

Nigeria - [419 Coalition](#) 1998 News on Nigerian Scam / 419 Operations

19 DEC 98

17 Nigerians Held for Advance Fee Fraud in Abidjan

Africa News Service

18-DEC-98:

Lagos (P.M. News, December 18, 1998) - At least 17 Nigerians including two women have been arrested and detained for allegedly indulging in Advance Fee Fraud, a.k.a. 419 in Abidjan, the Ivorian capital.

Thousands of dollars is said to have been ripped off Ivorian businessmen.

BBC report this morning said the Ivorian police authorities yesterday foiled the operations of the Nigerian fraudsters who were said to be using Abidjan as their operational base.

The Nigerians were said to be operating as a gang and have wrecked at least 50 Ivorian businessmen after duping them of thousands of dollars in the guise of transacting business with them. Report said the unsuspecting victims were usually asked by fraudsters to provide details of their bank accounts for the transfer of huge sums of money usually in hard currency.

The victims are subsequently duped as the Nigerians make away with whatever is left of the victims account and they are never seen again as they usually give fake addresses and phone numbers to their victims. BBC report further said the Nigerian fraudsters were paraded last night before local and international press journalists who took their photographs.

The Ivorian minister of security and the minister of Industrial Development while parading the Nigerians before the press, showed the press a satellite phone, two fax machines, a photocopier, and a typewriter which were recovered from the Nigerian fraudsters.

Also recovered from them were 315 stamped envelopes, 900 stamps, 200 letter-headed papers and 40 complimentary cards which were to be used to dupe more Ivorian victims in Abidjan. The report further said that a total CFA10.9 million (Ivorian currency) was also recovered from the gang leader which he was said to have used to try to bribe the Ivorian police.

An Ivorian policeman was said to have agreed to accept the bribe but later rejected the offer as he alerted his colleagues who laid ambush and swooped the gang leader and his accomplices. The fraudsters were said to be using two sweet-tongued Nigerian ladies whose job was mainly to entice and lure Ivorian Asian businessmen in Abidjan into investing their thousands of dollars in non-existent business.

In recent months there have been increasing complaints of duping in Abidjan which prompted several weeks of investigation and the eventual arrest of the Nigerian fraudsters who were said to have wreaked a lot of havoc in South Africa, Canada and the United States before re-locating their base to Abidjan. The Nigerian fraudsters are said to be living in high class neighbourhood where they pay more than two years rent in advance, thus triggering sky-rocketing rent for accommodation in Abidjan.

By Moses Uchendu

Copyright 1998 P.M. News. Distributed via Africa News Online.

8 DEC 98

419 Coalition received this report today from a correspondent in Germany (see below article as well):

5 year-sentence for 419 Ring Leader in Düsseldorf, 4 years for assistant!

The superior court of Düsseldorf (Stadtsschutzkammer) has today sentenced two notorious 419-crooks of Nigerian origin to 5 and 4 years imprisonment respectively.

In a detailed elaboration of the background to the sentence, the presiding judge emphasized his conviction that the 34 year old Godwin Usiayo (a naturalized German) of Nigerian origin, was the head of the 419 gang generally referred to as the Nigerian connection. His so-called assistant Frank Edafe (who was apparently responsible for telephone connections and logistics) was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment.

In each case, the sentence was 6 months lesser than the prosecution pleaded for.

The defence attorney laid special emphasis, in his plea, on the potential psychological problems of Mr. Usiayo behind bars. Even though German on paper, Mr. Usiayo has a poor command of the German language and is therefore subjected to an automatic social isolation in his new residence. Furthermore, he may not qualify for the privilege of deportation amnesty (being released half-way through the sentence, for deportation back home) because he is no longer regarded as a foreigner. He pleaded to have the co-operative attitude of Mr. Usiayo duly taken into consideration. Mr. Usiayo confessed at a very early stage of the proceedings and saved the judicial authorities a lot of procedural troubles. In the view of the defence, the confession of the accused was less tactical than repentant.

On the other hand, Mr. Frank Edafe may not serve his entire 4 years in prison. Since he is not in possession of the German passport, he stands to benefit from the deportation amnesty.

In his defence plea in favor of Mr Edafe, the attorney stressed that his client was nothing else than a subordinate staff of Mr. Usiayo. He even went further to emphasize that Mr. Edafe caused neither financial nor material damages to any German institution. The Germans may therefore have no pressing cause to place him on trial. Since all his actions were dependent on the goodwill or mood of Mr Usiayo he had less responsibility to bear. He accused the German telephone organization Telekom for not acting swiftly to cut-off telephone lines with which the criminal activities were carried out. High telephone bills unpaid would have been reasons enough for this. Apparently Telekom allegedly aimed at profiting from an apparently potential lucrative subscriber. He further accused the German banks of having sparked off the investigation but yet not having to pay back their profits from the criminal transactions of which they were well aware. Every party to the success of the gang was profit-inclined.

The presiding judge finally took all these facts into consideration in passing judgement.

Victims of Godwin Usiayo include Americans, Australians, Britons and Italians, some of whom are known to me by name.

Godwin Usiayo owns reasonable assets (luxury cars and villas) back home in Nigeria and may stand to lose no material profit from being in prison. The temporary bondage though is bound to be an enormous set-back to a young man who became almost a millionaire at the expense of unsuspecting, though equally crime-inclined international businessmen.

2 DEC 98

419 Coalition received this report today from a correspondent in Germany:

I refer to your report on "16 DEC 97" Quote: "Agents of the Düsseldorf State Bureau of Investigations (LKA) have arrested a gang of 419'ers which had been operating in Germany since 1988 ..."

The Ring leader of this gang "Godwin Usiayo" appeared before court today for the first time at the "Stadtschutzkammer" in the Superior Court (Landgericht) of Düsseldorf after an extensive confession during police interrogation. Final hearing and judgement is fixed for the 8th of December 1998 at 9:00 hrs...

10 NOV 98

Post Office Intercepts Nigeria Mail

NEW YORK (AP) -- Postal agents said Tuesday they have intercepted more than 2 million letters from Nigerian scam artists who have been stealing \$100 million a year from Americans.

