



First INTERPOL-AFRIPOL counter terrorism operation

Detecting travelers as potential terrorists at African borders

LYON, France – A counter terrorism operation led by INTERPOL and AFRIPOL has enabled frontline police across Africa to detect potential terrorists and seize dangerous and prohibited goods.

The pan-African operation codenamed “FLASH-PACT” took place in two phases between July and September 2022, to strengthen the ability of frontline border officers to detect potential terrorists and dismantle the networks behind them.

Using INTERPOL’s global criminal databases for wanted people, stolen travel and identity documents, and stolen vehicles, law enforcement worked together with INTERPOL and AFRIPOL to locate, intercept and stop criminals trying to cross regional borders.

Operation FLASH PACT: intelligence-led, collaborative and strategic

Underlining the need for a pan-African, multi-stakeholder effort against terrorism, the operation involved police, customs, border forces and counter-terrorism experts, including INTERPOL Regional Counter-Terrorism Nodes in Abidjan, Harare, Nairobi and Yaoundé.

Participating countries conducted their operations at airports, seaports, land border crossings and a range of pre-identified terrorist hotspots.

Ahead of tactical operations, investigators collected and examined data to establish a threat picture about regional terrorism using globally sourced data from INTERPOL’s 195 member countries.

Stronger borders, stronger national security

With stolen travel documents a key asset for terrorist mobility, particularly foreign terrorist fighters returning from conflict zones, the operation saw INTERPOL’s databases queried more than six million times throughout the operation, with some 400 hits on INTERPOL’s travel and identity documents database.

Border access to INTERPOL databases flagged nine people as red notice subjects. An INTERPOL red notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action.

Highlighting how terrorist activity is often linked to other crime areas, more than 20 people were flagged as wanted by INTERPOL for a wide range of serious crime including fraud, money laundering, drugs and wildlife trafficking.



One man was flagged as the subject of an INTERPOL-United Nations Security Council (UNSS) Special Notice which alerts the global law enforcement community to individuals that are subject to sanctions imposed by the UNSS. The three most common sanctions are assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo.

Several INTERPOL blue notice subjects were detected trying to cross borders in the participating countries. An international blue notice serves to collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.

“The past decade has seen increased terrorism in Western and Eastern Africa which is quickly spreading its tentacles southwards, causing death, fear and destruction - a devastation for African communities and economies,” said INTERPOL’s Executive Director of Police Services Stephen Kavanagh.

“Counter-terrorism operations like FLASH-PACT are a top priority for the AFRIPOL-INTERPOL partnership as they allow us to share expertise on local terrorist networks, better understand their methods, motives and financing and ultimately identify and arrest the criminals who spread the terror,” added Mr Kavanagh.

Uganda and Benin arrested six travelers attempting to enter their countries on forged passports.

Mozambique police authorities arrested a man in possession of an AK-47 assault weapon, two magazines and 51 rounds of ammunition. In another case, police also seized three boxes containing 360 roles of explosives and a detonating cord.

More than 250 travelers were arrested for attempted illegal immigration.

Several top range high value stolen vehicles were seized in Tanzania.

A powerful partnership

INTERPOL, AFRIPOL and the African Union work side by side on matters of joint interest, sharing resources and expertise, and developing combined responses to Africa’s policing needs.

“As a regional police organization, AFRIPOL provides a framework for police cooperation at the strategic, tactical and operational levels in all African states, helping us build stronger, meaningful capabilities for African law enforcement through our partnership with INTERPOL,” said AFRIPOL’s Acting Executive Director, Ambassador Jalel Chelba.

“It is important to underline the role of joint operations such as FLASH-PACT in enhancing cooperation and security for African countries. INTERPOL’s support has enabled to share intelligence information that leads to a greater security through arrests and seizures,” added Ambassador Chelba.



INTERPOL | MEDIA RELEASE



Operation FLASH-PACT is the first counter-terrorism operation organized by the two police Organizations since the establishment of AFRIPOL by the African Union in 2014.

The operation was coordinated with the help of INTERPOL's Support Programme for the African Union (ISPA) which assists AFRIPOL in developing its strategic framework and operational functions across the continent and in fighting transnational crime in cooperation with INTERPOL and other regional policing bodies.

Djibouti, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda took part in Phase one of Operation from 14-18 July. Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Congo (DRC) and Nigeria carried out the West African leg of the operation during Phase 2 from 4-8 September.