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Transnational Policing:

**A Model Approach
to Regional
Information
Sharing Centers**

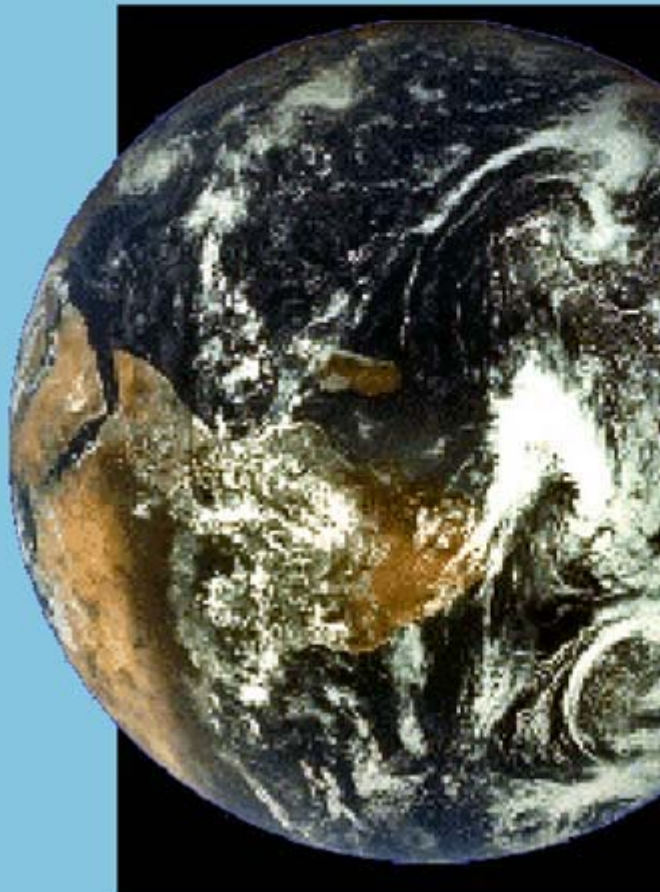


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Introduction

"Ah, that a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" - Robert Browning

Many of today's major criminal enterprises function as transnational opportunists, operating globally with complete disregard not only for national laws, but also for national



borders, ethnic territories, and even cultural boundaries. With the advances in communications and transportation, criminal organizations today can conduct their illegal activities over great distances, often with the unimpeded ease and access of the digital era. The unprecedented ability to transport goods, provide services, move people, conduct financial transactions, and convey information has driven the legitimate business world to operate in a global economy and profit in a global market. The criminal world of illegitimate business has embraced these opportunities no less. Their successes in this environment are magnified, their ill-gotten profits multiplied. The very opportunities that benefit the world, by opening new avenues to trade and improving the quality of life, are the same opportunities that make the criminal enterprises more lucrative by offering them additional resources, wider vistas, and greater flexibility for their illegitimate operations. Still, the world of policing is no less dedicated or resourceful in responding to this challenge from the criminal world.

The Drug Enforcement Administration's Commitment

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has recognized the need to adapt and has constantly modified its tactics to meet ever-emerging challenges. DEA accepts that the no-borders concept is not futuristic; it is here now. Transnational policing (TNP) is essential to counter the burgeoning international criminal threat. DEA's Intelligence Division has made programmatic efforts to codify and apply the concept of TNP. These efforts are incorporated in DEA's comprehensive strategic goal to "identify, target, investigate, disrupt, and dismantle the international, national, state, and local drug trafficking organizations that are having the most significant impact on America." In its Strategic Goals and Objectives, DEA's Intelligence Program has furthered this concept by establishing "strengthening information sharing and intelligence coordination along the continuum of transnational policing" as one of its five goals. In fact, DEA has taken a lead in articulating and acting upon the principles of TNP, by focusing on information sharing, intelligence coordination, and joint action across borders and jurisdictions, to better deal with the increased scope of criminal drug trafficking organizations.



However, the drug trafficking threat, like other international crime threats facing the United States, far exceeds the capabilities of any single law enforcement agency. Effectively targeting drug trafficking organizations and other criminal enterprises, and successfully disrupting their operations, requires strong partnerships among government agencies at all levels, nationally and internationally. These partnerships, especially those partnerships with other law enforcement organizations, must be promoted and strengthened in order to establish effective communication and the mechanisms to bring about this critical cooperation. If law enforcement is to be successful, emphasis must be placed on threats of mutual concern, joint planning, information sharing, operational coordination, and maximization, allocation, and utilization of resources against targets of mutual interest. As part of the furtherance of this concept, DEA stands committed to providing information that it collects to other law enforcement authorities, as appropriate, in addition to assistance provided to law enforcement counterparts worldwide.

The need for a coordinated global initiative has been best demonstrated in recent years by drug investigations of organizations that have spanned many continents, nations, and law enforcement disciplines in order to bring drug traffickers to justice. For example, Colombian traffickers have developed ties to traditional organized crime networks, as well as to Mexican, Russian, Israeli, and Spanish criminal enterprises. These drug organizations are some of the most ruthless and sophisticated criminal organizations in the world. Therefore, they demand law enforcement's most concentrated efforts and coordination to achieve effective enforcement action and prosecution. Successful enforcement operations can only be achieved when coordinated efforts in many nations are used to identify all elements of the organization and investigative and information sharing efforts are simultaneously targeted against the many parts of an organization, thereby disrupting the entire network. Achieving this goal will require the development of clear and specific enforcement objectives, the identification of all of the organization's tentacles, and the implementation of operational strategies targeted against significant impact targets in three categories: International Impact Targets, National/Regional Impact Targets, and Local Impact Targets.

TNP focuses on the International Impact Targets, but its ultimate effect is often felt more directly at the national, regional, or even local level. DEA's efforts in TNP have always placed emphasis on international organized crime. While international cooperation and information sharing constitute critical aspects of TNP efforts, there is no question that drug seizures, arrests, and dismantlement of drug trafficking organizations, both at home and abroad, provide tangible measures of effectiveness that further validate the TNP concept.

The Need for Cooperation



TNP, adopted as an integral part of the ultimate solution to international crime, can be overwhelming in its magnitude. It requires the cooperation of many, if not all, of the world's law enforcement agencies. Surely, no one agency can confront international crime alone. When crime transcends national borders

and conducts extensive criminal manipulation of communications, transportation, and even economies, it is critical that all nations and their law enforcement agencies move toward collaborative policing to combat the transnational criminal threat. Law enforcement worldwide, by working in concert, can spearhead an effective offensive to defeat criminal enterprises at their own game. Many collaborative efforts, such as the International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC), the Asian Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), the Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA), and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), already exist and are quite effective at facilitating cooperation and communication in the drug arena. But, as effective as they may be at the regional level and intra-regional levels, they lack an essential daily interface and collaborative mechanism that provides an environment conducive to building a true worldwide information-sharing network operating effectively on a daily basis.