The letters typically claim to be from a Nigerian government official who promises to transfer millions of dollars out of Nigeria and into the recipient's bank account if the recipient agrees to pay legal fees and other costs.

The fees, which can stretch into hundreds of thousands of dollars, do not stop until the recipient gets wise or runs out of money, said Lee Heath, postal inspector in charge of the New York Division.

The letters, which have been destroyed, often use counterfeit stamps to avoid paying postage.

© Copyright 1998 The Associated Press

419 Coalition Comment: This has been an ongoing project for some time of which we were informed and asked not to mention, but apparently policy has changed :) :) However, it WAS publicly announced a year or so ago that about 5 nations had returned over 4 million letters (see the news piece on that in 1997 News), most of which were 419 letters, to the GOV of Nigeria. Of course, Paul Ogwuma, GOV of Central Bank of Nigeria said in public This year (see earlier 1998 News) that the total of the letters sent out of Nigeria was something like 288,000 and that there were only 70 reported victims :) :) Ain't it amazing how those nonexistent letters just keep coming, and coming and coming :) :)

On another note - we have said on our main page since day one that the Government of Nigeria Are, in essence, the Crooks (we have put it more precisely in other writings that the Elites from which Successive GOVs of Nigeria have been drawn Are the Crooks). Over the last few months elements within the Abubakar GOV appear to have agreed with us, at least to the extent of Nigerian on Nigerian 419, which they are calling "Executive 419". The family of Abacha has been forced to turn over some \$750 million to the GOV of Nigeria; Ismail Gwarzo, the former National Security Advisor, has been hit up for some \$250 million; and Abacha's Finance Minister, Anthony Ani is currently under "attack" for alleged misappropriation of funds. We at 419 Coalition are Very Pleased that monies looted from the Nigerian treasury are being returned to the Abubakar Government and hope that they will be used to better the lot of the Nigerian people rather than merely serving as a - shall we

say - redistribution of wealth :) :) Though we have been following these events for several months, we have refrained from much comment on them and will continue to do so, as it is our view that monies looted from the Nigerian treasury and the recovery of same is primarily a Nigerian Internal Matter. We compliment the Abubakar GOV on their efforts in this matter and say again we hope that the situation of the People of Nigeria improves as a result of them.

However, we are still looking for action on Nigerian on Foreigner 419 in which like sums of money are repatriated to the nations from whence they came. There has been no substantive action taken in that regard as yet. It is 419 Coalition view that an effort to recover monies stolen by Nigerian on Nigerian 419 and an effort to recover monies stolen by Nigerian on Foreigner 419 need NOT be mutually exclusive endeavours.

23 OCT 98
nan - em - 11

"u.s. government to work with nigeria in the fight against transnational crime

abuja, oct. 21, '98 (nan) the u.s. government has promised to work together with nigeria to check the global danger posed by transnational crime.

mr. rand beers, the u.s. acting assistant secretary of state for international narcotics and law enforcement, said at a news conference in abuja on tuesday that the global malady had become a serious problem that no country could ignore or solve alone.

he said that the u.s. had devoted ``considerable time and resources both domestically and throughout the world to help put an end to the scourge".

he lamented that poor relations with the abacha administration had made bilateral co-operation difficult in the area of law enforcement.

``however, with the recent positive changes in the nigeria government, we believe this is an opportunity to resume dialogue on the issue," beers said.

he further pointed out that the u.s. regarded the latest on the non-certification of nigeria's drug war as a statement in the past, adding: ``we should now move into the future".

the official said that everything would be done to ensure nigeria succeeded in its efforts to check crime in and outside the country, stressing that doing so was in the best interest of both countries.

beers commended the current move toward democracy and pointed out that the u.s. was encouraged by the public statements of the head of state, gen. abdulsalami abubakar, regarding his commitment to improving nigeria's law enforcement record in the areas of financial fraud and narcotics.

the beers-led team had had discussions on a variety of issues with Nigerian officials, among them narcotics interdiction, financial crimes, money laundering, internal controls and corruption. (nanemb)"

419 Coalition Comment: US Gov has already been Trying to work with the Nigerian GOV on this matter for several years with little success. We hope the new programme bears fruit. And we continue to ask the Ultimate Question, ie. Where's the Money and When Will It Be Repatriated?

10 OCT 98

Here is verbatim some material recently sent to 419 Coalition from Canada. We found it interesting although as described it is more a case of alleged Institutional Fraud than 419, so we thought we'd put it up:

>"There is something that you may not be aware of and it involves INDIRECT
>SCAMMING
>of the tax payers of the countries which happen to be non-regional member
>countries of the African Development Bank. USA and Canada happen to be such
>members, besides others. All of the non-regional member countries of the
>African Development Bank contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to the
>kitty of this bank out of the taxpayers' moneys.
>There is a project going on in Nigeria, involving the Rehabilitation and
>Expansion of Nigerian Sugar Company Limited. The project has been going on
>since 1991. The cost of this project is in excess of US\$ 100 Million (US\$
>Hundred Million) and African Development Bank has provided more than 80% of
>this cost. From all indications, the project will never see the light of
>the day with the result that this huge amount of money has gone down the
>drain. Wouldn't you call it SCAMMING because it is our taxes, our money
>that has gone down the drain. The reasons are that everybody involved has
>been siphoning out millions of dollars through kickbacks from the suppliers
>of goods and services to this project.
>The bank is aware of this but nothing has happened so far."

9 OCT 98

Cote D'ivoire-Fraud Nine
Nigerians Arrested in Abidjan
for Fraud
Africa News Service
03-OCT-98

ABIDJAN, Cote d'Ivoire (PANA, 10/02/98) - Nine Nigerians suspected to be members of a notorious international "419" crime syndicate have been arrested in Cote d'Ivoire, while attempting to defraud a Japanese businessman of 35 million U.S. dollars.

According to the police, the arrests last week in Abidjan, followed a tip-off by the Japanese embassy here that one of her citizens was being courted by the swindlers at an hotel.

