

Journal of

International Relations and Policy

(JIRP) **Interrogating the Role of Interpol in Combating Terrorism
and Other Transnational Organized Crimes in the West African
Sub-Region**



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Interrogating the Role of Interpol in Combating Terrorism and Other Transnational Organized Crimes in the West African Sub-Region

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Accepted: 12th Jan, 2026, Received in Revised Form: 30th Jan, 2026, Published: 9th Feb, 2026

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to interrogate the role of INTERPOL in combating terrorism and other transnational organized crimes in the West African sub-region.

Methodology: The researchers adopted Woodrow Wilson's Collective security theory and exploratory design for the study. Primary and secondary data were obtained by using a purposive sampling technique. Respondents with relevant experience and knowledge of the subject matter were engaged. Primary data were obtained using 14 key informant interviews, 4 focus group discussions, and 25 in-depth interviews held with selected stakeholders, INTERPOL officials and personnel, investigators, analysts, and administrators working within Interpol's Regional Bureau for West Africa, based in Abuja, Nigeria. Secondary data were obtained from published works, including books, journals, and online articles, analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Factors hindering INTERPOL's effectiveness include political interference, inadequate training, language barriers, insufficient technology, and corruption. Transnational crimes in West Africa involve suicide bombings, kidnappings, human/drug/arms trafficking, cyber fraud, and banditry. INTERPOL's roles include intelligence sharing via WAPIS, suspect prosecution, training, global initiatives, and crime pattern analysis. Major challenges: language barriers, political meddling, funding shortages, limited tech, poor intelligence sharing, and corruption

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study clearly identifies the gap that lies between policy implementation, and influence of INTERPOL in combating terrorism and other transnational organized crimes in the West African sub-region. The study underscored the urgent need for reform, highlighting the importance of enhancing institutional integrity, improving training, and fostering inter-agency collaboration. The paper, therefore, concluded that investment in advanced technologies and information-sharing remained essential for bolstering Interpol's capacity and ensuring peace and stability in West Africa.

Keywords: *Interpol, Transnational organized crimes, Terrorism in Africa, West Africa*

Introduction

The rise and growth of terrorism in various parts of the world have posed significant challenges to global security, economic stability, and socio-cultural growth across the globe, with its devastating consequences affecting both developed and developing states under attacks. The frequent attacks have caused serious damage to the transportation systems, and infrastructure disrupted and deterred foreign investment, displacement of people, and fueling of social divisions and ethnic or religious tensions within a country. The fear and mistrust generated by terrorist activities can lead to the marginalization and stigmatization of certain regions hindering social cohesion and fostering discrimination (Allison, 2014). Terrorism encompasses the premeditated, political, and religious motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.

According to Lawrence (2006) state in the last twenty years, terrorism has become very different. The frequency and severity of terrorist acts have increased. After the bombings in Brussels, the author observed that Islamic terrorism is now a permanent and ubiquitous hazard to life in every city, and on every continent. Not a single day now goes by without an Islamist suicide bombing, rocket attack, shooting, spree, kidnapping or stabbing somewhere in the world. Terrorism involves numerous variations on the theme of physical and psychological violence. Rarely is it mindless; terrorists seek to legitimize their destructiveness by wrapping it for political or religious purposes. Osama bin Laden, shortly after the 2001 attacks on the United States, stated that ‘neither America nor anyone living there, will ever enjoy safety until we can first see it as reality in Palestine and before all the infidel armies quit the land of Muhammad (Byman, 2018).

Due to the increasing threat of terrorism and other transnational criminal activities, millions of women and children in the West African region have been forced to flee and are now receiving humanitarian relief. While transnational criminals are involved in kidnappings, drug trafficking, illegal mining and other criminal activities that have destabilized the region and posed significant challenges to the political, economic, and sociocultural stability, thereby undermining regional security, terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have been carrying out violent attacks.

Much of the world has seen an increase in terrorism and transnational organized crime throughout the past 20 years. Though it has been more widely recognized, little is known about its causes and reasons, and reactions to it are still primarily emotional rather than calculated. Attempting to combat violence with vehemently directed hatred is, at best, pointless and will probably backfire. Furthermore, suicide bombs, rocket attacks, shootings, sprees, kidnappings, and stabbings occur somewhere in the region every single day. The foundation of this research.

