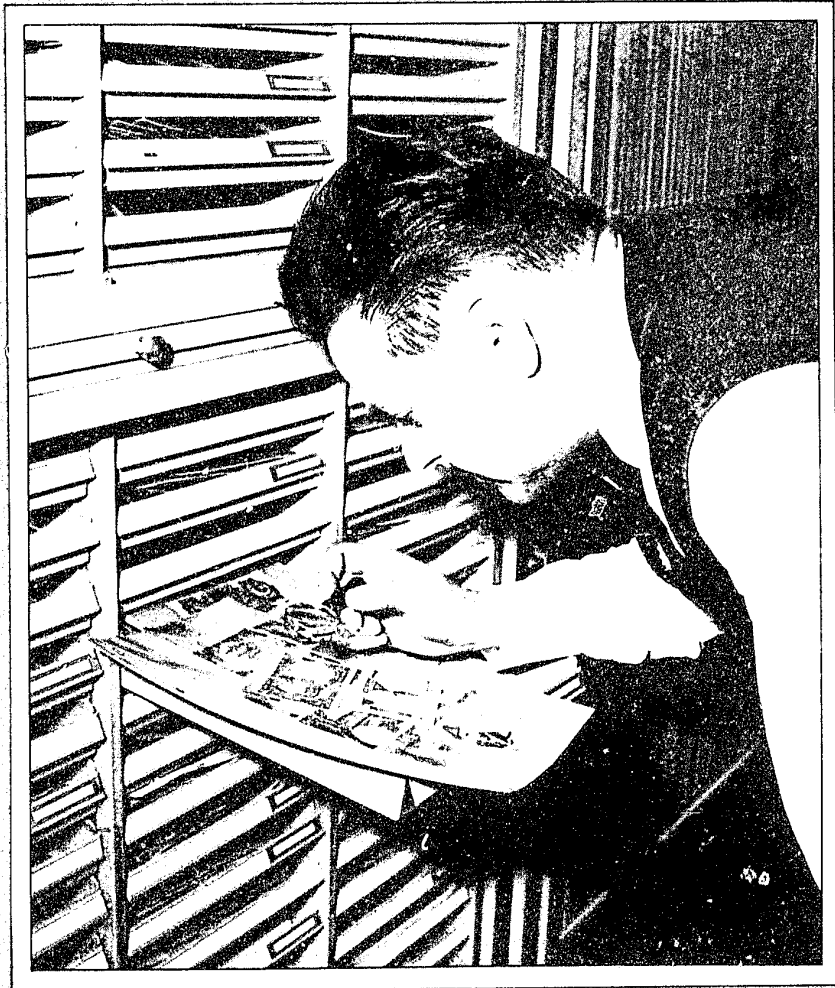


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OCTOBER 1981



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NCJRS

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The Cover: Interpol employee searches counterfeit currency file at Interpol's headquarters in St. Cloud, France. See article p. 1.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20535

William H. Webster, Director

The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of the Department of Justice. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through June 6, 1988.

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INTERPOL

The International Criminal Police Organization

“ . . . now as in 1914, international police cooperation is the obvious solution to the problem of international crime.”

By

CHARLES E. COLITRE

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Criminal Investigative Division
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, DC*

INTERPOL—To many, the name brings to mind the fictional image of an agent wearing a trenchcoat and wide-brimmed hat standing on a fog-shrouded train platform awaiting the arrival of the famed Orient Express. In reality, Interpol has no operatives of its own. Its fame and success are based solely on the efforts of dedicated law enforcement officers in its 136 member countries working within their own borders and criminal justice systems, backed by an extensive telecommunications system and a spirit of international law enforcement cooperation.

The turn of the century in Europe witnessed an increasing rise in the crime rate and development of a rapid and widespread transportation system on the continent. These factors created the ideal climate for the criminal who could commit a crime in Rome, board a train, and find himself many miles and several countries away within hours.

Greater international police cooperation was the obvious solution, but it was not until 1914 that the first positive action was taken. In that year, at the invitation of Prince Albert I of Monaco, the First International Criminal Police Congress met in the Principality of Monaco. Presided over by the University of Paris law faculty dean, the delegates from 14 countries discussed identification techniques, a central international records system, methods of speeding up and simplifying arrests, and a unification of extradition procedures.