"It is a strong network of dangerous swindlers with many ramifications, headed by Akpan, (alias Doctor Innocent Anih) and Jacob Effiong (alias Prince), who are on the run," said an officer of the Ivorian anti-crime police, Commissioner Honore Ataby, after the arrests.

Those arrested are Benjamin Chuka, Eric Owobo, Aladji Ousmane,

Mustapha Amzar, Jude N'Wadike, Theodore Oediman, Antony Paul Lenus, Friday Ogou and Anyawiri Ikechukwu.

The police said the suspects were using the names of fictitious companies like, Global Security, Assistance 2000, Transworld and CIE, Uptrust Finance and Security to defraud their numerous victims.

The gang derived the "419" label from the Advance Fee Fraud Decree gazetted as number 419, enacted during the presidency of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida in the 80's to punish such swindlers.

Their strategies are very simple. They would fax a letter to prospective victims and tell them that they had made a lot of money from a contract in Nigeria which they would like to transfer abroad without their government suspecting it.

They would ask the potential victim to furnish them with the details of his or her foreign bank account into which they would deposit the money for which he would be paid a fee of between 15 to 25 percent of the purported amount to be transferred.

In the case of the Japanese victim, Uno Hideaki, they proposed 15 percent kickback if he could help them transfer 35 million U.S. dollars to Japan.

"They organised a meeting in Abidjan on September 27, during which they managed to convince their potential victim of the genuineness of their proposal.

"After the negotiations, the Japanese opened an account in Abidjan into which he asked the swindlers to deposit the amount for onward transfer to Japan, without realising that he has fallen into the trap of fraudsters," Attaby said.

But, instead of doing that, the swindlers demanded their victim to give them 28,000 U.S. dollars as guarantee, which the Japanese did.

"They came the next day asking for more by providing a bag full of fake US dollars, but their victim, now suspicious, asked them to return the next day, after which he informed his embassy which alerted the police," the police said.

Contacted, Nigerian embassy officials in Abidjan told PANA that the "419" gang, had been operating in Cote d'Ivoire for the past three years.

"We warned the Ivorian authorities that they are a dangerous lot who are on the wanted list in their country. But they told us their country has an open economic policy, so whoever has money to invest is welcomed," an embassy official said.

"They have themselves to blame for refusing to take our advice," stressed the official.

419 Coalition Comment: Good for the Ivorians. As for the Nigerian GOV remarks asserting that these were Bad Guys wanted in Nigeria etc. etc. and they knew all about them etc. etc. we have a Word for the Nigerian Diplomatic Corps - E-X-T-R-A-D-I-T-I-O-N. Of course, most GOVs follow that word with a couple of others like Prosecution,

Conviction, and Compensation :) :) :)

1 OCT 98

In mid-September, 419 Coalition received an inquiry in from Peru asking us if we had anything that indicated General Abubakar had been involved in 419 operations. We replied that we didn't, but that there was data publicly available on other High Officials, such as Paul Ogwuma of CBN (see the Adler Case news items in 96, 97, 98, Latest News), and others.

Here is the reply we got back from the Inquirer, verbatim, without comment or embellishment of any kind, in his words, remember that English is the second language of the inquirer:

"Yes I am aware of Dr. Paul Ogwuma from the CBN, I spoke with him many times and he call me last week and try to convince me about the business offert and that I got involve in May 1996, yes I am another stupid who believe in making quick cash and as our financial situation in Peru was so bad I thought to solve this problem with my business this way, instead I lost US\$ 120,000.-, any how I ask you about General Abubakar because last October 1997 I receive a call from him in wich he offert pay the contract unpaid and that it is under my company name at the CBN system in Nigeria, this gentleman ask me to come over to Toronto Canada because I was going to get pay in cash, since man curiosity some time act like drug I accept and travel to Toronto, what I found there was the old game of deface money that need a solution and be clean, of course I did not accept and travel back, but after Gen. Abacha dead and leasing General Abubakar on the BBS of London his voice was the same so I though that maybe this gentleman is also involve. I will like to send you some information that could be a help in order to capture this people and put them in jail for ever, I believe that they are playing with fire and they are not considere peoples feelings and most of all human factor, personally I have burier this but I really will like to see them in jail, I have a very big file with letters, names, address, bank accounts, telephone, faxes that may be a good help."

9 SEP 98

The Nigerian Government is investigating and has charged several bigwigs in the Abacha regime with misappropriating GOV of Nigeria funds. One fellow named Gwarzo, it is said, was ordered to return some \$250 million in GOV of Nigeria funds to the Treasury; and there appears that a concerted effort is being made to determine Where the Money Went among those described as Abacha henchmen, and where the Big Man's own monies went (and where he and his pals Got it from in the first place).

419 Coalition applauds the efforts of the GOV of Nigeria in this matter, so long as it is more than a witch hunt type purge of Abacha supporters. We feel that ALL those who have committed large scale financial misdeeds under ANY Nigerian regime - not just the Abacha regime - should be investigated and charged if evidence warrants. We feel that ALL those in ANY regime Anywhere, not just in Nigeria, who are under suspicion of large scale financial misdeeds should be investigated and charged if the evidence warrants.

However, the investigations in Nigeria appear to be limited, so far, to Nigerian on Nigerian crime only (Government Officials stealing from the Public Purse). 419 Coalition calls for these inquiries to be expanded to include Nigerian on Foreigner financial crimes - in short, we want the investigations expanded to include those in and

out of Government who are suspected to be big time 419ers. This has so far not happened. No 419er "Big Men" have been charged with 419 proper. No significant repatriation of 419ed funds has occurred.

419 Coalition has always believed the best strategy in stopping 419 would be from the Top Down. We are watching and so is the rest of the world. And waiting..... And the 419 letters, faxes etc. keep coming, and coming, and coming, in to homes and offices all over the World....

14 JUL 98

George Qualley in the midwest has won his lawsuit and was awarded \$44,000 in compensatory damages and \$1 million in punitive damages from two US corporations.