Scholars such as Abiodun, Danjibo, and others have written extensively about the terrorist actions of Boko Haram and ISIS-ISWAP, which have resulted in the internal displacement of approximately two million people in the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, as well as the

external displacement of over 300,000 Nigerian refugees to neighbouring countries, primarily Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. This is because the majority of scholarly literature has focused on terrorism activities. As per the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaign, 112 girls were still unaccounted for by the end of 2020, following the kidnapping of 276 students from Chibok, Borno State, by Boko Haram in 2014. While most of the 113 students kidnapped from Dapchi, Yobe State in 2018 have been released, one student is still being held captive by rebels, according to the organizers of BBOG. There is a dearth of material on the International Criminal Police Organization's (Interpol) participation in combatting terrorism, which is why this study aims to investigate Interpol's involvement in counterterrorism efforts in Nigeria.

Worth (2016) clarified, however, that several issues, such as scarce resources, backing from the regional administration, difficulties in jurisdiction, and the intricate geopolitical dynamics of the area, have restricted the efficacy of Interpol's operations in West Africa. Furthermore, it is vital to comprehend the distinct obstacles and difficulties that Interpol encounters in this particular setting and devise tactics to augment its cooperative endeavours with domestic and local security organizations. The study is intended to investigate Interpol's roles in countering terrorism and other transnational criminal operations in the West Africa sub-region, based on the aforementioned challenges.

This study critically aims to explore the role of Interpol in combating terrorist activities in West Africa. Therefore, the specific objectives of this research are to: Identify and discuss the causal factors of terrorism and other transnational criminal activities in the West Africa sub-region and investigate the nature of terrorism and other transnational criminal activities (TCAS) in the West Africa sub-region.

Conceptual Clarifications

Terrorism

Terrorism is a concept replete with myriad interpretations and conceptions from sovereign states, intergovernmental organisations, security practitioners and scholars. The vagueness of what constitutes the “act of terror”? is further underscored by the inability of the United Nations to establish a universally accepted definition amid its successive declarations obvious in decisive resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council in 1994 and 2004 respectively. In this regard, the Module of the United States Institute of Peace Education (2004) documents that terrorism is both complex and emotive. It is complex because it combines so many different aspects of human experience, including subjects such as politics, psychology, philosophy, military strategy, and history, to name a few.

Terrorism is also emotive because experiences of terrorist acts arouse tremendous feelings, and because those who see terrorists as justified often have strong feelings concerning the rightness of the use of violence. Without a doubt, terrorism evokes strong feelings whenever it is discussed. To further illustrate the difficulty in the conceptualization of terrorism, perhaps terrorism has been

coined to refer to protestors in Thailand, Tunisia and Libya to the Israeli attack on a flotilla of ships attempting to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza, to the US invasion of Iraq and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, to US drone attacks in Pakistan, to Western and NATO airstrikes against Libya, to Syrian rebels attempting to overthrow the Assad regime, and to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange who was described by US Senator Mitch McConnell as a 'high-tech terrorist'. According to the FBI (2017), terrorism involves "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."

Counter Terrorism

According to (the U.S. Department of Defense, 2021) Counterterrorism refers to the full range of actions taken to neutralize terrorism, including offensive measures to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism." Kruglanski et al., (2019). Counter-terrorism is defined as the strategies, tactics, and actions taken by governments, law enforcement agencies, and other entities to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorist activities. The primary goals of counter-terrorism efforts are to protect civilian populations, critical infrastructure, and national security interests from the threats posed by terrorist groups and individuals. Counter-terrorism measures may include intelligence gathering, surveillance, law enforcement operations, military interventions, legislative and regulatory measures, as well as public awareness and community engagement programs (Kruglanski et al., 2019).