For many decades, DEA has recognized the importance of having liaison officers stationed abroad to facilitate information sharing and support investigations that are transnational in nature. More recently, information-sharing efforts have been enhanced with the development of bilateral working groups designed to further focus collaborative efforts through enhanced information sharing, common targeting, and joint investigations. Each of these bilateral working groups has grown at their own pace and has had to resolve issues, sometimes unique, and often independent of other relationships. Nevertheless, with the investment of time and significant effort by all involved, the relationships have begun to demonstrate their value and are impacting the criminal world with their effectiveness and flexibility. Their successes are leading to cooperation and collaboration at an even higher level - a level that lends itself to a multilateral forum. These forums are ones in which partner nations meet as equals, define their requirements, and find cooperative solutions to combat drug problems common to all.

Regional Information Sharing Centers (RISC)

Current liaison efforts and joint targeting operations are effective, but results are often too inconsistent, sporadic, and temporary. Moreover, they lack the means to measure their effectiveness across the broad spectrum. Frequently, information is not provided to a nation impacted by a drug trafficking organization because a trusted law enforcement counterpart, or point of contact who can take action, is unavailable. To ensure maximum law enforcement effectiveness, pressure against recognized drug trafficking organizations must be consistently applied against all elements of the organization. Maximum pressure can best be created by expeditious information sharing among those persons in positions best able to respond. Creating an environment conducive to daily law enforcement interaction among nations regionally impacted, an environment in which the threat to the region is constantly monitored, is the next logical progression in the development of a TNP continuum.

Why a RISC



The creation of tactical RISCs, with predetermined regional collaborative goals and objectives, embraces the TNP concept and takes TNP to the next level. A RISC is a solution that is unique, powerful, and, as many law enforcement officials internationally would now argue, essential. The bonding of different national police agencies into regional centers, which ultimately would form a global law enforcement network, is a daunting prospect. Each center would be designed to support laws common to each of the participating nations against international violators. The ultimate goal would be to more effectively confront criminal activity that threatens virtually all nations' sovereignty.

TNP and international information sharing is certainly not a new concept to law

enforcement. Neither its implementation nor its practice has been mastered. It requires a significant degree of risk-taking and trust building before relationships develop, collaboration ensues, and operational successes can be expected. The creation of a RISC, as the acronym implies, embraces these risks and challenges and fosters the alliances necessary to ensure successful TNP implementation.

Currently, multilateral international cooperative efforts are devoid of a steady information flow to tactical centers designed specifically to facilitate regional information sharing. Bridging this gap with a RISC is yet one more step to ensuring continuous communication, information sharing, and support to the TNP effort. A RISC would serve as the organizational nucleus and provide the operational services required to share targeted information throughout a defined region. Furthermore, a RISC's networking capabilities could form a worldwide network of regional information warehouses with the sole purpose of facilitating cooperation, enhancing collegiality, and collaboration between law enforcement agencies across the globe. The few such centers, which are in their nascent stages in several regions today, may ultimately serve as building blocks for a global system. With vision, persistence, and planning, a network of centers with global applications can be possible in a future that is not all that far away.

Cooperation and Collaboration in a RISC

Law enforcement cooperation could best be facilitated through the establishment of a RISC based upon the collaboration and collocation of representatives from all of the participating countries of a region. The RISC, staffed by national representatives, would serve as the hub in a wheel whose spokes would radiate out to nodes made up of the many and various participating law enforcement agencies. The participating law enforcement agencies' connectivity to the center would provide an information flow both into and out of the center. Initially, electronic systems connectivity among the nodes, with specific daily reporting requirements, would be at the core of the RISC operation. Such daily interaction among the nations represented at the RISC would foster enhanced information sharing, a growth in their cooperative relationships, and trust building between the representatives within the center, and ultimately among the nations.

The flow of information, though anticipated to be a trickle at first, would grow exponentially as cooperative efforts resulted in enhanced successful operations and better understanding of the threat facing each RISC participant. The reward for risk taking would soon be evident and would result in a drive by the participants to achieve greater openness and commitment levels. The RISC, and its corresponding information sharing national nodes, logically would evolve into a regional cooperation base necessary for TNP success. These regional systems would be the precursors to a global network of centers able to impact crime on an international level.

Using the RISC

The site for the center would be selected by the participating regional agencies and be based on such criteria as its strategic location, importance in the regional dynamics, and political sensibility. It would operate on a daily basis as an information receiving and transmitting focal point. The actual RISC facility should be sufficiently large enough to accommodate interregional planning sessions and coordination meetings. Over time, as the expertise of the participants increases, the RISC could serve as the strategic analysis center for the criminal threat impacting the region and provide not only a regional perspective, but develop a broader viewpoint as well.

Representatives at the RISC would contact law enforcement counterparts within their parent country on a daily basis and provide drug movement or seizure information to appropriate participating countries. Day-to-day operations in the center would include tracking and recording incidents reported by the regional police agencies, building a database of releasable information, responding to ad hoc inquiries from within the region or from outside sources, and disseminating information provided by other centers.

Each center also could perform a contingency role in support of specific investigative activity that affects the region. As the regional expert, the center could support a tactical operation half a world away by providing pertinent information from its database or member police agencies. It also could serve as the tactical center for specific investigative activities operating in their region, allowing additional augmentation at the center from participating police agencies to conduct planning, coordination, and even assume operational control of investigative activities occurring in the region.

In both cases, the use of the center would be flexible and responsive, minimizing sustained costs and maximizing TNP impact. In any tactical situation, each center could function as the virtual epicenter of police activity against a targeted criminal operation or organization. Best yet, as a virtual planning epicenter, each center's support will shift, and even overlap, depending upon the particular requirements of an investigation, maximizing impact and minimizing utilization of

resources. A center's flexibility of focus, value added as a threat analysis center, and collocation of representatives of all participating nations would enhance decision-making, cooperative planning, and marshalling of resources for any multinational investigation.

The Vision



A worldwide network of cooperating, supporting, and enhancing RISCs, capable of acting in a lead or support role, is certainly a futuristic vision. A great deal of detailed planning, cost sharing effort, collaborative work, innovative problem solving, and adaptation will be required. By taking the first bold steps now, by learning from and capitalizing on experiences from existing centers, and by making the commitment to support and further transnational policing, the vision can begin now, and pay great dividends in the future.

Description and Operation of the Model RISC

"The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible." -
Arthur C. Clark

The nature of the criminal threat, the historical context of the participating nations, and the political and legal considerations that impact each region will define a RISC's unique design, application, operation, and character. However, within every center certain consistencies and standardizations should be defined, most of which will be necessary for the center to operate and play a significant role nationally, regionally, and globally. The purpose of this section is to present a generic description of the basic considerations for designing, establishing, and operating a center, rather than to immerse itself in the detail of the unique attributes of any particular center.

