

Forum: The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

Issue: Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Protocols: Enhancing International Cooperation and Response.

Name: Jia Singh and Henry Mace

Position: INTERPOL Deputy Chairs

Introduction:

Disaster Victim Identification protocols are essential for identifying victims post disasters, aiding with the forensic process, and providing closure to families in grief. However, there are some main issues with the current protocols, mainly a lack of standardization, the different methods to solve a DVI can vary greatly from one nation to another, and this can cause inconsistencies during an international disaster. DVI's require seamless communication and coordination to work efficiently, although factors like language barriers, technology, and preparedness for a situation can cause interruptions. Some nations are unable to obtain the resources needed to solve a DVI, although this may seem small it can slow down the identification process greatly. In addition to these issues, there are legal and ethical boundaries, time sensitivity, data safekeeping and protection, and political considerations. Key players can include the government and local authorities, international organizations, technology and forensic experts as well as the family and friends of the victim. The most affected would be the family members, any witnesses or survivors, and local communities, the deceased individual may also be significant to preserve their dignity and respect. This topic is different from past ones because of the interdisciplinary approach, it covers multiple aspects and perspectives, like the family members, international cooperation, and forensic groups, in which delegates can all come together and solve a case using their different resources. It's also very victim and crime-based, so it will add some excitement to the committee, especially with a different procedure, witnesses, etc. Sensationalism should be avoided during the debate, sticking to the facts of the crime and death will be more beneficial, and being respectful by not exploiting a country or citizens about the issue. Blaming is also important to steer away from, stigmatizing victims and witnesses

based on their country of origin or culture and finally looking beyond preparedness, it's important to be prepared and delegates should be aware that a DVI case isn't simple to solve with a lack of preparation.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **DVI:** The process and procedures for recovering and identifying deceased people and human remains in possible fatality incidents.
2. **Mass Fatality:** A mass fatality incident is a term of emergency management used to identify an incident involving more dead bodies and body parts that can be located and identified.
3. **Post-mortem:** The careful examination of a dead body to determine the initial cause of death similar to an autopsy
4. **Antemortem:** Preceding the death of an individual or group of individuals.
5. **Reconciliation:** The restoration of relations and the settlement of particular agreements.

Background Information

The four phases of DVI

The process of Disaster Victim Identification itself can be divided into a total of four phases: Scene, Post-mortem, Antemortem, and Reconciliation.

Scene

The Scene phase is the first of the four phases that is executed, which takes place as soon as the DVI process is cleared to begin. The site itself is treated similarly to a crime scene, as it is vital that all evidence is preserved and maintained in the best possible condition for future analysis if the situation extends itself. Because the DVI process can be used in a number of ways for a variety of circumstances, much of the exact protocol varies on a case-by-case basis which means one case is observed at a time and the rest are put on hold until that particular case has been analyzed. As an example, if the particular situation in question had to do with a terrorist-associated

bombing, explosive specialists would be present to ensure that the scene is safe to examine. In addition to the safety precautions, the techniques themselves may be modified to accommodate the circumstances in place. The main purpose of the scene phase, however, is to conduct photographing, recording, and labelling. This phase also includes the isolated processes of recovery, storage as well as transportation of human remains and other evidence.

Post-mortem

This phase of DVI involves the careful and precise analysis of human remains. The Human remains from a case are kept in a mortuary, whether it be a previously established one or a temporary one. Some methods of identification and analysis include photography, ridgeology (fingerprinting), radiology, odontology, DNA sampling, and post-mortem examinations are autopsy procedures that are also the ones most commonly conducted due to their simpler nature as compared to the other methods suggested. Additionally, the property of the deceased is cleaned and stored for inspection in hopes of identifying further characteristics or traits of the individual.

Ante-mortem

This phase involves collecting information about the missing people to compare with the post-mortem data that had been collected. To find this important information, teams may conduct interviews with the friends and family of the victims. Working alongside other governments and agencies to find additional information may also be useful in this phase. Some of this information can include retrieving descriptions relating to jewellery, clothing, or other property items as well as dental and medical records, radiographs, photographs, DNA, and fingerprints

Reconciliation

The final phase, reconciliation, has the objective of matching post-mortem data with antemortem data in order to identify the disaster victims and impacted victims. Once the matches between the two data sets have been made, and the victim's identity can be concluded, it is presented to the Identification board for further checking and analysis to make sure that the conclusion that has been reached is indeed correct and there is no room for error in the findings that have been made in the identification process. Once they approve the findings, a death certificate can be issued and repatriation of the remains can be arranged to any living family members or individuals stated in a will if one has been presented by the authorities to the board. If no remains are arranged to be handed over to individuals in association the government is at free will to dispose of, cremate, or bury the individual, this is dependent on the government, nation, and party in the rule.