Transnational Organised Crime

According to (Finckenauer, 2005) who describes transnational organized crime as those self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate transnationally to obtain power, influence, and monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of corruption and/or violence. While the (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2010) sees "Transnational organized crime as the planned and coordinated criminal activities of groups or networks operating across national borders, to obtain power, influence, and monetary or commercial gains, often through the use of violence, corruption, and other criminal means" "Transnational organized crime encompasses criminal activities that have an international dimension, involving more than one country in their planning, execution, or impact" (Shelley, 2015). "Transnational organized crime is a form of criminal activity that extends across national borders, often involving the movement of people, goods, or money, and requires the participation of organized criminal groups from multiple countries" (Naim, 2015).

Organization: International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

The International Criminal Organization was founded in 1923 by 20 countries as members, the organization aimed to enhance global police cooperation against transnational crime. Its origins trace back to the first International Congress of the Criminal Police in Monaco in 1914, discussing international crime collaboration and prevention techniques. Interpol uniquely shares legal and law

enforcement information globally (Delpirou, 2022; Lacy, 2023; Milani, 2023; Yorke, 2023). Transnational crime in West Africa involves illicit networks operating across borders, combating terrorist activities, and exploiting weak governance and economic disparities. Crimes include drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime. (Delpirou, 2022; Helpingsstine, 2022;).

Interpol, however, maintains political neutrality and operates within the legal framework of various countries. Its official name is the International Criminal Police Organization, an intergovernmental organization. Interpol has 195 member countries tasked with assisting police forces worldwide in collaborating to make the world safer. Interpol allows police officers from different countries to share and access crime and criminal data while offering a wide range of technical and operational support (Tsybulenko & Suarez, 2022; Williamson, 2022;).

Historical Overview of Interpol

Abiodun and Abioro (2020) provides a comprehensive overview of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the key security challenges and criticisms it faces in executing its responsibilities as a global police agency. The authors begin by outlining INTERPOL's main objectives, which include facilitating international cooperation in criminal investigations, maintaining global security, and supporting law enforcement agencies worldwide. They note that INTERPOL is the world's largest police organization, with 194 member states and a presence in the form of National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and Regional Bureaus (RBs) across the globe.

The study critically examines the security challenges and criticisms that hinder INTERPOL's ability to effectively carry out its mandate. The issues such as bias, politically motivated arrests and harassment of political opponents, involvement in corrupt dealings, and unfair trials were highlighted. These challenges, the article argues, serve as "clogs in the wheel" of INTERPOL's operations and undermine its credibility and effectiveness as a global law enforcement body. In response to these problems, the study recommends a series of reforms to reposition INTERPOL and enhance its responsiveness and strategic capabilities in combating international crimes and insecurity. These recommendations include shunning corruption, dissociating from political interference, ensuring fair trials, eliminating bias, and upholding fundamental human rights.

Gerspacher (2008) traces the origins of international police cooperation efforts back to the mid-nineteenth century, where they were largely rooted in anti-anarchist policies pursued by European governments to protect the status quo. The author notes that police collaboration largely halted during the world wars, but the second half of the twentieth century witnessed an explosion of international cooperation mechanisms in policing as most states came to recognize the importance of multilateral action against transnational crime. The world also describes how international policing has now evolved into sophisticated, official, and far-reaching channels of information exchange and joint policing strategies and operations. The article highlights that police

cooperation has gone through cycles, where the political motivation that originally encouraged foreign police agencies to share information on alleged perpetrators and their activities eventually took second place to specifically criminal investigations. However, in today's security-driven policy environment, the political dimension is once again on the rise, as police strategies are aimed at terrorist groups.

Deflem (2018) added that the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC), the organization now known as Interpol, during a critical period when it came under the control of the Nazi regime, and the FBI became its official U.S. representative. The article argues that the nazification of the ICPC occurred in two strategic stages: from seeking influence in the organization to eventually acquiring control of it. It highlights the conflicting motives of the Nazi police and the FBI in participating in the same international organization during this period. Despite the infiltration of the ICPC by Nazi police officials, the article concludes that in practical terms, the Nazi's control of the organization never went beyond presenting an illusion of continuity in international police cooperation. The study suggests that theoretical models of Nazification should consider the rationality and purposive orientation of its direction, as well as the complex dynamics and historically variable determinants. The article's focus on the conflicting motivations of the Nazi police and the FBI in engaging with the ICPC/Interpol is particularly noteworthy, as it highlights the tensions and power dynamics at play within the international policing landscape during this critical historical juncture.

