

## 300 Brazilian Agents Chase Internet Bank Account Raiders

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Using more than 300 agents and covering five Brazilian states Brazil's Federal Police unleashed today, September 12, another operation to catch Internet hackers specialized in taking over bank accounts and depleting it of their funds.

52 people, the majority of them computer wiz teenagers, had already been arrested at the end of the day. Among those arrested there were three police officers, two of them from the military and another one from the civilian police. They are accused of stealing daily an average of US\$ 3,000.

The operation called Replicante (copy) is occurring simultaneously in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Goiás, Tocantins, Rio Grande do Norte and Brazilian capital Brasília.

The Federal Police have about 120 arrest and search and seizing orders issued by the Justice.

The investigations on this latest operation started one year ago, but according to a Federal Police note the action is also a follow up to several other police operations that have been conducted since 2000, including Cash Net in 2001, Troy Horse I and II (in 2003 and 2004 respectively) and Pegasus I and II (both in 2005).

The main target of Operation Replicante are programmers who create and spread Trojans or Trojan horses, software that invades computers and steals personal information stored inside computers including bank accounts data and passwords.

These same criminals generally create fake addresses in the internet, usually almost perfect copies of the sites they wish to replicate. Their activity is sometimes referred to as "phishing scam."

The Police say they are also going after users who spread these programs sometimes sending thousands of emails a day. They are known as *carteiros* or *cartãozeiros* (mail carriers) and they are in charge of the bureaucratic work of transferring money among bank accounts after they are violated.

Those arrested are being charged among other things with qualified theft, gang formation, illegal telematic interception, violation of bank secrecy, blackmail, fraud and money laundering.