
Computer-fakes suspect held after eight months on the run

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Martin Wong and **Nick Gentle**

The suspected ringleader of a gang believed to have sold fake computer-networking equipment in China and abroad has been arrested on the mainland after eight months on the run.

Tony Li Zhendong, who eluded a joint operation by the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau (PSB) and the private security firm I-On Asia last year, was arrested at his new home in Shenzhen on Tuesday.

In September's operation, counterfeit computer-networking equipment worth US\$25 million was seized and seven people arrested in 10 raids carried out simultaneously across Shenzhen.

"He was the only one who got away," said Derek Elmer, chief execu-

tive officer of I-On Asia, a security and risk assessment firm.

"We are so happy that he has finally been caught. We believe he was the leader of a big counterfeiting syndicate on the mainland which produced copies of advanced equipment," he said.

The items the syndicate is suspected of selling domestically and internationally were under the names of global brands like Nortel, Cisco Systems and Hewlett Packard.

"This included equipment used in the construction of infrastructure, and hospital equipment that could be used in intensive care units. It is very dangerous," Mr Elmer said.

The arrest was made after months of surveillance by staff of the security company, following tip-offs from mainland sources, who said Li had

bought a new apartment in Shenzhen.

"We actually watched him for months. We knew his routine, his social life," Mr Elmer said, adding that Li moved around a lot and drove an expensive BMW.

On Tuesday, the company informed the Shenzhen Economic Crime Investigation Department of his whereabouts. Its officers arrested him that night in his flat in Shenzhen.

The syndicate – comprising about 50 people, who took the counterfeit products all the way from production through to the end user – is believed to have had substantial backing from other mainland criminal enterprises.

"We are so happy about the arrest. It is a triumph for intellectual property rights [protection]," Mr Elmer said.