(Hufnagel & McCartney, 2018) agree that the role and operations of INTERPOL explained how Interpol evolved to address the challenges of globalized and transnational crime. The study traces the INTERPOL's historical development, noting how it has expanded its mandate from a focus on basic police cooperation to encompassing complex investigative capabilities and information-sharing systems. Empirical studies featured in the book demonstrate INTERPOL's growing involvement in combating emerging threats like cybercrime, environmental crime, and human trafficking (Rodgers, 2018; Barnett, 2018).

Lewis (2014)" in his *INTERPOL and Global Terrorism: Coordinating the International Fight Against Extremism*. The researcher describes that the threat of transnational terrorism has posed complex challenges for the international community in the decades since the 9/11 attacks. As terrorist networks have grown increasingly sophisticated and mobile, scholars and policymakers have grappled with how to enhance cross-border cooperation and coordination in counterterrorism efforts. The study states that one key institution that has taken on a greater role in this domain is INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization. Lewis's work builds upon a growing body of literature that has analyzed the limitations of traditional state-centric approaches to combating transnational terrorism. Scholars such as Pillar (2001) have argued that holding state sponsors and enablers of terrorism accountable is crucial, as terrorist groups often exploit weaknesses or complicity within nation-states. In this context, the role of multilateral organizations like INTERPOL becomes increasingly important.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the Collective Security Theory as framework.

Collective Security Theory:

The key proponents of collective security theory include Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts, Elihu Root, David Mitrany, Hedley Bull, and Boutros Boutros-Ghali. This theory was propounded in the early 20th century, particularly with the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919 after World War I. Collective security theory emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and joint action to maintain peace and security. The underlying principle is that an attack on one state is an attack on all, and member states must come to the defence of any state that is threatened or attacked. The theory suggests that the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security should be shared among all member states. This can be applied to Interpol's efforts, where the organization should encourage West African countries to collectively contribute resources, intelligence, and operational support to counter-terrorism initiatives, rather than relying solely on a few states or Interpol's capacities.

Collective security theory is highly relevant to this study, "Exploring the Role of Interpol in Combating Terrorist Activities in West Africa." The core principles of collective security provide a valuable theoretical lens for analyzing Interpol's efforts in this context. Interpol, as an international police organization, operates on the premise of international cooperation and shared responsibility in addressing transnational crimes, including terrorism. The collective security framework suggests that the success of Interpol's counter-terrorism initiatives in West Africa would depend on the willingness and ability of member states to coordinate their efforts, share intelligence, and provide mutual support. The Collective Security Theory can also be employed to evaluate the outcomes and impact of Interpol's counter-terrorism efforts in West Africa.

Research Methodology

This paper adopted the exploratory research design while the qualitative data were obtained from the primary and secondary sources through interaction with selected stakeholders, INTERPOL officials and personnel, Investigators, analysts, and administrators working within Interpol's Regional Bureau for West Africa, based in Abuja, Nigeria. INTERPOL officers and experts involved in capacity-building initiatives and operational support for West African law enforcement agencies. Police officers, investigators, and intelligence personnel from national law enforcement agencies in countries across West Africa. Data were also obtained from secondary source: relevant official publications, books, journals, magazines, newspapers published and unpublished materials. Other sources are the internet including papers presented at seminars and workshops as well as lectures delivered by resource persons at the Nation Defence College (NDA) and libraries, Abuja, Nigeria. Data obtained were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and insights from the interviews.

Findings of the Study

A. The causal factors of terrorism and other transnational criminal activities in the West Africa sub-region:

The paper found out that many factors contribute to the prevalence of terrorism and other transnational criminal activities in the West Africa sub-region and they include:

Youth Unemployment: Findings revealed that, "When young people see no future for themselves, they become easy targets for extremist groups that promise them money, power, and a sense of belonging." Also, participants from the Nigeria Police IDI 23 July, 2024 echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that the emotional and psychological toll of unemployment can drive young individuals toward radicalization. The absence of meaningful engagement and the feeling of being marginalized create fertile ground for extremist ideologies to take root.

