

Nigeria - [419 Coalition](#) 2009 News on Nigerian Scam / 419 Operations

2 DEC 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper The Times of Nigeria:

\$1.8million Fraud: American Victim Gives Evidence in Court

An American politician and financial expert, Mr. Carl D. Vance this morning at the Ikeja High Court presided over by Justice Josephine Oyefeso, narrated how he lost a whopping \$1.8million to a Nigerian 419 syndicate following promises of non existent lucrative oil contract with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC. He stated this while giving evidence in a 21 count charge bordering on obtaining under false pretences preferred against a Nigerian businessman, Chief Collins Oyejiaka by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC.

Led in evidence by the prosecutor, Mrs. Elizabeth Ayodele, Vance told the Court how he fell prey to the 419 syndicate of which Oyejiaka is the arrowhead. He said that in the winter of 1995, he attended a reception hosted by the Canadian Embassy in Washington D.C for the National Association of State Treasurers of which he was a member of the corporate affiliate advisory board.

At the event, he said he got talking with other invitees who were discussing investment opportunities in foreign countries. In the process, he claims that he was introduced to a certain Chief E. D. Akan by a man who claimed to be a staff of the Nigerian Embassy in Washington. Akan was introduced to him as a member of the board of directors of the Nigerian national oil company, the NNPC. Akan, he recalls, wasted no time putting across some very lucrative investment proposals to him .One of those proposals turned to be a lucrative oil contract with the NNPC. Vance, who didn't suspect any mischief, fell for the bait. This, he narrated, marked the beginning of his financial involvement with the syndicate. To land the lucrative contract, the victim who is a Rotarian was asked to make all manner of payments to purported Nigerian government agencies to secure non existent documents and certificates. He listed the documents to include Customs clearance, NDLEA clearance and NNPC fees, among others.

By 2001 when it dawned on him that he was being duped, he had lost close to \$2million. The payments were wired to the syndicate in several countries including United States of America, United Arab Emirate, Switzerland, Zurich and Brussels.

Desperate to recover some of the money, Vance said he placed a call on all the money but was only able to recover a paltry \$110,000 from UAE through Communal Credit Bank and the police in that country. Such cooperation however was not forthcoming in other jurisdictions. He met a brick wall in Swiss banks most of which requested him to hire an attorney to pursue his cause.

Vance lamented that he has lost almost all he had to this fraud. He told the court that he had to sell his cars, house and all valuables he possessed to raise the money. He added that he thought that he was dealing with genuine government officials not knowing that he was dealing with fraudsters.

After he gave his evidence, the prosecutor Mrs. Ayodele cross examined him and he affirmed all he wrote in his statement.

The respondent counsel, Mr. Richard Omo Ahonaruogho also cross examined the witness during which he told the court that he had never met the accused person before and that he met one or two members of the syndicate outside the country. The victim also told the court that he didn't pay any money into any bank account in Nigeria.

Before the victim was called to give evidence, Mr. Bawa Abdul- Rasheed, an EFCC investigator who is PW1 was cross examined by the accused person's counsel and he told the court that the accused did promise to refund some of the money traced to his account if the EFCC could assure him that he would not be prosecuted.

After listening to both parties, the trial Judge adjourned the case to January 18, 2010.

The witness had early this year petitioned EFCC over the massive 419 heist that began in 1995 .Following the report, the accused who is the chairman of C.B Trust Limited, was arrested. Investigations revealed that he used the company as the conduit to perpetrate the fraud. After the completion of investigation, he was arraigned and slammed with a 21- count charge bordering on Advance fee fraud, conspiracy and obtaining money by false pretence.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.thetimesofnigeria.com/Article.aspx?id=2317>

419 Coalition comment: Sounds good so far. Hopefully the EFCC will be pressing the Swiss etc. to repatriate the victims monies - after all, the Nigerian Government does have some experience with that sort of thing in getting monies back that were stolen by their former national leaders (like Sani Abacha) etc.

24 NOV 2009

From the Nigerian EFCC latest news section:

Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, Mrs. Farida Waziri, has directed that Rosalind Sumner, an Australian victim of love scam be paid the sum of N514, 212.10 and another \$5900 recovered from a Nigerian fraudster.

The payment which is a restitution is in fulfillment of a Lagos State High Court judgment of March 10, 2009, against Lawal Adewale Nurudeen, a graduate of the University of Lagos, who was prosecuted and sentenced to 28 years imprisonment by Hon. M. O. Obadina of the Lagos High Court.

Nurudeen was first arraigned on November 31, 2008, by the EFCC, on 11 count charge bordering on Advance Fee Fraud. He had defrauded the Australian of the sum of \$47, 816.93 in a romance scam.

The N514, 212.10, was recently recovered from the convict's bank account in Sterling Bank while another cash sum of \$5900 was recovered from his home. The court, in its ruling, also directed that the balance of the money be recovered through the sale of his car, two plots of land and a monthly \$250 which would be paid to the victim.

The Queensland Police, Australia as well as the victim have made requests for the recovered funds to be released to the latter in line with the judgment. In a letter to the Commission, the victim, Rosalind Sumner commended the EFCC for the successful prosecution of the case.

Consequently, the anti-graft agency on Monday directed that all funds so far recovered from the convict totalling about \$9,300 be handed over to the Australian Ambassador to Nigeria for onward delivery to the victim. Femi BabafemiHead, Media & Publicity24/11/09

Here is the URL of the press release for as long as it is good:

http://efccnigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=789&Itemid=34

419 Coalition Comment: Now, this is more like it! We hope that Ms Sumner is, over a short period of time, reimbursed for her losses in toto. We are still watching and waiting for large scale reimbursment to take place, as ordered by the Nigerian Courts several years ago, in the Odiawa case - Well over a million dollars in restitution was ordered in that case and the victim has not yet seen a dime, much less anything substantial. Over the years, that case has become a litmus test for the EFCC's restitution and reimbursement operations, and 419 Coalition would like to see that matter promptly addressed, though we are of course Very glad that Ms Sumner is receiving at least a portion of her monies back in her case as noted in the above press release.

