

-----Original Message-----

From: Arturo Cuervo [<mailto:acuervo@recol.es>]

Sent: Monday, June 21, 2004 8:46 PM

To: OLAF PRESS

Subject: Round table

- Name and surname: Arturo Cuervo Sánchez
- Professional title: Head of Public Relations
- Service: Civil Guard (Spain)
- Telephone: 91 - 5146012
- E-mail address: acuervo@recol.es

Please find below my thoughts on the questions to be discussed at the round table you have set up:

1. For - Information and communication: why should an investigative service have the powers and the duty to communicate on its work and what are its limits?

I believe that whatever information one holds back will be given out anyway by somebody else. It is always a good idea, as far as the law permits, to explain personally what your organisation is doing because, otherwise, somebody else will do it for you. It is mistaken to believe that an investigation will not become common knowledge – it always reaches somebody's ears eventually and will be passed on to the public, generally through the media. So why not get your version in first? Why wait for somebody else to reveal all as and when they see fit? Why assume that it will never get out? The only limits are those laid down by the law.

2. Against - Information and communication: why should an investigative service always remain silent and never communicate on its work?

I can come up with no answers to this question. Such an attitude is for those narrow-minded individuals who refuse to face up to reality and have no knowledge of the world in which they live.

3. Rights/duties of information, rights/duties with regard to the secrecy of investigation: where is the proper equilibrium?

Legal and operational limits should be respected. The point is not to give out information for the sake of it, but to have well-prepared and exhaustive guidelines as to what should or shouldn't be made public, and to give out information at the most appropriate moment.

4. Audio-visual information and communication of the investigative services: television, tabloids and financial inquiries.

Images are possibly the most important element in any newspaper article. Anything which is difficult to understand through explanation can be simplified by a good picture. I believe it is important for investigators to take on board this need for something visual and record as much of what they do as possible. Subsequently, and bearing in mind legal obligations and whether it is suitable to provide images, the decision will be taken on whether, how and when to provide them. Merely possessing the visual record will in any case always help the investigator and those in charge of public relations to give out information.

5. Why informing and communicating also means fighting and preventing fraud?

Society needs to be aware of things in order to prevent them...and what better way to become aware of the problems caused by fraud than through the process of institutional communication, be it the media, public relations or countless other channels...?

6. "Information Partnership": A free media must question the performance of public institutions. This can build walls between journalists and institutional spokespersons. But is it possible, through the development of mutual trust and professional respect to have a shared objective to tell a story fully and with frankness? What is the give and take in such a "partnership"? What are the risks?

The media must become yet another channel of information about institutional activity. As an important tool in achieving this, however, they must be treated normally. There are many advantages and risks, but "normality" might be the key word in such a relationship.