Corruption: Corruption undermines the integrity of governmental institutions, leading to inefficiency, lack of accountability, and a breakdown of public trust. As noted by a political science lecturer at the University of Ibadan,

"When government officials prioritize personal gain over public service, the very foundations of governance erode, creating a fertile ground for criminal activities" (July 2024). This sentiment reflects a broader consensus among academics that corruption directly impacts the effectiveness of security measures and governance.

In the interviews with Interpol officers at the Lagos headquarters, respondents emphasized the connection between corruption and the rise of terrorism in the region. One officer remarked, "Corruption within security agencies allows terrorists to operate with impunity. Bribes can facilitate the movement of arms and personnel across borders, making it easier for these groups to thrive" (Nwosu, 2024). This perspective aligns with findings from various studies that indicate a strong link between corrupt practices and the influx of transnational criminal networks.

Similarly, DSS officers in Ibadan highlighted the challenges they face due to corruption within their ranks. One officer stated, "Our work is compromised when colleagues engage in corrupt practices. It not only demoralizes honest officers but also allows criminals to exploit gaps in our operations" (Adeyemi, 2024). This internal corruption hampers effective intelligence gathering and response capabilities, making it easier for terrorist organizations to recruit and operate.

Lack of Essential Services: The absence of essential government services significantly exacerbates the vulnerabilities faced by communities, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria and West Africa sub-regions. Essential government services encompass a range of functions, including social security, healthcare, education, and law enforcement. These services are critical for maintaining public safety, fostering economic stability, and ensuring a basic quality of life for citizens. The lack of these services can lead to increased poverty, crime, and social unrest. As noted by a sociology lecturer in July 2024, "When basic needs are unmet, individuals

and communities are more likely to resort to desperate measures, leading to higher crime rates and societal instability" (KII with Smith, 2024).

Drug Addiction: Furthermore, drug addiction has also emerged as a critical factor intertwining with terrorism and transnational crime, functioning both as a cause and a consequence of these issues. Insights gathered from interviews with Nigeria Police personnel, Interpol agents, Department of State Services (DSS) officials, and academic lecturers from Political Science and Sociology at the University of Ibadan reveal the complex relationship between drug abuse and extremist activities.

Many respondents highlighted that drug addiction often serves as a gateway into criminal networks and extremist groups. An Interpol officer 22 on July 2024 IDI, noted, "Addiction can impair judgment, making individuals more susceptible to manipulation by extremist recruiters who promise financial gain or a sense of belonging."

Political Sponsorship of Criminal Networks: The exploitation of youth by politicians during election cycles emerged as a troubling theme in the interviews conducted with various stakeholders, including Interpol personnel, Department of State Services (DSS) officials, Nigeria Police officers, and lecturers from the Sociology and Political Science departments. This manipulation of young people not only undermines democratic processes but also contributes to the perpetuation of violence and criminality in the West African sub-region.

Many respondents acknowledge that politicians often recruit disaffected youth to serve as foot soldiers during elections. An Interpol officer stated, on 22 July 2024 KII "Political elites frequently leverage the vulnerabilities of young people, offering them financial incentives or promises of employment in exchange for their support or participation in violent acts." This perspective emphasizes how the lack of economic opportunities makes youth susceptible to exploitation, as they may view such involvement as a means of securing temporary financial relief.

Religious Ideology: The manipulation of religious beliefs for extremist purposes emerged as a significant theme in the interviews conducted with various stakeholders. Many informants emphasized that extremist groups strategically exploit religious sentiments to facilitate recruitment and radicalization processes. An Interpol officer on 22 July 2024 KII, noted, "These groups often frame their violent actions as a form of religious duty, appealing to individuals' desire for identity and belonging."

B. Nature of Terrorism and other Transnational Criminal Activities (TCAS) in the West African sub-regions

The study identifies a range of activities, including suicide bombings, shootings, attacks on mosques and churches, kidnappings for ransom, rape, forced marriages, financial terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, cyber fraud, and banditry. Additionally, illegal mining activities are prevalent in the region. These findings are based on insights gathered from key informant interviews (KII) and in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted with Interpol officers,

DSS officers, Nigerian police officers, and lecturers from the Department of Sociology and Political Science at the University of Ibadan.