22 NOV 2009

Not sure exactly which Nigerian publication this article was culled from, but it was posted in the Naijanet Yahoo group, a long established Nigerian online discussion group:

\$96,000 Internet Fraud: Christ Embassy Faithful Nabbed

Written by Lilian Agih, Abuja

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has arrested a former student of the Igbinedion University, Edo State, Okoro Osagie Victor, who is an ardent member of the Christ Embassy Church for allegedly defrauding foreigners to the tune of \$96, 607 through the internet.

The 23-year-old former Chemical Engineering student, who dropped out of university in 2004 due to what he called 'family issues', was picked up by operatives of the commission in Benin City following a petition by a regional compliance officer with MoneyGram International, who suspected that the large number of foreign ladies, mostly Americans and Germans, who have been wiring money to the fraudster were victims of fraud.

The suspicion was triggered by a communication with one of Victor's victims who told Money-Gram that she met the fraudster over the internet and that she has been sending him money because he claims that he wanted to set up a business. Further investigations revealed that Victor, was a serial marriage scammer. He has been fleecing his victims posing as Jerry Finger, a white British American expatriate working in Nigeria.

Apart from sending photograph of a successful white male with the assumed identity of a Jerry Finger to his victims and promising them marriage, he would also tell them that he was in Nigeria to execute a project and then demand for money from them, with a promise to refund them when he is paid for the project. Some fell for the gimmick and paid.

Before he was finally nabbed, a total of \$96,607.95 had been remitted to him by several victims from the United States and Germany.

He collected the money through MoneyGram desk in five different banks: United Bank for Africa Plc, Bank PHB, Spring Bank and Equitorial Trust Bank, using a fake driver's licence with the name of Jerry Finger.

Upon arrest, he confessed to the crime, explaining that he usually deposited receipts from his heist in three accounts; a current, savings and domiciliary accounts with numbers 6028812305, 4018813554 and 9018800613 respectively with Zenith Bank. Victor claimed that he started scamming in 2007, three years after he dropped out of university. Before then, he had worked as bar man in two hotels in Benin City, Royal Marble Hotel and Ede Confectionaries.

He said he was forced to embrace internet fraud due to the pressure of fending for his family. And even when he devoted most of his time to fraud, Osagie still held regular jobs as a camouflage for his criminal endeavours, adding that he continued to work as Independent Field Advisor and Multilevel Marketer for ADIC Insurance in Benin.

However, the unusual thing about the suspect is that unlike other fraudsters who live a life of luxury and spend their money on women, cars and drinks, he lives a moderate lifestyle. He neither drinks, smoke nor womanises. To crown it all, more than 80 per cent of the proceeds of his heist were given to his church, Chris Oyakhilome's Christ Embassy as tithes and offerings. The suspect, who was picked up on October 23 and has since been admitted to administrative bail, will soon be charged to court.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the EFCC, Mrs. Farida Waziri, has charged Nigerian youths to take up the gauntlet in the fight against corruption in the country.

She made the call at the weekend when she received members of the National Youth Council of Nigeria in her office. Waziri, who was represented by the Head, Strategy and Re-Orientation Unit (SARU), Gabriel Aduda, said the youths should key into the fight against corruption as the future belongs to them.

Her words: "We are going to be working together to fight this scourge (corruption) that has eaten deep into the fabrics of our nation and has even begun to tamper with our national life because we have people dying from road accident because roads have not been built and money meant for that has been stolen. We have people dying from diseases that should have been cured because those drugs never got to the hospitals or they got to the hospitals and later disappeared.

"So, whether we like it or not, directly or indirectly, we have been affected by corruption".

In his remarks, the acting president of the National Youth Council of Nigeria, Deolu Sotade George, showered encomiums on Waziri and the Commission especially over the recent conviction of Chief Bode George by a Lagos High Court.

He said with the successful prosecution and conviction of Chief Bode George, former chairman of the Nigerian Ports Authority, Waziri has shown that she was determined to root out corruption from Nigeria.

[There was also an article on this case in the Nigerian newspaper Daily Independent, here is the URL of that article, for as long as it is good: <http://www.independentngonline.com/DailyIndependent/Article.aspx?id=3820>]

419 Coalition Comment: We trust that the 20% for the stolen funds kept for himself by this erstwhile Robin Hood will be repatriated to the victims, and that the 80% of the stolen funds contributed to the Chris Oyakhilome's Christ Embassy Church will be promptly refunded and repatriated to the victims. That, after all, would be the Christian thing to do, our view. We'll let you know if we hear that this has been done - unlike in the Odiawa case where the victim has for years been awaiting the reimbursement of over \$1 million ordered by the Court in that case and so far hasn't received a dime, to the best of our knowledge...

