

Nigeria - [419 Coalition](#) 2000 News on Nigerian Scam / 419 Operations

12 DEC 2000

Anatomy of a case - this is a mix of Will Scam 419 and Black Currency 419. The victims in this case are seeking contacts with other victims. We received it 28 NOV 2000 and sent it onwards immediately to appropriate government agencies but have been holding it from public release until now to give time for investigators to work. A slightly edited version (for security and investigative purposes) of their case report is below in their own words:

From: Kennedy Walk- In Clinic
3308 West Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa FL, 33609
Phone Number- (813) 874-2400
Rubycafe1@aol.com

To Whom It May Concern:

Hello, my name is Shahla Ghasemi and my husband is Dr. Ali-Reza Ghasemi, we are American citizens who live in Tampa, Florida. Our telephone number for your convenience is (813) 874-2400 and (813) 832-4515, our address is above. This is what had happened to us and how we got involved in the Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud. About 3 months ago, we got a phone call from Nigeria by a man named Dr. Ali Abubabker -I don't believe that is his real name--his phone number is 234-1-774-1703. He introduced himself to us as the director of NNPC. He said that he had a confidential message for my husband, but if we were to expose this message he could lose his job and his life. He told us that he would receive a very big commission from this. The story that he told us was that one foreign contractor from our country who died transferred \$27,400,000.00 to Dr. Ali Reza Ghasemi. We were very shocked. After that, he faxed all the documents and attached all the needed documents. We looked over everything and they all seemed real, all bore the government's official seals and stamps. Then he faxed us a copy of our bank information, which we filled out and faxed back to him. On August 14,2000 we received a letter from the bank which stated that we needed to hire a power of attorney. His name is F.A. Williams and his telephone is 234-1-774-0939. We contacted Mr. Williams and he asked us to send him \$7,250.00 for the court registration fee through Western Union. We sent the money with a fee, which came out to be \$7,565.00. Attached is a copy of the receipt that we sent through Western Union to Mr. Williams. After they had received the payment, Mr. Williams said that everything was ready. Mr. Williams was at the bank and called us and asked us for a copy of SEPA. We had no idea what that was, so we called Dr. Abubaker who said that he didn't have the form and thought that maybe the original contractor hadn't paid for it. They then asked us for \$27,400.00 but with a fee we paid nearly \$30,000.00 through Western Union. After two days,

Mr. Williams had called and congratulated us. He said that our money had been transferred and he faxed me a copy of the transaction, which stated that our money had left the bank and was on its way into our account. In that same week, Dr. Abubaker had faxed me his confirmation ticket saying that he was on his way into America, and that we should send him money to buy his ticket. The following day Mr. Williams called and said that our money had been stopped because of a shorting tax that needed to be paid which hadn't been paid. He faxed me an invoice for \$63,250.00 bill for the tax. We transferred this money through our bank to Prism Company at Nigeria. Two days later he called and said that everything was fine. He said that we should be hearing from our bank representative very soon. Two days later we received a call from Carlos White from Atlanta, Georgia in America. He introduced himself as a NCB Bank Representative with the phone number of 404-944-1842. He said that our money was ready and that we needed to fly to Atlanta to transfer the account into our account. We asked why and he said because the money was big and he needed to transfer the money in front us. He told us to bring a copy of our driver license, a copy of the contract, and \$11,500 in cash. The same evening my husband, daughter, and myself flew to Atlanta. We got a hotel room. Then next day we called Mr. White to make an appointment with him at our bank, First Union. He said that he had to send a bank representative to our hotel room. When we got back, he sent two men by the names of Mustafa Sharief and Agu Jbreh. They received all the documents and \$11,500 in cash and then they told us to wait for two hours at which time our money would be transferred into our account. We waited for a few hours and kept calling them and they had said that no transaction had occurred. So we decided to head back to Tampa, while we were in line checking our bags and reserving our tickets, we were contacted by Mr. White by our cell phone. We told him that we were leaving and ready to go back to Tampa, He got very mad and said that we couldn't go back because the transaction hadn't been closed yet and that he still needed to talk to us. We went back to our hotel and we had to reserve another room. We called Mr. White and he said that he would be sending two people. After two hours, two people arrived by the names of Mustafa Sharife and the other didn't give his name, but I do remember his face. They came and told us that the government of Nigeria had approved our payment to be physical cash. We asked them what that meant and they said that it was real physical cash. Then they asked us to go to their car to see the cash and get the cash or to wait and transfer the money into our bank account. They said that the money couldn't get into our account until it had been cleaned. We asked them what they meant and they went to the car and came back with 5 pieces of black paper. Then they went into the bathroom sink and with some chemicals cleaned the black paper and it turned out to be \$100.00 bills. We told them that it was fine. They could clean the money and deposit it into our account. Then Mr. Sharrif called Carols White and he said that we had to pay for the chemicals, we asked how much they need and he said it was \$185,000. We told him if he could take the 185,000 from the money but he said that he could not touch the original money. Then we decided to go back to Tampa. From that night we decided to contact the Nigerian government and our attorney Mr. Williams. I called Dr. Abubaker and I called Mr. Williams, they acted normal and they didn't know what Mr. White had told me and then Mr. Williams told me that he had to go and speak with the president of Nigeria in Abuja and get his advice. Two days later, he called me and said that we had

no choice but to pay the money for the chemicals, but he said that we should send him a copy of the receipt so that after the government received their money from America and Japan in January or February they would reimburse my money that we paid them for the chemicals. Mr. White was calling me and asking me for money for the chemicals. Finally we wired \$150,000 to them. Two days later, Mr. White called me from Atlanta and asked for a Rolex watch for the president of Nigeria so that he could basically smother the president and get a better job in Nigeria in addition he wanted \$350,000. The \$350,000 was for the purpose of opening an account for me for a CBN transit account. I told him that he didn't tell us anything about this before, he told us after he had cleaned the money. That same day I spoke to our consultant and told him what happened to us and he said that we had been involved in a scam. He showed us the many different stories and example on the Internet of this scam and the many different victims that it had happened to. We found many different numbers to call for help including the Nigerian police. Sir/Mam, we really need your help. We lost almost \$400,000 on this matter. We are just a middle class family, my husband is a physician and I am a nurse. We borrowed money from many different places to pay to these people. Now we lost our credit and everything else. We beg for you to help us to arrest these people and get our money back. Please feel free to contact us at our phone number for any further information.

[Paragraph edited out]

[Paragraph edited out]

I called my bank and I asked them for a refund, my bank requested a refund through the Bank of New York. I got the number for the Bank of New York and asked them where did they send my money.

The representative said that they had sent the money to Lagos in Nigeria and Beirut in Lebanon, I asked for the phone number of the banks but they said that they didn't have it. They said that they had a representative at Nigeria who works for the Bank of New York. He is at Lagos and his name is Mr. Shay (phone number 234-1-2693327). The bank said that they sent the money to him and he sent it to the Bank of Omega (phone number is 234-1-2620851). I called to the Omega Bank Director, Mrs. Odunsi. I explained the situation and I faxed a letter of complaint. She said they got the money from the Bank of New York.

She then said the money was sent to the Atlantic Precision LTD (phone number is 234-1-2640120). The manager is Mr. Ikye, Eugwu. I spoke with Mr. Eugwu and I requested for a refund, I am yet waiting for his action towards this manner.

On November 2, 2000, I contacted with Mr. Ikye, Eugwen (director of Atlantic Precision LTD concerning when he was going to refund my money. He said that he couldn't refund the money because he paid the money to Mr. Bashiru, Ibrahim (phone numbers are 234-1-775-3112, 234-1-493-3445, and 234-1-804-3445). I said "Mr. Eugwn I sent my money from America to the Atlantic Precision LTD and it is your responsibility to collect my money from whoever received it." He then said "I am not a

collector and don't call me anymore," after that he hung up. After that incident I called Mr. Bashrim and I explained what Mr. Eugwn had told me from the Atlantic Precision LTD, he said that he had received the money and would not be refunding it. I asked who he is and did you give anything in replace of my money, he said that it is their business; this is the way we live. I told him that I am going to call the police at Nigeria and I am going to send a letter to the Nigerian President. He said that he didn't care and used an excessive amount of profanity towards the President and the police. Then he proceeded on by saying that this is another way of income besides the oil that is coming into the country. He said that the President and the government knows about this. He also proceeded on by using curses and also by threatening. Now I believe that not only are Dr. Ali Abubaker, Mr. F.A. Williams, Mr. Carlos White (real name Ojbe, Onokaite and phone number in America is 404-944-1842) but also Mr. Bashiru and Atlantic Precision LTD are also included in this scam. I have also found the number for the director of CBN from the Internet. His name is Mr. Joseph Sanusi (phone number 234-1-266-0100) to tell him about how the people are using the CBN's name improperly. I decided to call him and one person who answered his phone proceeded on to tell me to call him at his private number (011-234-1-775-4327). I called him and told him my contract number and he said that everything was fine with my contract. He also asked me to fax the document to his attention at 44-870-134-9987. I asked him where this is and he said it is at London. It was then where I found out that this is another scammer. I hope that Mr. Joseph Sanusi can read this and find out who is really working for him and answering his calls. In conclusion, I would just like to point out that these scammers have created a horrible name for Nigeria. The people wont trust anyone from that country and yes there are some wonderful and innocent people out there whom our money should go to, but not to these 419ers [remark edited slightly].

5 DEC 2000

We received a followup email to the one received and responded to 23 NOV. This time these folks asked 419 Coalition to provide a list and identification of victims of Nigerian 419 operations from 1980-present. We give the email received and our responses in their entirety below verbatim:

Subject of email: Request for List and Identification of Victims of Fraud Fee in Nigeria 1980 -present

419 Coalition: Sir:

Thank you for your continued interest. Our response is between the lines below:

At 02:07 PM 12/5/00 -0800, you wrote:
INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S
LIBERATION AND DEMOCRACY(ICN-PLD)
http://www.auracom.com/~netlink/home_lib.html

ANTI-REFUGEE SLAVERY INTERNATIONAL (INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN PROJECT)

http://www.auracom.com/~netlink/home_ref.html

AFRICAN CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (ACHRA)

NETLINK INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (NLICS)

<http://www.auracom.com/~netlink/>

OIL AND CHEMICAL WATCH INTERNATIONAL (OCWI)

AFRICAN CANADIAN IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT
ASSOCIATION (ACISA)

Contact:

Aviva Meridor, Senior Campaign Officer, Middle East
and Asia Project

Godson Etiebet - Assistant Crisis Investigator (1)

Paul N. Clarke - Campaign Co-ordinator (2)

Paul Achala - Campaign Officer (4)

Phillip C. Ofume - Senior Policy Researcher (1)

Margaret McDonough - Co-ordinator, International
Coalition Project (ICP)

8, Edwin Ford Court, P. O. Box 25153, Halifax Nova
Scotia, Canada B3M 4H4 Phone: (902) 832-3559 Fax:
(902) 832-3558 Cellular: (902) 452-5617 E-mail:
reidpam@yahoo.com, margretem@yahoo.com

Based on your e-mail, we have just concluded an
emergency teleconference and the General Assembly
requested me to e-mail you to request you to send the
effect in the subject above.

419 Coalition: Such a list does not exist, in our archives or
anywhere else. Even if it did, it would not be complete,
as according to US Government sources many cases go
unreported, worldwide.

The closest thing available to such a list would be in the
United States Secret Service led Joint Task Force on West
African Fraud database, which contains the "names" and
approximately 60,000 Nigerian phone numbers used by
Nigerian 419ers over the last four years or so. This
database is not available to the public for legal, privacy,
and investigative reasons, we have been told by USSS.
It would likely, of course, contain considerable
target/victim data as well - If it were available.

We believe that those who lost their hard earned money should be made to get their money back through normal legal process.

419 Coalition: We agree, but unfortunately the Nigerian legal process has not worked that way. There have been minimal convictions of 419ers in Nigeria, last we were informed less than 20, and of those convicted a number have decamped the country and are still being sought. By contrast, in the US in one recent year there were over 500 convictions for 419 related activities, of US, Nigerian, and other nations' citizens - mostly for working in financial "clearinghouses".

Additionally, in the US millions of dollars are recovered from 419ers annually over the last several years. In Nigeria, however, recoveries of funds are minimal.

Further, while the US and other Governments have been assisting the People of Nigeria to recover Abacha's Institutionally 419ed monies, Government of Nigeria has done little tangible to assist US and other governments in recovering monies 419ed from Their peoples to date.

First of all, streaming and stereotyping the entire Nigerian People are not necessary for ending this dangerous business.

419 Coalition: Contrary to your apparent view that we do such a thing, we, as noted in our previous correspondence, firmly believe that the vast majority of Nigerians at home and abroad are honest, honorable, hard-working people. In fact, we have even publicly defended this view against at least one article in the Nigerian media itself, written by a Nigerian journalist which did indeed say such things. Both the article and our public defense of the vast majority of the Nigerian people are posted up in one of our News sections.

Stereotype, prison, detention, death peanalty, etc. are not necessary in the 21st Century to stop crime.

419 Coalition: We are not qualified to respond to that statement, though we would agree that stereotyping is certainly not helpful, which is why we don't do it.

This dual duty and responsibility from victim and custodians of law and order with the sense and idoelogy of restorative justice stand to be the Best Practice(BP)in limiting the escalation of crime. We have researched and investigated the triangular victim system(TVS) and suggested a different and non-violence

routes. It requires the cooperation of Nigeria, victims' country of domicile, United Nations, NGOs, etc. Human Rights NGOs are involved because sometime the infraction turns out to be a human rights violation issue. The preliminary step towards this program is to identify the dual victim. Since we have decided to concentrate on the second victim at the preliminary stages without having anything to do with the first victim, as a mechanism to get on to the first victim thereafter. Application outcome: Our Gallup Poll January 2000 shows an impressive downward drop upto 43% and if we can apply the plan, under five year plan we will get to over 82-3% down.

419 Coalition: We could make neither head nor tail out of the above, sorry, our shortcoming, though it sounds interesting. Could you restate please?

This enumeration will enable us identify the victims(left and right) and focus on the recovery program which shall be conducted from time to time in association with the victims, governmental and non-governmental organizations such as your organization, target countries, UN, etc.

419 Coalition: Once again, sounds interesting.

We acknowledge receipt of the case history of Dr. & Mrs. Shahla Ghasemi of Tampa Florida. We have started to review their case

419 Coalition: That is one of the more interesting cases, to be sure.

Thank you for your time and cooperation,

Yours Very Truly,

Dr. Phillip C. Ofume

419 Coalition: Thank you as well. We are always interested in hearing views on 419 matters and hope to hear from you again in the future.

Respectfully,

Pascale

Coordinator

419 Coalition

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

29 NOV 2000

We received this in today from email nigeria419@hotmail.com
It is an excellent brief warning concerning Nigerian Classic 419 operations and gives the name and numbers of some alleged 419ers in Nigeria and abroad. There were links given to this site and to Secret Service 419 Task Force info at the bottom. See 419 Coalition main page for that information. Here is the email received, verbatim:

**** NIGERIAN 419 SCAM ALERT ***

Beware of any unsolicited correspondence originating primarily from Nigeria. The schemes usually follow these tactics:

1. Person receives letter or fax from alleged official connected with the government or one of its agencies.
2. An offer is made for a percentage of the funds to transfer millions of dollars in (over invoiced) contracts.
3. Travel to Nigeria or other countries may be suggested but arrangements can be made to hire an attorney in Nigeria to handle the matter.
4. You may receive numerous documents with official looking seals, stamps, and names of officials.
5. Eventually you must provide up-front fees for bribes, gifts, taxes, attorney fees, transaction fees, and so forth.
6. In most cases there is a sense of urgency!
7. Most correspondence is faxed and money to be wired by Western Union.
8. A confidential nature is emphasized and codes words are used to discuss business.
9. Usually there are strong claims to Nigerian officials.

The advance fee fraud is the most prevalent and successful of the scams.

The perpetrator will declare that he is a civil servant and will explain the over-invoiced contracts awarded by prior regimes and how the present government desires to pay off its debts.

These are some of the people known to be scam artists. The names are most probably fictitious.

Smith Umanah
Nigerian National Petroleum Corp
Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: 234-1-804-3169, Fax: 234-1-759-6291

Anthony Princewill and Associates
6th floor, Terminal Towers
Victoria Island
Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: 234-1-775-3437, Fax: 234-90405380

Dr Aliu Ahmed
St Vincent De Paul
PO Box 21715
Montreal, Canada
Tel: 514-803-8690, Fax: 514-248-2120

Gary Pendon
International Contract Affairs Corp
15 West Street
Nassau, Bahamas
Tel: 242-356-3510, Fax: 242-356-3507

23 NOV 2000
419 Coalition received an interesting piece of email today;
here it is along with our reply for those interested.

419 Coalition: Thank you for your note. Our response is
between the lines:

At 10:13 AM 11/23/00 -0800, you wrote:
INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S
LIBERATION AND DEMOCRACY(ICN-PLD)
http://www.auracom.com/~netlink/home_lib.html

ANTI-REFUGEE SLAVERY INTERNATIONAL(INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN PROJECT)
http://www.auracom.com/~netlink/home_ref.html

AFRICAN CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION(ACHRA)

NETLINK INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM(NLICS)
<http://www.auracom.com/~netlink/>

OIL AND CHEMICAL WATCH INTERNATIONAL(OCWI)

AFRICAN CANADIAN IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT
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Phillip C. Ofume - Senior Policy Researcher(1)
Margaret McDonough - Co-ordinator, International
Coalition Project(ICP)
8, Edwin Ford Court, P. O. Box 25153, Halifax Nova
Scotia, Canada B3M 4H4 Phone: (902) 832-3559
Fax: (902) 832-3558 Cellular: (902) 452-5617

November 23, 2000

Transmission: Hand Delivery/E-mail/Fax

The President,
The 419 Coalition,
Twin Maples,
3891 North Valley Pike,
Harrisonburg,
VA, 22802, USA

ATTENTION:

- (1) Through Mr. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General To:
185 Countries of the UNO
- (2) The Director, Assistant to the United Nations
Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination,
Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
- (3) Mr. Pierre Sane, Secretary-General, Amnesty
International, International Secretariat;
- (4) The Speaker, Canadian House of Commons
- (5) Honourable Michael Baker, Minister of Justice and
Attorney General of Nova Scotia;
- (6) His Excellency, Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- (7) The Executive Director, Nova Scotia Human Rights
Commission;
- (8) OECD countries - Australia, Greece, Norway,
Austria, Iceland, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Canada,
Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Switzerland, Finland,
Ireland, Luxembourg, Turkey, France, Netherlands,
United States, Germany, New Zealand, and United
Kingdom.
- (9) Dr. Patricia Evans of School of Social Work, York
University, Toronto
- (10) Gilles Seguin of Social Program Information and
Analysis Directorate, Human Resources Development
Canada.
- (11) E. G. Cramm, Deputy Minister of Department of
Community Services,
- (12) The Honourable J. Chataway, Minister of N.S.

Human Resources

(13) Mr. Rob Wright, Commissioner of Customs and Revenue Agency

(14) Mr. Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch, New York

(15) The Honourable Martin Cauchon, Minister of National Revenue

(16) The Director-General UNICEF International

(17) His Excellency, Ms. Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva.