The Nature of Violent Extremism: Violent extremism in West Africa is characterized by acts such as suicide bombings, shootings, and targeted attacks on places of worship, including mosques and churches. Respondents emphasized that these violent acts are often fueled by ideological extremism and religious intolerance. For instance, an Interpol officer noted, "The increase in attacks on religious sites reflects a disturbing trend of radicalization that exploits existing socio-political grievances" (Nwosu, 2024). This perspective underscores the link between ideological motivations and the targeting of vulnerable communities, where religious identities can become a flashpoint for violence.

Kidnapping and Human Trafficking: Another prominent theme is the rise of kidnapping for ransom, which has become a lucrative enterprise for criminal organizations. Respondents noted that this crime is often linked to broader networks of human trafficking, where vulnerable populations are exploited for forced labour and sexual exploitation. The interviews revealed that the lack of effective law enforcement and community cooperation exacerbates these issues, allowing kidnappers and traffickers to operate with relative impunity.

INTERPOL officers noted a marked increase in such incidents, particularly in northern Nigeria, where armed groups exploit insecurity to abduct individuals for financial gain. One officer remarked, "The rise of kidnapping is often linked to the breakdown of law and order, creating a vacuum that criminals readily exploit" (John, 2024). This trend not only poses immediate threats to individuals but also destabilizes entire communities, fostering an atmosphere of fear and mistrust.

Economic Crimes and Financial Terrorism: The respondents indicated a clear transformation in the modus operandi of terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations. Interpol officers noted that while traditional forms of terrorism, such as bombings and armed assaults, still occur, there has been an alarming shift toward more sophisticated economic crimes. One officer stated, "Terrorist groups are increasingly adopting financial terrorism tactics that target economic stability, using cyber fraud and money laundering to fund their operations" (Nwosu, 2024).

The responses pointed to a definite shift in the ways that terrorist organizations and multinational criminal gangs operate. While conventional acts of terrorism, such as bombings and armed assaults, continue to happen, Interpol agents have observed an unsettling trend toward increasingly sophisticated economic crimes. According to one officer, "Terrorist organizations are progressively utilizing financial terrorism strategies that aim to undermine economic stability, reliant on cybercrime and money laundering to finance their activities" (Nwosu, 2024). This change reflects a broader realization that the pursuit of ideological goals can be achieved through economic destabilization just as effectively as through physical violence.

Banditry: According to the law enforcement and academic respondents interviewed for this study, banditry is not just a criminal activity; rather, it is a complex socio-political phenomenon deeply ingrained in local contexts. Respondents stressed that bandits frequently use local grievances, such as socioeconomic disparities, political marginalization, and community discontent, to justify their actions; one Interpol officer observed, "Bandits often position themselves as defenders of their communities, leveraging historical grievances to gain local support" (Nwosu, 2024). This observation emphasizes the importance of understanding banditry as part of larger socio-political dynamics rather than as isolated criminal behaviour.

C. The Roles and Strategies Deployed by Interpol in Combating the Menace in the West Africa Sub Region

Interpol has become a crucial organization in promoting international collaboration and strengthening law enforcement capacities in the West Africa sub-region and worldwide in response to the growing risks posed by terrorism and other transnational crimes.

i. Sharing Criminal Intelligence: The West African Police Information System (WAPIS)

The creation of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) is one of the key tactics that Interpol officials have recognized. Used in facilitating the exchange of criminal intelligence across participating jurisdictions, this platform strengthens cooperative efforts to combat transnational crime and terrorism. According to Nwosu (2024), an Interpol officer stated that WAPIS is an essential instrument for law enforcement authorities in West Africa, facilitating the real-time sharing of intelligence that is necessary for taking preventative measures against criminal activity

ii. Prosecution and Detention of Suspects

The prosecution, detention, and repatriation of suspects represent crucial elements of Interpol's strategy in combating terrorism and transnational crime. By facilitating international cooperation through mechanisms such as Red Notices, Interpol enhances the ability of law enforcement agencies to apprehend criminals who operate across borders. Drawing on insights from eight Interpol officers, "Through our notices, particularly Red Notices, we facilitate the arrest and extradition of individuals wanted for serious offences, including terrorism," said Officer Adeyemi, highlighting the significance of Red Notices in the capture of people sought for serious offences (Adeyemi, 2024).

