Un-ringing the Bell, Part 3: Can INTERPOL Force a National Central Bureau to Correct False Information?

By Michelle A. Estlund on August 19, 2011

In order for INTERPOL to publish a Red Notice, one of its 188 member countries must first request the Red Notice based upon certain criteria. This request is made by the member country's National Central Bureau (NCB). Today's post addresses the question of what can be done when an NCB submits erroneous or false information to INTERPOL.

When such a submission occurs, the information may be circulated in the form of a Red Notice worldwide to various law enforcement agencies and to border checkpoint locations. It may also be published on INTERPOL's website. The NCB's act therefore has a monumental ripple effect. However, INTERPOL respects the finite realm of its control, and advises aggrieved parties of the limits of its authority. Attorneys and Red Notice subjects are frequently reminded that INTERPOL cannot force a member country's NCB to take any specific action.

In these instances where a member country is at fault for the inaccuracy of INTERPOL's data, INTERPOL's corrective options are limited to either entirely withdrawing the Red Notice, modifying it, or removing it from circulation pending clarification of the issue in question. No mechanism exists, nor is intended to exist, by which INTERPOL will force a member country to take any type of corrective action.

It is the member country that will be responsible for correcting the error or falsity. Of course, if the information, such as an underlying arrest warrant, has been purposely falsified, remedying the situation may be difficult if it is possible at all. On the other hand, where clear errors have been made or where the underlying information is no longer valid, member countries have taken it upon themselves to advise INTERPOL of those developments and request to have the Red Notices removed.

Not exactly a satisfying answer for most cases, I know. But it is what it is.

As always, comments and thoughts are welcomed.