

Brazil police nab man in powder mailing

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BRASILIA, Brazil --

Police said Friday they arrested a man suspected of sending envelopes containing a mysterious but harmless green powder to the U.S. embassy and 18 other foreign missions in Brazil.

Divino Aloisio de Souza, 42, was arrested Thursday night in Sao Paulo after police identified his fingerprints on the envelopes, police spokeswoman Fernanda Canto said.

At least 19 embassies and the powerful Federation of Industries of Sao Paulo State this week received envelopes holding small quantities of green powder, Canto said. The Brazil missions of Israel, Iran, Bolivia, Great Britain, Syria, Germany and Saudi Arabia were among those receiving the envelopes.

Police said in a statement the substance was tested and turned out to be a mixture sodium carbonate, sugar and dirt. Police did not speculate on a motive but initially were treating the incident as a prank.

"The substance sent to embassies is harmless ... not biological or radioactive material," the statement said.

The envelopes had the return address of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, according to delegates who received them. Alvaro Araoz, chief of the Bolivian consulate in Brasilia, said the envelope received there did not contain a letter.

The suspect could be charged with creating a false alarm, punishable by up to six months in jail, according to the Web site of the Rio de Janeiro daily O Globo.