

Blue vs. Red Notices: Different Purposes, Same Rules

By Michelle A. Estlund on November 11, 2011

In the previous post, I addressed the issue of a Blue Notice that had been issued by INTERPOL in the name of Ramona Bautista, who is under investigation for a crime alleged to have occurred in the Philippines. Today, the topic is how a Blue Notice request from a member country could be denied by INTERPOL.

Although the purpose of a Blue Notice (to monitor the movements of a criminal witness or suspect) is different from a Red Notice (to immobilize a criminal defendant or convict), these different notices have similarities. Specifically, they must be made in compliance with INTERPOL's governing rules and texts.

Just as with a Red Notice, INTERPOL might refuse to issue a Blue Notice if its rules or binding texts would be violated by issuing the requested notice. For example, in 2009, INTERPOL refused a request by member country Ecuador.

Ecuador had requested a Blue Notice in the name of Colombia's former Minister of Defense (and current president), Juan Manuel Santos Calderon. INTERPOL denied the request, and as grounds for the denial stated that the request was of a predominantly political and military nature. INTERPOL's constitution prohibits the organization from interfering in any such matters, and that prohibition naturally includes Blue Notice requests.

INTERPOL's decision did not sit well with some authority figures in Ecuador, who publicly criticized the refusal to issue the Blue Notice. INTERPOL eventually issued a [public statement defending its decision](#), which reiterated the political and military nature of the request, and emphasized INTERPOL's commitment to neutrality.

It even went so far as to state that if Ecuador didn't like the decision, it could appeal to the Executive Committee or eventually to the entire General Assembly. Eventually, the two countries began a normalization of relations, but the relationship is unstable and has shown [recent indications of strain](#).

As always, thoughts and comments are welcomed.