

Un-ringing the Bell, Part 1: What Leads to INTERPOL Circulating Erroneous Information?

By Michelle A. Estlund on August 15, 2011

As some unfortunate souls have discovered, INTERPOL sometimes publishes information that is simply wrong. Due to the "honor system" it uses to allow member countries to request Red Notices, there are instances where INTERPOL issues a Red Notice containing erroneous information, which can happen in one of several ways:

1. The underlying charge is completely fabricated by law enforcement or judicial officials in the requesting country,
2. The underlying charge is mischaracterized by the requesting country, or
3. The Red Notice itself as issued by INTERPOL contains an erroneous characterization of the underlying charges

When the false information is circulated worldwide on INTERPOL's databases, the result is that the subjects of the Red Notices lose the ability to travel, maintain their livelihoods, and needlessly suffer the accompanying humiliation and embarrassment.

It is difficult to overstate the effect of the reverberations following the ringing of INTERPOL's Red Notice bell. There are, however, steps that attorneys can take to correct these errors on behalf of their clients.

Next time: a discussion of damage control.

As always, thoughts and comments are welcomed.