In the Qualley suit, as we understand it, Mr. Qualley was instructed by Nigerian 419ers to send monies to 2 US corporations in furtherance of a legitimate business deal. It turned out, of course, that the Nigerians had been 419ing Mr. Qualley, so he went to the US firms and asked for his monies back. The US corporation said that they had applied the monies to the account of the Bad Guys, who owed them a legitimate debt, that they were going to keep the monies, and (essentially) that where it came from was irrelevant to them so long as their bill was paid.

So Qualley sued for his monies and won, as above. However, we think the 419ers have gotten away with defrauding the two US firms (who are apparently left holding the bag in all this) which is, of course, bad.

13 JUL 98

REPORT ON SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NIGERIA
Hosted by The Association of Nigerians Abroad
Held At Washington DC USA 9-12 JUL 1998

The Conferees were once again highly educated professional Nigerian expatriates. Given recent developments in Nigeria, ie. the deaths of both Abacha and Abiola, it seemed that most of the Conferees were still adjusting to the dynamics of the new situation. However, all agreed the new situation offers significant opportunities for the near and long term future of the nation.

There were many speakers on various aspects of Nigeria. 419 Coalition found two of the speakers to be particularly interesting:

Dr. George Ayittey of Ghana noted that many of the things that are happening in Nigeria have not happened in a vacuum and that they have happened elsewhere in Africa, and suggested that it is a constructive approach to look at how other nations have addressed the problems Nigeria faces.

Former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Walter Carrington, was the keynote speaker at the Conference. He discussed his relationships with both General Abacha and MKO Abiola. He also indicated that perhaps 1 OCT 98 was too soon for the new Government to schedule elections, but also indicated that 1 OCT 99 would be too late. Ambassador Carrington Did seem confident that elections will be held. He did note that regardless

of the Government in power, Nigeria had significant problems internally and externally which must be dealt with, like 419.

Given events, 419 Coalition kept its presentation brief, mainly giving stats and reiterating our view that no nation will seriously consider punishing those who Lose monies due to Nigerian 419 operations if Nigeria does not punish those who Make the Money. We also ignited an unexpected firestorm when we suggested that ANA develop a program to support enhanced Civics/ethics instruction in Nigerian schools (something the schools of all nations including the US could do a lot more of in our opinion), which seemed a rather innocuous suggestion to us.

All in all, the Conference was an interesting and well organized event, and we thank ANA for Inviting 419 Coalition to participate.

8 JUN 98

General Sani Abacha, Head of State of Nigeria, died this morning, apparently from heart failure. From 419 Coalition's very narrow focus on Nigerian 419 operations, the effect of Abacha's death on those operations is problematical. 419 has flourished in Nigeria under successive Nigerian Governments preceding the Abacha regime and continued to flourish under Abacha.

It has always been the analysis of 419 Coalition that the elites from which successive Nigerian Governments have been drawn have furnished the Big Man 419ers. Those elites are still in place even with Abacha dead. Therefore, our initial view is that the effect on 419 operations due to the death of General Abacha will be minimal. We think it will be business as usual, and that given the uncertainty of the political environment, that there may even be an increase in 419 activity as people try to stockpile funds to provide for any eventuality.

However, let us hope that the people of Nigeria use this "opportunity" wisely and install a responsible Government which believes in and practices the Rule of Law. 419 Coalition would like nothing more than to be put Out of Business, rendered unnecessary by a responsible Nigerian Government.

Let us all hope, for everyone's sake, that this will happen.

26 MAY 98

The Special Advisor to Abacha on Drugs and Financial Crimes is reported as saying the following in the Nigerian media according to the "News du Jour" posting of this date in soc.culture.nigeria:

"The government is determined to eradicate money laundering, said the Special Adviser to the Head of State on Drugs and Financial Crimes Alhaji Adamu Mohammed."

To which 419 Coalition says Great, Adamu old Chum, successive GOV's of Nigeria have been saying that since at least 1992 :) :)

What we want to know is: WHERE'S THE MONEY??? And when will it be repatriated in anything like the Amounts in which it was stolen? Talk is - and always has been - cheap... Readers, anytime you read stuff like this coming from the Nigerian Government, just keep repeating this no frills Mantra - Where's the Money? Where's the Money? Where's

the Money? Where's the Money? Or, for variation, you can try the Jerry McGuire (fun movie) version of the chant, ie. Show Me The Money! Show Me The Money! Show Me The Money!

Enjoy!

21 MAY 98

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Nicole Rutberg

May 21, 1998 (202) 225-2836

Markey introduces legislation to combat
Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) today introduced the Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud Prevention Act of 1998 along with 15 bipartisan cosponsors. Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud, known internationally as "4-1-9" fraud, after the section in the Nigerian Penal Code which addresses fraud schemes, has reached epidemic proportions.

"These scams are widespread, I have been targeted, my constituents have been targeted, and millions of unwary Americans have lost their savings to these fraudulent solicitations. This is the ultimate international con game. Its time to shut it down."

According to data provided by the U.S. Secret Service, Americans have lost over \$100 million in 1997 and 15 foreign businessmen, including 2 U.S. Citizens, have been murdered while in Nigeria in connection with a 4-1-9 scam. Perpetrators of these scams are rarely prosecuted or jailed by the Nigerian government, which is also suspected in playing a role in these schemes.

"Unfortunately, too many people are susceptible to the lure of pocketing \$9 million just by offering up their bank account information. The best way to avoid these scams is to just say no. But these scam artists are sophisticated and aggressive and should not be getting away with these frauds. The purpose of this legislation is to bring Nigerian Advanced Fee Fraud into the forefront of the public conscious, and focus the Government on implementing a national and international strategy to combat these scams."

The Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud Prevention Act of 1998

Expresses concern over the proliferation of 4-1-9 scams and the lack of effective action by the Nigerian Government to combat such frauds. Directs the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury to jointly report on:

1. Actions taken by the Nigerian Government in apprehending the perpetrators of 4-1-9 scams.
2. Efforts taken by the United States to inform Americans about such schemes.
3. Other such actions which are or should be undertaken, including

the possible imposition of sanctions on the Nigerian Government.

4. What efforts are being undertaken by executive branch agencies and officials to address these issues and coordinate U.S. Government policies on such fraud.