(18) The Honourable Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

(19) President Olusegun Obasanjo, Federal Republic of Nigeria

(20) The Right Honourable Jean Chretien, Prime Minister of Canada

(21) Honourable John Hamm Premier of Nova Scotia

Dear Sir:

OVER 114 MILLION NIGERIANS ARE NO SCAM: NIGERIAN SCAM UNDEFINED -CAMPAIGN IN SHAMBLES AND DRAIN OF TAX PAYERS SWEAT

419 Coalition: As we state on our site, we view the vast majority of Nigerians at home and abroad to be hardworking, honest, honorable people.

We have requested you to define the premises upon which this campaign maybe layed.

419 Coalition: We believe this is made clear on the site.

We have equally issued a law suit pre-notice to Canada, UK, Germany, USA, Belgium to stop clouding this issue and define their rectitude against Nigeria, Nigerians and Nigerian Scam.

419 Coalition: As we told the Nigerian Government several years ago, we are prepared to defend against any suit filed by anyone.

Almost all nations across the globe have Scam or sweepstake.

419 Coalition: Very true.

In all these nations, those

who are involved in fraud fee businesses must be dealt with severely according to the law. This has been our position on this social, political, economic, civil and legal threat in the world. People in nations (other than Nigeria) are routinely dealt with they benefit from criminal 419 operations.

419 Coalition: We could not agree more. The basic problem with this matter is that the supply-side of 419 emanating from Nigeria is not being dealt with severely according to the law.

All campaigners including your organization have made a first start mistake. This mistake relates to lack of "hunting for the victims". These victims in Nigeria's case are the parties in fraud fee business.

419 Coalition: That not accurate. The decision by the United States Government and many other Governments has been that since Nigeria will not deal adequately with the supply-side of 419, the way to deal with the demand side is through educational and informational programs, which is how the demand-side of the equation is generally addressed. Further, no nation in the world considers the victims of 419 (those who are ripped off by the 419ers) to be criminals, and they are not prosecuted.

According to Nigerian fraud fee or scam appeal letter - a man or woman receives a letter from unknown person demanding for a criminal business such as removing Nigeria money from the same unlawful route. The recipient agreed to do this business.

419 Coalition: The above describes only Classic 419 and other so-called "illegal" versions of 419. No country in the world (including Nigeria) considers victims of Classic 419 to be criminals, and no country prosecutes them. Further, your comment does not address the so-called "legal" versions of 419, in which there can be no question that the target is anything but a victim - like the goods and services scam, the will scam, the real estate version of the scam, and the outright extortion version of the scam etc.

The solution to this problem, is that at this point, the two or several countries of these originalities will come together under a known legal consensus to prosecute the victims. This is the only way this mischief could be drastically reduced.

419 Coalition: Not even worthy of consideration until Nigeria

starts prosecuting en masse the perpetrators. Further, no country in the world agrees with you that victims of 419 should be prosecuted, not even your own, and this is unlikely to change. Surely you would not suggest that the money-losers in these things be prosecuted and the money-makers get away with it scot free And keep the money (which is generally the case in these matters)?

This unfounded campaign against Nigeria is a direct attack against her social, economic, political, cultural and legal development and prosperity. This attack has grossly and awfully affected Nigeria and Nigerians. It has affected Nigerians inside and outside Nigeria. This unfounded and frivolous attack is similar to the frame up attack on the blacks across the world via AIDS/HIV.

419 Coalition: The solution to this, of course, is for GOV of Nigeria to take meaningful and tangible actions in controlling supply-side 419. We are always pleased to report any instances of actions by the Nigerian Government on our site - when there is anything to report.

We are further demanding you to remove all web and other publications directed against Nigerians and Nigeria and publicise the particular scam case. This is when your campaign will call for legal and judicious support.

419 Coalition: As we make clear on the site, we have no problems with Nigeria or Nigerians, we just don't care much for Nigerian 419 operations. Therefore, we must decline your request in this matter, as 419 continues to be an ongoing global problem. When it's not, we will be Very pleased to be able to take down the site, I assure you.

Thank you for the reposition of your campaign.

419 Coalition: Thank you for your interest.

419 Coalition: Respectfully,

419 Coalition:
Pascale
Coordinator
419 Coalition

Yours Very Truly,

Godson Etiebet
Assistant Crisis Investigator(1)

21 NOV 2000

From the Netnigeria.com news review:

POLICE, NITEL FIRM OVER INTERCEPTION OF PHONE CALLS

Nigeria Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) efforts to void the industry of fraudsters yielded dividends last week as the director of a firm which allegedly specialised in the interception of international calls to the country was arrested and a man-hunt for his accomplices by security operatives intensified.

The police who swooped on the company's operational base in Ikoyi, Lagos on a tip-off by NITEL found supplicated equipment like personal computers (PCs) satellite antennae, receivers, transmitters and a network server which it combined with a 50-line capacity to intercept in-coming international calls via digital satellite and high band width technology. *****

419 Coalition Note: Now this is a step in the right direction!

17 NOV 2000

According to sources in Nigeria, three men have been charged with 419 in an Ibadan court.

Here are their names:

- **Zino Oziwo**
- **Omotayo Idris Dipo**
- **Chinadu Lloyd Nwankwo**

They have been in custody for questioning etc. for the last couple of months.

The court released them on surety bond pending the trial, which is scheduled for mid-January 2001, assuming (and it is a Very dubious assumption) that they show up for trial.

A fourth man named **Paul Onuwa Uwechue, the alleged Big Man of this particular 419 operation**, remains at large at this time so he has not yet been charged. He is being looked for, however, and will be charged when he is found, according to our sources.

10 NOV 2000

A member of the Nigerian Police Force Special Fraud Unit has sent 419 Coalition hardcopy of a piece which appeared in the 25 SEP 2000 issue of the The News, a Nigerian news magazine, as the Cover story. The piece is titled "The Fraud Kingpins" and the author is Obiora Nwosisi.

The piece gives the Top 20 419 Kingpins as:

1. **Fred Ajudua a.k.a. Dr. Coker**
2. **Ade Bendel**
3. **Victor Okafor a.k.a. Ezego**
4. **Dele Ilori**
5. **John Nebolisa**
6. **Banji Balogun**
7. **Obi Eze a.k.a. Tanko Ibrahim, Chief Bola Ige, Phillip Asiodu, Prof. Inua Haruna, Prof. Sharafa Gambari, Ufot Ekaette**
8. **Shina One Ore**
9. **Tunde Adaba**
10. **Tayo Osekita**
11. **Solomon Agbaje**
12. **Chief C. Onuoha**
13. **Bright Ezeguze**
14. **Tope Eleti**
15. **Prof. Peller**
16. **Collins Eze**
17. **Aminu Isiaka**
18. **George Chidera**
19. **Osara Onaiwu**
20. **Obina Okoroafor**

The article details some of the actions of some of these men and how they operate. It also explains how they manage to move in elite and governmental circles with relative impunity. The piece is headlined as an "expose on the top runners in the 419 world." It also notes that not just foreigners but also Nigerians themselves are often victims of 419.

10 NOV 2000

From a member of the Nigerian Police Force Special Fraud Unit we have received hardcopy of an article published in the Nigerian news magazine The News 16 OCT 2000 issue. The title is "Route 419 To Organised Crime" by Peter Lilley, and the piece is excerpted from his new book "Rip Off: The Global Fraud Explosion & How To Survive It."

The article gives a good overview of the magnitude and variety of Nigerian 419 operations. Among other things, it maintains that Nigerian 419ers infiltrate business and even governmental organisations worldwide in order "to acquire inside information from banks, local authorities, benefit agencies, and anywhere else where money can be obtained through fraud."

Mr. Lilley also states that "The really serious and alarming facet of the Nigerians' operations is that they are, contrary to popular belief, highly organised on a global scale. They operate a complicated cell structure -- like that utilized by terrorist organizations such as the IRA. It is now accepted as fact, rather than apocryphal, that there are professional fraud schools operating in Lagos and major Western

cities which train new recruits. These schools also issue a manual showing how to commit fraud, one example of which I have seen."

He adds that "Nigeria has the largest number of dummy corporations on the African continent; the largest number of business scams, and, as a result of those, probably the largest number of fictitious government offices anywhere on this planet. Even the real government aren't any better."

The lead of the piece is "There are very few certainties in life, but one of them must surely be that whatever fraud is being committed the Nigerians will be somewhere near the front of the queue. As one commentator observed: 'If there was a World Cup for fraud, the Nigerians would win it every time'."

1 NOV 2000

Our friends [Ultrascan](#) in the Netherlands report that there have been two recent specials on Nigerian Advanced Fee Fraud (419) on Dutch TV. These programs were an hour and 15 minutes of total airtime and included a hidden camera type setup to film 419ers in the act. One 419er based in Brussels and Amsterdam was arrested as a result of the shows.

There have also been two additional recent arrests of 419ers in the Netherlands, with more to come, advises Ultrascan.

26OCT 2000

Police Accuse Lawmakers of 419 Fraud

This Day (Lagos)
October 26, 2000

Lagos

The commissioner of police in charge of the Special Fraud Unit, Mr. Ade Ajakaiye, has accused some lawmakers in the National Assembly, allegedly implicated in advance fee fraud, otherwise known as "419", of refusal to honour police invitation to clear themselves.

Addressing a news conference in Lagos, Ajakaiye also accused the lawmakers of complicity in illicit drug business.

"The lawmakers are hiding under the cover of being honourables for four years", he said that four years was not such a long period.

"When they have finished their tenure, they will come back to us. 419, murder and drug cases have no expiry dates."

On the 2,000 telephone lines allegedly used for illegal activities, the commissioner said that preliminary investigations had revealed that the suspects abandoned them after incurring huge bills. He said innocent subscribers were discovered to have acquired them legally.

"We have, however, established a sort of collusion between fraudsters and private telephone operators," Ajakaiye said, adding this was in spite of the fact that "some of the private telephone operators apparently tried to hide something".

419 Coalition note: We don't know where they are coming up with this figure of 2000 phone lines used for 419, it is only a small portion of such lines. It sounds like they are taking the number from the IIS Database, which makes no bones about NOT being an all-inclusive listing. The REAL number of lines that have been reported as 419er phone lines over the years is approximately 60,000. These are listed in the database of the United States Joint Task Force on West African Fraud (better known as the 419 Task Force).

22 OCT 2000

In the 2 OCT 2000 issue of TheNews, a Nigerian magazine, there were four excellent articles on 419. 419 Coalition waited to receive hardcopy of Volume 15 - Number 13 before synopsising the articles here in our own News section. Thanks to the good offices of a Concerned Nigerian, we have now received a hardcopy of the publication.

For those interested in getting their own copy, assuming any remain available, the contact data for TheNews is:

TheNews (ISSN 1116-7157)
Independent Communications Network Limited
Corporate Head Office
Press House
27 Acme Road
Adidingbi, Ikeja
P.M.B 21531
Ikeja
Lagos
Nigeria

The telephone/fax numbers for TheNews are:

4922983, 4922983, 4925353

Of course, when calling in from outside Nigeria, one must dial the international access code, country code, and city code in addition to the above number. Hence, from US for example, one would dial: 011 234 1 4922983 etc.

TheNews is to be commended for its excellent coverage of 419 matters in this issue and in the 25 SEP issue in which an article on the "Top 20 419 Kingpins" appeared.

Here are the synopses of the Four pieces from the 2 OCT issue:

This is the Cover Story:

Government Collaborators

Here is how Nigerian government officials aid advance fee fraudsters, a.k.a. 419, thus giving the country a bad name

by Obiora Nwosis

This piece is drawn from materials obtained from, among other sources, the 419 Coalition website; Dr. Bolaji Aluko of Howard University; apparent US and other government sources; and sources developed independently by the author. The new novel on 419, [Nigerian 419 Scam: Game Over! by American novelist and journalist Brian Wizard](#) is also cited in the article.

The piece notes the omnipresence of Nigerian 419 letters, emails, faxes and other solicitations worldwide, noting their detrimental effects on Nigerian expatriates and to the reputation of the nation as a whole. It also implies that trade with and foreign investment in Nigeria are negatively impacted by Nigerian 419 operations, which is indisputably accurate.

It goes on to cite examples of Nigerian government involvement in 419, which include: calls in to the main switchboard of CBN (for example) in which victims have asked for their 419er by name and been put through; victims being escorted into the vault of CBN to be shown the monies available for their "deal"; NITEL's historical inability to trace 419 numbers and to identify the account holders of those numbers (though this may be changing a bit, see earlier piece in this News section), etc. **It summarizes all this material with the following: "The racket is definitely not without the knowledge and at times active connivance of security agents, government agencies, and known collaborators."**

This is one of the most important pieces on 419 ever done, in 419 Coalition view, ranking up there with earlier pieces appearing in Asia Magazine and in Spotlight magazine noted in earlier news sections on this site.

There are a couple of minor corrections to be made to the article, though. Probably the most important is that 419 Coalition rule #4 of the 5 Rules for Doing Business with Nigeria given on our main page is slightly misquoted;

the correct rendition of Rule #4 is "Never EXPECT [not 'accept' as given in the piece] any help from the Nigerian Government." Also, the experiences of several different 419 victims drawn from our site sortof sound like they were all experienced by just One victim rather than several. There is also an extra 6 in the US Task Force voice number - the actual voice number of the US Government Task Force on 419 is (in US) 202-406-5850. Finally, the piece says that "the group" (meaning 419 Coalition) says that [Nigerian] government officials only give lip service to existing regulations covering transfer of funds to Nigeria. We never said that exactly, but that this is the case is obvious, as there is really no use in stealing large amounts of money if one doesn't get to spend it :) :)

This piece is a Must Read for all those interested in the dynamics of how large scale 419 operations have flourished in Nigeria over the years and continue to prosper.

The second piece is:

Who is Who in 419

(On the cover it is given as "2000 Crooks - Their Phones and Addresses")

This appears to be a printout of the Who is Who section of the [International Investigation Services](#) site, which data is available online for a small fee.

The 2000 or so names, numbers, and other data IIS has gathered over the years are the ONLY privately available such listing, though it is Not by any means meant to be all-inclusive. The US Secret Service Task Force on 419 has for example approximately 60,000 phone numbers etc. in Nigeria that have been used by 419ers over the years, though this database is not available to the public. So, if you have been contacted, and your Guy is not on the publicly available list, Don't assume he is OK.

If your guy, to quote a high US Task Force official, "looks like a duck, waddles like a duck, and quacks like a duck, he is probably a duck" even if his name Doesn't appear on the publicly available list.

The third piece is:

Our Story - Victims

As per the title, this piece gives the stories of victims of various versions of 419.

The fourth piece is:

Gold Medal For Nigeria

In its year 2000 report, Transparency International ranks Nigeria as

the most corrupt country on earth

The "gold medal" is of course a gallows humor allusion to the Olympics. Nigeria has ranked at the top or near the top of Transparency International's annual corruption rankings in previous years as well, if 419 Coalition recalls correctly. The piece does quote Lagos State Governor, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as saying that the ranking is "a serious drawback to the country's efforts at attracting foreign investments" which is indisputably accurate. However, the article Does also note that the Obasanjo Government is making a 'valiant effort' to ameliorate corruption in Nigeria, but that it is too early to see what impact those efforts are going to have in the future. As the Nigerians would say, 419 Coalition wishes "more grease to Uncle Sege's elbow" in that regard :) :)

13 OCT 2000

From The Guardian, a Nigerian newspaper, sent in by a member of the Nigerian Police Force Special Fraud Unit:

Friday, October 13, 2000

Fraud: NITEL disconnects 900 lines

By Sylvester Ebhodaghe

POLICE clampdown on fraudsters in the country may soon begin to yield results as over 900 telephone lines used by them have been put on toss by Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL).

This development, The Guardian learnt is sequel to a request made last week by the Special Fraud Unit (SFU) of the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), Lagos Annex, Milverton Road, Ikoyi, to NITEL that all lines published by a national magazine as being used by the fraudsters be put on toss.

The letter signed by the Commissioner of Police in charge of the SFU, Mr. Ade A. Ajakaiye further stated that owners of such lines who complain be referred to the unit for clearance before they are restored.

Following the request, authorities of NITEL on Tuesday commenced the action. As of yesterday no fewer than 15 companies had reported at the SFU for clearance. It was discovered as complaints were lodged that most of the original owners who are the suspected fraudsters abandoned the lines after accumulating huge bills and defrauding their victims.

NITEL which recovered the abandoned lines reallocated them to the present owners whose business have been put on hold following the temporary disconnection. One of such companies is NAGODE Industries Limited which manufactures plastic water tanks and other PVCs. Its Administrative and Personnel manager, Mr. Oluwarotimi Ali who spoke with The Guardian yesterday lamented the effect of the disconnection on his company.

According to him, the telephone line was given to the company after an official procedure. Displaying the documents with which the company applied for the line and the acknowledgement from NITEL, Ali said it was the only line through which the firm carries out its international transactions and claimed, "this we have used judiciously" He went on: "We got to the office on Tuesday to discover our chairman's line had been put on toss. So I raced to the exchange area manager who told me to go and get clearance at the SFU . On getting here (SFU), I was told my oga's line was used to defraud some foreigners of some millions of dollars."

It was disclosed that the line was formerly owned by one "Dr. Michael Adazi" who has one Dr. Bob Martins as his business colleague. The line was abandoned by the former owner and was reclaimed and reallocated to the company by NITEL.

Mr. Ajakaiye when contacted yesterday confirmed the development.

According to him, efforts are on to trace the various telephone lines to buildings in which they are installed to enable the police seize the suspects who appear to be faceless at present.

In a related development, the managing directors of three leading telecommunication companies have been queried and asked to furnish the unit with print-out details of particulars of subscribers of telephone lines used to obtain money under false pretence. In the letters sent to Mobile Telecommunications Limited, Skyview Nigeria Limited and Multi-Links Communications Limited, it was stated that specific lines (withheld) were used prominently in some cases of fraud under investigation by the unit.

About five persons have been arrested by detectives attached to the SFU. as the lines were being traced.

12 OCT 2000

Here is a piece published 28 SEP by the Nigerian newspaper Vanguard Daily which we just received today:

Nigeria Police Assures Foreign Investors of Protection

Vanguard Daily

September 28, 2000

Emma Ujah, Abuja

The Nigeria Police have assured both local and foreign investors wishing to set up businesses in Nigeria of the protection of such investments.

The Inspector General (IG) of Police, Mr. Musiliu Smith said in a paper "Police Role in Securing a Conducive Economic Environment in Transitional Economy" in Abuja Tuesday that the police fully appreciated the fact that security was crucial to economic growth in every society.

"The essence of this theme is to assure prospective investors in Nigeria, both indigenous and foreign, of the ability and preparedness of the Nigeria Police to provide the much needed security to protect the interest of investors and their investments," the

IG said in the paper delivered to the Council of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC).

Mr. Smith who was represented by A.I.G. "C" Department, Mr. Gimba Umar noted that there could be no economic growth in a state of chaos.

His words, "the lives of people are tied to the strength and buoyancy of their nation's economy.

"In the same vein, the survival of any human society; the progress of all network of human activities in the society including its economy and the continuity of that society are determined by the degree of security available to life and property.

"It follows that nobody talks about economy, in a state of a chaos.

