies of different countries. At the **4th Session of the General Assembly**, held in **Amsterdam in 1927**, a resolution was adopted calling upon each member state to establish a **central point of contact** within its police structure. This became the precursor to today's **National Central Bureaus (NCBs)** [3].



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The NCB system represents the “**nervous system**” of **INTERPOL** at the national level. These bureaus coordinate the participation of national law enforcement agencies in international operations, ensure the exchange of operational data, and facilitate the apprehension of fugitives abroad. NCBs also organize working meetings, expert conferences, and forums dedicated to sharing practical experience and developing unified approaches to combating transnational crime.

Each member country establishes its NCB in accordance with **its national legislation**. The NCB acts as a **link between national law enforcement agencies, other NCBs, and the General Secretariat**. In exceptional cases, when the establishment of a formal NCB is not possible, alternative forms of cooperation may be developed. NCBs provide **continuous operational coordination** both domestically and internationally.

Finally, the **Advisers** serve as **expert consultants** to the Organization. They are appointed by the Executive Committee for a **three-year term** and are selected for their **recognized international expertise** in relevant fields. Their role is purely advisory, aimed at enhancing the analytical quality and strategic soundness of the Organization’s decisions.

1.2 Communication

In its early years, communication between countries was maintained through postal services, telegrams, and telephone lines. However, by 1935, the first international police radio network had been established — a revolutionary development that provided an independent and, most importantly, rapid telecommunication system for the needs of criminal police work.

Today, **INTERPOL** operates through its state-of-the-art I-24/7 platform, a secure web-based communication system that links the law enforcement agencies of all member states into a unified information network. This system grants 24/7 access for National Central Bureaus (NCBs) to a wide range of **INTERPOL**’s databases. As previously mentioned, extradition has long been — and remains — one of the core components of international police cooperation.

Extradition refers to the surrender of a person by one state to another for the purpose of prosecution or execution of a criminal sentence. One of **INTERPOL**’s



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most important tools in this regard is the “Red Notice” — a special form of international alert containing the identification data of the wanted person, information about the charges brought against them, and a request for provisional arrest with a view to extradition.

These notices are created and transmitted in real time through the I-24/7 communication platform. In addition to Red Notices, INTERPOL issues a variety of other alerts:

- Orange Notice — warning of potential threats,
- Yellow Notice — to locate missing persons,
- Blue Notice — to collect additional information on a person of interest,
- Black Notice — concerning unidentified bodies,
- Green Notice — warning about persons who may reoffend,
- Purple Notice — describing criminal methods, modus operandi, and concealment techniques.

In 2025, INTERPOL launched a pilot initiative introducing the Silver Notice, designed to track assets used in criminal activities. Another important category is the INTERPOL–UN Security Council Special Notice, which alerts member states that a particular individual or entity is subject to UN sanctions.

Each year, INTERPOL circulates approximately 20,000 notices of various types [3].

2. Legal Framework

During World War II, the activities of the International Criminal Police Commission were effectively suspended — the organization lost its international status after falling under Nazi control following the occupation of Vienna, where its headquarters were located.

In the aftermath of the war, the world faced a sharp rise in crime, and the growing threat to global security required the revival of international police cooperation. In 1946, the organization was re-established on new principles, receiving its modern name — INTERPOL. Its headquarters were relocated to Paris, where they remain to this day.

To formalize INTERPOL’s international legal status, a Headquarters Agreement was concluded between the Organization and the French Republic. This



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agreement confirmed INTERPOL's intergovernmental character, recognized its international legal personality, and granted immunity from the jurisdiction of French law. Together with the Constitution, this agreement forms the foundational legal basis of INTERPOL's status [4].

According to V. A. Kolesnikov, the legal framework governing INTERPOL's activities can be divided into three main groups of legal norms:

1. Internal law,
2. External law, and
3. National legislation of the member states.

“Internal law” includes the norms that regulate the Organization's own functioning — its legal status, internal structure, financial and property relations, employment conditions, and other internal affairs.

“External law” comprises international legal instruments that grant INTERPOL global recognition, govern its relations with member states, and regulate cooperation with other international organizations.

Finally, national legislation of the member states plays a crucial role, particularly concerning the operation of National Central Bureaus (NCBs). These structures, integrated within national law enforcement systems, function in accordance with domestic law while simultaneously carrying out tasks delegated by INTERPOL [5].

2.1. INTERPOL Constitution

Among the internal legal acts, the Constitution of INTERPOL, which entered into force on June 13, 1956, serves as the cornerstone of the Organization's legal existence.

This founding document defines the fundamental parameters of INTERPOL's operations: its objectives, functions, principles of cooperation, and the competence and structure of its organs. Over time, the Constitution has been adapted to reflect the evolving needs of global law enforcement practice. It emphasizes the coordination of member states' efforts to combat transnational crime and maintain international security.



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2.2. Resolutions of the General Assembly

A significant part of INTERPOL's legal system consists of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. These acts can be divided into two complementary categories:

- Binding (internal) resolutions, which establish internal norms and procedures concerning organizational structure, division of powers, staffing, financial management, and operational regulations. These acts are obligatory for all member states, ensuring stability and effective governance.
- Recommendatory resolutions, addressing various aspects of international police cooperation — such as the exchange of operational data, adoption of modern crime-fighting methods, technical development, and the establishment of common standards. Although not legally binding, these resolutions often serve as guidelines for national policy-making in combating transnational crime and promote harmonization of international practices.

