

## Brazilian Police Have No Rest: They Bust International Importing Gang

Contributed by Francesco Neves  
Wednesday, 16 August 2006

The Brazilian authorities are calling it the "biggest scheme of foreign trade fraud ever found" in Brazil. The international gang operation, which embezzled an estimated US\$ 234 million from Customs, has now been broken after two years of investigations in Brazil and in the United States.

950 agents from the Federal Police and another 350 employees from the Internal Revenue service took part in the undertaking, which was called Operation Deluge. They are executing 118 warrants of arrest and 220 others for search and seizure in eight Brazilian states. Besides Rio and São Paulo, people were also being arrested in Paraná, Santa Catarina, Bahia, Pernambuco, Ceará and Espírito Santo.

Among those being detained by the police there are federal and state public servants as well as the owners of large companies specialized in imported products. Those involved are being accused of fraud, embezzlement, ideological and documental falsehood, tax evasion and criminal association with public servants.

The scheme, according to the police, is headed by a business group in São Paulo and has branches in several Brazilian states and in the US. For the first time ever the Brazilian federal police was helped by the American authorities to extend its investigations and searches into Miami inside companies controlled by the Brazilian group.

The gang's main leader is a Paulista (from São Paulo) businessman who owns dozens of tradings as well as distributors that intermediated the import operation in a way that the name of the real importer, a client of the distributor, never appeared. The group imported more than US\$ 500 million in the last four years.

The group was headed by Marco Antonio Mansur, who was arrested with his son, Marco Antonio Mansur Filho, in their apartment in the neighborhood of Paraíso in the south zone of São Paulo. His company was named after his initials: MAM.

The scheme allowed the import of a wide range of products going from fruit and clothing, to perfume, jewelry, electronic devices, computer and telecommunications equipment, tires, and cars. Included also in the list: orthopedic equipment, surgical gloves, batteries, motorcycles and vitamins.