"The place of security of lives and property in shoring up the confidence of investors in any economy cannot be over emphasized and that is where the role of the Police is very crucial."

The IG disclosed that the Police have set up the Anti-fraud section and the Special Fraud Unit to counter activities of fraudsters who have given the nation negative image abroad.

The two specialised units are attached to the Force Criminal Investigation Department.

According to Mr. Smith, the two units have been collaborating with the Central Bank, NNPC, NITEL and NIPOST in other to intercept "419" cases.

Earlier in his welcome address, the chairman of the NIPC, Chief Kola Daisi pointed out that a symbiotic relationship exists between security and investment.

"No investor would want to put his money in any country where security to lives and properties cannot be guaranteed.

"Indeed peace and security are sine qua non for economic growth and a significant factor in the creation of the conducive climate for foreign investment which is very paramount in the economic and social policy of the Obasanjo administration," he said

12 OCT 2000

Here is a piece which appeared in the Nigerian media
3 OCT which we just received today:

Date of Article: 10/03/2000

Topic: Police Crack Down on 419ers

Author: Godwin Tsa, Abuja

Full Text of Article:

Apparently worried by the smear the activities of advance fee fraudsters, (otherwise called 419ners) have cast on the nation, the Nigeria police, yesterday, constituted a

special squad to crack down on the scammers.

Nigeria has, in recent years, earned a bad reputation through the unwholesome activities of some citizens whose stock in trade is obtaining money by trick from both local and international business people.

The illicit trade assumed a global dimension in the late nineties, prompting the governments of some developed nations to warn their citizens against coming to Nigeria or stitching up business deals with Nigerian citizens.

The Inspector General of Police, Mr. Musiliu Smith who gave the directive in Abuja, said the squad is expected to look into the list of 419 operators, recently published in some magazines and other similar publications.

A statement from the Force Public Relations Officer, Assistant Commissioner of Police Haz Iwendi, said the squad is to be headed by Mr. J.O. Alapini, a Commissioner of Police in charge of Air Wing, Ikeja, Lagos.

The terms of reference of the squad, which include to identify, arrest and flush out 419ers within and around the local and international airports, will be complementary to those of the commissioner of police, Special Fraud Unit (SFU).

The squad, which will operate from the airport, will have a special prosecution team to prosecute all cases brought before it.

Accordingly, the Nigeria police has appealed to all persons who have any information on 419 operators or those who have been victims to contact the commissioner of police, in charge of air wing on 01-4962256, 01-2692728, 01-2691675, 09-2340868, and 090-407211.

Meanwhile, the police authorities, yesterday, announced the appointment of six new zonal assistant inspectors general (AIGs).

They include Dauda Gololo (zone 5 Benin), Rilwanu Akiolu (zone 7 Abuja), Hamman Misau (zone 8 Lokoja), Yakubu Shuaibu (zone 2 Lagos), Issac Boladuro (zone 4 Makurdi), Harris Agbohoroma (zone 6 Calabar) and Hamisu Isa (Department F. force. Headquarters, Abuja

8 OCT 2000
Post Express (Lagos)

October 8, 2000

Ajudua Again: Arraigned Over N224.4m Scam

Frank Alabi and Tunji Adeyemi
Lagos

Controversial Lagos lawyer-cum-businessman, Mr. Fred Ajudua, who was detained for over two years by the regime of the late Gen. Sani Abacha over alleged illicit business

deals ranging from forgery of Federal Government documents to obtaining money under false pretences, is allegedly at it again.

He was arraigned, yesterday, before an Igbosere Chief Magistrate's court in Lagos for forgery and alteration of government documents. Among the documents are those of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Federal Ministry of Finance, Federal Inland Revenue Service and those of the Accountant-General of the Federation with which he allegedly obtained money from supposed business partners to the tune of \$2,244,568 (about N224 million).

Among his victims, according to the police prosecution led by Inspector P. Ebohta, are Mr. Ziad Abu Zalaf, a Palestinian based in Germany who alleged that he was duped of \$1,043,000, Hugo Almeida, who also claimed he lost \$100,000 to the flamboyant lawyer and Johann Tarta, a German who also alleged being duped of \$90,000 and DM 63,000.

The offences, which were said to have been committed between 1992 and 1994 are punishable under Section 419 of the Criminal Code Cap 77, Law of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 and Section 516 of the same code which also enunciates punishment for offence of conspiracy.

Ajudua, who spotted a cream French suit with a pair of grey suede shoes arrived at the court premises at about 12.28 p.m. He was brought in a black Jeep in company of a retinue of his aides.

The charges were read to him by the court registrar, a procedure which lasted for about 40 minutes but he pleaded not guilty to all the counts and was granted bail on each charge with different conditional terms, depending on the magnitude of the offence involved in a charge.

For instance, in the two-count charge of obtaining the sum of \$1,043,00 from Mr. Ziad Abu Zalaf, Ajudua was granted a N5 million bail with two sureties by the hearing chief magistrate, Mr. Paul Gbogodo.

In another two-count charge of conspiracy and obtaining the sum of \$100,000 from Hugo Almeida, the accused person was granted bail in the sum of N8 million with two sureties who must not be below the rank of a grade level 14 civil servant.

Similarly, Ajudua who was accused of the same offence in yet another separate charge involving \$461,568 belonging to Mr. Ibrahim Dardeer, a Saudi Arabia national was granted bail of N8 million with two sureties.

He was also granted bail of N40 million in another charge containing 12-count of similar offences of alteration and presentation of forged CBN's foreign exchange confirmation/approval Form A which he allegedly presented to Messrs Konstruktor-Inzenjerino, a company based in Vienna.

Also in the charge, is a count which accused Ajudua for forging a Federal Government's National Capital Expenditure Payment Voucher for capital budget purported to have been issued by NNPC among others.

The charge also featured another allegation of demanding the sum of N100,000 from Mr.

Olusola Akinuoye Agbaje, a lawyer with alleged threat to kill him (Agbaje) and his family should he fail to pay the money.

Having denied all the allegations, Ajudua is expected to make his second appearance in court on December 8, 2000, when the matter comes up again.

30 SEP 2000

This is from The Guardian, a Nigerian newspaper, sent in by a Concerned Nigerian. We here at 419 Coalition would call this a step in the right direction:

Friday, September 29, 2000

419: Police invite phone firms' executives

CHIEF executives of two private telecommunication companies have been invited by the police in Lagos for allegedly providing telephone lines, used by Advanced Fee Fraud (419) syndicates, to defraud Nigerians and foreigners.

It was learnt their invitation was sequel to pressure mounted on the Lagos police command by Inspector-General of Police, Alhaji Musiliu Smith to unravel the faceless Nigerian fraudsters.

A top police source said the companies located in Lagos and Victoria Island were being investigated because their telephone lines "are fast becoming favourites for fraudsters".

The two executive, the officer added, were invited after a news magazine report on the activities of the fraudsters and the telephone lines which they use to carry out their "nefarious businesses."

He said: "Our action is even more compelling following repeated complaints received from members of the public within and outside the country.

"People complained of receiving scam calls and faxed letters, some of which had been traced to the private telephone outfits."

According to another source, the chief executives are expected to assist the police with information on the guidelines set by them, before a subscriber gets a telephone line.

They are also expected to shed more light on whether or not they have a mechanism for monitoring them and, how they collect bills from the fraudsters, if they say they do not know them or their outfits.

Meanwhile, plans have been concluded by the police to hold a crucial meeting with all the chief executives of telecommunication companies, including NITEL.

"I will not tell our strategy, but now that we have identified the specific telephone lines used by these 419 people, you can be rest assured that we will soon track down those who use these lines to defraud innocent persons beyond the shores of this country," said a top police boss.

28 SEP 2000

This from the Nigerian media 26 SEP 2000 culled from the soc.culture.nigeria newsgroup:

US SECRET AGENTS INITIATE ARREST OF 220 "419" SUSPECTS

The United States (US) Secret Service has carried out 150 investigations into financial crimes in Nigeria leading to no fewer than 220 arrests since January, last year. Head of the new office resident agent Thomas J. Johnson revealed this in an interview.

The revelation was made amid moves by the British authorities to open a permanent office in Nigeria to deal with the growing plague of financial frauds, otherwise known as "419".

22 SEP 2000

This piece from the Post Express, a Nigerian newspaper, sent in by a concerned Nigerian:

Suspected Fraudster Nabbed

Post Express (Lagos)
September 22, 2000

Eugene Agha
Lagos

A suspected fraudster, alleged to have forged the signature of the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Mr. Joseph Sanusi, to defraud

international companies abroad has been nabbed by the police in Lagos.

The suspect, identified as Prince Lucky Amafule, was purported to have written a letter to one Akaira Tsuchida, the director of a Japanese company in the name of the CBN governor with the intention of defrauding him.

The Post Express authoritatively learnt from a police source at the Special Fraud Unit (SFW), Ikoyi, that the suspect allegedly demanded about \$3.6 million being ten per cent of the total sum of an assumed contract purportedly executed by the Japanese firm in Nigeria.

According to the source, the suspect was alleged to have claimed that the purported contract was executed with a whopping sum of \$35.5 million, about N3.6 billion.

The Post Express gathered that the suspect (Prince Lucky Amafule) aka Tailor Briggs instructed Mr. Tsuchida to transfer the said amount to the CBN Governor in a foreign account in a bank in London which he (suspect) claimed is affiliated to CBN in Nigeria.

It was further gathered that the 40 year-old suspect from Aba, Abia State was nabbed at his Ogba, Ikeja, residence following a report made by Tsuchida to the CBN.

Items allegedly recovered from the suspect who claimed to be the director of Lumpalex International Limited are; Telephone line No. 4921605, a fax machine, telephone hand sets, an international passport, several envelopes purportedly addressed to would-be victims and a Toyota Carina car.

Confirming the arrest to The Post Express yesterday, the Commissioner of Police in charge of SFU, Mr. Ade Ajakaye said although the suspect initially denied having anything to do with the name

Prince Lucky Amafulé or the Japanese company, through intensive interrogation, he agreed that he once answered the name some years ago, to defraud another Japanese company of an undisclosed amount of money.

Ajakaye appealed to foreign embassies, international companies both within and outside the country to report to the police immediately they suspect that their telephone lines have been tapped, adding that by so doing, the police would be able to arrest the suspects while the operation is still at primary stage.

22 SEP 2000

This piece from ThisDay, a Nigerian publication, sent in by a concerned Nigerian:

House Of Reps Begins Probe Of Members

This Day (Lagos)
September 21, 2000

Victor Efeizomor
Lagos

The House of Representatives has started probing its members believed to have been involved in some questionable deals.

To this end, the House has constituted a committee to investigate petitions and allegations of Advanced Fee Fraud, popularly known as 419, levelled against some members.

THISDAY checks revealed that the committee, which began sitting outside the House chambers to prevent undue influence, has its members drawn from the House Committee on Ethics and Privileges with the inclusion of other members of the House.

A member of the lower House who pleaded anonymity told THISDAY that the leadership of the House has been inundated with calls and requests

from security agencies for the House to go ahead and commence investigation into the activities of suspected lawmakers

He further hinted that the decision to allow this probe is informed by the belief that some representatives were being blackmailed by some interest groups outside the National Assembly because of their questionable past.

The source said the House claimed to be concerned with allegations that some members were indicted for insurance fraud in America, and such scandals as the Otokoto incident, but queried the rationale of the House focusing only on a few individuals with questionable background, adding that the investigation is not aimed at witch hunting representatives who are in the vanguard of the plot to remove the House's leadership.

The renewed interest in the activity of alleged fraudulent members of the House is coming on the heels of reports that American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has opened an office in Lagos to assist the Federal Government in its task of battling the menace of Advance Fee Fraud (419).

419 Coalition Note: All major intelligence services of various nations maintain a presence in foreign nations which are important to them, and CIA is no exception. Though it is not customary for matters that intelligence services are tasked with by various nations to become public knowledge, that various intelligence services operating in Nigeria would have an interest in Nigerian 419 operations is not surprising given the effect that 419 operations have on trade and investment with Nigeria by any nation wishing to do business there. We here at 419 Coalition say Good for Them, we need all the help we can get in this matter.

20 SEP 2000

Here is an extract from the testimony of Ambassador Howard Jeter, Duputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, US Dep't of State, before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Africa, in Washington, DC, 3 AUG 99. We recently came across this material and regret the delay in posting it up. Here is the relevant section of Ambassador Jeter's remarks:

"Approximately 30% of heroin intercepted at U.S. ports of entry in

recent years was seized from Nigerian-controlled couriers, and already Americans lose \$2 billion annually to white collar crime syndicates based in Nigeria."

Given the difficulty in quantifying losses to American citizens by Nigerian white collar crime, including 419, we felt that the citing of the \$2 billion annual loss figure was of interest. And one must remember that this is just from the United States. Nigerian white collar crime is a Global matter.

17 SEP 2000

Here is a thought provoking piece on Nigerian 419 operations by Dr. Mobolaji Aluko, Head of the Department of Chemical Engineering, Howard University, Washington. DC. He heads several Nigerian expat organizations and is often called upon to speak as an Expert on Nigeria in various media and before governmental bodies.

His father, Dr. Sam Aluko, is a Nigerian economist of international repute. His brother, Gbenga Aluko, currently serves in the Nigerian Senate.

This piece was posted in the newsgroup soc.culture.nigeria and in other Nigerian oriented forums. We have taken the liberty here of correcting an occasional typo etc..; otherwise the piece is presented verbatim as written:

Here is the piece:

Subject:

SUNDAY MUSINGS: On Corruption in Nigeria: "419 - The Game is Not Over!"

From:

"Mobolaji E. Aluko"

Newsgroups:

soc.culture.nigeria

SUNDAY MUSINGS: On Corruption in Nigeria - "419: The Game is Not Over!"

by

Mobolaji E. Aluko, PhD
Burtonsville, MD, USA

Sunday, September 17, 2000

URLs for this text:

<http://www.ngex.com/personalities/voices/sm091700baluko.htm>

<http://www.gamji.com/NEWS201.htm>

INTRODUCTION - SOME ANECDOTES

This was not a good month for me and for Nigeria, corruption-wise. Why do I write so?

On Wednesday morning, September 13, I got a phone call out of the blues just as I was preparing to go to work.

The "419" phone call

Telephone rings: Grrrrnng-grrnnng!

Me: Hello, Aluko speaking.

Caller: (with a thick, detectable Nigerian accent, and speaking hurriedly) Give me your fax number. I need to fax something to you.

Me: (puzzled) How can I just give you my fax number like that? Who are you? I mean, you have not even introduced yourself !

Caller: This call is from Abuja, from the Secretary to the Head of State.....em, em, Secretary to the Senate Committee on Contracts..

Me: (shouting) Shut up, you 419! Go to ...well, wherever! (dropping the phone).

Caller: (quickly dropping the phone, and swearing in some language I will not disclose.)

My wife: Who was that?

Me: Some stupid 419 call from Nigeria - again!

So why did I quickly and so immediately shout "419" after this so-called "Abuja" call? I mean, can't some top Secretary from Abuja have been calling a whole me? I reacted that way because in fact I had indeed received unsolicited a fax on my home machine a few days earlier, using

internet free faxing facilities! I am now copying from the paper in my hand the message identification first line of the fax:

"Page 1 of 1 7:35:35 AM /9/6/00 209-315-9373 Distributed by Fax4Free.comT"

I now reproduce the full document, originally all written in caps in the original faxed document, but here reproduced in more readable print:

QUOTE

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
NATIONAL HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY - ABUJA
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN CONTRACT PAYMENT
DIRECT TEL/FAX LINE: 234-1-7743689

Attention: Honourable Contractor Date: 06/09/00

Dear Sir:

RE: Payment of your contract fund

The incessant complaints of Nigeria's foreign contractors have reached and attracted the attention of Nigeria's House of Senate [SIC]. Such complaints have ranged from undue extortion of monies from our foreign contractors, illegal transfers, to diversion of contractor's monies to bank accounts other than those nominated by the contractors. We are aware that these practices have existed over a long period of time but worsened during the past inept military regimes and lingered on until the present regime as there still exist such elements in our parastatals, ministries and financial houses.

Such occurrences have remained painful sore points in the image of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and utter contradiction [SIC] of our efforts in laundering the international image of our dear country.

Consequent upon these and after exhaustive consultations with the president, Olusegun Obasanjo, the following ministries/parastatal, agencies and office, which have been hitherto involved in the above mentioned malpractices have been prohibited, forthwith, from carry [SIC] out the function of vetting approvals and payment of contract claims or any other duties relating to the settlement [SIC] of our foreign debts.

They include:

1. Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) 2. Federal Ministry of Finance 3. Office

of the Accountant-General 4. Presidency 5. International Remittance Dept. 6. Officer of the Governor, CBN 7. All Task Forces 8. Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) 9. Justice Ministry 10. Debt Reconciliation Ministry 11. National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON) 12. Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) 13. Office of the Deputy Governor (CBN)

You are therefore advised to stop all dealings and communication with the aforementioned offices. In their stead the Senate Committee on Foreign Contract Payment has been inaugurated and given the sole authority to vet, approve and pay all outstanding contract debts with all necessary despatch [SIC].

While we apologies [SIC] on behalf of the Federal Government for all the undue delays and inconveniences, you are advised to acknowledge [SIC] this letter reconfirming your bank particulars and contract details to this office immediately to avoid mistakes when remitting your fund.

The earlier you respond to this message, the earlier action will be on your contract file and the better for us.

Best regards,

Signed

SENATOR FRED BRUMEH [sic]
CHAIRMAN SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN CONTRACT PAYMENT

UNQUOTE

First, Senator Brume's name was spelt wrong, and I am certain he is completely unaware of this letter. Secondly, it does not take a rocket-scientist to discern that this sic-filled letter, however craftily written, is a "419" letter written to deceive, once again, the unwitting "contractor" to disclose vital information about himself that will then be used to extort him or her based on some desperate hope to get either something for nothing, or GENUINELY obtain some money owed him or her by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. However, if all 13 agencies named above are now no longer able to deal as stated, what would that say about our whole system? Should that not ring a bell?

Not so easy, I guess! In case you are wondering how DANGEROUS these tempting letters can be, let me relate another story: On August 17, barely a month before this "419" phone call, I had gotten a call from an old friend from graduate school days in California, a White guy, now a businessman, a deep Christian fellow, asking that I call him. We attended the same church in California, our families have exchanged holiday visits between Seattle and Burtonsville, his son and mine were born at the same hospital within a month of each other eighteen years ago, etc. So we have

been in touch ever since, and we recently exchanged family pictures when our sons both graduated from high school within the past two months and are both now in college. I immediately called, and also left my email address to prevent phone tags. This is the email exchange, abbreviated:

QUOTE

EMAIL FROM FRIEND

On Thu, 17 Aug 2000, BD wrote:

> Bolaji, greeting to you as well. I hope you are well. The picture you X sent of [YOUR SON] was impressive--he looks as tall as Hakeem Olajun!

Materials deleted

> I am attaching a message that came in from Nigeria. It is seeking a
> relationship without specifically referring to our products and
> services. It may just be sort of a mass email looking to find someone
> to bite. However, I would value your feedback and how this might be
> cultural to Nigeria so I will know how to best respond. Thank you for
> your consideration.
>
> God's blessings on you and your family!

