After weeks of investigation, the Thai police are beginning to round up suspects (疑犯) in the Bangkok bombing that killed and injured many. Earlier in the US, police captured 60-year-old Willie Lee Austin, a convicted armed robber, 30 years after he escaped from prison.

In May, Frank Freshwaters, 79, who had been on the lam (潛逃) for 56 years, was finally found and arrested. He had killed someone while driving over the speed limit and escaped from an Ohio prison in 1959.

These cases are what we call “難逃法網” (nan2 tao2 fa3 wang3).

“難” (nan2) is “difficult,” “hard,” “逃” (tao2) is “to escape,” “to evade,” “法” (fa3) means “the law,” and “網” (wang3) is “a net.” Literally, “難逃法網” (nan2 tao2 fa3 wang3) is “hard to evade the net of the law.”

The idiom is an observation that those who break the law can count on being caught by the long arm of the law sooner or later; that try as they may, criminals will not evade punishment forever.

We use the idiom “難逃法網” (nan2 tao2 fa3 wang3) when a lawbreaker is finally brought to justice, especially after having successfully avoided detection or arrest for some time.

Another version of “難逃法網” (nan2 tao2 fa3 wang3) is “法網難逃” (fa3 wang3 nan2 tao2). The latter just reverses the order of “難逃” (nan2 tao2) and “法網” (fa3 wang3). Both versions are frequently used and mean exactly the same.

Terms containing the character “法” (fa3) include:

- 法律 (fa3 lu4) – the law
- 立法 (li4 fa3) – to make law
- 法治 (fa3 zhi4) – the rule of law
- 犯法 (fan4 fa3) – to break the law