Current Situation

Current DVI implications and implementations

In the current ongoing DVI protocols and standard usage, the four steps of identification have been made widely available in nations under the support of INTERPOL's DVI services. The uses of DVI amenities such as fingerprint identification, odontology, or dental examinations; DNA profiling which is inclusive of physical identification methods such as unique means of identification which is inclusive of permanent body inks and indentations or surgical traces of implants or aftermaths of surgeries done to alter the originality of the individual in question. All these methods have been standardized in national police agency protocols to stabilize identification in nations that struggle with meeting the required limit of police force on heightened crime in areas of knife crime in the United Kingdom and gun crime in the United States as well as other nations facing similar unsettlement or are under the threat of nationwide unrest.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

INTERPOL

INTERPOL is the organization in charge of orchestrating and executing DVI operations among its member states. In the event of a mass fatality incident, INTERPOL coordinates a response, whether it be organizing and sending DVI teams themselves, coordinating with other IGOs (like ICRC, ICMP, or IOM), or even the deployment of specialised teams on a broader scale to assist federal agencies in dealing with the aftermath of the disaster. A more specific example of this can be seen through INTERPOL's deployment of an Incident Response Team (IRT) to provide assistance with the DVI process, or to serve as a link to INTERPOL and their databases.

“The Working Group”

To ensure the excellence and efficiency of the DVI process, INTERPOL relies on what they call the Working Group. This group, comprising forensic and law enforcement specialists, convenes biannually to deliberate on enhancements to DVI procedures and standards. Perhaps the most important task of the Working Group is the “Guide to Disaster Victim Identification” which lays out official DVI protocols that are adopted and used by member states. The first ever published copy of this guide was produced in 1984 and is now updated every 5 years by the Working Group.

International Commission on Missing Persons

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) is a key partner for INTERPOL with their DVI program. In 2014, INTERPOL and ICMP signed a formal cooperation agreement to establish the Permanent Platform for Disaster Victim Identification (PDVI). The purpose of this is to serve as a resource for member states across the world to ensure increased preparedness and to improve the capabilities and efficiency of DVI. ICMP is an important partnership for INTERPOL and DVI because as the agreement highlights, ICMP possesses key expertise in the forensic field that could serve as a very beneficial contribution to DVI efforts around the world, like DNA analysis and genetic data processing. ICMP was founded in 1996, and their partnership can be traced back to 2004.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Due to the fact that INTERPOL is independent of the UN, there has not been much UN involvement in Disaster Victim Identification. Here are some relevant resolutions and treaties set in place by INTERPOL itself;

- Disaster Victim Identification Guide
 - [INTERPOL Disaster Victim Identification Guide](#)
 - This is one of the most recent Disaster Victim Identification Guides by the Working Group that was mentioned above. It provides more details as to how exactly the process works and how present and future resolutions by INTERPOL have been conducted. This guide was approved by INTERPOL on 2 different occasions concerning 2 different working groups, in 2014 and 2017. No changes made to the guide as the resolutions and information pieces stated have been deemed efficient and relevant.
 - This guide also provides examples of recent resolutions as well as touches on the implications of past conducted resolutions, strategically focusing on the four phases of the DVI and branching out into policy-making and societal conduct.

- Strengthening DVI capacities to assist with disaster response, 8-11 November 2010 ([AG-2010-RES-07](#))
 - This INTERPOL resolution focuses on improving the preparedness and efficiency of the DVI through collaboration with member countries and organizations to ensure stability and cooperation amongst nations. The resolution was adopted due to its stable nature and topic strengthening already existing capabilities instead of imposing new ones.

- [\(AG-2010-RES-07\)](#) is a prominent resolution component that is essential to the past, present, and future of DVI and builds a foundation for elaborating on certain points of concern that may or may not arise.
- Protocol to the corporation agreement: [ICMP INTERPOL](#)
 - This agreement states how the International Commission of Missing Persons is in cooperation with INTERPOL for DVI purposes and has agreed to this set of guidelines when conducting any form of research or forensics that cannot otherwise be compromised. The ICMP has agreed to all the agreements stated in the document and has put them into use since the exact date of 28th August 2014.