10 NOV 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper Thisday:

\$2.5m Scam: Varsity Graduate Bags 12 year Jail Term

From Yemi Akinsuyi in Abuja

A graduate of Chemical Engineering from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Nwanya Odichukwu, has been sentenced to 12 year imprisonment by a Federal High Court, Enugu over offences bordering on fraud and internet scam. According to a release signed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Spokesman Mr. Femi Babefemi, operatives from the Enugu zonal office of the Commission had on 20th August 2009 arrested Odichukwu at Logon Nigeria Multi Medis Cybercafé located at Chime Avenue, New Haven, during a raid. The statement said he was caught sending scam emails. Investigation shows that Nwanya was soliciting information on the financial status of unsuspecting victims. A thorough search on him and his residence led to the recovery of a parcel containing an international cashier valued at \$2 million, a Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) draft valued at \$500,000 in the name of one Mr. B.R. Butler, a United Kingdom International Passport bearing the name of one Jaxkson Phillips Dennis as well as scanned United States dollar documents. The suspect was subsequently arraigned on a six count charge for committing offences contrary to Section 5 of the Advance Fee Fraud and other Related Offences Act No. 14 and punishable under Section 1 (3) of the same Act. Delivering his ruling on the matter last Friday, a copy of which was obtained on Monday November 9, Justice Abdu Kafarati sentenced Odichukwu to two years imprisonment on each count charge, bringing the total number of jail term to 12 years. The prison term will run concurrently.

Here is the YRL of the article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=159393>

28 OCT 2009

A friend of ours from the Oregon Department of Justice has brought to our attention a video and online documentary by McAfee (the web security people etc.) which has recently aired on NBC and is also viewable online. It is titled "H*Commerce: The Business of Hacking YOU" and while only a portion of it deals with 419 the entire piece is well worth viewing.

Here is a link to its site, for as long as it is good:

<http://www.stophcommerce.com>

23 OCT 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper, The Guardian:

EFCC arrests 18 suspected Internet fraudsters

A CLAMPDOWN on Internet fraudsters by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has paid off as its operatives have arrested 18 persons suspected to be oiling the illicit trade.

Also, about 800 scam e-mail addresses used by the suspects have been tracked and shut down under the commission's initiative tagged "Project Eagle Claw."

Mrs. Farida Waziri, chairman of the anti-graft agency, made this public in Las Vegas, United States (U.S.) on Wednesday at the 35th yearly Convention of Black Mayors in the U.S. while speaking on "Global vision for local action: A paradigm of connectivity in the African Diaspora."

She told top officials of the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM) that "we expect that Project Eagle Claw as conceived will be 100 per cent operational within six months and at full capacity, it will take Nigeria out of the top 10 list of countries with the highest incidence of fraudulent e-mails. At the moment, Project Eagle Claw has delivered the following results:

"Over 800 fraudulent e-mail addresses have been identified and shut down. The EFCC is fine-tuning security modalities with Microsoft and upon full deployment, the capacity to take down fraudulent e-mails will increase to 5,000 monthly. Further, it is projected that advisory mails to be sent to victims and potential victims will be about 230,000 monthly.

"There have been 18 arrests of high profile syndicates operating cyber crime organisations."

NCBM led by President, Heather Hudson, had during a visit to Waziri in Abuja on July 29, this year invited her to address the yearly event as part of the group's efforts to foster greater relationship between the U.S. and the EFCC.

In a statement made available to The Guardian yesterday, EFCC spokesman, Femi Babafemi, said Waziri justified her decision to adopt the latest strategy against cyber crime.

Waziri said: "Project Eagle Claw is an initiative of the EFCC for the smart use of technology in fighting cyber crime. Hitherto, the EFCC structure for combating cyber crime revolved around cyber raids and investigation of petitions.

"However, the proactive stance of the new leadership required a radical departure and Eagle Claw was developed. When it is fully deployed, it will afford the EFCC the option of either monitoring or shutting down all fraudulent e-mail addresses. The EFCC would also have identified victims and potential victims and advised them that their e-mails have been compromised."

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:

[http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/news/article08//indexn3_html?pdate=231009&ptitle=EFCC arrests 18 suspected Internet fraudsters&cpdate=231009](http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/news/article08//indexn3_html?pdate=231009&ptitle=EFCC%20arrests%2018%20suspected%20Internet%20fraudsters&cpdate=231009)

There is also an announcement on this on the EFCC website. Here is the URL of that for as long as it is good:

http://www.efccnigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=746&Itemid=34

419 Coalition comments: We are always glad to see reports of EFCC counter-419 operations which result in arrests and other tangible outcomes, especially when as one will note if they scroll back in time through recent years' News on the site, there has not been that much to report of late. So this report of renewed EFCC counter-419 activity is very welcome news.

We'd appreciate it if the EFCC would publish the names, photos, and charges placed on those arrested for alleged 419 activity on their website and in the Nigerian electronic and print media. This should be done on a routine basis. After all, the Nigerian Government did promise vehemently and publicly over a decade ago, in a position paper on 419, that this would be done.

On the 800 email addresses shut down so far, we are thankful, but we would like to discuss that a bit.

Even though 419 Coalition discourages the sending of 419 soliciations in to us, since we are an educational NGO in nature and have no power to actually Do anything about them, people send them in to us anyway.

Of these reports we are sent, for the past several years, we in turn have been sending along those which contain Nigerian phone numbers on to the EFCC (of course each one we send in contains a 419er email address and headers as well). 419 Coalition alone, has sent in many Thousands of 419 solicitations containing 419er email addresses and Nigerian phone numbers to the EFCC over the last several years. Many thousands per annum must be sent in by others from all over the world as well. Therefore, the 800 email addresses shut down by the EFCC, while appreciated, must be seen as the mere tip of the iceberg when considering the magnitude of 419er criminal operations. However, the EFCC has said (in an article by Reuters) that when the Eagle Claw program gets fully up and running in six months or so, the numbers of email addresses etc. shut down will increase to a routine capacity of 5000 per month.

If the EFCC can indeed eventually shut down 5000 419er email addresses a month, that may indeed inconvenience the 419ers, for which we will be grateful. Of course, we'd also like to see the phone numbers we and others send in shut down en masse routinely as well...

