

Philippines arrests 44 from China, Taiwan in Internet fraud

July 10 2014



A man uses an iPad 2 during its launch in the Philippines at an Apple store in Manila on April 29, 2011

Forty-two Taiwanese and two Chinese suspects have been arrested in the Philippines over a sophisticated Internet scam targeting compatriots back home, police said Thursday.

The suspects—who posed as [police officers](#), prosecutors, judges and anti-

money laundering officials—cheated people from Taiwan and China out of their money by claiming they could safeguard their cash, a police statement said.

The scammers would allegedly convince their victims that their [bank accounts](#) were being used for money-laundering and that their assets could be protected if they transferred all their money to accounts owned by the fraudsters, police added.

"The syndicates... usually go to the Philippines as tourists and rent houses in posh (housing projects)" where they set up their illegal operations, a police statement said.

The suspects were arrested in a series of raids in the central city of Iloilo on Wednesday by a [police](#) anti-cybercrime unit and immigration bureau agents.

The [law enforcers](#) were aided by an official of Taiwan's cultural office in Manila, it said.

The two Chinese suspects were "caught in the act of engaging with their would-be victims abroad," said Senior Inspector Joanna Fabro, adding that scammers often believed they were unlikely to be prosecuted in the Philippines.

But she said the authorities were now boosting their anti-cybercrime capabilities.

"Maybe they aren't afraid of our laws. But we have more teeth and we hope more of them will be apprehended soon," she said.

The suspects will eventually be deported to China and Taiwan respectively but the "digital evidence" of their crimes will be gathered by

Philippine investigators to be used when they face trial at home, Fabro added.

Such scams involving people from Taiwan and China operating in the Philippines have become increasingly common in recent years.

"We can see an increasing trend in cybercrimes like this scam," warned Fabro.

Since 2012, the Philippines has deported hundreds of Taiwanese and Chinese for taking part in such rackets, usually targeting the elderly in Taiwan and China.

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Citation: Philippines arrests 44 from China, Taiwan in Internet fraud (2014, July 10) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-07-philippines-china-taiwan-internet-fraud.html>

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