

Vietnam high-tech crime conference builds cooperation

Estimates of the cost to Australians of computer-based scams and rip-offs vary wildly, and are often listed collectively in the tens of millions, but there is no doubt that when an individual's financial assets are attacked online, the impact can be devastating.

These crimes are truly borderless with criminals able to access personal information from half a world away, meaning that to catch these criminals, law enforcement agencies require a high degree of cooperation with each other.

The Australian High Tech Crime Centre (AHTCC) is a leader in raising the awareness of technology enabled crime among the law enforcement agencies of South East Asia. In this role, the AHTCC co-hosted a three-day conference with the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in Hanoi last December to examine current crime issues relating to technology.

Director of the AHTCC, Kevin Zuccato said: "With the borderless nature of technology enabled crime, it is important for police in the region to meet and share ideas and methodologies aimed at combating criminals who use technology."

The Internet plays a role in all criminal activity and law enforcement personnel at this conference were able to learn about emerging trends and issues from each other and the private sector.



Director of the Australian High Tech Crime Centre, Kevin Zuccato speaks at the December conference in Vietnam.

The conference attracted more than 40 key officers from 12 law enforcement agencies in the region and was made possible from funding by the Australian Government's Law Enforcement Cooperation Program (LECP) and the assistance of the AFP's Hanoi office.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Public Security Deputy Minister, Senior Lieutenant-General Le The Tiem, said that in recent years, crimes involving technology had become more



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sophisticated, with serious consequences across all crime types.

Mr Tiem said that these crimes had not been isolated to a particular nation, rather they had become a challenge to the sustainable development and security of every country in the world.

“As a result, fighting and preventing this kind of crime requires close coordination and cooperation among nations to create a global front”, Mr Tiem said.

He also stated that the conference was a chance for Vietnam’s police to learn from the experiences of their international colleagues and enhance their fight against technology enabled crimes.

At the conference, detailed presentations were given on the latest tools and techniques used to investigate technology enabled crime by representatives from Microsoft, Visa International and a range of police investigators and computer forensic specialists.

Delivered as a series of case studies, the presentations enabled participants to focus on all aspects of technology enabled crime and to use this information in their own investigations. This information can be used in Internet-based investigations, tracking suspects via email and websites, and using intelligence principles to support investigations.

The Asia Region Conference on High Tech Crime brought together more than 40 key officers from 12 law enforcement agencies in South East Asia.

The AHTCC has been involved in developing the capacity of the MPS in Vietnam to investigate instances of high-tech crime since 2004. This has culminated in the opening of the Vietnamese High Tech Crime Division (VHTCD). Through the ongoing assistance with both equipment and training, this team is now capable of investigating serious technology enabled criminal activity, particularly that which impacts internationally.

One case study presented at the conference clearly showed the benefits to Australia of interagency cooperation. In early 2005, the AHTCC referred an investigation to the VHTCD after discovering a significant amount of unauthorised Internet banking transactions against Australian banks that had been crediting money to bank accounts in Vietnam.

Investigations in Australia showed these unauthorised transactions originated in Vietnam. The Vietnamese Police identified the male responsible and arrested and charged him with a variety of offences as well as seizing property and large sums of cash.

At the conference, the AFP also announced that due to the success of the VHTCD initiative, a second team would be established in Ho Chi Minh City in 2007 using LECP funding.



Cooperation between Australian and Vietnamese authorities in early 2005 led to the arrest of a Vietnamese based criminal attempting to credit money from Australian banks to accounts in Vietnam.