On another front, when 419ers are convicted of their crimes (yes this does happen from time to time) and restitution is ordered to the victim by the Court, as it usually is, we ask the EFCC to prioritize the identification and seizure of 419er monies and assets, no matter how well disguised or hidden, and to expedite repatriation of funds to victims. For example, in one case we have been following (the Odiawa case), the 419er was convicted several years ago with restitution of 1.6 million US dollars ordered, and so far the victim hasn't seen a dime. This sort of performance by the EFCC on asset identification, seizure, and repatriation matters is simply abominable. Conviction of 419ers is good, but it is not enough. They must be punished financially as well, and we would suggest that it would be good for EFCC counter-419 efforts to show consistently and repeatedly that there is more financial risk than benefit to becoming a 419er.

To sum up, 419 Coalition once again thanks the EFCC for its recent activity on the counter-419 front, and appreciates its plans for increased counter-419 operations in the future, as there remains much to be done.

22 OCT 2009

This report on a version of Cashier's Check 419 written by and sent in to us by our friends at .NEXt Web Security. The events were first reported in JUN but they are still of interest::

Attorney / Collection Scam - Understanding the crime

It has been dubbed the "Attorney/Collection" scam and has extracted millions of dollars from law firms in the US & Canada. While started by one Nigerian criminal group in Toronto, there are now 3 additional "copycat" groups participating due to the success of the first group. These additional groups are operating out of the Toronto area and the UK.

The law firms are contacted first via email explaining that they wish to engage the law firm's services for collection of overdue accounts, most being larger than \$420,000 each. Alternately, the firm receives a "referral" from another firm.

Once communications begin, the "debtor" somehow finds out about legal action being taken, contacts the law firm to tell them they will pay. The firm receives a counterfeit cashier's check via UPS or FedEx, most often drawn on CitiBank. To date, over \$500,000,000 in counterfeit Citibank cashier's checks have been sent to attorneys.

The check is deposited in the law firm's trust account. Within a few days, when the bank provides the firm with a provisional loan for the value of the check and the firm mistakenly believes that the CFT has actually been made good, the law firm wires the "due" amount to the scammer's "company" which in reality is a money laundering account somewhere in Asia, where literally hundreds of accounts are set up for this purpose. Once the bank finally discovers the check is counterfeit, it holds the law firm responsible for the entire amount.

The Nashville Post confirmed that Bradley Arant Boult Cummings recently fell victim to the scheme, wiring in excess of \$400,000 to the scammers' bank account, even after performing what turned out to be faulty diligence on their part and contacting a supposed "third party" to verify the funds. Reports of a "quick arrest" by the FBI have been confirmed to be false.

Here is the URL of a piece from the 10 JUN 2009 Nashville Post which reported on the crime, for as long as it is good:
http://www.nashvillepost.com/news/2009/6/10/tba_warns_of_scam_too_late_for_one_major_firm

3 SEP 2009

From the Daily Sun, a Nigerian newspaper:

Fraudster in police net for swindling victim N1.7 m

By MATTHEW DIKE

Police operatives in Lagos have arrested a suspected member of international fraud syndicate, who swindled a victim the sum of N1.7 million. Police detectives from Apapa Division were said to have nabbed Olusegun Ojo, 42, at a popular Fast Food Outlet in Ikeja area of the metropolis.

Ojo was alleged to have gone to wait for the victim, identified simply as Akpan, to collect extra \$ 30,000, before he was rounded up.

Akpan, a civil engineer, alleged that a woman, who identified herself on phone as Toyin Solaya, (real name Rose), had told him how someone gave her his phone number. He said the woman claimed she was living in the United Kingdom.

The woman was alleged to have claimed working for former President Olusegun Obasanjo and his late wife, Stella. Rose was also said to have lied that a popular pastor in Lagos, owed her the sum of \$45 million which she gave to him to enable him establish his fast growing church.

Akpan alleged that the woman claimed she wanted to build a large oil depot in the country and would require large expanse of land for that purpose. He disclosed that the woman also told him to inspect a land in Calabar, Cross River state, with the assistance of her agent, Christian.

The victim narrated how he traveled from Lagos to Calabar, only to be told that the land belonged to a certain company. The victim further explained that Rose later told him to inquire about it, adding that he took the matter to the traditional ruler of Calabar (Obong).

The Obong allegedly told him that he (Obong) would invite the family later to inquire about the land.

The engineer said he was planning to go back to Calabar, after spending some time in Lagos, when Rose called him again to tell him not to worry and promised to send \$200 million to him from the United Kingdom. The female fraudster allegedly told him she would send the money through China, to Ghana, to prevent Nigerian fraudsters from intercepting it.

Rose was said to have advised the victim to prepare his International passport as he would soon be traveling to Ghana to collect the money from a Cargo Company. The victim said he took his bossom friend, Chuks, to Ghana, adding that a man, who presented himself as a Chief Security Officer of the company, identified as James, picked them from Ghana Airport to the company.

At the Cargo Company, the fraudsters asked him to pay the sum of \$ 7,600. He said after paying the money in Cedes, he informed Rose on phone of the payment.

The victim said when they brought parcel, it turned out to be a golden box filled with fake \$200 million. The woman asked the victim to negotiate with the company and one of them, who claimed to be a staff of the company advised him to pay 5 per cent of the \$200 million.

He said the woman told him to try and raise the money, since he would also be a beneficiary.

He said he came to Nigeria in search of some money, but to no avail. The fake Chief Security Officer of the company, later called him on phone to inform him that he would assist him to provide the sum of \$40,000. Yet, the victim said he could not raise the \$60,000.

The woman called the victim on phone again, claiming to be suffering from heart attack, adding that a man she identified as Mohammed, from Cameroon, would bring the sum of \$30,000 to him.