iii. Training of Law Enforcement Agencies

One important tactic and strategy used by Interpol to improve the local police force's ability to combat organized crime and terrorism is capacity building through training programs for law enforcement organizations. The perspectives acquired from Interpol agents illuminated the different training programs implemented and their influence on law enforcement activities throughout the West African sub-region.

iv. Facilitating Global Policing Initiatives

To address the cross-border aspect of transnational crime, global policing initiatives the INTERPOL are a key player in making this possible. Based on their observations, eight Interpol officers explain how the agency facilitates international cooperation and allows for coordinated responses to transnational crimes.

v. Collection of Statistics and Crime Patterns

The gathering and examination of crime data and trends within the West African subregion is one of Interpol's other key responsibilities, according to the officers. Law enforcement agencies use this data-driven approach to guide their resource allocation and strategic planning.

D. Challenges faced by Interpol in combating terrorism and other transnational criminal activities in the West African sub-region

The research findings revealed several reasons that considerably impede the International Criminal Police Organization's (Interpol) ability to effectively combat transnational criminal activities, including terrorism, in the West African sub-region. Such as Language barriers, political meddling, inadequate personnel training and retraining, a lack of funding, inadequate technological advancement, problems with repatriation procedures, inadequate information and intelligence sharing among security agencies, and widespread corruption are a few of these challenges. Language difficulties frequently obstruct international law enforcement agencies' ability to communicate and work together, making it challenging to successfully plan joint operations, according to respondents. Political meddling can also impede investigations and result in a lack of accountability, which erodes the legitimacy of law enforcement initiatives.

Given that many officers lack the abilities essential to handle contemporary kinds of crime, it was noted that a key issue is the absence of training and continuous professional development for staff members. In addition, insufficient funding limits the agencies' capacity to acquire the tools and resources necessary for efficient law enforcement. The study also revealed that the lack of sophisticated technology instruments makes it more difficult to collect and evaluate data effectively, and problems with return policies make it more difficult to extradite individuals who have committed international crimes. Furthermore, gaps that can be exploited by criminals are created when information and intelligence are not shared among security organizations, which ultimately undermines coordinated efforts to combat crime.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The paper recommended the following:

- i. ***Enhancing Training Programs:*** Interpol should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive training programs specifically designed to meet the unique needs of West African law enforcement agencies. These programs should address

contemporary challenges, including cybercrime, intelligence sharing, and effective counter-terrorism strategies.

ii. **Strengthening the Legal Frameworks:** Governments should undertake a thorough review and enhancement of existing legal frameworks to promote more effective cooperation in the fight against transnational crime. This effort should include harmonizing laws related to extradition, evidence collection, and mutual legal assistance, thereby facilitating smoother collaboration among regional and international law enforcement agencies.

iii. **Allocating Sufficient Resources:** Policymakers should prioritize the allocation of adequate funding to law enforcement agencies, ensuring they have the necessary resources to conduct effective operations against terrorism and organized crime. Sufficient financial support is critical for equipping agencies with the tools and personnel required to address these complex security challenges.

iv. **Promoting Research and Innovations:** The Department should actively foster academic research on security issues in West Africa, emphasizing innovative approaches to combatting terrorism and transnational crime. By facilitating collaborative research initiatives that engage both practitioners and scholars, the Department can generate actionable insights and strategies that enhance the effectiveness of security interventions in the region.

v. **ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) should strengthen their frameworks for regional cooperation:** to facilitate joint initiatives that address the root causes of insecurity in West Africa. This effort should include promoting economic development and fostering social cohesion, which is essential for mitigating the factors that contribute to crime and terrorism in the region.

The paper, therefore, concluded that investment in advanced technologies and information-sharing remained essential for bolstering Interpol's capacity and ensuring peace and stability in West Africa.

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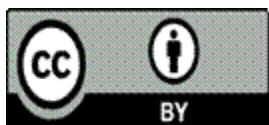
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