Regional Consensus Building

Long before a RISC can be actualized, the nations of a region must realize and agree on the need for a center in their region. Even with sponsorship and interest shown by law enforcement organizations from outside of a region for the establishment of a center in a region, there is no substitute for that solid support base of at least some of the nations within that region. Once a core set of nations agree on their participation, consideration must then be given to what other nations need to be part of the center based upon common threats, or goals. All the participating nations also must agree that cooperation and mutual assistance is the best way for them to counter a criminal threat, achieve shared goals, and meet regional law enforcement needs. These three elementary premises are the basis for regional cooperation and the establishment of an environment conducive to building trusting relationships, establishing collaborative objectives, and eventually engaging in joint law enforcement activities. A RISC offers just such an environment and a solution to this need for cooperation and mutual assistance.

Many times the agreement to establish a center will come out of such collaborative efforts as those mentioned in the introduction - IDEC, ADEC, HONLEA, INTERPOL, etc. Additionally, leaders of an effort to create a center also will have to engage in some lobbying of the other law enforcement agencies of the region to persuade them to convince their countries that such a center is in the common interest. Any investment in a center has a price, and using convincing arguments to gain financial support will require a concerted effort by the proponents, an investment of time, and a willingness by the leaders to use their personal influence and goodwill to convince, encourage, and persuade others to become RISC participants. The work to create a RISC, to change it from a concept to a reality, requires significant effort behind the scenes. The effort, however, even if understated here, is absolutely essential.



Once a country agrees to participate, it must carefully select a representative to meet with other participating country representatives to design the proposed RISC. Selection of a representative, who has a vision for the center, knowledge of its potential, and an ability to work out the details with other similarly minded individuals is critical. All of these representatives will work to secure a center's direction, its ground rules for cooperation, and its working and workable environment. Theirs will be the mission of writing the protocols for the center.

Protocols for the center's operation must be established to assure participants of the parameters that will be adhered to for the sharing and use of information and personnel. Flexibility and trust will be a key factor in the development and implementation of these protocols. One method is to adopt standard operating procedures as part of these protocols, and agreed to in a memorandum of understanding or letter of agreement - a "rules of cooperation" document. All participating countries must agree to abide by these procedures before anyone makes an investment in creating a RISC. The sharing of law enforcement information at the center will be a major item to be addressed in these protocols and should have its own procedures. The laws of each participating nation that pertain to the classification, dissemination, and utilization of information should be reviewed prior to the drafting of the standard operating procedures, and the necessary accommodations should be included in the final agreement. This part of the protocol will be at the very heart of any agreement.

Another critical part of the protocols that must be spelled out when considering establishing a RISC involves responsibility for administrative oversight of the center. This oversight of the center, as well as specific administrative procedural issues, must be addressed. Protocols should cover whether or not the administrative oversight position will rotate among the participating countries, the term of office, and responsibilities of the position. Much of the initial activity and development of the RISC will depend on this position and the person in it. It is well worth the time to develop protocols that look to the present as well as the future.

Protocols and standard operating procedures must be designed according to the specific needs of the region in which the particular RISC is located and those of the participating nations in that center. In the initial design of protocols and procedures, emphasis should be placed on the general principles of the overarching operating procedures of the center rather than on specific details. This approach allows for flexibility both during the initial center development and in the future. More defining guidance will undoubtedly need to be developed as the center commences operations either in reaction to specific needs or evolving challenges. The procedures should always be living documents, able to be adjusted when all participants agree that change is needed, and always flexible enough to meet the challenges of the day.

Defining a Mission and Goals

The information and technology age effectively bridges the regional requirement for the establishment of information sharing centers that are able to communicate and exchange information expeditiously, effectively, and efficiently. Crime has evolved into a truly worldwide venture. Bringing law enforcement personnel together in permanent, regionally-based locations, with direct access to their parent countries and other centers globally, to combat international crime is a capability that can be employed today. The establishment of a worldwide law enforcement information sharing system would have a truly synergistic effect in promoting TNP.

The mission of the RISC is to be an information collection and dissemination hub for a region in support of multinational investigations focused on the disruption of criminal activity, such as drug trafficking. While the center would focus on criminal drug information sharing, it obviously could lend itself to developing and capturing criminal information on any or all crimes, to include terrorism. Successful information sharing will build momentum in improving multilateral and multinational coordination, foster regional law enforcement efforts, build upon existing capabilities of participating nations, and promote the timely and effective exchange of investigative data. This will lead to enhanced sharing of participating nations' experiences, ideas, and best practices.

The goal of the RISC should be simple: to support law enforcement operations through national participation, regional specialization, and global application. The center would support the initiation and development of regional investigations and operations, while maintaining responsiveness to the individual participating nation's priorities and the center's identified targeting priorities.

In its infancy, a RISC will probably act as a bulletin board for arrests, seizures, lookouts, and other minimal risk information sharing. Getting law enforcement agencies within a region to accept the concept of cooperation, to reject the parochialism of individual pursuit of criminals, and to share their proprietary information is a major effort.

Trust building, a constant theme of TNP, is not easily achieved at the working-level. But the small steps of posting less critical information and conversing with trusted partners constitute the initiation of a process that must be pursued if larger gains are to be made. Participation at the working level must be expected and demanded by the leadership of participating law enforcement agencies if the potential benefit of a center is ever to be realized.

As the relationships within a center mature and confidence at the RISC by country representatives grows, the center gradually will provide more than a bulletin board service for their law enforcement customers. Eventually, leaders in the process will venture into the realm of sharing real-time investigative information that probably includes operational and tactical information for immediate use in conducting ongoing investigations and operations. Cautious information sharing at first, often between representatives who may have personal relationships within the center, will usually trigger additional cooperation that will be larger and more adventuresome, especially if the first exchanges can demonstrate an operational success as a reward for an investment in trust. This cooperation, with its resultant successes, and the center's eventual creation of an internal center database, should further the center's growth and development and establish the center as an information creator. Then the center will not only be a place where information is taken in, but it will be a place where new information is developed by the synergy of the many inputs it receives, and it will be a place that sends that new, value-added information back out to the law enforcement customers who provided the original input.

Finally, with the maturation of the RISC, the initial accomplishment of gathering and sharing information at the regional level would be likely to progress to a gathering and sharing at the multi-regional or even global level. A mature RISC could be expected to recognize criminal activity reported from multiple sources as a regional criminal enterprise and potentially as a global problem requiring worldwide law enforcement cooperation that can be enhanced by the center's contributions.

Progress from the first steps of information posting, through information sharing, to information development, and even to extended cooperation, will take time and an investment in trust by all the regional participants. Individual successes, however small at first, will be the foundation upon which the building blocks of additional cooperation and information sharing will be placed. Each success, and its concomitant increase in trust between the participants, will encourage the further sharing of information among the participants. This will eventually lead to a center that functions not as a collection of independent representatives, but as a unified entity operating collaboratively.