James was said to have called to inform the victim that one Mohammed had brought another \$30,000 to the company.

The same woman also called the victim to inform him that she would send her brother to travel to Syria to collect the money and that the victim would be responsible for the travel expenses, including airfare.

But instead of the brother, another man, who introduced himself as Mr. Cole called the victim with the first phone number the woman used earlier in communicating with him (victim). Cole claimed to be working with the said company in its Nigerian Branch. Cole told him that as a fellow Nigerian, he had volunteered to assist in clearing the goods from Ghana port.

The victim said Cole later suggested that they met at Sheraton Hotel, Ikeja. But the victim suggested that they met at Durbar Hotel, Festac, Savannah Hotel, Apapa, or somewhere on Oba Akran Road, Ikeja. But Cole later chose a popular Fast Food Outlet at Toyin street, Ikeja.

The victim, who had realised that he was dealing with fraudsters alerted the Divisional Police Officer of Apapa Police station, Mohammed Ali. He disclosed that Ali immediately gave him some police detectives, who accompanied him to the Fast Food to arrest Cole (Olusegun Ojo).

Ojo, who hails from Ondo State, denied being a fraudster. The suspect said Rose was his neighbour at Sunny Oyekunle Street, Anthony village. He also claimed to be an estate agent, who was told by Rose to sell a property to the victim. The suspect also

claimed it was Rose, who gave him the phone number of the victim. "I have my office in my residence. I have a property to sell at Apapa. I only invited him for a genuine business. I don't know if they duped him \$7,600. I have a wife and seven children," Ojo said.

A police source told Daily Sun that the suspect represented the syndicate in Nigeria. He said Ojo came to the Fast Food joint to take part of the money, unknown to him that the victim had suspected a foul play and alerted the police. " He came to collect the balance of the money and was arrested," the police source said.

Here is the URL of the piece for as long as it is good:

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/crimewatch/2009/sept/03/crimewatch-03-09-2009-003.htm>

10 MAY 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper, Vanguard:

How Nigerians fraudster duped me of \$1m - American businessman

An American businessman, Mr. Brandon Benson, has narrated in graphic details how a Nigerian fraudster, Engr. Taiye Ogbonyomi, allegedly obtained \$1million from him under false pretence.

The American who is the president of Pipeline North Energy Inc, USA was brought into the country by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC to testify in a case of Advance Fee Fraud brought against the suspect before Justice G.K Olotu of the Federal High Court, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

In his testimony before the court on Tuesday, May 5 and Thursday, May 7, the American businessman said that Engr. Ogbonyomi who is the chairman of Energy Spread Network Ltd had sometime in 2006 contacted him and told him that he was a crude oil marketer with large quantity of crude oil for sale. An agreement was subsequently signed online by both parties for the sale of 1.985 million barrel of crude oil.

This made the victim to send the first installment of \$229,000 and another \$5,000 on November 6, 2006 into the accused company's domiciliary account with First Inland Bank Plc. The payment was said to be for charter party agreement.

With the first breakthrough, Ogbonyomi demanded the payment of \$159,000 for documentation at the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC. This the suspect said was to enable him obtain certificate of origin, certificate of quantity, bill of lading, cargo manifest, tanker village report and master's receipt of documents.

When the documents were eventually sent to the American businessman, he was further convinced to wire \$425,000 to the fraudster who claimed the fund was for the warranty of title. That was shortly before another \$180,000 was sent to the accused to seal the deal bringing the total sum lost to the fraudulent transaction to \$989,000.

Investigation by EFCC operatives has, however, shown that the entire documents sent to the victim were forged by the suspect to make the deal look genuine. The suspect was eventually arrested on November 11, 2007 when the matter was reported to the EFCC and arraigned before Justice Olotu on October 23, 2008 on a 10-count charge of criminal conspiracy and obtaining under false pretence.

The suspect's trial commenced fully on February 3, 2009 when the lead investigator, Mr. Abdulrasheed Bawa gave evidence which he concluded last Tuesday, May 5. Soon after Bawa stepped down from the witness box, the American businessman stepped in to give evidence which he concluded on Thursday, May 7. After the victim's account of his ordeal in the hands of Ogbonyomi, the trial judge adjourned the case to June 3, for continuation of trial. The victim has since Friday morning, May 8, left for his base in the U.S.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/content/view/full/35520/42/>

10 APR 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper The Punch:

EFCC arraigns ex-banker over N40m fraud

By Friday Olokor

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, on Thursday, arraigned a former employee of First Bank of Nigeria Plc, Ibrahim Ologho, before an Ikeja High Court for allegedly defrauding a Swiss businessman, Mr. Roland Weiss of about N40m.

The anti-graft agency had brought the accused before Justice Mufutau Olokooba on a 20-count charge of obtaining money through false pretences.

The accused was said to have fraudulently obtained \$506,209 (about N40m) alongside Bala Magaji, Ogbake Georges and five others now at large.

But Ologho was later arrested, following a complaint by Mrs. Frieda Springer-Beck, a German on behalf of Weiss, who resides in Hauptstr, Switzerland.

The EFCC also claimed that the accused used different names to transact fraudulent

business with the complainant.

When the 20-count charge was read to the accused, he pleaded 'not guilty'.

The offence is contrary to sections 8(a) and 1(3) of the Advanced Fee Fraud and other related offences Act No.13 of 1995 as amended by Act No. 62 of 1999.

Justice Olokooba later adjourned the case till April 23.

One of the 20-count charge against the accused reads in part, "That you - 'Ibrahim Ologho (Alias Kola Dele, Barrister Ralph Udo, Alhaji I. Ahmed), Macpherson Electronics and Allied Products Limited, Mac Stephenson Invest/Exchange Bureau Limited; Dr. I.W. Barbar, Salazar and (others at large) sometime in March 1996 at Lagos, within the Ikeja Judicial Division with intent to defraud, conspired to obtain money by false pretence from Mr. Roland Weiss Besk of Switzerland."