MY RESPONSE

Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2000 19:52:44 -0400 (EDT)
From: "Mobolaji E. Aluko"
To: BD
Subject: Re: Nigerian proposal

B..

Nice that you got back to me quickly!

The letter you received is a CLASSICAL INTERNATIONAL SCAM, called "419", for which my country, unfortunately, is infamous. I am sure that you would NEVER fall for such a scam.

To read more about the general scam, check these websites:

<http://home.rica.net/alphae/419coal/>
http://www.lpconline.com/Nigerian_fraud_letter_scam.html

--- materials deleted---

Best wishes, and God's blessings.

Bolaji

UNQUOTE

Another potential disaster averted, this time the scamming of a dear friend!

To cap this my "Nigeria-corruption" month up, two further things occurred: first Transparency International published its Year 2000 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of official, public-sector corruption. The new index is based on multiple surveys from 1998-2000 rather than just one year as previously done. Unfortunately, it now lists Nigeria as moving from 27th most corrupt nation (last year 1999, out of 99) to being most corrupt nation out of 90 countries surveyed in 2000. See:

<http://www.transparency.de/>

<http://www.transparency.de/documents/cpi/2000/cpi2000.html>

The report could have come at no worse time than when President Obasanjo was state-visiting the UK, and talking about debt-relief and new investments in Nigeria. It will also further devastate the psyche of Nigerians in the wake of the recent highly-publicized Senate contract probe, and question how much progress we have really made in this nascent democracy. However comfort must be taken that the data includes the year 1998, and Nigeria should insist that Transparency International ALSO publish what the list would have been IF only year 2000 had been used as done in previous years so as to discern the relative contributions of the intervening years.

I must tell a quick story here, most probably apocryphal: a Pakistani taxi-driver's story is that Nigeria bribed Pakistan so that Pakistan would agree to be designated the most corrupt in 1997 and Nigeria, hoping to polish its image a bit, would be designated second place. Go figure who was really the most corrupt that year!

Finally, the second happening: I received a free copy of an interesting book on Nigeria sent to me by a good friend Charles Pascale of the 419 Coalition [<http://home.rica.net/alphae/419coal/>]. A witty, well-researched and author-autographed book written by one Brian Wizard, it is titled "Brian Wizard's Nigerian 419 Scam: "Game Over!" [See <http://www.brianwizard.com.>]

If, within a month, I can be faced with FOUR different encounters of "419" issues, I wonder what has changed?

STEMMING THE CORRUPTION

So how do we stop the corruption in Nigeria, including "419" scams? This

is the million-dollar question, which needs a final answer, which I will attempt to give! In international trade, "419" is particularly serious, because it is a death sentence like AIDS, a cancer that causes a violation of all trust in international commerce, and makes crooks out of innocent Nigerian people, casting them in bad light even before they open their mouths.

But corruption is like any other crime in Nigeria: there must be the motive, means, and opportunity, and a reasonable assurance by the criminal that he will not be detected, and if detected he will not be punished, and if punished it will not draw consequences which make the crime too expensive. Therefore, if we systemically REMOVE - or seriously mitigate any of these factors: motive, means, opportunity, non-detectability and non-commensurate punishment - we will be well on our way to successfully combating corruption in our country.

Motive

The motives for financial corruption are GREED, POVERTY and FEAR OF RETURN TO POVERTY. Greed is a spiritual deficiency, and can only be removed by spiritual means. So a spiritual rejuvenation, hammered on by our religious institutions, must definitely be embarked upon. While government is made of men and women who should be spiritually upright, the promotion of religion by government can create its own problems, so it is the province of the religious institutions, not the government, to hammer on this spiritual dimension of our crisis.

Poverty is another matter. Government has a primary responsibility of not only alleviating poverty but creating prosperity. Thus it must create the conducive infrastructural environment in society such that its citizens are gainfully employed and not roaming the street and not letting the devil find work for idle hands; that those working in government are paid living wages; adequate pay is paid for commensurate responsibility; and bosses do not award themselves such fat salaries as to make their underlings believe that they too are entitled to "government" money by fair-or-foul means. Of course, there is also a spiritual dimension to poverty, for from Proverbs we read the prayer that "God, please do not make me poor such that I will steal, or make me too rich that I will forget thee..." Thus both the poor and the rich have the propensity to be corrupt, but for different reasons.

Finally, fear of the return of poverty is due to the lack of job security and social security (insurance) when work is no longer doable. This could also account for the greed and the outlandish accumulations of wealth that characterize our nation. Consequently, the laws of the land should protect indiscriminate job firings, and, like in other developed countries, social security monies should be BY LAW be put aside for one's sunset years.

Means

With \$1-N100 exchange, a visitor to Nigeria is bound to be shocked at the amount of hard currency one has to carry around! Our society is still a cash-and-carry society, with "Ghana-must-go" bags being the means of money transportation. In fact, I understand that as much as 60-80% of the cash in Nigeria is in circulation among its citizens, and not in banks! It is more like 20-40% in developed countries, maybe even much less in the United States. This large proportion of money in circulation (and hence low savings) not only encourages home burglaries and highway robbery, but also affects interest rates offered by banks, making them unreasonably high.

Until and unless cash is de-emphasised in transactions - and this can best be done by government by insisting that it will deal only in checks or money orders as much as possible - the ease with which bribery and corruption via exchange of cash can be done will overwhelm hopes of stemming corruption. This is where user-friendly BANKING REFORMS, as well as technology, particularly ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION of the citizenry and NETWORKING of ELECTRONIC DATA BANKS will be of the greatest value.

Opportunity

There is too much DIRECT contact between the citizens and bureaucracy: you must go to this office to get a form, go to that office to get a vital document, return several times because a particular official, the ONLY official designated to handle your interest, is not in. The service centers themselves are few and far between, increasing the level of desperation among patrons. All of this leads to greater opportunity for desperate people to offer bribes, and bribe-takers to be able to demand them with impunity.

The recent Senate contract scandals, despite serious misgivings about the probe itself, is symptomatic of the contracts scandal that pervades the ENTIRE public sector of Nigeria, and would no doubt contribute to Transparency International's CPI on Nigeria. It appears that there are no standards of contract and purchase in government, and if there are, they are not widely known; there are no published lists of customary prices of items to be contracted or purchased, to serve as guide for easily determining whether a quoted price is high or low. A government list depicting accredited suppliers and contractors should be maintained for each government agency (this should be a subsection of the general government list), and this list should not change within the fiscal year except for unusual circumstances. Use of open tender should be the rule, not the exception. For example, the US General Services Administration has a website <http://www.gsa.gov>. [See also <http://pub.fss.gsa.gov/vendorsguide/section-d.html>; <http://pub.fss.gsa.gov/sched/far-8400.cfm> ; <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp/gsa.htm>; <http://www.mcbride.com/contracts/federal/gsa/terms.htm>.]

We should not have to re-invent the wheel all over again. Since we are yet an import-dependent country, nothing stops us from negotiating with BOTH local AND foreign companies, as well as friendly foreign governments so as to obtain the same or even better published favorable terms with which we get some equipments and supplies (with possible consideration for our poverty, plus insurance and freight). Finally, contract and purchase administrative officers - as well as the government's Auditor-Generals - MUST be given adequate salaries, independence and such security of position that they cannot be overruled by those who might request them to do things fraudulently. Even the president should not be able to say, "Buy this - or be fired!" The law should protect such contract overseers, who should themselves be subject to periodic audits.

Furthermore, government should look into ALL of its operations to see where it can cut out the need for citizens to go distances to get essential services. Churches, schools, non-governmental organizations and others must be used wherever possible.

I cannot leave this section without relating an incident that I witnessed in Ile-Ife on my way to Ibadan/Lagos about August 1 of this year when I last visited Nigeria. From the center of Ile-Ife to its outskirts, over about a five-mile distance, the car I was in followed directly behind this one packed commercial "Danfo" bus that was also travelling to Ibadan. Because of the recent Ife-Modakeke "troubles", there were mobile police checkpoints at about every half-mile, maybe less. AT EVERY ONE OF THESE STOPS, THE DANFO DRIVER, IN A PERFECT WELL-CHOREOGRAPHED MOTION, HANDED MONEY TO A MOBILE-POLICEMAN, WHO SWIFTLY PUT IT IN HIS POCKET! They did not even seem to care who was watching in the next car. At every single stop! I was so incensed that I took out my camera and said that I would take a candid picture at the next stop, but our own driver "begged" me not to do so, that if we were caught doing so, it would be trouble. I insisted (saying that I would be careful), but at the fourth mobile-police stop, the fluidity with which the driver handed the money to the policeman was so smooth that even a nano-second shutter camera would not be able to snap it! At that point, I asked my driver to speed up, and I caught up to the side of the Danfo driver, and spoke to him in Yoruba, shouting why he was handing money to the policeman even without them asking! He said, smiling "Eh, e ma binu, won o ni je ki nko ja ti mi o ba fun won!" - "Don't be angry, they will not let me pass if I don't give them something!"

We fell back and continued to follow the Danfo bus. At the next two stops, he continued with his nefarious act, and when finally we sped past him for the last time, he just looked at me smiling as I shook my head! I could not cry, so I smiled too!

Detectability

I believe that detecting most of the crime is easy IF THERE IS A WILL!

One is therefore forced to believe that in some cases, there is just a plain, conscious aversion to detection. For example, the mobile police men taking money so brazenly on the Ife road could be easily detected, but they seemed to care less! For example, the 419 merchants of shame use ACTUAL PHONE NUMBERS in Nigeria that you can call and fax responses to - how did they get these numbers, and how come the givers and the takers cannot be shut down RIGHT AWAY? I mean the Lagos number "234-1-7743689" at the head of the 419 letter from the "National House of Assembly" - WHOSE NUMBER IS THAT, AND WHERE AND HOW WAS IT OBTAINED? Why can the authorities in Nigeria not track this particular number down and determine who obtained it?

Also, of course, the low level of technology usage in our country makes detectability of most financial crime - and hence the ability to even begin to punish the criminal - extremely difficult. Again, one must emphasize, as I wrote above, that ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION of the citizenry and NETWORKING of ELECTRONIC DATA BANKS will significantly aid in this respect. This is where the much-discussed multi-billion-naira ID Card project is more important, in fraud detection, rather than the much-touted use in census or in elections: after all, in Nigeria, it is not the voting or counting that matters, but the announcement of the numbers and winners! :-)

Punishment

No number of new anti-corruption laws written in the books will succeed if the JUDICIAL SYSTEM itself is corrupt. There are already enough laws in the books, but unfortunately, one often gets the feeling in Nigeria that the people feel that the personnel of our very judicial system - or more precisely the arresting policeman, or the judge in a particular case - has his or her price, and hence ultimately justice can be perverted. Consequently, corruption and crime continue with impunity.

In respect to judges, the Justice Kayode Esho report, the work of a panel on the judiciary inaugurated by (of all people) the late Gen. Sani Abacha on December 29, 1993 has so far has been secreted away. It is reported to have case studies allegedly showing the indictment about 47 judges caught in various forms of judicial rascality. A full disclosure and implementation of the report's recommendations would go a long way to sanitizing our judicial system. It is pertinent to quote the erudite Justice Aguda here from a recent speech: "A country can still do well with bad laws but it cannot do well with bad judges. This is because if the judges are upright, they can mitigate the injustice, inhumaness created by people who made bad laws. But when judges are corrupt, even with good laws, development, justice cannot thrive".

The size of our police force, their minimum level of education, the resources available to them and the salaries must all be revised if we are truly concerned about making our society safer for the citizenry and for investment purposes. [See, for example, my essay

http://www.nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/maluko/monday_q/0321400.html
"MONDAY QUARTERBACKING: How many policemen do we actually need?] However, the corruptibility of law-enforcement officers is a spiritual issue, but it also has its means, motive, opportunity, detectability and punishment components.

Finally, when those that have been found guilty of egregious corruption in government still get recycled to government, or deal with government, it speaks little of our values. This again is essentially a spiritual matter, but a graduated five-year-by-five-year-to-life ban scheme by law on government positions can be placed such miscreants have been fairly tried and indicted.

EPILOGUE

One is painfully aware of the disincentive of the perception of our country as a chronically corrupt one - disincentive to new investment, to debt relief and to self-esteem as we travel around the world. However, I have always held, sometimes to the annoyance of some of my compatriots who think that I am minimizing issues, that the Nigerian, as a human being, is no less corrupt or more corrupt than the Englishman, or American or Japanese or Ghanaian. The problem is that over the years we simply have not addressed our corruption in a systemic manner, and we have had governments themselves, both military and civilian, that have encouraged the corruption and hence have not sat back FULLY to address it.

I hope that by breaking the problem down into means, motive, opportunity, detectability and punishment components, and by putting the feet of our civilian governments, present and future, to the fire, we all can contribute to the ongoing attempts to holistically and systemically address solving this major problem of our country.

For a companion piece, see my February 14, 2000:

SUNDAY MUSINGS: On Nigerian Criminality and Public Accountability
http://www.nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/maluko/sunday_musings/0214500.html

15 SEP 2000

This article from the Nigerian PM News sent in today by a Concerned Nigerian:

Expose of Top Fraud Kingpins

Obiora Nwosisi

In Nigeria, advance fee fraud has been elevated to an art, and for the unsuspecting, it has been a tale of woes. Here is the exposé on the top runners in the world of 419.

The first is Barrister Fred Chijindu Ajudua Nobody would have thought that so soon, after a five-year detention experience at the dreaded Kirikiri Maximum Prisons, Lagos and Agodi Prisons, Ibadan for obtaining huge sums of money from foreigners under false pretences, Barrister Fred Chijindu Ajudua would go back to the trade. But old habit, as the saying goes, die hard. Barely a year after he was released from the dungeon, Ajudua, alias Dr. Coker, jetted out to the United Kingdom late 1999 for a mega pounds deal.

As soon as the notorious 419 kingpin flew into UK, he was received by his supposed clients at the airport and driven to town in a glittering Mercedes Benz E-class. The Ibusa, Delta State-born University of Benin law graduate did not know that the entire operation was being recorded. A copy of the footage in possession of this magazine showed that Ajudua's accomplice is one Solomon Agbaje who was softening the ground for the Lagos-based kingpin. Dressed in a cream colour safari suit, Ajudua walked into the venue of the meeting confidently. He shook hands with one of the clients believed to be Michael. Then, the negotiation began. Ajudua, a.k.a. Dr. Coker claimed to be a minister's son. "My father is a minister in Nigeria. I know my position, I am protective of my position," he told his clients (see pix taken from the footage).

Michael was hesitant but Ajudua tried to allay his fears. "Well, for God's sake Michael," he emphasised, "there is no risk in this thing." Probably at another meeting but in the same footage in TheNEWS' possession, Ajudua told Michael and others: "You know, they've gone to the vault." This is believed to be the vault of the Central Bank of Nigeria. Further into the footage, Dr. Coker told the Britons: "to move the money out of the vault to where we are going now." As members of the team rose to proceed to where the money had been transferred, they were joined by another person. Ever alert, Ajudua bombarded the new man with a barrage of questions: "Who are you?" "Where are you going?" As the man tried to offer explanations, Ajudua, now jittery, blurted: "I don't know you, I don't know you." Sensing great danger ahead, the 40-year-old Ajudua took the next flight out of Britain. But the Britons caught the plane in the footage as it took off. And the drama in Britain ended for the boss of Nigerian tricksters. Whether or not

Ajudua eventually succeeded in fleecing the Britons of their hard earned money in the deal could not be confirmed. But soon after, soft-sell magazines and tabloids reported that the well-built Anioma man had hit (a palance for successful operation) hundreds of millions of naira during a trip to Ireland.

So, the kingpin bounced back into the fold of 419ers he had left following his arrest and detention in March 1995. Or so it seemed. Even so, not much was heard of him until recently when he was mentioned in another advance fee fraud of \$925,000 (N92.5 million) which was facilitated by Standard Trust Bank (STB), a commercial bank. The victim, Montia A. Rice Jr., an American, has already dragged STB and one Dr. Nzeh (a.k.a.) Ejikeme Nze, before a Lagos High Court demanding \$50 million as damages. Rice, who had earlier placed an advertorial in a national newspaper before President Bill Clinton's visit to Nigeria regarding the fraud, complained that the fraudsters are walking freely without being reprimanded. Although Ajudua is not a defendant in the suit, he has already been fingered as the operator of the account number 000708952 at STB which was used by him and his agents. This, no doubt, has punctured his new-found peace at his highbrow Victoria Garden City (VGC) new residence on Epe road.

While Ajudua holds the forte in Lagos and Ibusa, his counterpart in the "milking" business holds sway in Rivers State. Dele Ilori, though an Ekiti man, operates in Port Harcourt. In 1995, Ado Ekiti, his home town, was thrown into a festive mood during his father's burial ceremony. King Sunny Ade, the juju maestro and chairman, Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN), entertained Ilori's guests from far and near. But, something unsavoury happened. As he was gyrating to Sunny's music, some security detectives invaded the gathering, arrested him on the orders of Group-Captain Ernest Adeleye, a former military administrator of Rivers State. When he was told he would be driven to Port Harcourt, he was said to have told Sunny Ade to continue entertaining his guest until he returned that day. After discussing with Adeleye, he told his chief driver to head back for Ado Ekiti, that a big prize awaited him if he accomplished the feat. TheNEWS learnt he made it back to Ado Ekiti midnight. And the driver got a new Mercedes Benz car gift. This magazine learnt that in a business deal with the military officer, Ilori did not keep his own end of the bargain.

Even so, that disgrace did not detract from Ilori's popularity. He was used to dining with the high and the mighty who he often swindled. He once allegedly had an oil "business deal" with the Libyan strongman, Muammar Gaddafi and short-changed him.

Ilori was so successful in his oil business that Shina Peters, another

juju musician, praised him as Onile Oloko Oju Omi l'Ado, Onile Oloko Ofurufu ni Porta (owner of ship-like and plane-like buildings in Ado-Ekiti and Port Harcourt). In the Ekiti State capital, his house is at Bashiri, Iyin-Ekiti Road. What Ilori became later in life was reflected in his childhood. When he was an Ado Grammar School student, he once allegedly stole his father's money and bolted. The old man had a small printing outfit near Omega Bank, Ijiku, Ado Ekiti. Ilori was to later drop out of school. His past exploits notwithstanding, Ilori is currently suffering from a serious stroke. Tope Alabi (a.k.a. Tope Eleti) is another 419 sensation that has his base around Ogba in Lagos. An old student of Ola Oluwa Muslim School, Ado-Ekiti, Eleti goes everywhere with his hangers-on, attracting attention and recognition as a hot celebrity who has just arrived.

Eletι once duped Admiral Akin Aduwo, the three-month ex-governor of old Western Region of N5 million. He is also known to have had a sizzling romance with the regent of Ado-Ekiti shortly after the death of Ewi Adelabu. A celebrity journal, Global Excellence reported last month that the young man is making serious waves in town. Aside a gigantic building currently under construction, this Ologundudu of Ekiti land has taken delivery of a state-of-the-art photography equipment valued at over N100 million. Global Excellence also reported that Eletι has just acquired a new British citizenship and now lives like a lord in his double suite at the Excellence Hotel, Ogba from where he monitors progress in his travel agency business. Although, the agency is yet to take off, a choice office complex has already been acquired around the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos. He has promised to service mainly those on the fast lane like him. But, the Ologundudu is a lucky fraudster. He has remained unscathed despite his many deals that have fetched him millions of dollars and naira.

