

Dutch police crack encrypted communications network

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Dutch police and prosecutors took down an encrypted communications network Tuesday believed to have been used by criminals in the Netherlands and possibly overseas.

Prosecutors said in a statement that they arrested a 36-year-old man in the eastern city of Nijmegen who is suspected of [money laundering](#). He is the owner of a company which allegedly "provided criminals with customized smartphones and accompanying communication services."

The company sold mobile phones for 1,500 euros (\$1,700) that had been protected with legal encryption software called Pretty Good Privacy, or PGP, and could be used only for email, said cybercrime prosecutor Martijn Egberts.

"You pay a very high price for a phone you can't make calls on," cybercrime prosecutor Martijn Egberts said in a telephone interview.

Police said in a statement that investigations into contract killings, [drug trafficking](#) and motorcycle gangs have shown that using encrypted networks "makes it almost impossible for investigation services to trace the communication between suspects."

PGP is effective enough that the U.S. government tried to block its export in the mid-1990s, arguing that it was so powerful it should be classed as a weapon.

As part of Tuesday's action, [prosecutors](#) copied data from several servers in the Netherlands and one in Toronto, Canada. Data on the servers should show details of who sent and received emails on the encrypted phones and investigators will try to crack the encryption to read messages, Egberts said.

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