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.punchontheweb.com/Articl.aspx?theartic=Art20090409082712>

419 Coalition comment: At last a little life from the EFCC under Waziri in counter-419. Let us hope for a conviction and a prompt repatriation of the stolen funds to the victim (unlike in the Odiawa case, for example). Also it is good to read Frieda Springer-Beck is still on the job helping victims of 419 - she has been absolutely instrumental in getting several major 419 cases successfully concluded, including the famous Ghasemi case.

9 APR 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper, The Punch:

FEC okays bill for seizure of proceeds from crime

By Ihuoma Chiedozie, Abuja

The Federal Executive Council on Wednesday approved a bill seeking to empower law enforcement and anti-graft agencies to confiscate the properties of individuals or corporate bodies suspected to have been acquired through crime.

Owners of properties used for corrupt activities would also lose them to the Federal Government, if the proposed law sails through the National Assembly.

Crimes which their proceeds stand to be confiscated include money laundering, drug trafficking and terrorism.

The planned law, known as Non-Conviction-Based Forfeiture of Proceeds and Instrumentalities of Unlawful Activity Bill 2009 was approved after it was presented by the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, Mr. Michael Aondoakaa.

The bill, which would soon be sent to the National Assembly also empowers foreign nations to confiscate property used or derived from unlawful activities on request by the Federal Government.

A copy of the bill, which was made available to journalists after the FEC meeting, gave its long title as "An Act to make provision for the restraint and civil forfeiture of property derived from unlawful activity and any instrumentalities used or intended to be used in the commission of the unlawful activity."

In the preamble, the Federal Government stated that the planned law would stem corruption and other crimes in Nigeria, and the international community.

The preamble reads, "Whereas there is rapid growth of organised crime, corruption, money laundering and other serious criminal activities, nationally and internationally which poses a threat to both national development and international security and stability.

"Recognising that such criminal activities, individually and collectively, present a danger to public order and safety, to economic growth and stability, and have the potential to inflict social damage.

"Deciding that it is necessary to restrain and forfeit the instrumentalities and proceeds thereof and co-operate with other states in the suppression of corruption, serious crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, etc, and its benefits."

Although the confiscation would not be based on the conviction of the owner(s), the forfeiture would be made in respect of a court order.

The forfeiture would be made after 14 days, or any other period the court may have given date of notice or through a publication.

Apart from outright sale of such properties, the bill gave the Federal Government the power to appoint a receiver or manager to manage such property.

The Minister of Information and Communication, Prof. Dora Akunyili, said the bill would strengthen efforts already being made by the President Umaru Yar'Adua administration to curb corruption.

She added that the proposed bill was in "consonance with the provisions of United

Nations Convention Against Corruption, which Nigeria has signed and ratified."

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.punchontheweb.com/Articl.aspx?theartic=Art200904093295437>

419 Coalition Note: This bill could be quite useful in counter-419 operations if it expedites the seizure and repatriation of 419ed monies and assets to victims of 419. Time will tell, we suppose, but at this point Anything would be an improvement....

7 APR 2009
From the Salina Journal, Salina Kansas:

Nigerian scam linked to counterfeit bills

A Salina man was prevented from purchasing a Moneygram using counterfeit \$100 bills he received through the mail as part of a Nigerian Internet scam.

An employee at Dillons, 2350 Planet, used a counterfeit detecting pen on the bills the man was trying to use to purchase the Moneygram about 1 p.m. Saturday, Salina Deputy Police Chief Carson Mansfield said.

The 37-year-old Salina man had been corresponding through e-mail and Internet chat with a person who said her name was Angel Rose Jones and that she lived in Nigeria. He received a message along with \$3,000 in cash from a man who said he was the woman's uncle. The man asked him to purchase a Moneygram and send it to Jones so that she could move to the United States, Mansfield said.

The clerk was suspicious because the color of the bills was not uniform and they were missing watermarks and microprinting, Mansfield said.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.salina.com/news/story/counterfeit-4-6>

2 APR 2009
From US Department of Justice, sent in by Ultrascan Advanced Investigations:

Three Defendants Sentenced in 'Advance-Fee' Fraud Scheme That Cost Victims More Than \$1.2 Million

WASHINGTON, April 2 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Three defendants were sentenced to prison today after pleading guilty in January 2008 to federal charges of running an "advance-fee" scheme that targeted U.S. victims with promises of millions of dollars, Acting Assistant Attorney General Rita M. Glavin of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Benton J. Campbell of the Eastern District of New York announced. The defendants were sentenced by U.S. District Judge Dora L. Irizarry at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Nnamdi Chizuba Anisiobi (a/k/a Yellowman, Abdul Rahman, Michael Anderson, Edmund Walter, Nancy White, Jiggaman and Namu), 31, citizen of Nigeria, was sentenced to 87 months in prison.

Anthony Friday Ehis (a/k/a John J. Smith, Toni N. Amokwu and Mr. T), 34, citizen of France, was sentenced to 57 months in prison.

Kesandu Egwuonwu (a/k/a KeKe, Joey Martin Maxwell, David Mark and Helmut Schkinger), 35, citizen of Nigeria, was sentenced to 57 months in prison.

All three defendants each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy, eight counts of wire fraud and one count of mail fraud.

The investigation was initiated by Dutch law enforcement authorities. After identifying victims in the United States, Dutch authorities notified the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, which opened its own investigation, resulting in the charges against the defendants. Three of the defendants were arrested in Amsterdam on Feb. 21, 2006, and were subsequently extradited to the United States.

