

# The fight against transnational cyber crime

**"The new frontier of cyberspace is a virtual world of social and criminal practices that openly challenge current policing methods," *Transnational Cyber Crime*, Strategic Alliance Cyber Crime Working Group.**

**In April 2007, the Strategic Alliance Cyber Crime Working Group (SACCWG) released its white paper *Transnational Cyber Crime* and agreed that combating cyber crime requires transnational leadership and cooperation.**

The Australian High Tech Crime Centre (AHTCC) representing Australia, contributed to this paper alongside members of the Group including law enforcement representatives from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and New Zealand.

Director of the AHTCC, Federal Agent Kevin Zuccato, described the outcomes of the SACCWG as a positive way forward in international law enforcement cooperation as well as, a means of addressing the current and emerging trends in cyber space and initiatives required to educate, prevent and mitigate the impact of criminal activity online.

"The purpose of this engagement is to build strong multilateral relationships with these countries to increase effectiveness at combating organised crime worldwide," Federal Agent Zuccato said.

Since the AHTCC's establishment in



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2002, there has been a rapid expansion of online crime. The Internet alone has created major new opportunities for crime including: fraud, trafficking in pornography, terrorist recruiting, identity theft and industrial espionage.

The Internet has turned into a complex and challenging, if not menacing, gateway where criminal activities have progressed to attacks which are targeted and sophisticated.

"Organised crime groups and cyber criminals are working together seamlessly, moving between the real world and virtual environments," Federal Agent Zuccato said. "What we have to understand is that in today's society the Internet knows no geography."

"It is fluid, dynamic, and can be anonymous. When a crime takes place, it moves so rapidly that the impact on individuals, organisations and even governments, can be felt instantaneously around the world."

As people around the world make use of online space for vital communications, e-commerce and services, real-world criminals have become attracted to these technologies and enhanced their own operations at a magnitude and rate that traditionally may not have been available to them logistically or financially.

From technology enhanced crimes including phishing and related criminal activity to technology enabled crimes





such as unauthorised access or denial of service, the world in which we work in has required law enforcement to rethink its policing methods and find innovative strategies.

"We have to learn the new language and landscape of cyberspace. Prevention, education, awareness, mitigation and disruption must also form part of any joint strategies involving law enforcement, government organisations and the private sector," Federal Agent Zuccato said.

In Australia, the AHTCC has developed collaborative relationships with the banking and finance sector to deal with online fraud, money laundering, scams and identity theft.

Through this collaboration of targeted media and awareness-raising campaigns, the AHTCC has been able to demonstrate to the community that the Internet is an environment that contributes a great deal to our daily lives. However, as with any environment, there are also things that we need to be aware of in order to remain protected and safe.

As Federal Agent Zuccato explained the Centre works with Government and the private sector and organisations under

attack to identify what the problem is, mitigate the damage, get them back online, develop treatments for whatever attack they are under and find the perpetrators.

"Investigators need to be aware that criminals have migrated to the Internet and are using it as a vehicle to commit crime," Federal Agent Zuccato said. "We have to be innovative and flexible in order to be effective,"

The most significant development so far which is of particular concern to the AFP and other law enforcement agencies is the emerging trend of social networking websites.

"The Internet has seen the creation of a second reality in which people simply connect online, build trust and rapport without knowing the true identity of the people they communicate with," Federal Agent Zuccato said.

Websites including *Second Life*, *You Tube*, and *MySpace* are networks created by individuals, groups and organisations encouraging socialisation in a virtual world.

"What we have to do is understand that this generation of children, growing up immersed in the Internet and anything digital, make no distinction between the real world and their virtual world. The members of this generation use technology at greater rates and in different ways than those from other generations," he said.

"There are also gangs online that 'mug' individuals by stealing artefacts, chattels and then on selling the goods for financial gain.

"As cyber criminals go into this second environment they also seek to harm children and adults, they can also exploit those with weaknesses and radicalise them into believing their ideas.

"They can also conspire and train for terrorists attacks using social networking and multiplayer online games.

"This is just a snapshot of the issues the AHTCC deals with. One of the biggest challenges for the AFP is to examine how does it develop an effective presence in that environment, how will it investigate and prosecute those types of crimes, if they really exist in our world and how will it follow criminals into that public domain."

It is expected that the new governance arrangements and structure for the AHTCC, will be ratified by the end of 2007, further enhancing the performance and capabilities of the AHTCC and continuing its leading role in developing innovative relationships with the private sector.

The formation and future directions of the AHTCC will be provided in future editions of *Platypus Magazine*.