Selecting a Location

One of the initial phases in the creation of a RISC is to identify the region to be served by the center. The region should be selected predicated on an agreement of cooperation by the potential law enforcement participants. The participants may only represent the region itself, but, more than likely, there will be some extra-regional interests that may contribute to a center's development. Either way, the selection of any location ultimately should be based on benefit and feasibility, as well as reality. The participating countries will play the critical role in determining their center's location. However, they also should be thinking to the future when a growing, productive center will have the possible future role of becoming a critical node in the linkage of a global network of regional centers.



Selection of a location for any permanent multinational center should be strategically based on a criminal threat that exists within a geographic area. The criminal threat should be of such significance that it demands a major commitment by law enforcement in terms of office space, nontransportable equipment, and permanent relocation of manpower. This strategic examination can be made by policing organizations with a mutual interest in a region of the globe, or it can be made by the governments of the countries in a region. In most cases, it will probably be a combination of the two. In any case, the issue of regional cooperation and acceptance is paramount, and significant diplomatic work will be required to make it happen.

From a practical sense, a significant determinant in selecting the location for a center within a region is the availability of resources. For any specific region, consideration and planning based on what resources already exist, and what additional resources can be obtained, will be part of the cost and budget considerations. A RISC's location

also must consider the availability of such things as the physical building requirements, automated information systems and support, and a reliable communications infrastructure. Security of the site and its communications network also must be considered. Further, planning for future growth, as well as the possibility of temporary augmentation, is necessary.

From a realistic sense, politics and political acceptability will, in the end, be a final determinant in selecting a site for the RISC. The politics of any region, and more critically, any country, must be identified and evaluated. A diplomatic approach by law enforcement agencies interested in participating in a regional center often will determine what is viable. Some political realities, such as civil unrest within a country, border disputes, political instability of a region, etc., will undoubtedly preclude even consideration of some countries or cities for the center's location. Because of that, planning, cooperative meetings, and frank discussions are an absolute necessity for the selection of any location.

Securing Funding



Funding for the individual centers, at least in part, must be provided by the participating countries as a demonstration of earnestness and sincerity in their commitment to such a cooperative effort. Certainly outside sources also should be explored, using the sponsorship of regional groups, other organizations (both police and civil), and even such institutions as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and other similar funding sources. Funding also must be procured not only for the initiation of the center, but must be planned and secured for the out years if the center is to be more than a short-term solution to a single episode of increased criminal activity.

Funding will be required for the everyday operational and administrative expenses of the center. Depending on agreements, funding also may be required for personnel (if not provided by the participating countries). Centers also may have to plan for funding contingency expenses, if such considerations are provided for in their establishing agreement. For those centers that are able to plan for such contingencies, their budget may have to have some built-in flexibility. If not, unforeseen contingencies should probably be borne by those participants actually causing the increased expense, similar to the imposition of a user fee, proportionate to the direct benefit that they receive.

Funding is a significant issue in the planning of a RISC as well as in its long-term sustainment. Funding and budget issues should be explicitly delineated in a governing memorandum of agreement for the center, and agreed to by all parties long before the first piece of equipment or individual arrives for duty.

RISC Organization and Staffing

Oversight Committee:

Management of the overall operation of the RISC should be by an Oversight Committee composed of a representative from each of the participating nations and operating under the theory of "one representative, one vote." The Oversight Committee would serve as the principal arbiter for any issues that may arise at the RISC. The selection of a Chairperson, or even Co-Chairpersons, probably on a rotational basis, also is recommended to manage the committee and the meetings. It is further recommended that the Oversight Committee appoint an Administrative Officer to organize, record, and even facilitate the committee's directives, guidance, and resolutions.

The representatives on the Oversight Committee should be knowledgeable of the purpose and operation of the center, and would not necessarily have to be those same country



representatives permanently stationed at the center. The committee representatives should meet both on a regular basis and an ad hoc basis as determined necessary. The committee would review progress at the center, discuss and adjudicate issues, share the most effective practices, recommend improvements, and establish budgets. The sharing of ideas, issues, and solutions by the committee should facilitate cooperation, focus on success, and encourage the center to operate as a part of the network of policing organizations.

RISC Daily Operations:

The daily operation of a model RISC would be comprised of three distinct organizational sections: one for coordination, one for analysis and information processing, and one for administrative support.

Coordination Section:

Daily management of the RISC should be provided by a law enforcement official from the host nation in which the RISC is located. This individual would serve as the RISC Director and be responsible for the smooth and effective daily operation of the center. This Director not only would respond to routine inquiries and perform liaison functions as required, but would be responsible for allocating funding, managing personnel and information, and resolving issues that arise in the daily operations of the center.

The Law Enforcement Coordination Section would be comprised of the designated liaison officers who are permanently assigned to the RISC by the participating nations to act as representatives of their nations. The number of liaison officers should be at the discretion of the participating nation, but the number should be no less than one. These representatives are the primary receivers and transmitters of information from their country's police departments/agencies, the interface persons with the other liaison officers within the center, and the primary contacts to provide information to their own country, whenever appropriate. They would handle requirements in response to inquiries and requests, both from their home police organizations and from other liaison officers at the center. Each liaison officer would have equal stature within the center's organizational hierarchy. The liaison officers would be required to act in concert with each other as the principal day-to-day operators of the center.

To be effective, a RISC requires the liaison officers to be experienced law enforcement personnel who can well represent their countries and their law enforcement organizations. They must be capable of evaluating information collected, maintained, and disseminated by the center, as well as creating and maintaining good working relationships and embracing the concept of information sharing for the betterment of the region. Each nation's representative also should bring a unique set of skills and abilities to the center based on individual education, experience, and innate abilities.

To support their liaison officer, each participating nation should choose a primary point of contact at each participating police agency within their respective country. These law enforcement points of contact would act as the principal official for the liaison officer's coordinating actions within his or her country, and specific to that particular police agency. Routine contact with each point of contact is necessary for the liaison officer to be a conduit for information flow from the country police agencies to the center, and from the center to the local police agencies. This function also could require several points of contact, to include the many police jurisdictions and policing responsibilities of any particular country.



Analysis and Information Processing Section:

The Analysis and Information Processing Section should consist of a core group of analysts or law enforcement officers operating in an analytical capacity. This section would be responsible for analyzing the information flowing into the center and providing finished analytical products of both a strategic and operational nature. The role of the

analytical staff would be twofold: to provide responsive support to requests from any liaison officer, such as with target support, and to provide basic analytical products such as trend analysis, flow charts, case presentations, etc. This section would work closely with the center's liaison officers since these, at least initially, will be the sole source to information contained in country law enforcement databases.