A second meeting, scheduled for 1916, was delayed by World War I. It wasn't until 1923 when the Second International Criminal Police Congress met in Vienna, Austria, at the invitation of Dr. Johannes Schober, Presi-



Interpol's Founding Fathers



Special Agent Colitre

dent of the Vienna Police. At this meeting, it was decided to create the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC), the forerunner of the present-day International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO).

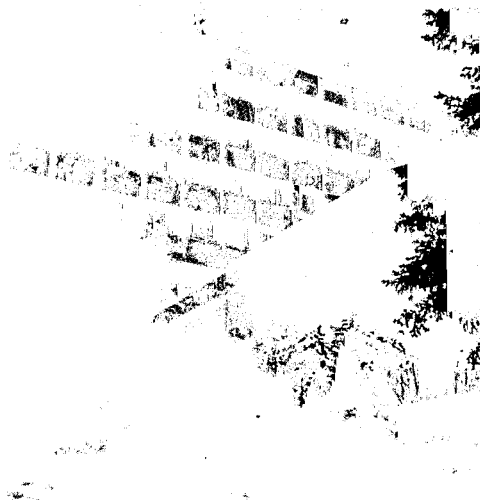
By 1938, 34 countries had joined the ICPC, though its activities were primarily centered in Europe. The 1938 General Assembly Session held in Bucharest, Romania, marked the end of normal ICPC activities until the end of World War II.

With the return of peace in Europe came the need for the return of international police cooperation. In 1946, the ICPC was reborn at a conference in Brussels, Belgium. This effort was sparked by Mr. Florent Lowage, a senior Belgian police official who was elected president. A new constitution was adopted, and Paris was selected as the site for the new ICPC headquarters. The 17 countries attending the conference elected Mr. Louis Ducloux of France as Secretary General and that position has been held by a Frenchman ever since.

At the ICPC 25th General Assembly in 1956 a new constitution was adopted. Article I of the new constitution changed the organization's name to the International Criminal Police Organization—Interpol. The word "commission" was dropped because many members believed it was too indicative of a temporary group. The word "Interpol," in use since 1946 as part of the telegraphic address of the ICPC in each country, had become so well-known throughout the world as a substitute for International Criminal Police Commission or ICPC that it was officially made part of the new name.

Interpol headquarters, known as the General Secretariat, is located in a modern structure built by Interpol in St. Cloud (pronounced San Clue), a quiet suburb of Paris, France. The building was first occupied in July 1966, and houses the permanent administrative and technical staff of the organization.

The General Secretariat is organized into four divisions: General Administration, Police Matters, Studies and Research, and the International Criminal Police Review. The General Administration Division is further divided into subdivisions handling personnel, budget, conferences, and the vital translation and telecommunications functions. The Police Division is composed of three subdivisions—general criminal, economic, and financial crime and drugs. These subdivisions are further divided into groups handling specialized crime, such as violent gangs, counterfeiting, financial assets, and check fraud. The Studies and Research Division carries out research in a wide range of problems facing the world law enforcement community. The fourth division, as its name implies, publishes the International Criminal Police Review, a periodical published in the four official working languages of the organization—French, English, Spanish, and Arabic.



Interpol's General Secretariat, St. Cloud, France

The General Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General, a career law enforcement officer elected by the General Assembly for a term of 5 years. The Secretary General is advised by the executive committee which, like the Secretary General, is elected by the General Assembly and serves as Interpol's board of directors. The president is elected for 4 years and the three vice presidents and delegates for 3-year terms. The president and vice presidents must each be from a different continent.

Interpol's General Assembly meets annually to conduct the general business of the organization and to discuss topics of special interest. Each member country is invited to send a delegation to the General Assembly which meets in a member country that volunteers to host the session. Regardless of delegation size, each member country has only one vote as the assembly voices its decisions on a series of resolutions and election of officers.

Of great importance during the General Assembly sessions are the face-to-face meetings between the delegates who represent a wide range of cultures, customs, and backgrounds. Regardless of formal language barriers (the General Assembly meetings are simultaneously translated into the four working languages), the common language of law enforcement provides a bond of cooperation that transcends national boundaries.

