

Brazilian Police Arrest for Illegal Logging Those in Charge of Protecting the Amazon

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Brazil's Federal Police arrested 78 suspects of involvement in wood extraction frauds in the Amazon.

The group, operating for 14 years, was integrated by employees of the National Environment Protection Agency (IBAMA) whose main role is to protect the forest from illegal logging.

Others participating in the scheme were wood-related business people, and people specialized in the illegal extraction and transportation of wood.

450 federal police officers are executing 124 arrest and 168 search warrants in the states of Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, and Paraná, issued by the Federal Justice of Cuiabá, the capital of Mato Grosso.

According to the Federal Police, US\$ 57.6 thousand (140 thousand reais) have been apprehended at the residence of an IBAMA employee in Mato Grosso, as well as two imported cars, and an airplane.

Frauds included sale of "Authorizations to Transport Forest Products" (ATPF) to ghost companies. Accused employees also emitted fake reports and illegally authorized lumber exploration on indigenous lands.

The Ministry of Environment reveals that the deforestation of the Amazon has increased 39% since 2002. The total deforested area is 26,130 Km².

During the four first months of this year, 52 thousand m³ of wood logs have been seized in the Amazon.

The police operation, named Curupira after the Brazilian folklore's character that protects the forests, is already being considered the largest ever in the history of the Federal Police.

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