Development of an analytical capability within a center should be progressive. Initially the analysts might only be collectors of information provided to the center, posters to a bulletin board, or updaters of information moving within the center. In a short time, they either could be tasked to provide some strategic analysis of the criminal activity occurring in the region, or be asked to act as the link to other resources, information sources, libraries, databases, and centers outside of their region. Eventually, the role of the analysts should expand to include support for ongoing or evolving investigations occurring in the region. Then, in a mature center, they also could be expected to perform damage assessment to criminal enterprises, statistical evaluations, and even post-case analysis for linked criminal prosecution opportunities.

Administrative Support Section:

The third component of the center is the Administrative Support Section. This section is comprised of host nation and participating nation personnel attending to administrative responsibilities, maintaining the information system databases, and managing the day-to-day operation of the physical space. In addition to being responsible for fiscal administration, maintaining the facility, arranging for utilities, and providing for the myriad of other services necessary to the RISC operation, they also would consider and plan for such things as security, personnel and equipment augmentations, and clerical support. The administrative support section would be responsible for managing contracting requirements, and may even include a technical assistance unit to provide database and network administration support. This technical unit also could be responsible for providing information systems training to the center's personnel. As part of the administration of any RISC, a regional system administrator position should be established to maintain the standardized computer configurations and educate new users. Initially, each center's host country computer personnel will probably handle this responsibility.

All of the organizational and staffing design considerations that are discussed above are only meant as an introduction to the necessity for detailed planning that is an absolute for each individual RISC. Variations in requirements influenced by location, mission, and the individual priorities of every region will dictate the final organizational and staffing makeup of the center.

Developing Regional Expertise



The development of regional expertise is a byproduct of daily interaction, development of a regional database, and institution building. An individual, or an entity such as the RISC, becomes an expert in a particular area by consistently examining and studying that area, thereby gaining additional insights and information. For an individual, this requires perseverance, continual research, and access to information. For an organization like a RISC, it requires tenure by its participants and continued focus by its leaders. Each RISC's principal focus should be established based on the specific needs of the geographic region served. Since it would be nearly impossible for a single law enforcement entity to provide a complete strategic analysis of a region, the center should be able to fuse information from the participating countries' component agencies into a tailored, focused,

and applicable product. The RISC should strive to produce the most complete and accurate picture of the region possible.

Becoming a regional expert and source of information leads the center to becoming the focal point for conducting law enforcement briefings and strategic planning. Another role of the information-sharing center could be to serve as a conference site for the preparation of operational planning within the region. The temporary influx of specific case-related personnel to the RISC could be facilitated on a case-by-case basis. A case officer, temporarily assigned to the center, could serve as the main point of contact for an investigation. Additional personnel may include investigators and law enforcement officers, technicians, intelligence analysts, data input clerks, and other personnel who directly relate to this type of significant multilateral investigation. Their use of the center should be geared toward accomplishing a specific mission in the minimum amount of time with the maximum concentration of

expertise. The case officer and the additional personnel would then return to their parent agencies after the culmination of the investigation.

Being a regional expert brings with it a responsibility that extends both internally and externally. Certainly for any investigation that is being conducted within a region, the center will be expected to fully support that investigation with all of the data and analysis available. From a global perspective, the center also would be responsible for identifying needs for its expertise, and would be willing and able to secure the permission to share their expertise in support of an investigation that may be half a world away, and have only a marginal effect on that region.

Sharing Information

Information sharing at any new regional center will have to undergo a gradual growth process. To accomplish this, information sharing must be initiated as innocuously as possible, such as beginning with the establishment of an electronic bulletin board for the center and implementing a shared e-mail system. The posting of non-sensitive information, even if initially nothing more than information that deals with recently culminated seizures and arrests, to a secure electronic bulletin board could begin what will be a slow and cautious growth-oriented process. The first postings may even have to be mandatory in order to ensure participation by all the nations represented in a center. Doing this, though artificially creating the interaction, will break down the initial resistance to information sharing and allow leaders within the center to create an atmosphere where the ultimate goal is willingly shared information between the participants.

Once a willingness to share information is demonstrated, and even more so when investigative successes are demonstrated from doing so, a certain level of trust and confidence is gained between the partners. Success reinforces risk taking and breeds trust. And with trust, participating nations will be more inclined to allow other participating nations access to their law enforcement information. To evolve the process to a stage where the RISC becomes a conduit of free-flowing information from law enforcement entities in one country to those in another, basic information sharing mechanisms between the participating nations and the center must be agreed upon, established, tested, and protected.

Two basic types of information will probably pass through the conduit of the established, maturing RISC on a daily basis. These would be tactical, actionable information being passed from one participating country to another, and database checks requesting information from one participating country by another. Tactical information, information that is of immediate value, may be provided as the result of an inquiry by another country, or volunteered proactively by a country as in the case of a lookout notice. In either case, the release of information would then be coordinated by the liaison officers from the countries involved. In the case of an inquiry, information in a response would be tightly controlled and probably restricted in what can be released by each nation's representative at the center. In the case of a lookout, the information could probably be widely used within law enforcement circles, and thereby benefit from immediate and fairly broad releases. Admittedly, this limited sharing is a first step. Growing trust will heighten information sharing and ultimately result in better overall communication among law enforcement worldwide.

As previously mentioned, the RISC should create and maintain its own centralized database, comprised initially of information derived from the center's own activities. Participating countries would be encouraged to provide their liaison officers access to their own country's database(s), which would be accessible only to their representative. RISCs should become the information expert of the region, taking on a proactive role in sharing information in order to effectively support measures and operations designed to combat transnational crime. To do this, the RISC should become an information warehouse for criminal activity in the region.

Finally, a RISC should facilitate the exchange of information not only between regional partners, but also with other centers worldwide. Each time that information is shared, and results in either the planning or execution of an enforcement operation, that success extends to the RISC. Each success within the RISC is a step in building a better and more effective information gathering and sharing system - from the initial establishment of electronic bulletin boards for sharing general information through the daily sharing of tactical information through the ultimate development of center database and a true analytical capability responsive to the participating countries. Information sharing is the cornerstone on which the regional center is built. A RISC cannot exist without the capability to provide mechanisms for reliable systems connectivity, secure communications, and database development.

Communications and Systems Connectivity

Arguably, the most important element in strengthening the ability of law enforcement agencies to respond to the increasingly global reach of drug trafficking organizations is the accurate and timely exchange of information. No single country or agency has access to all existing information, nor can a single nation independently achieve the level of success necessary to effectively target transnational drug trafficking organizations. A common secure means of electronic communication between different agencies, and even different countries, is an essential element of both information sharing and the desired end result of controlling the activities of international criminal enterprises. The RISC can be a critical node to facilitate communication between and among law enforcement agencies.



The effective sharing of information demands an ability to communicate, linked with the desire to do so. To effectively share information, RISCs need to develop both a communication network and a willingness to cooperate between its potential communicators. The essence of the communication system that is needed is one that is secure, simple, and globally applicable.