According to the indictment and an earlier filed complaint, the defendants sent "spam" e-mails to thousands of potential victims, in which they falsely claimed to control millions of dollars located abroad. Attempting to conceal their identities, the defendants admitted they used a variety of aliases, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. In one scenario, the defendants sent e-mails purporting to be from an individual suffering from terminal throat cancer who needed assistance distributing approximately \$55 million to charity. In exchange for a victim's help, the defendants offered to give a 20 percent commission to the victim or a charity of his or her choice. Subsequently, as part of the ruse, the defendants sent a variety of fraudulent documents, including a "Letter of Authority" or a "Certificate of Deposit," making it appear that the promised funds were available, and pictures of an individual claiming to suffer from throat cancer. The evidence to the court established that Anisiobi telephoned victims, disguising his voice

to give the impression that he was suffering from throat cancer.

After obtaining their victims' trust, the defendants asked them to wire-transfer payment for a variety of advance fees, ostensibly for legal representation, taxes and additional documentation. In return, the victims received nothing. In a variation of the scheme, if the victims said they could not afford to pay the advance fees, the defendants admitted they would send them counterfeit checks, supposedly from a cancer patient, to cover those fees. Many victims deposited the checks and then drew on them to wire-transfer the advance fees. Subsequently, when the checks did not clear their accounts, the victims suffered substantial losses.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and prosecuted by Fraud Section Trial Attorneys Mary (Kit) Dimke, Amanda Riedel, and Nicola Mrazek, Paralegal Pamela Johnson, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Tanya Y. Hill.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2009/April/09-crm-304.html>

This story was also covered by the media in Nigeria and worldwide. Here is the URL of an article that appeared in Macworld (UK):
<http://www.macworld.co.uk/digitallifestyle/news/index.cfm?newsid=25637&pagtype=allchandate>

As a side note, the sentencing of these 419ers on 2 APR 2009 came on the same date as that of the burial of the chief investigator in this case, Rene van der Wouw. He worked on the case from 2005 until his death. Thank you sir, and may you rest in peace.

1 APR 2009
From ABC News, sent in by our friends at Ultrascan Advanced Investigations:

Nigerian 'Black Money' Scam Turns Deadly for Two Suspected Con Men

Police Say Men Were Killed by Victim of the Fraud

By JOSEPH RHEE

The tables were turned with deadly consequences on two African immigrants trying to run a Nigerian "black money" scam on a New York man. Police say the men were killed in retaliation by the victim of the fraud and have identified the suspect as the cousin of NFL player Jonathan Vilma.

Both men - Sekou Sakor, 31, and Ansu Keita, 32 - had been shot in the head inside Vilma's Long Island, New York home, which was littered with pieces of the black paper used in the scam.

A recent ABC News 20/20 investigation detailed the inner workings of the black money scheme. In the scam, victims are notified by e-mail that they have received a huge windfall in cash that has been coated with black ink so it can be smuggled out of Africa.

The victims are told they have to pay thousands of dollars to buy a special chemical that will clean the black ink off of the cash. The "cash" is actually nothing more than worthless pieces of black construction paper.

Authorities say the scheme has ensnared many prominent Americans, including U.S. Congressman Ed Mezvinsky, who served a prison term for his involvement in the fraud, and Dr. Timothy Sloan, a California heart surgeon who lost his life savings to a con artist.

A black money scammer caught in the act by 20/20 gave a rare, exclusive look at how the scam is pulled off. According to the con man, who worked for a Nigeria-based ring of internet criminals, the victims are shown a large suitcase filled with currency-sized pieces of black construction paper. The marks are then presented with a few real hundred dollars bills that have been coated with a protective layer of glue and then dipped in tincture of iodine to turn them black. In front of the victim's eyes, the bills are then cleaned with a "magic chemical", which is really just water mixed with crushed Vitamin C tablets.

Police say they found black paper, chemicals and Vitamin C in the apartment of the two men killed at the Long Island home. Police are still looking for Vilma's cousin. According to NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly, Vilma was not in the house at the time and there is no evidence he was involved.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=7232968&page=1>

419 Coalition note: The view here is that nobody should die over 419 - including the 419ers. though there have been deaths on both sides of the matter over the years. We prefer reasonable punishment for the 419ers plus an efficient stripping away of all their assets followed by prompt repatriation of stolen funds to their victims. Escalating 419 and counter-419 into deadly weaponized arms races can only make matters worse for all concerned and should be avoided by all sides, our view.

26 MAR 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper The Daily Independent:

Nigeria has no apology for 419 victims - Mark

By Adetutu Folasade-Koyi Assistant Editor, Abuja

Nigeria will not accept blame for foreigners who are victims of advance fee fraud, known as 419, Senate President, David Mark, declared on Wednesday.

The sobriquet, 419, is the number of the section of the legal code which deals with the crime in which Nigerians demand money from foreigners who agree to carry out illegal activities with them.

Mark reiterated to an economic team from Ireland, led by Integration Minister, Conor Lenihan, who visited him in Abuja that those who fall into the booby trap of 419ers are also fraudulent.

"I have no apology for victims of 419. This is a situation where someone asks you to bring, say \$200,000 in order for you to get \$20 million in return, without investing anything concrete or rendering valuable service."

"If you are ripped off in the process, you should blame yourself and not the system," he stated.

Mark said as a matter of policy, Nigeria condemns fraudulent practices and should not be made a scapegoat.