Whatever might be Eletι's infamous achievements, his credentials fizzle into insignificance when laid side by side the towering records of Adedeji Alumile, a.k.a. Ade Bendel. The fastidious kingpin from Hiveevie, a tiny village in the heart of Owan Local Government Area of Edo State, has displayed an ingenious capacity for financial mischief in his ten years of reckless fiscal malfeasance. Ade Bendel's victims count their losses in hundreds of millions and only the lucky ones among them escape with just a few millions.

An indiscriminate 419 practitioner with an intricate web of equally skilled associates, Ade's victims include military officers, civilians and even spiritualists. Early last week, he was arrested by the International Police, INTERPOL and was temporarily detained in Cell 7 of the Ikoyi Prisons, before his eventual evacuation to Abuja where he now cools his heels.

Before his arrest, TheNEWS gathered that a court had ordered his detention following his arraignment over a N14 million fraud against a retired military officer. Earlier, another officer and former military governor of the defunct North-Eastern State, Brig.-Gen. Abba Kyari (retd.) was swindled of money in excess of N500 million. Scared of what might become of him should he involve the police, the elderly former soldier kept mum. But his friend who was worried over the hallucinating state of the victim's health, eventually reported the matter at the Special Fraud Unit, (SFU) of the police.

And thus began another round of man-hunt for the fraudster. But Ade Bendel is a man conversant with police arrests as bees are with honey combs. Police arrests, investigations and release are common nature to him. He was arrested some years back for duping a popular Epe-based Islamic cleric and clairvoyant, Sheik Abdul-Jabar Balogun, who was stripped of N70 million. He was lured to invest in a bogus ship-buying business. In October 1997, Ade Bendel was detained at Alagbon. Even inside the dungeon, he displayed his ingenuity as he often outsmarted people in draught games. Also in 1998, he was quizzed over allegations that he duped two Warri-based business men to the tune of N250 million.

TheNEWS investigations revealed that other 419 kingpins like run-away king, Chief John Nebolisa, alias JONEB, Banji Balogun, Obinna Okoroafor, Eze Collins, Chief. C. Onuoha and Mike Ajasin Ikoku (not real names), are still active in business. However, more trial and conviction of these fraudsters take place almost on a daily basis in some Lagos courts. Bright Ezeguze and six others were among those recently sentenced to jail. Even when they appealed to the Federal High Court, the lower court's decision was upheld. But, eventually they were released on bail, disappeared and are yet to show up. Peeved that a judge could grant them bail after conviction, the Lagos state government sacked Justice Bayo Manuwa for reportedly taking bribe to free them.

Notable men in the illicit art include Shina One One, Tunde Adaba, Tayo Osekita a.k.a Lustay, and others who go about with curious names like Segun, Olaiya and Laka.

Segun started practice in Iju in the late '80s. But within a few years, he has become a "chairman" after severe escapades. Today, he has a fleet of over 20 cars including Mercedes Benz of various types, Honda series and a Rolls Royce.

Following his success in business, he relocated from his father's decrepit building in Iju to Gbagada where reports indicate he is regarded as a shipping businessman.

Laka, as he is popularly called, is a lucky man, for his first exploit in the trade brought in millions. His team was reported to have swindled General Wushishi of N750 million a few years ago.

Tayo Osekita became a force to reckon with through occult practices. The Ado-Ekiti-born graduate of the Yaba College of Technology hit it big as a herbalist. His first victim was Wing Commander Williams Oni, also an Ekiti man. Oni was said to have indicated his desire to become governor of the oil-rich Rivers State. To realise his dream, Osekita a.k.a. Lustay asked the airforce officer to bring a live python, a live blind vulture, a live lion and leopard for sacrifice. Since he could not procure these things, he began to pay money to herbalists who could. By the time he knew what hit him, he had parted with N35 million.

Oni, using his military might, ordered the arrest of Osekita and his gang of fraudsters. Lustay spent the whole of 1996 and part of 1997 at the Adeniji Adele police station. All the vehicles he bought from the big haul were impounded by the airforce officer and sold to repay those who borrowed Oni money for a rice importation business. At the end of his misery, Oni lost his commission. He now sulks in his native Ekiti land.

Olaiya, another promising 419 kingpin began as a practising herbalist with Chief Ekun Elekeru in Iju on the outskirts of Lagos. But after a few months, he swindled his boss of over N300,000. Elekeru was said to have told Olaiya that he wanted to buy a Mercedes Benz car. Olaiya introduced him to fake car dealers who brought a car, registered it in Elekeru's name but on the pretext of going to collect other vehicle papers disappeared into thin air. Although he is famous as a herbalist, the physician could not heal himself. Today, Olaiya and his gangsters drive about town in posh cars. At a time, Olaiya relocated to Ibadan where he reportedly succeeded in fleecing Mr. Dele Ige, younger brother of the Justice Minister, Chief Bola Ige, of over N70 million.

Interestingly, 419 kingpins have perfected the act of inventing odd names that cut across tribes and some times religion. Thus, it is not impossible to see names like Mike Ajasin Ikoku as an individual, while others could have as many as seven to ten "operational" names. And in most deals, they use several telephone numbers and countless letterheads ranging from that of the CBN to those of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Office of the President and Supreme Court. John Idenuwa Akugbe, a Nigerian resident in Germany and his German wife, Barbel, between July and September, received letters with such papers. Akugbe woke up to a big

surprise on the morning of 16 July 2000 and found a letter faxed to him. He was shocked. For one thing, he had never met the sender of the letter. Again, the contents of the letter had no connection with him. On 19 July, he got yet another letter. It reads: "I am Professor Sharafa Gambari, the computer scientist with Central Bank of Nigeria, solely in charge of all telex kit transfer of your contract bill which has been on hold due to logistic problems." The letter continued: "Following directives from the Ministry of Finance to "write off" all such unclaimed debts, I sincerely know that you will suffer if that happens. I am also aware of some top government officials sitting on your contract bill with a view to diverting it to their personal account when all your efforts to get your fund has been frustrated with nefarious demands for payments. As an insider and the head of the telex section, I have an answer for you. It will take me just 72 hours to secure diskette for the telex transfer of your fund, that is if you are ready to collaborate with me." The letter further listed no less ridiculous conditions for the deal which included a 10 per cent cut payable to the writer, a promissory note to re-transfer the money to another account within five days of receipt and another promise to facilitate the passage of the writer's wife and son to the receiver's country until he could join them. On a final note, he warned: "You must maintain absolute secrecy and confidentiality by not communicating with any other person or disclosing this arrangement to another person." Akugbe dismissed the letter as a mix-up as he had never met the writer and could not have given him his fax number. The writer was relentless. He kept sending more. What followed were a stream of letters, first from the office of the President and signed by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Uffot Ekaette and dated 21 July. The next letter came on 2 August from Prof. Gambari with telephone numbers 234-1-7591543, 7591661. On 6 August, Prof. Haruna of the CBN headquarters, Wuse District II, Abuja wrote the "Honourable Contractor" Akugbe. His fax and telephone numbers are 874-762281566 and 874-762281565 respectively.

Chief Bola Ige of the "Supreme Court of Justice, Federal Ministry of Justice located at Justice Plaza, 17 Eleke Crescent, Victoria Island, Lagos Liaison Office," sent a letter to the contractor. It was titled "irrevocable and unconditional payment approval cum release order instruction specifically issued for final and confirmation of your contract settlement by the Supreme Court of the Federal Republic of Nigeria." Ige's fax number was given as 234-1-2881332.

Close on the heels of Ige's letter was that of Chief Idris Umar on 22 August. Umar described himself as chairman, Senate Committee for payment to local/foreign contractors debts. His E-mail address is telnet 3@excite.com and telefax 234-175-913770. It was marked "strictly urgent/confidential (see box).

The Akugbes were not only surprised by the deluge of letters but were scandalised in Germany. "This particular person or persons continue to change name, letter headings and different types of government logos," he wrote. But more embarrassing, the letters were equally sent to his office. Thus, anywhere he went, he was looked upon as a criminal (see box). He consequently appealed that the letters he sent to TheNEWS be handed over to the police for investigation.

But unknown to Akugbe, the jig-saw puzzle had been resolved in the first letter allegedly written on 16 June by Tanko Ibrahim (see box). It bore fax and telephone numbers 231-1-7590612 and 234-1-7746687 respectively. TheNEWS investigation showed that the real owner of these numbers is an Apapa-based 419 kingpin, Obi Eze alias Tanko Ibrahim, Bola Ige, Phillip Asiodu, Prof. Inua Haruna, Prof. Sharafa Gambari, Mr. Uffot Ekaette and Chief Idris Umar. Indeed, several times, TheNEWS spoke to Obi Eze and his secretary, one Elizabeth. On one occasion, he was told the game was up.

This is just one in a million advance fee fraud cases emanating from Nigeria. The incidence of such bogus letters that thrive on impersonation by this group of fraudulent Nigerians compelled the Central Bank, a few years ago, to run advertisements in major international media to alert unsuspecting foreign businessmen and women of this scam. Despite this warning and the two-good-to-be-real tones of the letters, not a few people have fallen victim.

In Nigerian cities, the front-runners of this nefarious business are well-known for their unusually loud life-styles. Apart from the fact that they consciously strive to marry, and be seen around well-educated and sophisticated women so that the garb of an emerging elite could fit, they are also escorted by soldiers and policemen. With the presence of these law officers, they can effectively act out their scripts especially when a foreigner came calling. Their influence is also very pervasive in the society and they struggle to belong to elite clubs and associations that will further give false impression about them and their activities. In the National Assembly, for instance, quite a number of them are legislators and some are even known to be heading some committees.

Today, two names tower above others. And the duo Fred Ajudua and Ade Bendel have had more than a fair share of 419-related reports both in Nigeria and beyond. In Ibusa, his agrarian ancestral home, Ajudua is a revered lord and kingpin. For many years, he held the townsfolk spellbound. He appeared the only wealthy man in the town and its environs. He reigned until his last major travail on 29 March 1995 which led to his five-year permanent stay in detention under (Detention of Persons) Decree 2 of 1984. Ajudua's journey to stupendous wealth

actually began shortly after his graduation from the Nigerian Law School in the 1980s. Fred, as he is popularly called, came into public consciousness with a whack. Wherever he went, he instantly drew attention by his peculiar brand of exotic cars and police escort. A retinue of public officers were in his pay roll. And his activities remained high-pitched in his operational bases in Lagos and Ibusa.

Until a few years ago, every Christmas season was a jamboree in his Umejei Road country home residence in Ibusa. In front of the imposing house were cattle of various shapes that are usually slaughtered for a stream of never-ending visitors from far and near. It was also during such periods that Ajudua displayed his preponderance for charity activities. Apart from the routine of road construction, the 419 kingpin at a time, placed all red cap chiefs (Ndi Eze) on an attractive monthly salary and awarded bursary grants to many Ibusa sons and daughters in secondary schools and higher institutions throughout the country. In fact, a total of 683 beneficiaries drawn from 15 universities, selected polytechnics, a few colleges and secondary schools received the 1993/1994 bursary awards which was supervised by a Second Republic Senator, Chief Nosike Ikpo.

Indeed, it was Ajudua's moment of glory. While praise songs were rendered in his name by desperate artistes eager to make quick money, traditional rulers in a bid to get his attention to one communal problem or the other, freely gave him chieftaincy titles in quick succession. The well educated Oba of the proud Ondos even gave him a chieftaincy title that was celebrated in a manner never seen before. The red carpet on which he walked to accept the honour was made with Nigeria's currency.

But, as he enjoyed the reverence and veneration that usually accompany stupendous wealth, not a few knew that its source was indeed, questionable, for Ajudua battled countless court cases, arrests and detention for 419-related offences. On 15 February 1994, he was charged to court for defrauding a foreigner, Nelson Allen of \$515,000 (N51.5 million). The same year, Ziab Abdul Zalaf lost a total of \$775,000 (N77.5 million) to him. Other known cases include an American, Mr. Montia Rice who lost \$1.6 million (N160 million) in 1995. A German widow, Mrs. Frieda Springer-Beck equally paid \$402,000 (N40.2 million) to Ajudua in the same year. He was also accused of forging a Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) receipt number 11037411 in 1995 dated 31 January 1991 for about \$150,000 (N15 million) and an American International Insurance Company (AIICO) Nigeria Limited receipt, G 1A 9724 dated 22 July 1991 for N172,000 with the intention to defraud. As a socialite, Ajudua enjoyed some privileges that ordinarily would have been denied a character like him. For instance, throughout the tenure of Alhaji Aliyu Attah, a former Inspector-General of Police, he enjoyed a cosy relationship with the police chief who in turn, provided protection for

him. This association which was not well received by the public, drew the ire of the then Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police, Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie who persistently cautioned his boss on the dangers inherent in associating with people like him who are known to have robbed people of their prized possession, impersonated prominent people, forged letterheads of the President, Senate President, Central Bank and even the Police. "These days, Nigerian 419 businessmen have foreign business partners abroad, so deals can easily be sealed outside the shores of Nigeria," a top police officer at Alagbon told TheNEWS.

It is funny to note that one major trait common to most of the cases, according to the police, is that the conmen make their victims believe that they are going to be involved in the mining of Crude Zekonia (whatever that means) for which most of them eagerly invest in. "Five prominent lawyers and three notable clergy men have fallen victims of this style, same for prominent bankers, I am not talking of the new wave bankers, but ones with integrity, " the source said.

Some of the kingpins have also resorted to jumpering telephone lines of establishments especially embassies. The police have complained about the uncooperative attitude of the officials of Multi-Links, a telecommunications company and NITEL who they said have not cooperated in the attempt to carry out sting operations against the crooks have been fingered in this respect by the police. For instance, Obi Eze's line 7746687 was provided by Multi-Links. Also, a kingpin, Aminu Isiaka, who claims to be a Senior Advocate of Nigeria with offices at 79, Ebute Metta East, Victoria Island, Lagos used telefax number 7744214 to defraud a foreigner who preferred anonymity of \$23,000 (N2.4 million) last year. His accomplice, George Chidera, also a legal practitioner used numbers 7745026 and 7752531 in the exercise.

Isiaka and Chidera had contacted the foreigner, suspected to be a Malaysian to make his private bank account available for the transfer of \$25 million (N2.5 billion). One thing led to another and the victim was invited to Toronto, Canada for a meeting. When he became suspicious, "George started to collect funds from Nigeria via Western Union to cover the handling charges," the victim said. Convinced that the deal was genuine, the gullible businessman found a local creditor who transferred \$23,000 to a bank in Toronto.

Said the victim: "I collected the U\$23,000 from the local bank. At about 1:00pm, John and George came to my Hotel room. I gave him the requested amount of cash and John handed over to me a certificate of the PROBE AND VERIFICATION PANEL OF FOREIGN DEBT RECOVERY AND PAYMENT with an official Government seal of Nigeria. I myself had to sign a paper that I received the funds and that I won't take any legal action against the Nigerian Government. He explained, the funds would be

remitted on the same day to my private bank account.

About 2 hours later, he surprisingly came again with a security officer and an aluminium case, full of US \$ bank notes, bundled in plastic and covered with a white powder. He explained to me, that all notes are marked with numbers that are to be cleansed by a chemical emulsion. According to him, this procedure was introduced by South Africa during the apartheid regime to avoid the international boycott on weapon deals by physically transporting big amounts of cash. He took out of the container five bank notes, poured the chemical liquid in the sink and cleaned the notes until the stamps disappeared. I confirmed that the money was not faked and John went off together with the officer.

After having a lunch with George, he went off to the airport to catch his flight back to Lagos. Just half an hour later John called me again in the hotel saying that the National Bank of Nigeria had forgotten to supply the security company with the adequate amount of chemicals to cleanse all the money. It would be the task of the beneficiary to come up with an additional fund of about US\$280,000 for another five litres of chemicals. From that moment on I knew that I had been cheated." Outside well-known cases of foreign victims, certain Nigerians have also fallen for the pranks of the fraudsters. For all their odious intent, these 419ers are supremely gifted actors with very fertile imagination. A few years back, a scammer here in Nigeria thought up a slow but steady way of fleecing a big-time business woman. The fraudster started by having an affair with the woman who was then married. He did not immediately show his hand. Rather, he concentrated on how best to be a model lover. He identified what was dearest to the woman her children. He regularly asked after them and sent them gifts. The woman's trust in him increased.

She gave him the photographs of her family. He returned all except that of the husband. Then the scam. The fraudster offered to help the woman buy some foreign exchange and the woman parted with N5 million. The conman simply vanished. Realising she had been duped, the woman reported to the police who succeeded in arresting the trickster.

Another ingenious move saw him turn the tide against the woman. He showed the police the photograph of the woman's husband, saying the woman gave her the N5 million to kill the husband. He added a sensitive pay-off. Since the man committed no offence, he felt there was no reason for him to kill the man. He was sprung. The woman was driven out of her home by the husband.

Advance fee fraud is not a respecter of individual or status. After all, some influential Nigerians, including the gap-toothed dictator, General Ibrahim Babangida who ruled Nigeria for eight gruelling years was a victim of the financial scam. Babangida was duped of N800 million

meant for the purchase of transmitting equipment for his super media outfit, Triple Heritage, located at Sultan Abubakar III Way, Abuja. For ten years now, Babangida is still waiting for his mysterious consultant who bolted with the huge fund. The former military president also suffered another bout when he was again hoodwinked by yet another associate to the tune of N212 million. Other notable Nigerian victims of 419ers include General Muhammadu Wushishi, N750m; Wing Commander Williams Oni N35 million; Vice-Admiral Akin Aduwo N5 million, Chief Ayo Shasanya, N12.5 million; Rev. Tanko Jolly Nyame, current Governor of Taraba State, N3 million and Mr. Tanko Kokwain, former managing director of International Merchant Bank (IMB), N46 million.

Others are Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, N3 million, Alhaji Ibrahim Kargama \$116,850; Dr. Clarkson Majomi, N500 million; late Pastor Alex Bada; Mr. Dele Ige, N70 million; Ibrahim Alfa and a host of others.

Like their foreign counterparts, victims suffer immense mental and physical torture after every experience, although the fraudster could elongate such suffering depending on the victims's psychological make-up. Since greed is a strong factor on the victim's side, chances are that he or she will continue to pay as long as there is available fund. Such was the easy money that made influential kingpins like the late Chief Victor Okafor alias Ezego whose escapades in 1997 scared Aso Rock and its occupants. Ezego died later in very baffling circumstance after being arrested several times.

Another 419 kingpin who met his untimely death was the late Professor Peller. He was reported to have duped a former female minister in the Shonekan's government and Alhaji Mufutau Lanihun, an Ibadan-based multi-millionaire. Dazed by Peller's act, Lanihun reportedly had stroke. Peller was killed by unknown gunmen in Lagos home.

But for a country like Nigeria, the consequences are quite enormous. Naturally, where a few crooks have profited, it is the country's image that has taken serious battering from the international business and finance communities. Today, some countries of the West either ignore mails coming from Nigeria because of this perceived notion or take extreme measure by openly burning them.