The Initial Phase

In the initial phase of center development, the desire to share information by the participants will probably be limited, and the environment to do it in will often be a bit strained. In this early phase of center development, systems connectivity will probably need to be capable of little more than secure e-mail correspondence between the countries and their representative liaison officers. Connectivity at this juncture can be accomplished with the most basic of computer systems, commercial off-the-shelf standardized software, Internet access, and commercially available secure communications.

E-mail communication is essential to the early development of the center. It creates an environment of instant contact between the center and participating law enforcement agencies allowing both to pass information, ask questions, and provide information to queries on a one-on-one basis. E-mail also can connect center participants with each other and will promote relationships, build trust, and provide opportunities for communication between regional law enforcement entities that may not otherwise interact. This electronic communication network is the first step in creating an environment of openness and willingness to share information, which leads to the next phase in the center's development.

The Intermediate Phase

Soon after a RISC is established, and its communication links between the liaison officers and their home points of contact are active, the next phase of communication development should be the establishment of a common server. This common server initially would be used to support the analytical and administrative needs of the center personnel as well as an electronic bulletin board on which all countries will be required to post general information.

For this stage of center development, the server should be capable of housing and maintaining a database, using programs designed to manipulate the database, providing link analysis, using e-mail, encrypting Internet links, and interfacing with other office automation. It also must be able to handle budgeting, contracting, and other administrative office software that the center needs for daily operations.

The ability to create and maintain an electronic bulletin board would allow the RISC to post information and also allow the center's liaison representatives, as well as the participating nations' law enforcement agencies, to share news and information relevant to their region. Regional center personnel would be required to design and develop web-based applications to display information and data provided by the participating nations. Electronic bulletin boards should be structured to allow specific regional information to be posted by topics or events. For example, the network could allow participants easy access to recent law enforcement activity in the region, such as contraband seizures, arrests, asset forfeitures, and even emerging trends in illegal activities.

The Maturing Phase

The next phase of a RISC's communication development is the use of secure, encrypted Internet communication. This should be more than just access to a bulletin board or to exchange basic information between countries. Secure Internet use is an inexpensive means for the direct and real-time exchange of active law enforcement information. In the beginning of this phase, the secure system could provide the participants with an electronic mechanism to do things such as verify legal documents like import/export documents or pre-export notifications. It also could be used to verify lists of illegal contraband or posted lookouts. With confidence in passing such information, interaction between liaison officers, inquiries being passed between countries, and the passing of current tactical information should become more common.

The next logical systems connectivity should be between the liaison officers, the center's analysts, and the common database being built at the center. Access to the database will speed up responses, improve participation, and encourage additional information sharing. More is discussed on the database in a subsequent section.

The Final Phase

In the final maturing process of a center, an effective and efficient standardized communication system that allows for connectivity within its own region will be required to connect with other centers worldwide. In order to attain worldwide center communication, this connectivity should be kept as simple and as readily available to other centers as possible. The simplicity and availability of the Internet is one solution to facilitate connectivity. Also, the security and low cost provided by commercially available software can meet the requirements of the secure transmission requirements for worldwide communication. This will aid in the coordination of multinational investigations and enforcement operations. All RISCs should maintain standardized systems and software for mutual compatibility.

Standardization of systems is essential to the future of communications. To ensure compatibility with other RISCs, and even to minimize costs of maintenance and repair, the software and hardware within the center and at the country contact points must be standardized. Standardization of hardware and software not only makes systems interoperable among centers and their equipment, it makes it easier to diagnose and repair problems within a system. Standardization needs to be a fundamental concept in the very design of the system. Also, as with any mechanism in the center, the communication network should be malleable, and should be designed to take on the increasingly global demands of the regional centers. The essence of universal connectivity is based on the interoperability of the equipment and software selected. Standardization is essential. Planning is critical. Both must be part of an overarching plan that considers a future network of centers, a global approach to information sharing, and a rapid reaction to the innovativeness of the criminal enterprise.

RISC Database Development



Timely access to available information is the key to the success of the RISC. Technology available today makes it possible to access and disseminate information in a matter of minutes or even seconds. In order to provide a quick response to information requests received on an ad hoc basis, and serve as a focal point for operational planning, data collection, and information analysis and dissemination, each center should maintain an on-site database. Capabilities and requirements, such as data storage and system security, should be implemented incrementally based on the logical fielding of hardware/software and the successful completion of requisite training for operators.

Initially, regional centers should be equipped with communications systems that allow access to the participating nations' law enforcement databases by representatives of that nation at the center. Database inquiries would be made based on requests for information by other center members and dissemination would be regulated by the liaison officers stationed at the center. Requests and queries for data would be limited to information concerning criminal activities affecting a particular country. The information requested would include information concerning criminal activity that occurs within the region, not necessarily limited to one particular country. As the amount of information on an investigation grows, the network should provide the analytic integration of such information into a coherent, comprehensive output of the all-source intelligence products provided to all concerned agencies. The RISC would act as a coordination point for conducting regionally based operations, therefore the network should be designed to aid in operational planning, particularly multinational operations.

As the RISC matures, so too would the development of a centralized database. This database would be populated with data relating to the information passed through the center on a daily basis. It would be augmented with data provided by the participating nations from their independently maintained databases. This would include such things as identifying information on individuals, organizations, locations, seizures, methods, and other related drug trafficking details. The RISC database would ultimately be used to facilitate the production of comprehensive analysis of the threat impacting the region.

In a fully mature RISC there should exist an independent, fully-developed database, which possesses software that will allow for the storage, manipulation, and analysis of collected information. Daily input of new information and data into the center's database would occur in order to maintain the most complete, up to date information available. Tactical information provided by the participating law enforcement agencies would be relayed to the center for input into the center's database. As the center grows, the information contained in the database will become more in-depth and should contain easily retrievable information in categories such as names of suspects, descriptive characteristics, vehicles, suspect businesses, suspect locations, brief description of events, etc.

All RISCs should be equipped with the latest off-the-shelf standardized searchable database available. Commercially available, rather than specially designed and tailored, database software is preferable to ensure interoperability with other regional centers, continued upgrades, and general availability to the potential users.

Of course, an equitable degree of information disclosure between the countries that participate in any center is the ideal goal. This display of openness and trust is the key to effective TNP. However, there needs to be a significant degree of cooperation and risk taking to attain the required level of trust that is essential to allow for this level of information sharing. Database development and implementation in a regional center is certainly a futuristic goal, but one that will have the most impact on effectively dismantling global criminal organizations. This database element is the heart of the information-sharing center.

Training

Intelligence analyst training is a significant area that must be considered for the growing center. Initial analysts manning a center to provide data gathering, e-mail assistance, and bulletin board postings will probably have to arrive already trained. As a center develops, new analysts will come on board that may require training, at least in the functions of the center. Senior analyst mentoring and on the job training will probably solve this need. Professional training of the analyst at certified schools to learn to become an analyst is still probably the best choice for regional center needs.