In addition to the General Assembly sessions, Interpol holds a number of regional conferences, seminars, and symposiums each year to discuss topics of interest to various member countries. Such conferences in the past have focused on telecommunications, drugs, counterfeiting, aircraft hijacking, organized crime, financial crime, terrorism, and other matters of special concern. Several Interpol drug conferences have been the genesis for regional drug interdiction plans,

and in some cases, have targeted specific narcotics smuggling rings.

Financial support for Interpol is transmitted to the General Secretariat by the member countries in the form of annual dues. Each member pays an amount based on the population and development of the country and its use of Interpol facilities. The United States' annual dues account for approximately 5.2 percent of the overall Interpol budget and amounted to \$373,785 from appropriated Department of Justice funds in fiscal year 1983. The Interpol budget is constituted in Swiss francs, chosen because of their traditional stability in the world money market.

At the heart of the Interpol operation is the telecommunications system that provides the rapid exchange of information between the member countries and the General Secretariat. A modern, high-speed radio telecommunications network



Interpol's General Assembly

Telecommunications Center, St. Cloud, France

links 67 member countries with the General Secretariat either directly or through regional switching centers. As equipment and funds become available, additional members, now communicating via international telex or cable, are expected to join the radio network system.

To provide an Interpol point of contact in each country, the Interpol constitution requires member countries to establish a National Central Bureau (NCB). In most countries, the NCB is established as a component of the national police service and is frequently headed by the police official with the responsibility for all foreign police liaison matters. Though the size and internal organization of the NCB's vary from country to country, each operates within the constraints of its own national laws and policies, as well as within the framework of the Interpol constitution. Each NCB is responsible for liaison with other agencies in the country, with other NCB's, and with the General Secretariat.

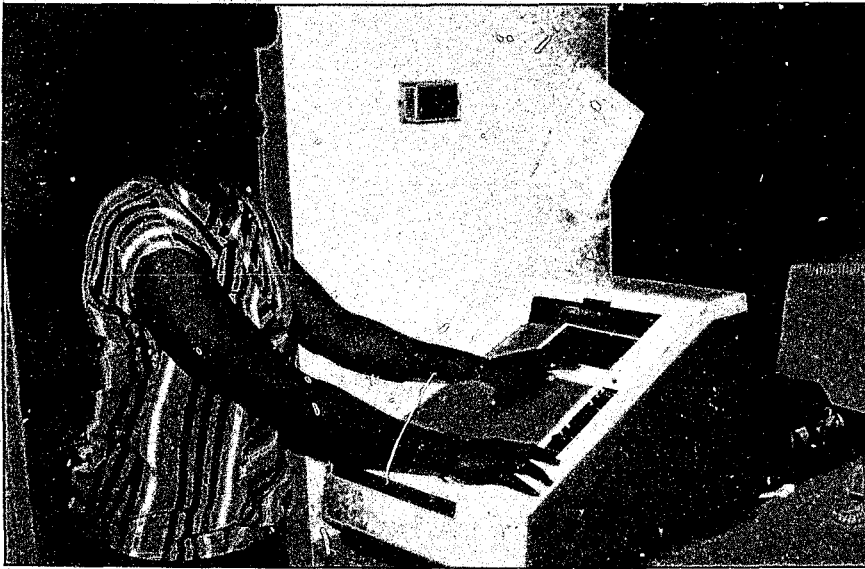
Since the United States has no national police service, the authority for the operation of Interpol was vested by law in the Attorney General in 1938.¹ He initially designated the FBI to handle Interpol matters, a role which continued in 1947 when the United States resumed participation after the post-World War II reorganization. Even before the United States formally resumed participation in Interpol in January 1947, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had accepted a unanimous nomination by the General Assembly in June 1946, as senior vice president of the organization, a post held until December 1950, when the FBI discontinued its association with Interpol.



With the disassociation of the FBI, the U.S. Treasury Department, anxious to maintain international contacts to help with its enforcement responsibilities in narcotics, currency, and customs violations, continued an informal liaison with Interpol through 1957. In 1958, legislation was passed allowing the Attorney General to delegate the responsibility for Interpol operations in the United States to any department or agency.² The Treasury Department, already deeply involved in Interpol activities, officially assumed this responsibility, and in the fall of 1960, hosted the 29th Interpol General Assembly in Washington, DC. In 1962, the U.S. National Central Bureau (USNCB) was established in the Treasury Department to act as the central point of contact for Interpol activities in the United States. In January 1972, the USNCB joined the Interpol radio network, thus permitting direct communications with the 29 other member countries then a part of the system.