#

23 APR 98

The Nigerian newspaper ThisDay reports on 3 APR that joint raids by US and Nigerian authorities have resulted in the arrest of 100 419ers in various parts of Lagos State. Although US Government sources put the number of arrests at closer to 50, they view the joint operation as a success and hope to mount many similar operations in the future. 419 Coalition trusts that the arrestees will receive prompt trials and that the monies they stole will be promptly repatriated, only time will tell.

23 APR 98

The Nigerian newspaper PM News reported in March that Hong Kong Police have arrested 54 primarily Nigerian 419ers responsible for an estimated \$70 million in monies scammed worldwide. 13,350 fraud related letters were also seized, 95% of which came from Nigeria, most with forged stamps and postmarks, according to Hong Kong Police Commercial Crime Bureau Chief Inspector Matthew Hemmings.

23 APR 98

As reported in the Guardian (Nigerian newspaper) in article "Seminar Identifies Panacea to 419" on 29 MAR, page 3, which covers a two day seminar in Lagos on 419 organized by the Nigerian - American Chamber of Commerce, Paul Ogwuma, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, states that "about 244,300 scam letters had so far originated from Nigeria to 30 Countries, out of which 70 victims have been recorded..."

Mr. Ogwuma must be in la-la land :) :) We here at 419 Coalition have had reports from at least 60 countries in the last year alone, as has the US Secret Service Task Force. Plus the 244,300 total letter figure is absurd, given that the Governments of several western nations recently returned something like 5 MILLION letters to the GOV of Nigeria and this was reported in the Nigerian media and in 419 Coalition news. As to the 70 victims figure, Task Force has about that many a WEEK from the US alone, not to mention the Rest of the World. 419 Coalition wonders why Ogwuma, Nigeria's top Banking guy, who certainly knows better, would put out in public such patently inaccurate information... more use of Goebbel's Big Lie technique perhaps? :) :) C'mon, Paul, you can do better than this, you disappoint us :) :)

Special Agent Jim Caldwell of the US Secret Service Task Force on 419 was also a key speaker at the seminar. He emphasized the need for multinational efforts against 419 in order to bring it under control.

15 APR 98

This piece appeared in the 14 APR News Du Jour in the soc.culture.nigeria newsgroup and was forwarded to 419 Coalition by a concerned Nigerian who asks that it be noted that the great majority of Nigerians are Not 419ers:

>Nigerian News Du Jour - Tuesday 14 April, 1998
>A Daily Selection of Public and Private News On Nigeria
>

>=====

>

>In Today's NNDJ:

>=====

>

>"419" FRAUDSTERS MILK OVER \$7M FROM WASHINGTON RESIDENTS :

>

>United States law enforcement officials have warned that Nigerians with
>connections with the military regime have duped Washington DC area
>residents out of more than \$7 million in a variety of "419" fraud
>schemes in recent months, despite hundreds of arrests made by a task force
>of investigators in the last six years. "Watch out," said Helen F. Fahey,
>U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. Joining other federal
>and local authorities at a news conference Fahey said of those involved in
>the scams: "These people are very good at pulling cons on others." In one
>popular scam, authorities said, unsolicited letters or faxes are sent to
>people on official-looking stationery. The letter will contain a
>"confidential business proposal" from a purported Nigerian government or
>bank official. The letter writer states that he needs assistance moving
>millions of dollars out of Nigeria and promises a 30 percent commission in
>return for help. But first, the victim must send "transaction fees" and
>"tax fees" to the letter writer in Nigeria. "Greed supersedes common
>sense," said Peter Dowling, a Secret Service agent in charge of the
>Washington field office. He said 1,000 people with ties to Nigeria have
>been arrested in connection with scams in the last six years, and many
>have been deported. "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is,"
>said Thomas Motley, of the U.S. attorney's office in the District.

10 APR 98

419 Coalition has received a report that a Church run soup kitchen
in Kentucky was recently targeted for 419 by Nigerian Scammers.
A Soup Kitchen, for God's Sake. C'mon people, give us a break...

10 APR 98

"GARDEN GROVE--At least a dozen local business owners have been
targeted in recent weeks by an international fraud ring and
police on Wednesday were warning others to be wary of letters
from overseas that promise easy money.

A barrage of letters from Lagos, Nigeria, are arriving at local
businesses with a bogus offer: Get thousands of dollars for
accepting a covert, international money transfer to your bank
account. Only later is the victim told of a last-minute expense
--a tax, government bribe or transaction fee--that needs to be
sent first.

The scam is well-known and often called the "Nigerian advance-
fee fraud." The scams likely take in hundreds of millions of
dollars each year from victims across the country, according
to the U.S. Secret Service, which handles about 100 calls every
day from people nationwide who have received the letters.

The letters have arrived in recent weeks at a local restaurant,
a computer store and a small roofing company, Eggen said, and
he suspects that the addresses and owners' names were accessed
via the Internet or a business licensing list.

So far, no one targeted by the recent Garden Grove mailing has

reported losing any money, but Eggen said he is concerned that it may take weeks or months before victims realize they have been scammed.

"And then they basically have no recourse," Eggen said, adding that police and federal agents can offer little hope of recovering the money.

The Nigerian government has refused to cooperate with extradition efforts regarding the suspected culprits behind the advance-fee fraud, and victims have had little or no luck trying to recoup their losses, officials said.

Authorities said they believe that 15 foreign businessmen have been murdered while traveling to Nigeria to confront their victimizers and recover their money.... " Copyright Los Angeles Times.

Note: 419 Coalition was informed of this article by a concerned Nigerian citizen, who asks us to note once again that the Vast Majority of Nigerians are Not 419ers.

29 MAR 1998

This appeared the Friday 27 MAR "News Du Jour" in the soc.culture.nigeria newsgroup and is confirmed by article "Royal Father faces 419 Charge" in the Vanguard (Nigerian newspaper) of 27 MAR, page 3:

"TRADITIONAL RULER ARRAIGNED FOR ADVANCE FEE FRAUD

The Traditional ruler of Awkuzu in Anambra State, Igwe John Nebolisa, was yesterday docked along with two others over alleged advance fee fraud otherwise known as '419' at the Miscellaneous Offences Tribunal, Victoria Island, Lagos. Igwe Nebolisa, Dr Akinsanya and John Achionye reportedly defrauded a London-based Portuguese, Jose Manuel Santos-Periera of over \$300,000."

