

Police in Europe bust gang hijacking celeb phones, arrest 10

February 10 2021



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Police have arrested 10 people in the U.K., Belgium and Malta for allegedly hijacking mobile phones belonging to U.S. celebrities including internet influencers, sports stars and musicians to steal personal

information and millions in cryptocurrency, authorities said.

The European Union police agency Europol said Wednesday that the gang is believed to have stolen more than \$100 million in cryptocurrencies by using so-called SIM swap attacks.

These attacks involve deactivating a victim's [mobile phone](#) SIM card, either by tricking the [phone company](#) or using a corrupt insider, so that the number can be transferred to another card under the gang's control.

The arrests were the result of a joint investigation by U.K., U.S., Canadian, Belgian and Maltese police, Europol said.

Europol didn't specify the nationalities of those caught in the sweep, but the U.K.'s National Crime Agency said a day earlier that eight men were arrested in England and Scotland. Two others were arrested previously in Belgium and Malta, Europol said.

Neither agency identified the celebrity victims.

Investigators found that after accessing victims' phone numbers, they were able to take control of apps or accounts by requesting password reset codes sent via SMS. Then they were able to steal money, cryptocurrencies and [personal information](#), including contacts synced online, as well as hack into and post from [social media accounts](#), Europol said.

Europol has warned that SIM swapping is a growing threat carried out by fraudsters.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Police in Europe bust gang hijacking celeb phones, arrest 10 (2021, February 10)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://techxplore.com/news/2021-02-police-europe-gang-hijacking-celeb.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.