By the mid-1970's, a movement became active within the Justice Department to return the Interpol function to the Attorney General. Though this move was opposed by the Treasury Department, which by then was in full control of the USNCB, an agreement between the departments was reached in 1977. The compromise returned control of Interpol in the United States to the Justice Department but permitted representation and operation of the Interpol function to be shared by officials of both departments.

Today, the USNCB is located in the Justice Department and is staffed, in addition to a permanent Justice Department cadre, by investigative personnel detailed from Secret Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Marshals Service, Postal Inspection Service, Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Comptroller of the Currency and the Federal Law Enforcement Training



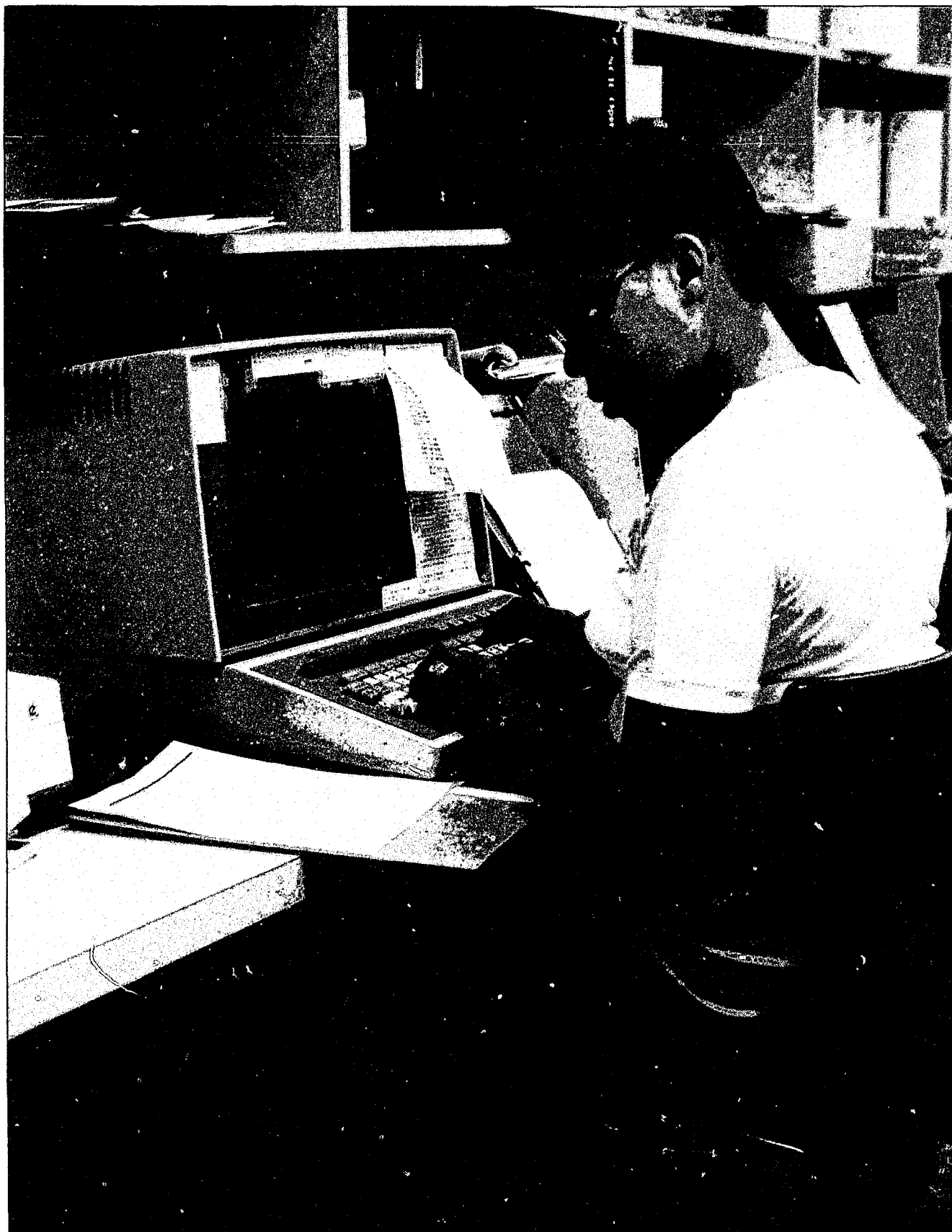
*U.S. National Central Bureau, Washington, DC
Left: Photofacsimile Unit
Below: Communications Center*

Center are also participating agencies, each having detailed administrative personnel to the USNCB.