Possible Solutions

In INTERPOL resolution AG-2010-RES-07 was passed and adopted in 2010, one of the two clauses read, “Engage in a consultation process with member countries and with international and other organizations, inter alia, to seek solutions to ensuring continuing adequate preparedness to respond to DVI events in a focused and targeted manner, and to propose improvements to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of DVI responses in line with existing mechanisms and instruments on the subject;” This clause captures the essence of the solutions that would benefit the progress of the DVI program today. A more collaborative approach to addressing and responding to a disaster of any scale is imperative to ensuring DVI is as effective as possible. Preparedness and increased efficiency have been one of the main focus points of INTERPOL for a while, and they continue to make progress, whether it be the founding of PDVI which was mentioned earlier, or the DVI guides published every 5 years. This principle of collaboration is what has brought DVI so far, and in order to continue to “enhance international cooperation and response,” is it vital to continue to work towards that same principle.

Other forms of possible solutions delegates may reference for implementation are as follows:

Enhancing Existing Policies:

- The delegate can take existing policies and enhance them to comply with a majority of nations in order to provide international cooperation in the context of pressing issues concerning the DVI.
- The delegate may choose to elaborate further on certain existing policies and add detail to sub-clauses and sub-sub-clauses based on what they believe will be the best course of action for the committee.

Standardizing a Nation's national policy:

- The delegate can draw from their own national policies and expand on how these policies can set a bar for international standards.

Urgent Response Protocol (High Profile Cases):

- The delegate can create new urgent response policies for high-profile cases that require to be looked at to ensure the safety of their respective populations

Creating an International Database:

- Delegates can create an international database that would be available to all member nations, this database would have to be secure, reliable and up-to-date.
- This also leads to the question of who would have access to the database and what restrictions would it have on who is able to view it, as well as how much and what information it would include.
- A way for this to be done is by the creation of a United Nations task force dedicated to researching and analyzing this data to ensure corruption and other forms of mismanagement don't occur.

Better Integrating Technology into DVIs:

- The delegate can look at the problems with false or unreliable victim identification, and ensure that all member nations have proper and up-to-date victim identification software such as DNA profiling, Facial recognition and other tools that can help speed up and increase the accuracy and DVIs.

- This can be done with investments into technologies, subsidizing companies developing these sorts of technologies, also relaxing policies for startups allowing for more parties to get involved in developing technologies for DVIs.

Bibliography

Useful Links

- <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Forensics/Disaster-Victim-Identification-DVI>
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/242339/reporting/de>
- <https://missingpersons.icrc.org/library/dvi-form-post-mortem-unidentified-human-remains>
- https://www.fbiic.gov/public/2008/apr/Disaster_Victim_ID_Guide.pdf
- <https://www.icmp.int/press-releases/interpol-and-icmp-sign-pdvi-agreement/>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0379073810000873>
- https://www.interpol.int/content/download/589/file/18Y1344%20E%20DVI_Guide.pdf
- <https://www.oatext.com/Beyond-DVI-Future-identification-research-and-archiving.php#:~:text=There%20are%20four%20phases%20in,%2C%20Postmortem%2C%20Antemortem%20and%20Reconciliation.>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10445580/>

Works Cited

- https://www.interpol.int/content/download/589/file/18Y1344%20E%20DVI_Guide.pdf

- <https://www.oatext.com/Beyond-DVI-Future-identification-research-and-archiving.php#:~:text=There%20are%20four%20phases%20in,%2C%20Postmortem%2C%20Antemortem%20and%20Reconciliation.>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10445580/>
- <https://www.college.police.uk/app/civil-emergencies/disaster-victim-identification#:~:text=DVI%20principles%20are%20subject%20to,a%20crisis%20management%20support%20group.>
- <https://www.icmp.int/press-releases/interpol-and-icmp-sign-pdvi-agreement/>
- <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/242339/reporting/de>
- <https://missingpersons.icrc.org/library/dvi-form-post-mortem-unidentified-human-remains>
- https://www.fbiic.gov/public/2008/apr/Disaster_Victim_ID_Guide.pdf
- <https://www.icmp.int/press-releases/interpol-and-icmp-sign-pdvi-agreement/>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0379073810000873>
- <https://europepmc.org/article/med/20303223>
- <https://handbook.monash.edu/current/units/FOR5017>
- <https://www.forensicevents.com/blog-details/Interpol-Protocol-Guide-of-DVI:-Procedure-in-Mortuary/244>
- <https://www.oatext.com/Beyond-DVI-Future-identification-research-and-archiving.php>