There was also another recent article in the newsgroup indicating that there had been a 419 conviction in Nigeria, bringing the total number of convictions to five, as we recall, (two in absentia).

As a side note, 419 Coalition has not noticed any decline in 419 efforts from Nigeria so far in 1998, it seems to be business as usual, with the site still receiving an average of 60+ hits per day and reports of scam attempts, some successful - some not, from all over the world. We even had a report recently from the island of Yap out in the middle of the Pacific. FYI.

What 419 Coalition wants to know is When is the GOV of Nigeria going to start arresting its own internal 419ers and 419er collaborators? Now that will be an interesting day :) :) And, of course, our standard question of 'Where Is the Money' is still very much on point in this matter.

25 FEB 1998

The German media is reporting 1.62 million marks confiscated from Nigerian 419ers. Here is the translation of the article:

"1.62 Million Confiscated - dpa Hannover. The state attorney of Hannover has confiscated six accounts in Hamburg belonging to the world wide

operating fraudsters 'Nigera Connection'. State attorney Uwe Gorlich just confirmed a report of the 'Welt am Sonntag'. The newspaper reports that by this action first time money of this group was confiscated."

"The more than 100 victims have had good luck. "We will try to return the money to them" said Gorlich. The 'Nigeria Connection' is active since 1988 in Germany with dubious business offers where members of the gang pretend to be serious members of the Nigerian Government. By this manner the group has made already several million DM."

For the original article in German [Click Here](#).

18 FEB 1998

In the 16 FEB issue of Barron's magazine an article titled "Nigeria Confidential" by Vincent S. Castellano, producer and host of "Real Estate Nightmares," a talk show on WEVD, a New York radio station, gives a first person humorous and detailed account of his experience as a target of Nigerian 419ers. A must read :) :)

17 FEB 1998

In the January 1998 Periscope, the Newsletter of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO), there is an article on International Crime, which deals primarily with Russian organized crime. However, in the article General Barry McCaffrey, the national drug control policy officer, is quoted as saying: "the Russians, along with the Nigerians, are the most threatening criminal organizations based in the United States."

10 FEB 1998

We had a request to post up in its entirety the latest article from Nigeria Today on the Four Convictions for 419 in Nigeria that we reported on over a week ago. Accordingly, here it is:

>>>

>>>

>>>

TODAY NEWSPAPER: FEBRUARY 8-14, 1998

>>>

>>>

>>>

Police make breakthrough: '419' specialists jailed

>>>

>>>

>>>

Four notorious Advance Fee Fraud '419' criminal suspects have been convicted by the Miscellaneous Offences Tribunal in Lagos.

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

Those convicted were Bright Ezekusi, Benjamin Inana, Helen Osuntuyi and Wilson Egbon. The four were arraigned on April 18, 1996 before the Miscellaneous Offences Tribunal, sitting at Plot 707 Adeola Hopewell Street, Victoria Island, Lagos, on a seven (7) count charge of conspiracy, obtaining money under false pretence, use of premises, fraudulent invitation and impersonation under the Advance Fee Fraud Decree.

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

Tribunal Chairman, Justice Dorothy Edem, said that having reviewed the submission of the prosecution including the exhibits rendered, she was convinced that they were guilty of the crime and sentenced them as follows:

>>>

>>>

>>>

>>>

On the first count, Bright Ezekusi and Benjamin Inana (1st and 2nd accused) were found guilty of conspiracy to the commission of the crime and were sentenced to 10 years each with hard labour, while the

>>> 3rd and 4th accused, Helen Osuntuyi and Wilson Egbon, were discharged and acquitted.

>>>

>>> On the second count, both first and second accused were found guilty of obtaining 60,000 US dollars from one Mr. Sigh Bajwa and sentenced to 15 years each on that count.

>>>

>>> Similarly, they were found guilty of obtaining 285,000 US dollars from the complainant, which bagged them another 15 years with hard labour. Benjamin Inana was also guilty of obtaining 6,900 US dollars worth of gift items and was sentenced to 10 years.

>>>

>>> On count 5, the second, third and fourth accused were found guilty of attempting to collect the sum of 1,534,000 US dollars from one German, Mrs. Springer-Beck and were sentenced to 10 years each.

>>>

>>> Additionally, the first, second and fourth accused were each sentenced to 7 years for fraudulent invitation while the first accuse, Bright Ezekusi, is to face another five years imprisonment for using his premises at No. 7A Type "D" LKSDPC Isolo for the purpose of Advance Fee Fraud, otherwise known as 419. All sentences are to run concurrently.

>>>

>>> The Tribunal chairman further ordered that Bright Ezekusi, the principal accused, pay restitution of 50,000 and 285,000 US dollars fraudulently obtained from the victims through the police.

>>>

>>> Failure to comply, said the judge, all his assets, moveable and immovable, should be auctioned and the proceeds paid to the complainant or their representative, while the balance is to be paid to the Government of Nigeria through the Accountant General of the Federation.

>>>

>>> Immediately after the judgement, the German lady, Mrs. Springer-Beck, jumped with joy and expressed appreciation to the Nigeria Police for bringing the culprits to book.

>>>

>>> Today learnt that Mrs. Springer-Beck is one of the few expatriate victims of 419 who have cooperated fully with the Nigeria Police in their investigations thus leading to the first ever conviction of a 419 case in a Nigerian court (See Editorial).

10 FEB 1998

In the FEB 8 - 14 issue of the Nigeria Today newspaper, an Editorial on Nigerian 419 titled "A Show of Shame" appeared. 419 Coalition responded to that editorial on a point by point basis in the newsgroup soc.culture.nigeria in an article titled "Nigeria Today 419 Editorial" which gives the original piece and responds to it paragraph by paragraph. Here it is:

TODAY NEWSPAPER: FEBRUARY 8-14, 1998
(and 419 Coalition Paragraph by Paragraph Responses)

Editorial: A Show of Shame

BRITISH newspapers take delight in informing the British readers of how fraudsters, crime syndicates and drug rings, mainly operated by

Nigerians have been ripping off Britain and USA of billions of dollars a year.