Since the core of the RISC is the database and communication network, training on the center's communication network and database systems is vital. Training ensures standardization at start-up and continued system utilization by new and/or additional personnel. A regional training point of contact should be established to be responsible for network training issues, including ensuring user guides are current and new personnel are qualified in using the system. Network training should be conducted in three phases: initial, follow-up, and continuity.

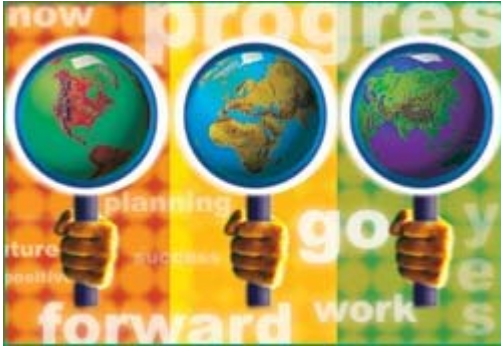
Initial training will facilitate uniform network operations and maintain accountability to project timelines. This training will consist of one-on-one instruction for the RISC's host country computer personnel regarding local area network (LAN) installation and implementation. The instruction should include a thorough review of the system documentation and a question-and-answer session. Initial training also would be provided to LAN users to ensure that they are familiar with the operation of the database and are comfortable using Internet encryption, to include sending e-mails containing attached files, photographs, and video clips.

Follow-up training will be provided within the first few months of start-up to reinforce the concepts presented at the initial training session. This training will be more in-depth and provide system users the opportunity to reinforce their initial instruction, answer user concerns, and promote regional interoperability. Not only will this training lead to greater operational knowledge of the system, but will bring regional users face-to-face, establishing personal relationships that will promote increased information sharing.

Continuity training is essential for the long-term health of the system. As the system matures with additional versions of software and more capable hardware, training must be conducted to ensure that the system's users remain current. Additionally, as center personnel are rotated into and out of the RISC, initial and follow-up training opportunities must be available to guarantee continued competence in utilization of the systems.

As for other personnel in a RISC, such as those involved in administration, budget, facilities maintenance, etc., training is best handled through contracting, or the hiring of those that are already trained and qualified. Technical expertise for this type of training or hiring is usually readily available in most areas where a RISC would be located. All contracting or hiring for this level of support within a RISC should be a local solution whenever possible.

Global Applications



The creation, development, and maturation of a RISC is a complex and complicated process. Significant amounts of planning, resources, and personnel, as well as technical training, will be required. Getting individual centers to a functioning, contributing status within their region is only a first step in building an organization that can and should reach beyond any single region's utility. Development of a RISC at the next higher level is a global concept, and includes the networking of all the active RISCs worldwide so that they can share their information and expertise. The final RISC organization should rise to become a cooperative transnational mechanism designed to confront transnational crime by providing support for transnational investigations and operations.

Centralization of information from all information centers is a lofty goal, but political considerations, perceived safety issues, and parochial protectionism are only a few of the many obstacles, real and perceived, that are constant challenges. Information sharing at the regional level will be a significant challenge in and of itself. Centralization costs for the personnel, equipment, and physical plant needed to consolidate and maintain such a system is no less of a major hurdle.

Today's technology offers a lower level, less stressful solution to the problem of RISC development. One step below this ultimate centralization of all information, RISCs worldwide should be globally linked for real-time sharing of information through electronic communication and data retrieval, with the long-range goal of staging multi-center support to law enforcement operations. To be able to effectively participate in a global network, each center should develop and implement its own database and secure communication system. Networking of the individual centers, through electronic interface and linked with personal contacts, is far simpler. Secure communications, allowing point-to-point contact between centers, would allow for rapid processing of inquiries, database searches, and research questions. The technology to do this is available now, and a networking solution's acceptance is much more achievable. It is a futuristic solution achievable with today's technology.

Measures of Effectiveness for the Model RISC

"Well done is better than well said." - **Benjamin Franklin**

Measuring success for a RISC is essential in determining the continued existence of the facility, whether the parent organizations of the center operate in response to securing future legislative funding or employ a business model approach. Quantitative measures of effectiveness are often difficult to find. Qualitative measures of effectiveness are often difficult to standardize. Both are necessary when assessing the center's success. To determine if each regional center is serving the region in which it has been established, some combination of the two measures of effectiveness must be instituted.

First, each center, by a committee of representatives, will need to enact methods to evaluate the center's performance based on the needs of the respective regions. Obviously, each participating law enforcement agency will need to feel that the centers are worthwhile as an additional law enforcement tool available to combat their national and regional criminal threat. This is the critical measure of



customer satisfaction, since the participating law enforcement agencies are the real customers of the center.

Though qualitative in nature, customer satisfaction often depends on elements that can be quantitatively measured. For law enforcement agencies, such things as the number of arrests, the rate of violent crime, and the amount of contraband seized are often used as success stories. Other things such as the number of transjudicial prosecutions emanating from the center's information and assistance provided are also good measures of success. Customer satisfaction will be the measure of the return on investment in the center. It will be a primary measure of success or failure of a center and it will be far more difficult to measure. Also, the disruption and dismantlement of criminal organizations must be weighed to determine whether the quality of life of the inhabitants of any given region has improved. This too can use the rate of violent crime per capita, but also must measure an overall trust in the police and the government in general. As the centers grow, an annual comparison of the number of participating nations, computer system users, database entries, and database inquiries can be provided to determine if the concept is taking hold and being relied upon by the participating nations' law enforcement agencies.

Each success becomes the genesis for future success in the center, allowing for the development of its own synergy and maximizing its potential. Measuring TNP is measuring a dynamic: an abstract relationship involving personalities, camaraderie, and professional interactions.

To determine if each RISC is serving the region in which it has been established, both qualitative and quantitative measures of effectiveness need to be instituted. Each regional center must enact methods to evaluate its own performance. Although each nation may have its own measurements and even its own standards within a measurement, the participating nations need to mutually agree upon specific measurements in which to evaluate the center. Consequently, the performance measures of effectiveness should be general enough to encompass the mission and goals of the center.

Typical law enforcement statistics such as the number of arrests, the rate of violent crime, and the amount of contraband seized are easily tracked and can be published as successes. One measure of the center's effectiveness would be that the number of arrests, the number of seizures, and the amounts of the seizure increase, while the rate of violent crime in the region decreases annually. Another applicable measurement is the number of investigative inquiries or leads from a specific region immediately following the disruption of a major criminal organization.

As the RISC matures, an annual comparison of the number of participating nations, computer system users, database entries, and database inquiries can be used to determine the degree the law enforcement community has accepted and implemented the concept of TNP. As with arrests and seizures statistics, the best measure of the center's effectiveness would be an increase in the number of database entries and inquiries, as well as center participants and database users with each passing year.