The official INTERPOL website hosts over nine hundred General Assembly acts, available in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic.

2.3. INTERPOL Service Standards

A notable example is the INTERPOL Standards for National Central Bureaus, adopted at the 73rd Session of the General Assembly (Cancún, Mexico, 2004). These standards set out mandatory operational requirements to ensure the effective and coordinated functioning of NCBs worldwide.

According to these standards, each NCB must:

- Maintain close contact with other national and international law enforcement bodies;
- Provide continuous, secure data exchange via the I-24/7 communication system, including biometric data, fingerprints, and images;
- Immediately notify the General Secretariat of any operational changes;
- Ensure multilingual support in INTERPOL's official languages;
- Employ qualified personnel with appropriate expertise;
- Respond promptly to urgent international requests, and
- Designate authorized contact officers to handle priority cases.



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2.4. International Agreements and Cooperation

INTERPOL also concludes international cooperation agreements with other subjects of international law.

A notable example is Resolution AG-2004-RES-16, adopted at the 73rd General Assembly Session in Cancún (Mexico), 5–8 October 2004, which approved the Cooperation Agreement between INTERPOL and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

This agreement emphasizes that the crimes within the jurisdiction of the ICC correspond to INTERPOL's objectives — namely, the fight against international crime and the promotion of international justice.

2.5. Legislation and Subordinate Acts of INTERPOL Member States

An illustrative example of national implementation of INTERPOL mechanisms is the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 343 of June 2, 2017 “On Measures to Improve the Activities of the National Central Bureau of INTERPOL in the Republic of Uzbekistan.”

Annex No. 1 to this Resolution establishes the legal framework and status of the NCB of INTERPOL, the procedure for conducting operational-search activities by its officers within the limits of their competence and in accordance with the national legislation, as well as the main tasks, functions, organizational structure, and financial support of the Bureau.

This document provides a clear institutional and procedural foundation for cooperation between Uzbekistan and INTERPOL in combating international criminal activity.

3. INTERPOL in Practice

It is difficult to overestimate the role of INTERPOL in the global fight against crime, as this organization is capable of providing a large-scale and coordinated response to criminal activities that are increasingly sophisticated, transnational, and dangerous.

A striking illustration of this is the recent operation led by INTERPOL in which law enforcement agencies of seven African countries — from Nigeria to Rwanda — jointly carried out a powerful campaign that resulted in the arrest of over 300



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individuals, including members of international criminal groups. The operation uncovered vast investment and banking fraud schemes affecting more than 5,000 victims and led to the seizure of hundreds of devices, digital assets, and property. Through this, significant financial losses were prevented, protecting real lives, families, and businesses. [3]

What deserves special recognition is INTERPOL's unique capacity to combine intellectual resources, technological partnerships with leading IT companies (such as Kaspersky, Group-IB, and Trend Micro), and seamless cooperation among international institutions. INTERPOL does not merely exchange information — it establishes a global early-warning system against emerging threats that no single national authority could detect on its own.

Another remarkable case is Operation Thunder 2024 — the largest operation in history aimed at protecting wildlife and forest resources.

From November to December 2024, under the joint coordination of INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, 138 countries and regions united to combat transnational criminal networks engaged in the illegal trade of rare animals, plants, and timber.

The results were striking: about 20,000 live animals belonging to endangered and protected species were rescued from illegal circulation; 365 individuals were arrested; and six major international criminal networks were dismantled. More than 100 companies involved in illegal trade were exposed.

Across the globe — from Australia to Peru, from Mexico to the Czech Republic — more than 2,200 operations were conducted simultaneously to disrupt criminal activities. The rescued animals were transferred to wildlife protection centers where they received care and, where possible, began rehabilitation for return to their natural habitats.

INTERPOL Secretary General Valdecy Urquiza rightly emphasized that environmental crimes destroy ecosystems, contribute to biodiversity loss, undermine stability, and even provoke conflicts. Therefore, INTERPOL considers the protection of the planet to be one of its central missions. [3]

A notable case occurred when Georgian politician Givi Targamadze, accused in Russia of organizing mass unrest, was removed from INTERPOL's wanted database. According to Targamadze, he received a letter from INTERPOL



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Secretary General Ronald Noble confirming that Russia's request for his international search violated INTERPOL's principles, and thus could not be executed. Such instances are not isolated.

Similarly, in 2013, INTERPOL's General Secretariat rejected the Russian Federation's request to place financier William Browder on the wanted list, deeming it politically motivated. Nevertheless, Browder was briefly detained in Spain several years later but was immediately released — highlighting both the complexity and the fragility of maintaining strict political neutrality. [6]

Conclusion

The conducted research has examined INTERPOL as an international organization, analyzed its historical formation, traced the evolution of its goals and functions, and explored its institutional structure and practical mechanisms. In essence, INTERPOL represents a living mechanism of international legal order, reflecting the challenges of the 21st century and providing effective and professional responses to them. Its authority — reinforced by the trust of 195 member states — makes it one of the few truly universal instruments for combating transnational crime.

Its activities demonstrate that, despite the differences in legal systems, languages, and political interests, international cooperation is not only possible but necessary, provided it is driven by the common pursuit of justice, security, and the protection of human rights worldwide.

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