As a result of the clampdown on these syndicates, they no longer post 419 deal letters from Nigeria in a bid to outsmart the law. They now take letters to neighbouring countries to post in other to avoid prying eyes. This magazine, however, learnt that the Federal Government of Nigeria has reached a memorandum of understanding with those countries so that they can hijack suspicious letter(s) and destroy them.

In some cases, victims got invited to neighbouring countries and fleeced. One unlucky 419er was Aliyu Momoh, a former Daily Times employee who went into the sleaze business. He was stabbed to death in a hotel room in Togo. Togolese police men dumped his body in a mortuary and his accomplice who narrowly missed death and made it to Nigeria kept mute over the unfortunate incident for months. However, an identity card found on Momoh prompted the police to report the matter to the Nigerian Ambassador in Togo who promptly got in touch with Prince Tony Momoh (his brother) who TheNEWS learnt, arranged for his corpse to be brought to Nigeria for burial.

On the Internet too, it is business as usual for the fraudsters. They are at home with all forms of modern communications equipment and techniques and they are going ahead with this business of fraud on the web. Mr. P. S. Chang, the lucky Asian that contacted this magazine before involving himself in a spurious deal is just one in a thousand people that come their way without a bitter after-taste. But for Akugbe, the Nigerian in the diaspora, "it is not nice for Nigeria and Nigerians who desperately need foreign investment. Many people don't pay attention to documents from Nigeria anymore. They are all looked upon as fake," he lamented.

Already, startling figures are being released from official quarters on the resurgence of 419. Between 1998 and 1999, government received a total of 318 complaints from victims of the fraudsters. A breakdown of the figure, according to Dr. Ibrahim Lame, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Drugs and Financial Crimes, shows that whereas 141 complaints were received in 1998, the figure ballooned to 247 in 1999. The year 2000 figures are not yet available, but reliable source said it may have doubled that of the previous year. Lame further disclosed that 316 persons were arrested over the 1998 complaints while 274 suspects were arrested over last year's complaints. But he did not give the figure of those being prosecuted for the crime.

A more staggering figure of 6.7 million letters written by conmen were said to have being intercepted within the "last few years." Of the figure, 1.9 million were intercepted each in the United Kingdom and Germany. Last year alone American citizens were said to have lost not less than N10 billion to the scam.

To curtail the ravaging impact of the conmen, Lame disclosed that an international conference on the crime was in the offing. The conference is expected to draw about 300 participants from across the globe, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, Africa and Asia. The Federal Government is expected to spend a total of N21 million on the conference which major objective is "to identify and examine the

magnitude, nature and patterns of the manifestations of corruption and organised crime as they affect Nigeria." He said the conference would enable Nigeria to acquaint its foreign allies with the provisions of the anti-corruption bill.

Billed to take place before the end of the year, the conference seems inevitable if foreign investors must be lured into the country and be convinced that fraud is as much in Nigeria as elsewhere. Already, foreign investors are jittery over the possibility of falling victim of 419. Conmen are said to swindle foreigners to the tune of over N200 billion per year. Tony Ede, head of Corporate Affairs Department of Nigeria's apex bank, CBN who made the disclosure recently also spoke about other efforts being made to arrest the ugly scenario. Ede said the International Transaction Surveillance Office established since 1997 and charged with the responsibility of curtailing international fraud, received and treated 1,056 letters between January 1998 and December 1999, an average of two letters per day. To control the situation therefore, Ede said the CBN would enter into joint venture with Special Fraud Unit, SFU, of the police. Under the arrangement, the bank will assist the unit with fund, modern communications equipment and relevant information.

Joseph Sanusi, CBN governor, said the bank has "spent over \$4 million (N400 million) in placing warning advertisements in over 80 newspapers and magazines in 12 languages in 36 countries" since 1996. He called for "the establishment of a national inter-agency committee that would properly and more effectively co-ordinate the fight against financial crimes as a matter of urgency." A month after Sanusi's overtures, about three million fraudulent letters were intercepted from a hideout. A Syndicate comprising employees of the Nigeria Customs Services, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, (FAAN) and the Nigerian Postal Services, (NIPOST), were believed to be behind the fake letters.

Recently, the United States of America moved to assist the Nigeria police machinery. Worried by the incessant complaints from American nationals who are daily falling victims of these kingpins, the United States Secret Service has established a unit in Nigeria to combat the 419 menace. The unit under the leadership of Tom Johnston, an official of the U.S Embassy has the dual responsibility of assisting the government of Nigeria and its law enforcement agencies in curbing money laundering and advance fee fraud, besides strengthening Nigeria's security apparatus. "We had wanted to come in before now, but during the military rule, we had poor relationship with Nigeria. Now, with a democratic government in place, we have better relationship and we are eager to help," said Steve Lauterbach, information officer at the United States Information Service. Although, the American Privacy Act would not allow Lauterbach to disclose the names and identities of Americans who have fallen victims of the financial crime, he said that

the figures are quite alarming. "There are quite a number of cases," he told this magazine.

Additional reports by Richard Elesho, Lara Owoeye-Wise, Abimbola Ogunnaike, Temitope Ogunjinmi, Adelanwa Bamgboye, Bamidele Johnson, Gabriel Orok, Goodluck Ebelo and Ademola Adegbamigbe.

The Top 20 1. Fred Ajudua a.k.a Dr. Coker 2. Ade Bendel 3. Victor Okafor a.k.a Ezego 4. Dele Ilori 5. John Nebolisa 6. Banji Balogun 7. Obi Eze a.k.a. Tanko Ibrahim, Chief Bola Ige, Phillip Asiodu, Prof. Inua Haruna, Prof. Sharafa GAmbari, Ufot Ekaette 8 Shina One Ore 9. Tunde Adaba 10. Tayo Osekita 11. Solomon Agbaje 12. Chief C. Onuoha 13. Bright Ezeguze 14. Tope Eleti 15. Prof. Peller Collins Eze 17. Aminu Isiaka 18. George Chidera 19. Osaro Onaiwu 20. Obina Okoroafor

A 419 Letter (Unedited):

>From the desk of Chief Umar Idris.

Telefax #:+234-175-913 770 E-mail: telnet3 @ excite.com Date: 22nd Aug. 2000.

Attn: The Hon. Contractor: Strictly Urgent/Confidential Dear Sir, I am Chief Umar Idris, the Chairman, Senate Committee for Payment to Local Foreign Contractors Debts by the Federal Ministry of Finance (FMF), currently sitting temporary in Lagos (Nigeria Financial Centre). After series of petitions was received by this present reign from foreign contractors, and also reports from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the inability of the Central Bank of Nigeria to fulfil their obligations for the payment to its foreign creditors, our Head of State (The President) in conjunction with his Council of Ministers formed this committee, and mandated us to carry out a careful and comprehensive review of all overdue payments to foreign contractors who have genuinely completed their contracts and to effect payments immediately, so as to sanitize the image of our great country caused by the embarrassments. In view of the above, this country found it very necessary to review your contract file and application submitted to Central Bank of Nigeria for payment. However, after going through to your contract file and with all application further carefully investigated. And I found out to my greatest surprise that you or your company was not the actual contractor that executed the said contract but you were acting in collaboration with some highly placed connected government officials here in Nigeria to claim this money. And I am sure, and no doubt that this is one of the reasons why this fund has not been transferred into your account.

Note: You already know quite well that you never did any contract to The Federal Government of Nigeria, and I am only sharing the secret with you alone and none of my committee members is aware of these yet, that is the reason why I am contacting you.

Really, this fund is still existing in our government annual report payment schedules on foreign debts as unclaimed and in your favour as the sole beneficiary but it is really unfortunate that your representatives here in Nigeria have complicated the transaction, and with them, there is no guarantee that you will receive this fund since various departments have made derogatory remarks on your file, thereby unlawfully demanding excessive taxes and levies just to frustrate you. The non-payment of these taxes/levies by you is one among the reasons why (CBN) has not transferred/released the fund to your account. My main purpose of contacting you is to inform you that I can sincerely use my powers and position as the Head to this Committee, and also the Director of Foreign Payments to assist you in correcting these anomalies and make sure that the fund is strictly approved and paid to you without you sending any money to Nigeria for taxes and levies, but on the condition that you must agree on the following: 1. To pay me an agreed percentage of the total contract sum immediately after the fund is being paid to you.

2. Due to its secret unlawful nature of this assistance I am going to render to you now, you should also promise to keep all my contacts and discussions with you as secret as possible. In this regard, you should also promise not to get in contact again with any of your representatives here in Nigeria or any other person or group of persons except me.

Warning: Because I have my interest and image to protect, You should try as much as possible not to make an inquiry or inform any person, both the Nigerian embassy in your Country or your Country's embassy here in Nigeria about this development because if they should know about these and investigate and finally find out that you are not actually the rightful owner, the real contractor that executed the contract who is supposed to be the beneficiary to the said fund, they will inform our President to stop the payment and I will be sent to Jail for betraying the trust imposed on me. Note that you also will go to jail for unlawful claims. If all the above conditions and warnings are acceptable by you, then in a confidential note, get in touch with me immediately on my personal private Fax #: +234-175-913 770 1377, so that I can then commence to work-out the modalities and inform you on how this fund will now be released to you.

I am looking forward to receive your urgent responds immediately. Yours

sincerely, Chief Umar Idris.

NB: To assure me that I am dealing with the right person, you first of all send to me a fax informing me about the following below for confirmation: (A) Your Bank account number (b) Your contract number (C) The contract value sum.

After complying with the above, you can call me for discussions if you wish to, but that's only if all these information's you're going to send to me corresponds with the once I have in your contract file before I will feel free to deal with you. And if they do not corresponds, then am afraid, I am dealing with the wrong person and you will never ever again hear from me any more.

Thank you.

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5 SEP 2000

ABC News did a piece on the Nigerian Scam today. Here is the link:

[ABC News Piece on the Nigerian Scam](#)

Here is the text of the piece:

Too Good To Be True

By David Ruppe

Sept. 5 — Nigerian-based confidence scammers are bilking American businesses and everyday citizens at such alarming rates that the U.S. Secret Service has set up shop in the oil-rich African nation to help stop rip-offs and other criminal activity at their source.

“Advance fee fraud” or “4-1-9” scams, after an old Nigerian criminal code for theft under false pretenses, have been around for at least a decade.

U.S. officials estimate Americans lose at least \$100 million a year to these scam artists. That's equivalent to what the United States has spent combating wildfires this year, what George W. Bush so far has received in campaign donations for his presidential run, and, as it turns out, roughly what the U.S. government will send to Nigeria in foreign aid this year.

The means for pulling these lucrative cons can be relatively low-tech. The perpetrators send out mass mailings to entice potential victims, by mail, fax and e-mail,

with the expectation that a percentage of recipients will bite. In a typical swindle, a criminal will elicit payment from a victim, purportedly some type of government fee or tax, with the promise of a much bigger payoff down the road.

Small businesses, charity organizations, churches, elderly people with retirement funds — basically anyone suspected to have a pot of cash — are targeted.

The Secret Service, under its mandate to protect U.S. currency and financial institutions, has since 1995 been working with the U.S. Department of Commerce, and Nigerian and other foreign authorities to try to counter the operations, which range from the crude to quite sophisticated.

Last month, the bureau opened up an office in Lagos, Nigeria's capital. They're sharing information, technical expertise and some resources to help Nigerian authorities battle advanced fee fraud and other Nigerian criminal activity, such as money laundering and counterfeiting.

How it Works

The scam generally works like this:

A criminal posing as a government official or national oil company executive sends a letter to the victim proposing a deal to transfer money — purportedly Nigerian government contract overpayments — to the victim's bank account in the United States in exchange for a cut of the money.

If the victim agrees, the criminal or an associate, just before the expected big payoff, says a fee or bribe of some sort must be paid to make it happen, usually several thousand dollars — typically a fraction of the promised million-dollar payoff. The victim is encouraged either to bring the money to Nigeria or to hire a Nigerian “attorney” to make the last-minute arrangements.

After the victim pays the fraudulent fee, usually by wiring a bank transfer, the perpetrators ask for more fees. The victim is faced with the prospect of either losing the original fee payment or paying even more fees, hoping for the big payoff.

In this way, tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars may be swindled from a victim. The payoff, of course, never comes, because there never was any payoff to begin with.

“They may sound like old 1920s flimflams, but they still work,” says Jim Caldwell, a supervisor in the Secret Service's financial crimes division.

Sophisticated Grifters

Indeed, just like in the 1973 hit movie *The Sting*, the “4-1-9ers” go to great lengths to make their phony

operation seem believable.

Letters are written on official-looking Nigerian government letterhead, faxes sent from places like London, money transferred to legitimate-sounding places like Hong Kong. The scam operators dress up and play the part of government or military officials in face-to-face encounters. Computers often are used to forge documents.

In one recent instance, a scam letter was written on stationary appearing to be from the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria.

“Some of these guys can really put a fairly convincing letter or fax together,” says a Commerce official.

Nigeria is a former British colony, and many of the scammers speak and write English, so these rip-offs commonly target people in English-speaking countries. Elaborate laundering operations funnel the money around the world to buy goods for sale back in Nigeria. In many cases, accomplices in the United States and other countries help the perpetrators, officials say.

The Nigerian government has blamed the rise in scams on the country’s problems of decades-long mass unemployment, extended family networks, the age-old thirst for a quick buck, and the greed of foreigners.

Throwing Good Money After Bad

The scammers are so good, some victims are strung along for months and spend thousands of dollars, unwilling to believe they’ve been taken.

“It’s like being a gambler, who throws good money after bad — the deeper you get in the more reluctance you have to back out,” says Caldwell. “It’s not unusual that we have seen victims lose more than \$1 million.”

“Once people get hooked, my experience is they become more and more resistant to accepting that it’s a scam, because they become vested in the deal,” says a Commerce official. “It’s almost like ... denial, they don’t want to believe that it’s not true.”

Many times a family member or friend of a victim will ask authorities for help. When the bureau receives the information, they try to talk the person out of becoming victimized or subjecting themselves to further victimization.

“We’ve done that quite a bit, where we’ve talked people off a ledge, so to speak, and got them to come around and believe they’re victims,” Caldwell says.

“We’ve gone so far in the past to actually pull people off airplanes,” he says. “We’ve gotten to these people and pulled them out of potentially either harmful or certainly cash sensitive situations and gotten them out. We’re really quite proud of that.”

But, he adds, “Clearly some people never ever come

to the realization that they've been a victim to a fraud, and think that one more payment and their windfall is going to happen.”

Nigerian Scam Chronicles

The 4-1-9 scams come in a number of varieties. An Oregon man named Brian Wizard in July published a book about his experiences with Nigerian scammers, in which they worked a bizarre 4-1-9 variant called, Black Currency Scam.

In his book, *Nigerian 419 Scam, Game Over!*, Wizard describes how Nigerian cons proposed he pay \$8,000 to help them buy special chemicals to “clean” a suitcase supposedly full of illicit U.S. \$100 bills, and another \$2 million in a vault.

Meeting in a hotel bar in London, the Nigerians told him each bill had a smudge on its face that would prevent detection by a scanning device as it passed through U.S. Customs.

“They just tell you their story about why they need your money,” says Wizard. “They needed to buy the chemicals, and they just happened to be out.”

Wizard says he spent \$4,000 total to play along with four different scams. Now he hopes to recoup his losses with the book. Altogether, he says he was promised \$32 billion.

For souvenirs, he has a swath of forged and faxed documents. They include a certificate of ownership for \$25 million in a security vault in Benin, various diplomatic papers signed, stamped and approved, and a “get out of jail card” that says the money he would be getting was free of money laundering or drug money.

“I’m thinking, cool, wallpaper,” he says.

A rare, more sinister variant seen primarily in Europe is the Threat Scam. Victims are sent “notifications of assassination” from letter writers purporting to be from an international security service that has received information that the letter’s recipient is about to be kidnapped and murdered.

How do you get these mystery murderers off your back? Pay thousands to the security service, and they’ll take care of it.

There is no evidence the threats have ever been carried out, says a State Department publication.

Spreading the Word

Many victims who realize they’ve been taken never report their losses to the authorities out of embarrassment or fear they’ve violated some U.S. law, officials say.

U.S. authorities have published materials encouraging people to report suspected advanced fee fraud scams so

they can target the criminals and try to prevent others from being taken. The U.S. Department of Commerce has a hotline available for discussing possible scams.

“We get on average at least one call a day from a U.S. company, trying to find out whether these things are legitimate or not,” says the Commerce official. “About 90 percent of the time we determine that it is not legitimate.”

“If it’s unsolicited, and large amounts of money are connected to it, and it’s a confusing letter, it’s almost certainly a scam,” he says.

Which is not to say that 90 percent of all offers coming out of Nigeria are not legitimate, says Edward Casselle, Commerce Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa.

“Most Nigerian companies are honest and legitimate entities, but unfortunately, a small number of ‘scam artists’ operating out of Nigeria tarnish the country’s image as a place to do international business,” says Casselle.

To help U.S. companies avoid the bad apples, the Commerce Department also offers U.S. companies a market-research service called International Company Profile, which checks the bona fides of Nigerian individuals or companies or deals.

“I would like to think that we’re having an impact on this, in the education arena. But on the other hand, we’re not seeing any decline in it, in terms of victims,” says Caldwell.

For counseling about possible 4-1-9 scams, call the Nigerian desk officer at the U.S. Department of Commerce at (202) 482-5149.

26 AUG 2000

Siobahn O'Donnell sent the first of the two below letters to the Nigerian Inspector General of Police in FEB 2000 and the second "open letter" to President Obasanjo was published in the Nigerian publications The Punch and This Day on this date. They make for interesting reading:

The Inspector-General of Police
The Nigeria Police Force Headquarters
Area 10 Garki - Abuja.

Dear Sir,

RE: MISS SIOBHAN O'DONNELL (VICTIM OF ADVANCE FEE FRAUD) - A PLEA FOR CONCLUSION OF INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTION OF THE ACCUSED PERSONS.

We are legal practitioners representing the above named Miss O'Donnell hereinafter referred to as "our client" and on whose behalf and instructions we write to you as follows with regards to her case.

Our client who is a United States citizen resident in New York was lured into marriage some time in early 1997 by a Nigerian citizen also temporarily residing in New York at that time and named Moses Ituludiegwu Agwuna. The marriage by the way has in the meantime been annulled by a court of law in New York. More importantly, Moses Agwuna and two of his siblings Chukwudi Agwuna and Miss Uchenna Agwuna conspired with and amongst themselves to defraud our client a total sum of \$326,254:00 (Three Hundred and Twenty-six Thousand, Two Hundred and Fifty-four Dollars).

They perpetrated this fraud by selling the idea to our client of investing with them in the Nigerian petroleum sector. The fraudsters represented Miss Agwuna as being on very friendly terms with the Minister for Petroleum who would facilitate their getting crude oil allocations. Since the money required for their purported crude oil venture was huge and beyond the means of our client, the fraudsters representing that huge profits are usually made from import and sale of cars in Nigeria lured our client into buying and shipping to Nigeria for sale diverse makes of luxury cars on the understanding that the supposedly envisaged huge profits therefrom would substantially boost her over all financial standing and thus able to ultimately initiate the oil and gas venture.