True enough, Educating their citizens on this matter is a very useful service performed by the press - and not just the Western press. Helps deal with the "demand - pull" aspect of 419 the GOV of Nigeria is so fond of citing, which is constructive in 419 Coalition view.

In an attempt to show the level of seriousness of the crimes, it is said that the National Criminal Intelligence Service is expanding its work against the gangs, while MI5 and MI6 have been drafted to infiltrate them.

True enough, as we reported on our site over a week ago in the Latest News section. 419 Coalition position on this is that we will take all the help we can get and work with any group, government, or agency which fights 419.

Variously referred to as 'Nigerian criminals' or 'West African criminals', a reluctant admittance that they could not all be Nigerians, these criminals are said to have been discovered working inside government departments, the police and tax offices.

This is true enough, except that the piece we saw noted that the criminals were "principally Nigerian" and no 'reluctance' to say that was anywhere evident.

Individuals and companies are lured into believing that they would profit handsomely by helping to transfer millions of non-existing government money out of Nigeria. Once booked they are asked for an advance or have money removed from their accounts.

Yes, that is Classic 419, the most common form. However, there are other forms like the Will Scam, the Real Estate Scam, and Contract Fraud Scam, and the nonpayment for Goods and Services scam.

Yet, in all their treatise of the Nigerian criminals, the British tabloids neglect to mention that greed and fortune hunting by these British individuals and organisations lead them to fall victims to these criminal gangs.

Well, in Classic 419 the Nigerian GOV may have a point here, but they do not in the so called "Legal" versions of the Scam like the Will Scam, the Real Estate Scam, Contract Fraud, nonpayment for Goods and Services etc. versions of 419. And then there is the outright Extortion versions, of course, which tell the victim to pay up or be killed. And the Nigerian Government certainly does not address the greed and fortune hunting by its own citizens who Make the Money in any degree commensurate with the magnitude of Nigerian 419 operations.

For, how can one explain a situation whereby a reputable company will agree to transfer money it knows nothing about, and even advance some funds to facilitate the deal?

Once again, the focus on Classic 419, but even so, like it or not, an element of trust is inherent in all business transactions, and in Nigeria it is impossible to tell the players without a programme

and there is no programme :) :) The only way to be absolutely certain one is not going to be ripped off in doing business with Nigeria is to follow the 5 Rules for Doing Business with Nigeria given on the 419 Coalition site.

There is a popular saying that "it takes two to tango". If Nigerian or West African criminals are guilty of fraud, so are their British, American or European victims.

In Classic 419, maybe, but once again this does not address the so called "legal" versions of 419 operations in which there is no reason whatever to call the victim anything but a victim, and concerning which there is very little recourse for the victims in Nigeria.

Most significantly, however, is the sheer arrogance of their security outfits who refuse to co-operate with their Nigerian or West African counterparts in the fight against fraudsters, criminal gangs and drug rings.

Now, this is an outright lie. Every security outfit in the World that we ever heard of which deals with this thing states outright, flatly, that it is the NIGERIAN authorities which are uncooperative in this matter, and 419 Coalition has on file a statement from the US Department of State dated less than two weeks ago which confirms that. Frankly, it is appalling that Anyone would see fit to print the above statement in outright defiance of the Huge mass of data available as to the unresponsiveness of the Nigerian Government in this matter. 419 Coalition can only assume that Goebbels has been resurrected and moved to Nigeria, as, if he hasn't, his Big Lie technique sure has :) :)

Times without number the Nigeria Police and specialised agencies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have appealed for do-operation from the security networks of Western countries. Their appeals have turned on deaf ears.

This is also an outright lie. The basic problem here is that the security agencies of other countries (not just the West) want to see some PERFORMANCE by the Nigerian authorities in dealing with this matter, and there just isn't much given the extent of Nigerian 419 operations. The security services of other nations have no intention whatever of being "419ed" by the Nigerian security services in this regard, they would be glad to provide assistance, but they want to see some home-grown Performance first.

Perhaps the reason may be that they do not wish to expose their own citizens as fraudsters. But the fact cannot be hidden that '419' thrives in Europe and America, which explains why they are ready victims to the crime.

Once again, the focus on Classic 419 and no mention of the "legal" versions. And perhaps the victims of it are "ready" victims, but then the Nigerian 419ers who Make the Money are certainly Ready Thieves :) :) And no country in the world is going to do anything to its citizens who have been punished by Losing the Money until Nigeria does something IN A VERY BIG WAY to those who Make It commensurate with the magnitude of Nigerian 419 operations.

Mention must therefore be made of Mrs. Springer-Beck, the German national who co-operated fully with Nigerian authorities when such fraudsters attempted to dupe her. The effect has yielded positive results with a notorious Advance Fee Fraud gang behind bars.

Yes, 419 Coalition reported on this case on our site over a week ago and complimented the Government of Nigeria on their performance in this case, which resulted in Four convictions. We also expressed our fervent hope that there would be many more - commensurate with the magnitude of Nigerian 419 operations - to follow. And in terms of cooperating with Nigerian authorities, it is a canard that 419 victims are not willing to cooperate. There are publicly reported cases of a Canadian and an Indonesian who were willing, for example, (see Asia magazine) and once the Indonesian volunteered to testify he never heard from the Nigerian authorities again. There are many others similar, ask any security agency anywhere in the world that deals with this matter. It would also be a bit overexuberant for the Nigerian media to wax too lyrical over Four Convictions in this matter (though they are welcome) when last year in US alone there were some 500 convictions of those who illegally benefited from 419 and in UK in 1995 111 convictions were reported.

It is a show of shame that with all their sophistry in crime detection, British and American police forces consider Nigerian or West African criminal gangs a threat. After all, these criminal gangs can never be as sophisticated and as well connected as the Mafia or the drug cartels whose home base is the same western countries.

