U.S. Slaps $3 Million Bounty on Wanted Russian Hacker Bogachev

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The FBI has released a "Wanted" poster for suspected hacker Yevegeny Bogachev.

The U.S. State Department and FBI on Tuesday announced a $3 million reward for information leading to the arrest or conviction of Russian national Yevgeny Bogachev, the highest bounty U.S. authorities have ever offered in a cyber case.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation also issued a "Wanted" poster for Bogachev, who is charged in the United States with running a computer attack network called GameOver Zeus that allegedly stole more than $100 million from online bank accounts.

Bogachev has been charged by federal authorities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with conspiracy, computer hacking, wire fraud, bank fraud and money laundering in connection with his alleged role as administrator of GameOver Zeus.

He also faces federal bank fraud conspiracy charges in Omaha, Nebraska related to his alleged involvement in an earlier variant of Zeus malware known as "Jabber Zeus."

Bureau officials said they believed Bogachev was still in Russia. He could not immediately be reached for comment.

Joseph Demarest, head of the FBI's cyber crime division, said that Russia's internal security agency, the FSB, had recently expressed tentative interest in working with U.S. authorities on investigating cyber crimes. He did not link the offer of cooperation to the Bogachev case.

Last June, when charges in the United States were first filed against Bogachev, journalists from Russian newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda paid a visit to the luxury housing complex in Anapa where Bogachev is believed to reside, only to be told by other residents that Bogachev was lying low.

"Journalists keep coming around. But there's no one here, you might as well not search [for him]," the newspaper cited a couple from the housing complex as saying, adding that both Russian and Western journalists had been scouring the premises for him with no luck.

"It seems the only ones not searching for him are Russian law enforcement," the report said.

According to the newspaper, Bogachev targeted only Americans, infecting their computers with malware and then draining their bank accounts.

"Bogachev bought up real estate in Krasnodar and a yacht in Anapa, on which he travelled around the Black Sea. He also acquired property in an elite housing complex in Anapa" with the stolen funds, the report said.

His apartment in Anapa was described as a fortress, with Bogachev having "bought the entire sixth floor and installed a steel door at the entrance with numerous locks."

A housing attendant in the residential complex was cited as saying Bogachev lived with a wife and daughter, and that they "changed cars like gloves," and even had a personal driver.

"I just saw the news yesterday, and it was immediately clear how they were living such a golden life," the attendant was cited as saying.

(Reuters, MT)