Secure in the mistaken belief that she was dealing with decent people and who supposedly were also her relatives, our client liquidated and ploughed all her financial resources in the United States into buying cars which she sent to the fraudsters in Nigeria. She was shocked to discover that she had become the victim of an elaborate but unspeakably heartless fraud when her would - be business partners were neither forthcoming with proceeds of any sales, the cars, nor any explanation whatsoever. The principal co-conspirator, Moses Agwuna, who had traveled down to Nigeria (from New York) to facilitate the quick clearing of the cars refused to take phone calls from our client.

Our client in desperation turned to her supposed father-in-law, Igwe Osita Agwuna (the traditional ruler of Enugwu-Ukwu in Anambra State) to prevail on his children to return her money. But all her phone calls to the palace and letters dispatched by 'DHL' were all ignored by Igwe Osita Agwuna and his wife. Our client consequently came down to Nigeria and with the assistance of some sympathizers was able to lodge a report of the fraud with the Presidential Task Force on Financial Crimes (PTFFC). The fraudsters were accordingly interrogated, with Moses Agwuna only being detained thereafter. He was later released but after which he had confessed to the fraud, refunded a fraction of the money (about N3.6m) and gave an undertaking to the PTFFC that he would refund the remainder of the money to our client.

What happened next could only be rationally explained on the basis that the PTFFC had become compromised by the fraudsters and their undoubtedly influential family and friends. Not only that the PTFFC did nothing to enforce the undertaking given by Mr. Moses Agwuna, it purportedly allowed the person who stood surety for him, one Capt. Okpe, to withdraw the suretyship without producing him. Of course Moses Agwuna casually jumped bail and never went back to the PTFFC. This is apart from the fact that it is inexplicable for the PTFFC not to have also arrested the co-conspirators Chukwudi and Miss Uchenna Agwuna whose active involvement in the fraud was also obvious and beyond any doubt at all. For example, the bill of lading has Miss Agwuna as consignee of the cars and there is unimpeachable documentary evidence showing that our client transferred to her some amount in dollars with which to open an account with CitiBank (former N.I.B.) Abuja in which proceeds of the cars sale were to be deposited

for easy transmission to our client who also has an account with CitiBank in New York.

Upon the intervention of the United States Embassy in Nigeria the case was in December 1998 transferred from the PTFFC to the Special Fraud Unit of the police (S.F.U.). Though the SFU appears to show more professionalism than PTFFC in the handling of the case we are convinced that a lot more could be done than presently is the case. Chukwudi Agwuna and Miss Uchenna Agwuna at different times within 1999 were briefly detained and released on bail by the SFU but there does not seem to be plans to prosecute them. This is particularly frustrating considering that the case against them is seemingly iron-cast and the case file has been with the police for more than a year now.

As for Moses Agwuna, he was suspected to have fled to Britain by the time the police took over the case. After our several months of visits and letters Interpol (Nigeria) in or about August 1999 reportedly came round finally requesting the British police authorities for his repatriation back to Nigeria. The information which we had from our client, who made informal but intensive contacts with the relevant British police authorities, was that the request was defective and Interpol (Nigeria) was advised accordingly but it is yet to make a fresh (and procedurally correct) request. It however does appear now from available reports and the surrounding circumstances that Moses Agwuna has fled London in the meantime and is suspected to be hiding in his said father's palace/country home, Obu Ofo Nri Palace Enugwu-Ukwu Anambra State.

The case of our client is as pathetic as it is significant in allot more ways than one. It is, for example, a widely held belief in Nigeria that most victims of advance fee fraud have a good share of blame also in that most of the phony transactions by which they get defrauded are to their knowledge designed ostensibly to defraud Nigerian government and/or its agencies. But the business our client thought she was investing in was unquestionably legal and her partners were supposed to be her relatives by marriage. It is equally pertinent that the present democratically elected government has repeatedly advertised both at home and abroad its readiness and zeal to prosecute advance fee fraudsters and to minimise if not stamp out the crime entirely. As a matter of fact the Commissioner of Police (SFU) and a director of the Central Bank of Nigeria reiterated these claims about two weeks ago in a published newspaper report and went on to cite victims' reluctance to complain and refusal to come to Nigeria to testify as the greatest obstacles to prosecuting the fraudsters who have succeeded to paint the country, in the words of Gen. Colin Powell of the Operation Desert Storm fame, as " a nation of scammers".

It is however noteworthy that our client has complained to all and sundry. Several Nigerian newspapers have interviewed her and have featured her case a number of times. This is apart from her complaints to the PTFFC and SFU as well as other law enforcement organs and some top officials of the federal government. She has been intensely following up on her complaints personally and through our chambers as her retained legal representative in Nigeria. It is worth mentioning here that at the time our client was about starting her friendship with Moses Agwuna all her friends and family warned her to steer clear of any Nigerian as more good people, in their opinion, were to be found in the Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah than in Nigeria. When her trust was so criminally betrayed and she decided on coming to Nigeria to seek justice many people in the United States, including law enforcement agents, strongly advised her against making the trip based on their belief that Nigeria approximates to Dante's Inferno in

which all those who find themselves are well advised to abandon all hope. But she was fortified by hope that there must be some good people, no matter how few, in Nigeria especially in its law enforcement agencies who would at least try to ensure that justice is done. She accordingly has been coming to Nigeria at her own expense and would continue to come as may be required for the prosecution of the fraudsters.

Our client's trust is that the Nigerian criminal justice system would operate as is expected in any decent society to apprehend and prosecute the fraudsters and that they be punished quickly as provided by the law. You no doubt have a significant and indeed crucial role to play in the achievement of this goal. May we, with all humility, point out that given that circumstances of our client's case and its potentialities for even greater visibility locally and internationally, failure to achieve the above stated goal would constitute a significant dent on the credibility of the present government's claims of determination to stamp out advance fee and other cross border fraud by Nigerians.

We therefore urge you to use your good offices and ensure that Mr. Chukwudi Agwuna and Miss Uchenna Agwuna are promptly charged to and prosecuted in a court of law for the fraud on our client. As for Mr. Moses Agwuna, we believe that he would sooner be fished out from wherever he is hiding and brought to trial if your officers and men intensify efforts to apprehend him. It would be a good idea to mount surveillance on his father's palace/country home where he is strongly suspected to be hiding. Moreover it is inconceivable that his father does not know his whereabouts for about one year that his son has been on the run and he should therefore be questioned by the police.

Thanks in anticipation of your prompt response and kind consideration of our plea for justice.

Yours faithfully,

For: C. O. Akpamgbo's Chambers.

C. O. Akpamgbo, SAN.

Cc:

1. Commissioner of Police
Special Fraud Unit
13 Milverton Street
Ikoyi, Lagos.

2. Commissioner of Police
Anambra State.

3. Hon. Attorney - General, Federation
and Minister for Justice

4. The President and Commander-in-Chiefs
Federal Republic of Nigeria.

AMERICAN.

Dear President Obasanjo,

My name is Siobhan O'Donnell and I am a resident citizen of the United States. I was duped of my life's savings by some rather visible Nigerians and nothing concrete has been done on the matter despite my ceaseless efforts of over two years to get Nigerian law enforcement agencies to bring the culprits to justice. My lead lawyer Mr. C.O Akpangbo, SAN in frustration at the non-challance of the relevant authorities in apprehending and prosecuting the fraudsters wrote a detailed letter in February 2000 to the Inspector-General of Police. I have satisfactory proof that copies of the letter were sent to your goodself and to the Hon. Attorney-General of the Federation amongst others. I am equally aware that the letter has not been acknowledged by any of the recipients nor has there been any response to the compelling issues raised therein. I therefore have very few options but to make recourse to the present medium to communicate to you.

One Nigerian named Prince Moses Ituludiegwu Agwuna who was temporarily resident in United States developed a friendship with me, which soon thereafter resulted in a marriage. The marriage by the way has in the meantime been annulled on the grounds of fraud by a court of law in New York where the marriage had taken place. Moses Agwuna and two of his siblings Chukwudi Agwuna and Miss Uchenna Agwuna (all children of Igwe Osita Agwuna, a supposed first class chief and traditional ruler of Enugwu - Ukwu in Anambra State) conspired with and amongst themselves to defraud me of a total sum of \$326,254.00 (Three Hundred and Twenty-six Thousand, Two Hundred and Fifty-four U.S. Dollars). They effected the fraud by selling to me the idea of investing with them in the Nigerian petroleum sector. Miss Agwuna presented herself to me as being on very friendly terms with the Minister for petroleum who would get us crude oil allocations. Since the money required for this purported crude oil venture was huge and beyond my financial resources, the fraudsters convinced me that huge profits are usually made from import and sale of luxury cars in Nigeria and I consequently bought and shipped to them for sale in Nigeria different brands of luxury cars on the understanding that the supposedly envisaged huge profits to be made would substantially boost my over all financial standing and thus be in good stead to initiate the crude oil venture.

I was however shocked to discover that I had fallen victim to an elaborate fraud when my would-be business partners were neither forthcoming with proceeds of any sales of the cars, nor any explanation whatsoever. The principal co-conspirator, Moses Agwuna, who had traveled down to Nigeria (from New York) to help in clearing the cars refused to take my phone calls. My desperate telephone messages and letters to Igwe Osita Agwuna to prevail on his children to discuss my business investments were ignored. I then came to Nigeria in February 1998 and with the assistance and direction of some sympathisers lodged a report of the fraud with the Presidential Task Force on Financial Crimes (PTFFC). Two of the fraudsters were accordingly interrogated, with Moses Agwuna only being detained thereafter. He was soon released but only after he had confessed to the fraud, refunded a fraction of the money (about N3.5 million) and gave an undertaking to the PTFFC that he would refund the remainder of the money to me.

What happened next could only be rationally explained on the basis that the PTFFC had become compromised by the fraudsters and their undoubtedly influential family and

friends. Not only did the Chairman of the PTFFC, Lt. Col. Hassan (Rtd.), do nothing to enforce the undertaking given by Mr. Moses Agwuna, he refused to arrest the man who stood as surety, one Capt. Okpe (Rtd). When Hassan was queried, he only offered that Moses had been released as a result of a meeting he had with Moses' father Osita Agwuna III. This is apart from the fact that it was inexplicable for the PTFFC not to have also arrested the co-conspirators Chukwudi Agwuna and Miss Uchenna Agwuna whose active involvement in the fraud was obvious and beyond any doubt at all. Investigation on the case was in December 1998 transferred from the PTFFC to the Special Fraud Unit of the Police (S.F.U.). Beyond briefly detaining and releasing on bail Chukwudi Agwuna and Miss Uchenna at different times in 1999 nothing much has been done on the case. Capt. Okpe (Rtd.) who was made by the police to undertake to produce Moses Agwuna has neither produced him after more than nine months nor made to escheat his bond. Moses Agwuna himself travels in and out of Nigeria and England and telephones to tell me that nothing would ever come out of my quest for justice against his family because of his father's great influence. Spirited and consistent attempts by my lawyers and I to move the Interpol section of the Nigerian police to get him back to Nigeria to account for his theft of my money have been to no avail.

Since my present ordeal began, I have followed the developments in Nigeria by reading the Nigerian newspapers daily on the Internet. I have also come into contact with many victims of Nigerian advance fee fraudsters. Most of these victims prefer suffering in silence, expressing absolute lack of faith in the Nigerian government to prosecute fraudsters apart from the risk of being murdered should they come to Nigeria to press their case. In my own case the fraudsters and their privies have threatened and harassed journalists who have written on the case, lawyers who worked or are working on my behalf apart from assassination of their characters. Representatives from all relevant arms of the three involved governments, Nigeria, United States and United Kingdom have adamantly warned me that the fraudsters would kill me if they get the chance and I have absolutely no reason to doubt this.

A former Inspector General of Police had tried justifying the police inaction against advance fee fraudsters on the basis that for one reason or another most victims are reluctant to come to Nigeria and assist the police in investigating and prosecuting the criminals. But this rationale does not fit with the facts on the ground as exemplified by my own case. Here I am, aware of the danger to my life and out of funds but nevertheless borrowing money to travel to Nigeria several times to assist the law enforcement agencies in their investigations apart from constant and costly telephone calls and faxes to them and other relevant persons. The two Law firms representing me in Nigeria have gone to great lengths in the quest for justice but it does appear that getting the law enforcement agencies and other relevant organs of the Nigerian state to do the needful on cross border fraud is akin to trying to wring water out of stone. My lawyers tell me that my determination to see justice done is quite remarkable and some Nigerian law enforcement agents I have had cause to speak with acknowledge as much. Yet we are apparently as far from the prosecution of the fraudsters and their punishment under the law as we were about three years ago when they embarked on ruining my life.

If my case could be in such a state of neglect how about those in which the victims are less resolute in pursuing the criminals? Mr President, Sir, is it not probable that given the surrounding circumstances my case provides the litmus test on the attitude of the Nigerian police to advance fee fraud? Does my case not reflect an embarrassing gulf between statements of policy and practice given your much advertised readiness to

combat corruption and advance fee fraud by Nigerians? There is no doubt at all that the Nigerian economy, like many other economies, needs foreign investment to thrive. It is equally axiomatic that foreign investment would not readily flow to any environment where fraud routinely comes in the garb of business proposals or investments and the police do not appear very keen to subject the fraudsters to the dictates of the law. It is common knowledge that the United States President Bill Clinton shall be visiting you in some day's time and it is likely that a major issue you would discuss with him would be about facilitating investments from the United States. Could you, Sir, in the light of the foregoing honestly canvass and expect the support of President Bill Clinton in getting United States businesspeople and corporations to meaningfully invest in Nigeria? What recourse for justice exists in Nigeria if, for example, U.S. Agricultural Aid sent there never makes it to the fields and farms but goes to line the pockets of people such as the ones in my case.

The Nigerian government bought eight full pages in the New York Post of June 14, 2000 to highlight the numerous and potentially profitable investment opportunities in Nigeria and generally lauding your administration. For obvious reasons I was annoyed by the advertisement. I drafted a letter for publication in the New York Post to highlight my ordeal at the hands of my Nigerian would-be business partners (and supposed relatives by marriage) and to warn fellow U.S. citizen to regard all the smooth public relations talk on the 'new' Nigeria as sheer deceit. My Nigerian attorneys had earlier advised me to clear with them first any formal statements that I would make on my case. One of my attorneys, Mr. F.C.A. Okoli, dissuaded me from sending the letter to the New York Post by saying that justice would still be done in my case by the Nigerian criminal justice system. My doubts are however resurfacing and are getting graver with the passage of time. All that I ask Mr. President, Sir, is that justice be done or be seen to have done in my case. And the minimum requirement in this regard would be for the fraudsters and the accessories to their crime to be quickly apprehended and made to stand trial according to the laws of Nigeria.

May God Almighty continue to guard and guide you as you go about the undoubtedly great task of steering your potentially great country towards the path of spiritual and material recovery. Meanwhile, may I humbly express my hope for a meaningful response having now taken my case to the paramount law enforcement agent in Nigeria and on whose desk the buck stops.

Yours faithfully,

Siobhan O'Donnell.

17 AUG 2000

This sent in by a Concerned Nigerian:

>Police arrest three 419 suspects

>By Albert Akpor

>

>LAGOS— THE Police from the Special Fraud Unit (SFU), Milverton Road,

>Ikoyi, Lagos, have arrested three persons for being in possession of

>various government letter headings allegedly used for the Advance Fee

>Fraud (419).

>

>Reports said the arrest was sequel to a fax letter addressed to the
>Commissioner of Police (SFU) by one Mr. Eric of Snelcoky, Finland,
>saying that he was no longer interested in the investigation being
>carried out because he (Mr. Eric) had paid over \$857,000 without a
>tangible result.
>
>Sources further said the fax letter also bore a phone number 5890268
>of another suspect believed to be the controller of the office where
>the 419 activities were being carried out. He is reported to be
>presently on the run.
>
>Speaking on the arrest, the Commissioner of Police (SFU), Mr. Ade
>Ajakaiye, said: "This is not the first time government headed letters
>were being used to defraud innocent foreign victims.
>
>"This present one, I received a fax letter with phone No. 5890268,
>addressed to me, the Commissioner of Police (SFU) by one Mr. Eric of
>Snelcoky, Finland, claiming that I should discontinue the investigation
>because he (Eric) can no longer pay more than what he had paid already.
>
>"From investigation, we found out that the victim had been duped of
>\$857,000.00.
>
>We also recovered various government letter headings from the suspects.
>
>Mr. Ajakaiye gave the names of the suspects as Francis Agugom, Uzoukwu
>Ikenna and Chigozie Okorie, adding that two other suspects were still
>on the run.
>
>The police boss further said that when his detectives led by Inspector
>Abubakar Omede stormed the 156, Old Ojo Road, Agboju, the chairman of
>the office, Mr. Emmanuel Onuoha (principal suspect) was said to have
>travelled outside the state with other vital documents that could lead
>to the arrest of several other accomplices in the metropolis.
>
>Letters purportedly written from the Presidency, Office of the Chairman,
>Senate Committee on Local and Foreign Debt and Union Bank of Switzerland
>were recovered from the suspects.
>
>Mr. Ajakaiye further said the suspects have made useful confessions,
>adding that they will soon be arraigned in court.
>
>
> Vanguard: Transmitted THURSDAY, 17th AUGUST, 2000

10 AUG 2000

Brought to 419 Coalition attention by a Concerned Nigerian:

The Guardian Online - <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com>
Thursday, August 10, 2000

'419' goes internet

By Okey Ndibe

THE more one thinks about it, the stronger the sense one gets that the political charade in our country is a malignant case of government of 419, by 419 for 419. Our leaders have fully entrenched 419 as a social doctrine and political philosophy. Those we hired as leaders have turned out to be magicians. Daily, these magicians beguile us, seduce us, madden us with their sleights of hand, their abracadabras, their come-and-see-America-wonder routines.

The corrupt military regimes gave us something called security vote. It had nothing to do with security, and even less to do with a vote. It was simply another nomenclature (what our bureaucrats might call expenditure head) invented by our small-brained magician-leaders to steal public money without having to account for it. If you ever asked how any of the magicians spent their security theft, then you were declared a threat to security.

Not to be outdone, our politicians manufactured a trick they call welfare package. Like everything Nigerian, we had to do it in a big way. So our legislative leaders routinely assigned themselves fat welfare packages. You want to know how fat? Our Senate President's Christmas welfare is about what the United States pays its president for a whole year! Why not, I hear some of my friends saying. After all, unlike the U.S. president, Nigerian leaders call their country "a great nation" and flatter their people as "the great people of Nigeria." What better way to prove our greatness than to have our magician-leaders take home enough money to make most U.S. politicians salivate in envy and wish they could change their address to Abuja.

As our great leaders go, so do some of our great followers. The wisest Nigerians are those who have mastered the magic of 419. A Nigerian friend recently told me a joke he said was now commonplace in some quarters. According to him, if a Nigerian tells you he is a pharmacist, you must find out if his training is in Colombian drugs! If a Nigerian announces himself as a business consultant, you must ask if his speciality is in the branch of 419 called reparations. Now if a Nigerian tells you he's a legislative leader, you ought to find out if he's on welfare!