During 1983, the USNCB investigative caseload totaled 24,706, an increase of 17.3 percent over 1982. In addition to the investigative caseload, the USNCB handled 648 other inquiries concerning Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, media and public relations, and a broad spectrum of law enforcement topics from the use of bulletproof vests to computerized fingerprint comparison.

To handle these inquiries on an international level, the USNCB makes use of the Interpol radio telecommunications network and a telex and cable facility to communicate with NCB's not yet on the radio network. An advanced technology photofacsimile unit was installed in 1983, giving the USNCB high resolution transmission capabilities for fingerprints and photographs. For domestic communication, the USNCB has terminals for the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) and both the Justice (JUST) and Treasury Enforcement (TECS) Communication System. Access terminals permit queries of the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Narcotics and Dangerous Drug Information System (NADDIS) operated by the Drug En-





“Recognized internationally for its unique high degree of cooperation among members, Interpol continues to grow and adapt to the constantly changing methods of the modern international criminal. . . .”

forcement Administration. Information regarding fugitives and wanted persons is exchanged with the Department of State Advanced Visa Lookout System (AVLOS) and the Immigration and Naturalization Service Master Index File (MIRAC). The USNCB also makes use of an internal computer system for case indexing and tracking and to provide statistical data for management purposes.

The broad range of offenses and requests for investigations received by the USNCB extend from murder, robbery, narcotics violations, large-scale fraud, and counterfeiting to locating and apprehending international fugitives which involves arrests and extraditions to the countries where the crimes were committed. The requests also include criminal history information, license checks, and humanitarian matters. Through Interpol, weapons can be traced, witnesses can be located and even interviewed abroad, and criminal record checks can be conducted since there is no international equivalent of NCIC. Unless an individual has previously come to the attention of the General Secretariat through an Interpol-handled investigation or the issuance of an Interpol international wanted notice, each member country believed to have a criminal record or arrest warrant for the subject must be queried individually. The worldwide Interpol communications system makes such a task the simple matter of transmitting a single message for relay to the appropriate member NCB's.

Each case handled by the USNCB is carefully monitored to insure compliance with Federal statutes and regulations, Department of Justice policy, and directives and international standards for investigations and exchange of information. The questioning process between member countries is encouraged to insure that investigative requests do not violate the Interpol¹ constitutional prohibition against involvement in political, religious, racial, or military matters. Requests from domestic law enforcement agencies must be in writing, either by mail or a telecommunications system, and must specify the criminal activity under investigation and the relationship of subjects to the investigation before the USNCB can proceed with international inquiries.

For U.S. law enforcement agencies, Interpol provides the vehicle for worldwide extension of “the long arm of the law.” Through the use of Interpol, even the smallest and most remote police department has available to it, free of charge, the full resources of the law enforcement services of 135 nations.

Today, as at the turn of the century, rising crime rates and vast and rapid transportation systems, as well as modern communications networks, continue to provide the ideal setting for the international criminal. So too, now as in 1914, international police cooperation is the obvious solution to the problem of international crime. In the 70 years since Prince Albert I set in motion the wheels of multinational law enforcement cooperation, Interpol has grown to a membership of 136 countries. Recognized internationally for its unique high degree of cooperation among members, Interpol continues to grow and adapt to the con-

stantly changing methods of the modern international criminal in such diverse areas as terrorism, drug trafficking, and computer crime.

Investigative personnel of the participating agencies in the USNCB should consult their headquarters representative at the USNCB or current directives for format and method of communicating investigative requests to Interpol. State, local, and nonparticipating Federal agencies may submit requests by mail on agency letterhead to Interpol-U.S. National Central Bureau, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 20530 or via the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) to (DCINTER00). To insure compliance with U.S. law and the Interpol constitution, Interpol guidelines require all requests for international investigation to be received in “hard copy” before action can be taken.

FBI

Footnotes

¹ 22 USC 263 (a).

² P. L. 85-768.