



### F20 Interpol – It's Role in Mass Fatality Incidents Such as the December 26, 2004 Tsunami in Southeast Asia

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The author familiarize the attendee with the International Criminal Police Organization – Interpol and its supportive role in major disaster or mass fatality incidents such as the December 26, 2004 tsunami that struck southern Asia on December 26, 2004.

This presentation will provide information that will encourage a greater sharing of information and co-operation amongst those who have assisted or will assist the operations of the United States Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) or the Interpol Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Team. This “will only serve to enhance the compassionate treatment of the next of kin and the scientific identification of the deceased.” *J. Kenney, the European IOFOS Meeting, Belgium, August, 2000.*

Interpol, now recognized as the second largest organization in the world, next to the United Nations, was founded in 1923 with its headquarters being established in Lyon, France in 1989. Interpol's constitution prohibits any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character. It is not an international police force; it is an international organization that encourages co-ordination and co-operation amongst the national police forces of member countries, even when diplomatic relations do not exist between some of those countries. It does not conduct investigations on its own; they are conducted by the national police force of each member country, abiding by its laws and keeping to the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 182 member countries maintain a National Central Bureau (NCB) staffed by their own law enforcement officers. The NCB is designated as a contact point for rapid and secure communication between each member's national police force and Interpol and between the national police forces of individual countries. Interpol's fully encrypted electronic communication system is known as I-24/7.

Although it maintains its focus on such interests such as fugitives, public safety, terrorism, drugs and organized crime, Interpol has created various specialty working groups bringing together experts from around the world. In 1980, the General Assembly, at its 49th Session in Manila, established a working group to draft a DVI Form. The Interpol Standing Committee on Disaster Victim Identification, composed of police officers, forensic pathologists and forensic odontologists, was established in 1986. At its 1996 Session, Interpol introduced an updated and computerized version of its DVI Form accompanied by the revised manual “The Disaster Victim Identification Guide”. It called upon member countries to establish national DVI teams consisting of police officers, forensic pathologists and forensic odontologists and to insure that such teams are made available when a request to observe or to assist in a disaster investigation is made by a member country. It encouraged member countries to share information and experience and to help to refine common procedures and standards to the benefit of all. And finally, it encouraged co-operation in the planning for and the response to mass fatality incidents.

Interpol has coordinated or assisted in tragic mass fatality incidents around the world. Recent involvement includes the 2002 terrorist bombing in Bali (Indonesia), the 2004 crash of an airliner in Uzbekistan, the 2004 terrorist bombing in Madrid (Spain), the massive supermarket fire in Asuncion (Paraguay), and still ongoing is the biggest single forensic operational response in history, providing communication, co-ordination, and logistical support to the governments in Southeast Asian countries hit by the December 26, 2004, tsunami.

The identification of the victims of these multiple fatality disasters was, and is, based on the internationally recognized DVI process; this process will be explained. The communication, co-ordination and logistical support provided in Thailand will be discussed and the international DVI team described.

This presentation will provide a better understanding of Interpol and its role in the development of the mass disaster investigative process in other parts of the world and will promote greater co-operation and sharing among investigators planning for or working on the ever increasing number of multinational mass fatality incidents.

#### Interpol, DVI, SE Asia Tsunami