It's a sad, saddening reality, this knowledge that our best and brightest permit themselves, all too easily, to slip into the magicians garb, to master the deceits and conceits of 419. It's a shame to see so much talent wasted in pursuit of the ephemeral, the fleeting, the slippery crowns of self-aggrandizement and crass materialism. In the past week, I have been called by two Americans who received 419 letters promising them millions of dollars if only they would supply their bank accounts and a stamped letterhead. Then a third American, a university administrator, forwarded me an e-mail he received from a Nigerian who signed as Razaq Obaro. The 419-er's e-mail address was given as razaq-obaro@gmx.net. The American's note to me simply asked, "Is this comedy?" Whether Razaq Obaro is really somebody's name or is just another of those phantoms that populate-and pollute-Nigeria's social space is besides the issue. I have decided to publish his letter, unedited (and without further comment), for your reading displeasure:

Dear sir/madam,

I know this will reach you as a surprise, but need not to worry as we are using the only secured and confidential medium available to seek for foreign assistance/partnership in a business transaction which is of mutual benefit.

A foreigner, late Engineer Johnson Creek, an oil merchant/contractor with the Federal Government of Nigeria, until his death three years ago in a ghastly air crash, banked with us here at Union Bank Plc., Lagos and had a closing balance of \$USD18.5M (Eighteen Million, Five Hundred Thousand United States Dollars) which the bank now unquestionably expects to be claimed by any of his available foreign next of kin or alternative be donated to a trust fund of the WEST AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING FORCE (ECOMOG).

Fervent valuable efforts are being made by the Union Bank to get in touch with any of the Creek family or relatives but all have proved abortive. It is because of the perceived possibility of not going to be able to locate any of late Engr. Johnson Creek & #8217;s next of kin (as he had no known wife and children) that the management under the influence of our chairman board of directors, Retired Major General Kalu Uke Kalu, that an arrangement for the fund to be declared "UNCLAIMABLE" and then be subsequently donated to the trust fund for arms and ammunition which will further enhance the course of war in the West African sub-region and the world in general.

In order to avert this negative development, myself and some of my trusted colleagues in the bank now seek for your permission to have you stand as late Engr. Johnson Creek 's next of kin so that the fund, \$18.5M would be subsequently transferred and paid into your bank account as the beneficiary next of kin. All documents and proves to enable you get this fund have been carefully worked out and we are assuring you a 100 per cent risk free involvement. Your share would be 30 per cent of the total amount. 10 per cent has been set aside for expenses while the rest would be for myself and my colleagues for investment purposes in your country. Though we are trying to make a better future for ourselves and our families, considering the poor standard of living in Africa, we also want you to see this proposal as our own contribution in putting an end to the senseless wars in the West African sub-region.

If this proposal is OK. by you and you do wish to take advantage of the trust we hope to bestow on you and your company, kindly get to me immediately via my e-mail razaq-obaro@gmx.net, furnishing me with your most confidential telephone number, fax number and exclusive e-mail number so that I can forward to you the relevant details of this transaction.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated co-operation.

Regards,

Mr. Razaq Obaro

UNION BANK PLC

N.B Please, for confidential reason, I would like you to send me e-mail reply to razaq-obaro@gmx.net only. Do not send mails to my office e-mail at the Union Bank Plc.

Ndibe is Assistant Professor of English in Connecticut, United States

3 AUG 2000

Today US Treasury Officials and US Secret Service's 419 Task Force were able to intercept and return to an Asian victim over \$75K of 419ed funds that were in transit. Score One for the Good Guys.

21 JUN 2000

Here is advance notice of an article on 419 which will appear on the WorldNetDaily News site Saturday 24 JUN, along with a sample from the article:

COMING SATURDAY

Nigerian fraud hits
U.S. pocketbooks

Mail scam goes high-tech,
costs more than \$100 million

By Ardith Morgan
<http://www.worldnetdaily.com>

The black Mercedes glides through the sea of ragged women and children vendors on the sweltering, dirty Lagos street. Someone yells out, "Here comes a 4-1-9er! Let the 4-1-9er past!" A few of the people look up and wave or smile. The folk hero's car speeds off to the affluent suburb of Ikeja, a former residential neighborhood where buildings now are graced with discreet brass plaques identifying the headquarters of international investment, real estate and trading companies.

Expensively dressed young men linger on the street and balconies, preventing access to the buildings and the companies within, for all but a select few. Later they will drive in a shiny Lexus or Honda to Allen Avenue, center of the Nigerian drug trade to shop in exclusive stores and conduct other business in the middle class neighborhood near the Murtala Mohammed International Airport. This is the ruthless, powerful merchant class of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud or 4-1-9, named for a section of the Nigerian Criminal Code.

In this Saturday's edition of WorldNetDaily, read how Americans are losing \$100 million each year to this bizarre, worldwide fraud, an amount which, when added to estimates of Australian, Canadian, Japanese, Malaysian and European police, adds up to an international cost of at least \$5 billion during the last 11 years.

Ardith Morgan is co-author of the book, Business Opportunities: Secrets Revealed. She and her husband, Herb Morgan, are management and start-up business consultants and write about business fraud.

Source - <http://www.worldnetdaily.com>

20 JUN 2000

Here is the Decision in the Adler Case, which we received today. It is too long to include inline, so [click here](#) to read the Decision complete.

In brief, it says that Adler lost his case and is not entitled to his money back from Paul Ogwuma, then-Governor of CBN and bunch because his hands were found to be "unclean" -- and that, on the other hand, though Paul Ogwuma is basically found to be a 419er, he and bunch get to keep the money Adler sent because they are Nigerian crooks and it is up to the Government of Nigeria to prosecute them (don't hold your breath).

1 JUN 2000

Here is the Preface/Postscript the Coordinator of 419 Coalition wrote for novelist and investigative journalist Brian Wizard's upcoming novel "Nigerian 419 Scam 'Game Over!'." It serves as a useful recap of the situation.

The term 419 (four-one-nine) comes from the section of the Nigerian criminal code outlawing fraudulent activities. It has become a part of everyday Nigerian language. As others might say that one has cheated, or stolen, or tricked, or misrepresented, or lied, or conned, etc., a Nigerian will often just use the term "419" to cover all or some of the above sort of terms.

This book is an entertaining look at Black Currency 419 operations. Black Currency 419 is actually an updated version of a centuries old West African con called the Red Mercury scam, in which a special chemical is "necessary" to "clean" (ostensible) banknotes that have been defaced in order to make them negotiable. Of course, there is always a problem with the supply of the chemical or with the chemical itself, so the Bad Guys need money from the target in order to correct that and get the job done.... Black Currency 419 is the second most prevalent version of the Nigerian 419 scam.

The most common version of 419 operations is Classic 419, which is basically a money laundering proposal in which the target must supply advance fees in order to free up sequestered funds (which of course don't exist) in return for a percentage of the funds once they are released.

Some of the more common "Legal" 419 versions are: Contract Repurchase 419

in which the target thinks he is buying the proceeds of a Contract legitimately executed in Nigeria by another firm; Oil 419 in which the target thinks he is buying a shipment of Nigerian oil at a discounted rate; Will Scam 419 in which the target is told that he has been willed monies by someone in Nigeria; and Charity 419, in which the target (usually a religious or charitable organization) is told that the Persecuted Nigerian Christians (or Muslims etc., depending on what the target organization is) need to get their money out of the country before it is seized by the Nigerian government or other "hostile" groups. All of these 419's, of course, ultimately require the payment of an Advance Fee of some sort in order to get the job done.

Nigerian 419 is a global problem, affecting nearly every nation on earth. 419 Coalition has even had reports of 419 operations affecting the island of Yap out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. One can't get much further from anywhere else than Yap.

Nigerian 419 operations have been running since at least the mid-1980's and conservative estimates of total monies stolen worldwide through 2000 range from \$5 billion on up. That's Billion with a B. The United States alone has confirmed losses of \$100 million per annum, and estimated losses of \$300 plus million per annum, according to the US government. And that's just the US, there is of course the Rest of the World to factor in as well. It has been publicly reported that according to Diplomatic sources in Nigeria, Nigerian 419 operations are the third to fifth largest industry in the country (oil is of course #1).

What makes Nigerian 419 unique is that there is almost no recourse In Nigeria for the victims. While in the US and other nations there are millions of dollars of 419ed monies seized annually and hundreds of arrests and convictions (mostly of Nigerian nationals, but often of other nationalities as well), in Nigeria for the Whole Run of Nigerian 419 operations there have been about a dozen convictions to date and monies recovered and repatriated have been minimal. Nigeria has to date functioned, basically, as a safe haven for the 419ers and has done so for many years under several different regimes and forms of government.

It is very necessary to note that the People of Nigeria have been victims of Institutional 419 by successive Nigerian governments in which the rulers have systematically looted the Treasury for their own benefit. The most recent Nigerian Government under Obasanjo does seem to be making some progress in the recovery of these funds belonging to the Nigerian people and this is an encouraging sign in terms of Nigerian on Nigerian 419. However, the Regular forms of 419 described above, which are basically Nigerian on Foreigner 419, continue to date largely unabated.

It is also essential to note that the vast majority of Nigerians at home and abroad are honest, hardworking folks who are justifiably appalled at the damage done to their country and to their reputations by their 419er countrymen. It is unfortunate, and unfair, that these good folks are often subjected to suspicion and harrassment as suspected 419ers. But given that one cannot tell a 419er without a programme, and there is No programme, it is likely that these good people will continue to

suffer due to the misdeeds of their countrymen for some time to come. Both the targets of 419 who have lost money and the good people of Nigeria are victims of the success and longevity of Nigerian 419 operations.

Nigerian 419 is essentially one of the most successful and longest running direct mass-marketing campaigns in history with millions of letters and emails arriving into the homes and offices of people and businesses all over the world each year. Losses by given individuals can commonly reach into the millions of dollars. According to the targets in several such cases, everything they could possibly check out was checked out. Phone numbers, addresses, work numbers, job titles of the 419ers were checked. Some of the targets even held meetings with bona fide Nigerian Government officials in bona fide Nigerian Government offices where their "deals" were specifically discussed in front of witnesses, according to them.

And they got 419ed. All of a sudden, when push came to shove and the targets realized they had been taken, nothing was Real. The phone numbers were all "fakes" (even those of the main switchboard of the Central Bank of Nigeria obtained from Directory Assistance where the targets called and got put through to their 419ers at work); the Government Officials were on Mars the day the meeting was held; the Government Offices were "rented" by 419ers for the occasion, and nobody can figure out by whom; etc. You get the picture.

Sometimes even after targets have been 419ed for millions of dollars they continue to believe that their ship will come in despite being Told that they have been ripped off by the 419 Coalition, by the US Government, and by everyone else under the sun who knows anything at all about 419 matters.

We here at 419 Coalition call such people True Believers (after an Eric Hoffer book of the same name). And it often seems that the better educated, better travelled, and more successful the target is, the more likely he is to be a money-loser and to become a True Believer. They have to be successful people to have made the kind of monies that they lose, but their egos just won't let them believe that they have been Taken. And so they lose More.

Finally, although this book is a light-hearted look at 419, you need to know that a dozen deaths of those targeted have been reported, including that of one American who went to Lagos and apparently refused to go along with the 419ers. They then cut him up and sent him home in pieces for ransom. After receiving a million dollars in ransom they drove the man, soaked in gasoline, up to the street in front of one of the major hotels in Lagos, dumped him out of the car, and set him ablaze. No-one knows whether the victim was alive or dead when the Zippo got flicked, but he was certainly dead thereafter. No-one was ever caught or charged with this crime. So, Be Careful out there.

- June, 2000

Prepress copies of Mr. Wizard's novel can be ordered online at his website <http://www.brianwizard.com> [Click Here](#). The book is scheduled for publication in JUL 2000.

And no, neither 419 Coalition nor 419 Coalition staff get a dime out of this novel. The Preface was done as a public service.

30 MAR 2000

Here is a piece posted by a Concerned Nigerian to the soc.culture.nigeria usenet newsgroup on 23 MAR. We could not have said it better ourselves, except for the put 419ers to death part :) :) We would rather have monies recovered and repatriated and have the 419ers forced to do some sort of Constructive Public Service to repay some of the harm they have done to Nigeria both at home and abroad. Here is the piece:

"Dear Netters:

It is not surprising as things get worse in Nigeria that these dubious monsters would continue to seek ways to enrich their ill-gotten wealth. I came back last night and my wife handed me a 419 letter faxed to my home office. This is about the third time in the past two years that I am being bombarded with this type of letter. I have ignored it in the past but it is getting on my nerves, which is why I thought it to be a matter of urgency which needs to be looked into by the Nigerian Consulate.

I thought the legislature had passed an anti-corruption bill. When is it going to be implemented or will it be one of those laws in the book that never gets to be implemented. I hope there is a provision in the bill that makes it punishable by death for anyone knowingly or intentionally write a letter or try to parade his/herself as what he/she is not.

I can't believe that Nigerians would continue to embarrass us both home and abroad. The situation is getting out of hand. This time around it is a forged President's letterhead that is used, advising me to get in touch with Dr. Phillips Asiodu: Presidential adviser on economic and financial matters on foreign contract payment. At first glance, I thought it was funny but after contemplating on it, I viewed it as a serious issue that needs to be tackled by the Federal Government of Nigeria swiftly. "

419 Coalition would like to note that we have seen no interruption or reduction in Nigerian 419 operations under either the Babangida, Abacha, or Obasanjo regimes. It has been large-volume business as usual under all three regimes, to date. It seems the 419ers are able to operate as always no matter who is in power or what form of government Nigeria is under. In all this time, there have been minimal convictions of standard 419ers in Nigeria, though it is fair to say that the Obasanjo Government does seem to be trying to do something about what we here would call Institutional 419ers. And,

of course, only minimal amounts of monies have been recovered and repatriated from standard 419ers by successive Nigerian GOVs, including the Obasanjo GOV to date. 419 Coalition continues to average over 60 hits a day on our main page, as we have done ever since we put the site up in 1996.

419 Coalition would also like to note that in our view the vast majority of Nigerians, both at home and expatriate, are hard working, honest, honorable people. In fact, we have publicly stated this many times, including defending this position against Nigerian media pieces asserting the contrary. It is a shame that the 419ers continue to operate with impunity from a safe haven in Nigeria, damaging both the People of Nigeria and the reputation of the nation as a whole. But that is the way it has been for many years, under successive Nigerian Governments, and that is the way it remains today from all evidence available to us at this time.

15 FEB 2000

The following piece was sent to 419 Coalition by a concerned Nigerian.

BOSTON, Feb. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- A former Chatham resident was sentenced today in federal district court on wire fraud charges in connection to a Nigerian fraud scheme.

United States Attorney Donald K. Stern announced today that GLENN R. ELION, age 50, a former resident of Chatham, Massachusetts, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns to 3 years and 10 months' imprisonment, followed by 3 years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$3,495,697. ELION pled guilty to one count charging him with wire fraud on June 11, 1999.

According to information presented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Diana K. Lloyd at a previous hearing before Judge Stearns, ELION's fraud arose from correspondence he received in 1995 from an individual identifying himself as Frank Chuma asking him to invest in a Nigerian business deal. Chuma wrote that he had access to \$25 million in U.S. Federal Reserve Notes, and that if ELION was willing to advance Chuma some money, ELION would receive a 20% share of the money. Chuma explained to ELION that the notes had been coated with a black substance to prevent their theft, and that ELION's money was needed to purchase a special chemical to clean the notes. Between August 1995 and early 1997, ELION sent approximately \$700,000 of his own money to various accounts identified by individuals purporting to be associates of Chuma.

By May 1996, however, ELION's own financial resources were becoming limited. At the time, ELION owned at least two businesses: a start-up biotechnology firm called Plant Cell Technologies ("PCT") and a small winery in Chatham, Massachusetts where he lived. However, these businesses were not generating a substantial income stream. ELION was still being asked, by various Nigerians, to send large sums of money to different bank accounts, but now,

instead of sending his own money, ELION began to defraud others into sending him their money. He did so by telling elaborate lies. ELION told different lies to different people in order to induce these individuals to send large sums of money to accounts under his control. He told some victims that he needed money in order to secure funds he was owed on an old Japanese consulting contract and others he told he was trying to bring millions of dollars back from Taiwan.

ELION even went so far as to create several phony documents in order to make his scheme appear legitimate. One example was a letter he created on forged Secret Service letterhead containing the forged signature of a Secret Service agent. The letter outlined the specifics of the purported Secret Service involvement and approval of a supposed transaction that ELION had described to some of his victims. All of ELION's stories were false, and he never revealed to his victims that all along, he was dealing with, and sending money to, various Nigerian-controlled accounts all over the world.

By December 1998, ELION had defrauded friends, business associates and even family members out of a total of approximately \$3.5 million, according to the government.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Secret Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Diana K. Lloyd of Stern's Major Crimes Unit.

SOURCE U.S. Attorney's Office, Massachusetts

10 JAN 2000

We at 419 Coalition thought it would be appropriate to start the New Year with a reprint of the piece which follows from Nigeria's Vanguard newspaper from 17 NOV 1999. The promised published list of 419ers has not yet materialized as of this date to the best of our knowledge (which comes as no surprise given the history of how successive governments of Nigeria have handled this matter).

We would also like to note that Anytime the Government of Nigeria needs some help in compiling their list, all they have to do is make an official request of the United States Secret Service 419 Task Force, which maintains a database of over 60,000 Nigerian phone numbers, names, and other related data on Nigerian 419ers.

Further, we would like to note that this material has been made available to successive Nigerian Governments already. But, golly gee, the GOV of Nigeria is still having trouble putting together even a Small list of 419ers for publication etc. Well, well, what a surprise... :) :) :)

And 419 Coalition continues to wait for the monies stolen by Nigerian 419ers to be repatriated in anything like the amounts it was stolen. The GOV of Nigeria seems to be very interested in getting other Governments to help it recover monies 419ed from the Nigerian people by 419ing Nigerian Governments; but it does not seem

too awful interested in helping other Governments in recovering monies 419ed from Their peoples by 419ing Nigerian citizens.

One would think a little quid pro quo might be in order here, do you reckon? :) :)

Here is the piece from 17 NOV Vanguard:

FG to publish names of 419 suspects

The Federal Government will soon publish particulars of suspected fraudsters, also known as 419ers, as part of the efforts to save foreign and local investors from being duped, the Minister of Commerce, Alhaji Mustapha Bello, said in Abuja yesterday.

He said that the step was also being taken to help in bolstering public confidence in the country, an essential ingredient to attract foreign investors.

Mustapha told newsmen in the federal capital that a special investigation panel on trade malpractices had compiled the addresses, telephone and fax numbers used in sending scam messages and that Nigeria's foreign trade partners were already being alerted.

The minister, who lamented that the activities of the dupers had continued to cast the country in bad light, stressed that they had also scared off many would-be foreign investors who feared being ripped off.

He vowed to "put in everything" within his powers to expose the dealers, saying that the attack on their deeds would be fully sustained in spite of their being crafty in their operations.

419 Coalition note: The Nigerian Government promised this sort of thing plus television coverage of the 419ers detained in the Nigerian Government white paper on 419 in mid-1992. 419 Coalition sincerely hopes that the Obasanjo Government follows through on this promise, as it would be a Very Welcome first step in the right direction. 419 Coalition also hopes for quick trials and rapid repatriation of 419ed funds. We are always pleased to report on any constructive steps taken by the GOV of Nigeria in controlling supply-side 419.

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