Events, such as the number and quality of transjudicial prosecutions emanating from the center's information and assistance, are also a measure of success. If the center's information analysis and assistance are instrumental in bringing an investigation to fruition then the center will be perceived as an invaluable tool for law enforcement. Another benefit of regional centers is that it promotes the concept of transjudicial prosecution for criminal organizations. Law enforcement agencies could maximize the penalties for criminal activity depending upon the country in which the prosecution of the criminal occurs.

Qualitative measures of effectiveness based on the specific region in which the RISC is located also should be used to assess the center. Disruption and dismantlement of criminal organizations is one such qualitative measure, and must be evaluated to determine whether the quality of life of the inhabitants of any given region has improved. Quantitatively, the rate of violent crime per capita can be examined, but qualitatively an assessment of the overall trust in law enforcement and government also must be attempted. Another qualitative measure is the level of trust and relationship building between participating law enforcement entities, both inside and outside of the RISC. The institution building that occurs in these centers would reinforce the concept of TNP in the sense that old prejudices and wayward relationships would be put aside for the betterment of the common goal. Two countries with a long history of non-involvement could work together in the same room, focusing on the same criminal target, and achieving a common solution. Some of the relationships that will be built in these centers will be unprecedented and should aid in repairing those relationships.

Each participating law enforcement agency must perceive the RISC as a worthwhile law enforcement tool available to combat globalized crime. If the participating nations do not perceive the centers as worthwhile, then they will not

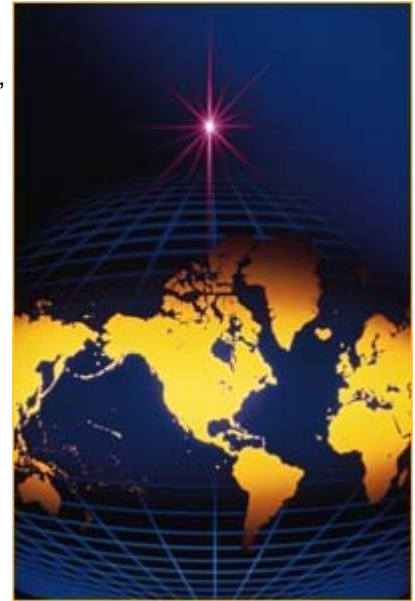
continue to participate and, therefore, the RISC will not succeed. Customer satisfaction - the return on investment in the center - will be a main determinant in the success or failure of a RISC, and customer satisfaction is much more difficult to measure.

The Future

"The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more." - **Jonas Salk, MD**

The concept of information sharing centers is hardly a new one. They have been, are, and will continue to be successful as long as the spirit of regional cooperation and collaboration is alive and well. This paper does not try to modify, to any significant degree, the design or application of those centers that exist and are proving themselves valuable. It is simply a codification of the basic features of a RISC, its general inner workings, and its mission in support of its region - sort of a starting point for developing a new center. In addition, this paper attempts to capture the essence of the role that these centers could play in a larger concept, a wider application of their expertise, and perhaps even an evolution of their individual successes into a higher plane of success. With a modicum of vision, planning, and commitment, this is certainly in the realm of possibility.

A RISC with a vision of a future that capitalizes on the synergistic effect of the inherent strengths of networking must include in its basic design the concept of regional specialization with global applications. Both the regional and global perspectives give the RISCs that critical link between TNP as a concept and TNP as a reality. This reality is a network of worldwide centers that can function both independent of each other and dependent on each other. Through connectivity and databases, these centers would serve as critical facilitators for multinational and multiregional investigations.



Many challenges exist in the actual implementation of so lofty a goal as worldwide connectivity and multinational law enforcement information sharing. Many challenges face multinational collaboration, such as different languages, diverse legal systems, availability of information sharing technologies, and political disagreements. These challenges will certainly require a significant amount of accommodation before any real value can be expected from a center, or a network of centers. Before any of these challenges can be met, the most critical of all obstacles to be overcome at the very beginning of the process is the willingness of potential participants to take the risk of subordinating their personal, or even national interests, to establish a trust-building environment to work for the greater good.

RISCs have already been established in some parts of the world. Though not always bearing the same name, their successes to date are increasing and their potential is limitless. Any proposal for expansion of these, in numbers and in cooperating members, continues to build the foundation toward achieving the ultimate goal of a worldwide web of collaboration and operational successes. The timely exchange of information through these centers can only expand current efforts regarding ongoing investigations, drug movements, seizures, alien smuggling, money laundering, weapons trafficking, clandestine drug laboratories, and many other criminal activities of mutual concern. Every current effort at TNP is enhanced geometrically by those at each and every participating RISC.

Currently, existing centers, and every newly introduced center, also will provide a forum to establish and maintain long-term working relationships among member nations' law enforcement personnel. By working closely together toward the same goals and sharing information and analytical techniques, participating countries will be able to leverage each other's strengths and gain a regional perspective of the drug situation. This regional perspective and cooperation among law enforcement officials at the analytical and operational levels are vital in combating crimes and destroying criminal enterprises. The regular and rapid exchange of information among all law enforcement entities is an essential factor in impeding the fluidity of successful criminal enterprises.

The permanent installation of multinational RISCs would provide a constant, strategically located presence,

commitment, interaction, and enhancement to the working relationships among the participating countries and their law enforcement agencies. These centers would provide a forum for participating countries to share law enforcement information, thereby facilitating the global exchange of criminal information. In a futuristic view, these centers would provide worldwide connectivity and an environment of trust that would culminate in multinational law enforcement operations.

A secondary outcome of regional cooperation in TNP is the strengthening of bilateral contacts between affected countries that may even improve coordination and direct communication between the various national agencies responsible for law enforcement within their own countries. Like any system, the value of the current methodologies and procedures should be constantly evaluated, and innovation and new ideas always assessed for incorporation and improvement.

Flexibility would come in the form of the centers being active in any region of the world and able to be enlisted as the central point of contact of an investigation at any time. Regional centers could be part of law enforcement's counter to the flexibility of criminal enterprises. RISCs would allow law enforcement to shift their focal points quickly among the centers worldwide to meet an emerging criminal threat. Depending upon the type and depth of an investigation, any one of the individual RISCs would be able to become the focal point for an investigation, or part of an investigation, at any time. Each center would be able to function as the virtual epicenter of police activity against any criminal organization.

These virtual epicenters will shift and overlap, depending upon the investigation or different aspects of an investigation (i.e., financial activity, transportation of contraband, etc.). Such centralization also would maximize impact and minimize resources by allowing augmentation only as needed and by collocating representatives of all participating nations so that decisions regarding multinational investigations can be made collectively without need for complex communications and extra manpower.

The potential building blocks for success in global information sharing are available. The RISCs need the attention of law enforcement today, and the vision of collective goal setting for the future. The realization is neither technologically difficult nor idealistically antagonistic. It only requires a few leaders with vision and foresight to grasp the concept and make it a reality.

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