Well, in reality, the Nigerian 419ers are indeed not very sophisticated and the only real problem any security agency has in controlling them is that they have a Safe Haven in Nigeria and can hide under the protection of Nigerian Sovereignty. That is the major problem which faces the security agencies of the rest of the world, and indeed that is the primary obstacle to controlling Nigerian 419 - period.

Pascale

Coordinator

419 Coalition

<http://home.rica.net/alphae/419coal/>

3 FEB 1998

UK National Criminal Intelligence Service and Reuters report that in an effort to combat rising West African gang-related crime in the UK, the NCIS set up the West African Organized Crime Section to pool intelligence from police, customs, Interpol, and other agencies. A NCIS spokesman said "In the past, there have been various agencies probing various aspects of the crimes. Now we have a multi-agency unit able to investigate all aspects." The West African gangs, principally composed of Nigerians, operate international fraud and drug smuggling operations. The new agency is expected to collect and analyze data and then pass the information to police and customs agents.

2 FEB 1998

The UK National Criminal Intelligence Service and The Independent (London) report that West African criminal gang activity in the UK is becoming such a problem that the UK Security Service (MI5) and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) have been used to clamp down on crime. Criminals, principally Nigerians, have been discovered working

in UK government departments, police, and tax offices. The problem has escalated to such a serious level that the NCIS is expected to announce an expansion of its current efforts to thwart the criminal operations. Allegedly, agents and eavesdropping equipment from MI5, MI6, and the listening post at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in Cheltenham are being used to investigate crime in Nigeria. Intelligence agencies are assisting the NCIS in the more serious crimes perpetrated by the gangs, including benefit fraud, cocaine trafficking, fraud, and illegal immigration. The agencies are providing expertise in infiltration, bugging, covert surveillance, and identification of the targets. The gangs are alleged to have strongholds in Europe and the US.

2 FEB 1998

The United States Secret Service Task Force is reporting that they are seeing increased use of counterfeit stamps and fake franking (the cancellation of stamps) on 419 materials originating from Nigeria. Now, the use of counterfeit stamps and fake franking is nothing new for the Bad Guys, but given the 5 Million Letters, most of which were 419 letters, returned to the Nigerian Government last year by several GOVs for counterfeit stamps and fake franking (and those were just the ones that happened to be noticed - see 1997 News) it gives one a feel for the actual magnitude of Nigerian 419 operations. Additionally, C'mon There Bad Guys, you simply Have to accept Some cost of sales for all these mailings, hell, the least you could do is be Patriotic, Buy Your Stamps, and quit 419ing your own Countrymen :) :)

29 JAN 1998

US Embassy Lagos is reporting that the Nigerian media is reporting the Conviction of Four Nigerian 419ers who Made the Money, in these cases about N105.38M (in USD that's \$4,790,000 at the internal Nigerian GOV rate of about 22-1 and \$1,405,066 at the everybody else rate of about 75-1).

The aggregate of all four sentences is reported to be 106 years, with two 419ers on hand to serve the time, the other two being abscondee's apparently convicted in absentia.

Restitution is to be paid in the case, along with fines and police costs. If these are not paid in short order, the assets of those convicted are to be liquidated and used for these purposes, the Nigerian media said.

419 Coalition supports efforts by anyone or any agency to fight 419, and in this very welcome and precedent setting case the Government of Nigeria has earned its salt. Our compliments to the Government of Nigeria, and we at 419 Coalition hope that this case will be the first of many such until "supply-push" 419 is brought under control in Nigeria.

26 JAN 1998

The Los Angeles Times of 24 JAN 1998 in an article titled "Nigerian Con Artists Netting Millions in Advance-Fee Schemes" by Jack Nelson, Chief Washington Correspondent, has the following items of interest: "Over the last three years 15 foreign businessmen have been killed after travelling to Nigeria and pushing too hard to recover money lost to Nigerian con men.... British authorities say it [419 fraud] has reached epidemic proportions... police here [UK] arrested 111 Nigerians in 1995 in connection with the scams - only a fraction of the number that they say were involved."

Mr. Nelson adds "Authorities [US and UK] warn that money derived from the schemes is often used to support more violent crimes, especially those involving drug trafficking... Corrupt Nigerian Government officials also play a large role in the schemes, according to a State Department official... Perpetrators of the fraud are seldom prosecuted."

He notes that "In August 1995 the US, Britain, and 33 other countries had sent a letter to Nigeria protesting its failure to do anything about the extradition issue [Nigeria has repeatedly refused to extradite 419 type criminals to the US and elsewhere] or the advance-fee fraud." He quotes State Department official Jonathan Winer as saying "We got two replies from them. First, they blame greediness of foreigners for falling for the fraud schemes and say 'We need your help, we don't know what to do.' Or they say they have done something about it, which is patently untrue."

Mr. Nelson closes with "Because of Nigeria's lack of cooperation, the country has been decertified for US foreign aid since 1993" and notes that "Victims have invariably failed when they tried to recover their losses."

7 JAN 1998

The NECA News, an industry trade publication, has published its second article on 419. It is an excellent summary of the situation, and while it is not usually 419 Coalition policy to scan in articles on the Scam (there are simply too many) we just Had to scan this one in for you, we Loved the Graphic :) :) Looks like the Coordinator's Cousin Guido from South Philly :) :) [Visit Cousin Guido Here](#)

[Go To 419 Coalition Main Page](#)

[Go To 2018 News](#)

[Go To 2010 News](#)

[Go To 1999 News](#)

[Go To 2017 News](#)

[Go To 2009 News](#)

[Go To 1998 News](#)

[Go To 2016 News](#)

[Go To 2008 News](#)

[Go To 1997 News](#)

[Go To 2015 News](#)

[Go To 2007 News](#)

[Go To 1996 News](#)

[Go To 2014 News](#)

[Go To 2006 News](#)

[Go To 2013 News](#)

[Go To 2005 News](#)

[Go To 2012 News](#)

[Go To 2004 News](#)

[Go To 2011 News](#)

[Go To 2003 News](#)

[Go To 2002 News](#)

[Go To 2001 News](#)

[Go To 2000 News](#)