He told his guests, who included Nigeria's Ambassador to Ireland, Kema Chikwe, and her Irish counterpart, Kyle O'sullivan, that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) have been strengthened to fight the war against corruption...
[The rest of the article had nothing to do with 419]

419 Coalition Comment: We simply love it when Nigerian officials make ingenuous and self serving statements concerning the criminalization of 419 victims, as no country on earth that we know of criminalizes victims of 419, including Nigeria. Plus, we find that statements like Senator Mark's in this article are Wonderful motivational tools in galvanizing the efforts of counter-419ers worldwide :) So, thank you Senator :)

We might also add that 419 Coalition does not much care whether the Nigerian government apologizes or not for the activities of 419ers operating from Nigeria or who are Nigerian nationals operating from elsewhere.

What we DO care about is tangible proof that the Nigerian Government is arresting 419ers, convicting 419ers, seizing 419er assets, and repatriating monies stolen by the 419ers. And, given the magnitude of 419 operations emanating from Nigeria, there has been precious little of that of late.

So, we're with you Senator Mark. Forget about the apologies and let's see large scale tangible results instead :)

23 MAR 2009

Article on 419 from Israel in Hebrew from Mako Digital Magazine, sent in to us by Ultrascan Advanced Investigations:

419 Coalition is sorry, but the Hebrew won't display properly for us in attempting to post the article, so here's the URL of the article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.mako.co.il/digital-magazine/Article-a6b31de5e502021004.htm>

23 MAR 2009

Article on 419 from Spain in Spanish from El Periodico (elPeriodico.com), sent in to us by Ultrascan Advanced Investigations:

Los españoles pierden cada año 250 millones en los timos 'on line'

España es el tercer país del mundo donde más incautos pican con estos engaños

Las bandas nigerianas envían millones de mails con promesas de dinero

Antonio Baquero
Barcelona

¿Daría usted crédito a un emilio que le informara de que le ha tocado un premio en la lotería de un país en el que nunca ha estado? ¿O a otro que le asegurara que un pariente lejano del que usted desconocía la existencia ha muerto en Suráfrica dejándole una enorme fortuna? ¿O que la hija de un dictador africano que sabe dónde se esconden las decenas de millones de dólares que su padre amasó le pide ayuda a usted --sí, precisamente a usted-- para recuperar ese dinero? ¿O que su empresa

puede hacerse con un supercontrato para construir un estadio en un país africano? ¿Lo creería? Posiblemente, usted no. Sin embargo, mucha gente en todo el planeta sí da crédito a esas oportunidades de ganar dinero fácil y acaba perdiendo miles de euros en esos engaños, que han sido elaborados por mafias nigerianas, consideradas ya como la principal industria mundial del timo en línea. De hecho, España es uno de los países donde los timadores nigerianos consiguen ganar más dinero. El timo de la carta nigeriana o fraude 419, denominado así pues ese es el artículo del código penal nigeriano que castiga ese tipo de delito, hace estragos entre los internautas españoles.

Según Ultrascan Advanced Global Investigations, una compañía internacional con sede en Holanda especializada en la lucha contra los timos en internet, España es el tercer país del mundo donde ese tipo de engaños causan más pérdidas. En total, en el 2008, esos timos hicieron que los internautas españoles perdieran 248 millones de euros. El año anterior, la cifra fue aún mayor: en España se perdieron 259 millones.

HERENCIA FALSA

Solo EEUU, con pérdidas por valor de 607 millones, y Gran Bretaña, con 424 millones, superan a España. "En la mayoría de los casos, los internautas españoles caen en el timo de la herencia", cuenta Frank Engelsman, un experto holandés en timos 419 de Ultrascan Advanced Global Investigations, que avisa del aumento de víctimas entre los empresarios españoles de la construcción.

"En este caso, esos empresarios reciben mensajes en que se les informa de la necesidad urgente de empresas constructoras para acometer la reconstrucción de emergencia de Gaza y se les ofrece la posibilidad de conseguir un suculento contrato. Muchos, acuciados por la crisis, pican y responden al emilio interesándose por la oferta. Entonces, se les pide una primera cantidad de dinero para pagar permisos, luego otra cantidad para pagar abogados, luego otra para pagar sobornos, fianzas... Una constructora en Marbella quebró por ese timo".

Las redes nigerianas no actúan solo en Nigeria. Ultrascan Advanced Global Investigations tiene censados a 300.000 timadores nigerianos en todo el mundo dedicados a este negocio. Hay una regla de oro: no timar nunca en el país en el que se reside. Así, las redes nigerianas que timan a españoles actúan desde Grecia, Holanda, Gran Bretaña, Emiratos Arabes Unidos y Ghana.

CUENTAS EN BARCELONA

Eso no quita para que España sea el país europeo donde residen más timadores nigerianos. "Hemos detectado --cuenta el experto-- a 2.000 timadores en España. Residen sobre todo en Madrid y Málaga, aunque tienen sus cuentas bancarias en oficinas de Barcelona. El timo que más realizan desde España es el de la lotería. Cada banda envía 15.000 emilios diarios en los que se informa a los destinatarios de que han sido agraciados con el premio gordo".

Según Engelsman, un problema a la hora de tratar con las víctimas es que muchas no son conscientes de estar siendo timadas porque caen en un proceso psicológico de autoengaño. "Algunos han perdido ya tanto dinero que no quieren asumir que alguien les ha engañado. Se convencen de que están en un gran negocio y el dinero que les han prometido llegará".

El perfil de la víctima es diverso. Muchas son personas poco conocedoras de internet que no están al corriente de estos timos. "Eso hace que países como India, donde cada año hay millones de personas que pasan a tener acceso a la red, sean el gran objetivo de las mafias". Pero también pica gente preparada, como médicos, profesores universitarios e ingenieros, convencidos de que a ellos no se les puede engañar. "Esa es su debilidad. Por eso les engañan", sentencia este experto.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:

http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio_PK=46&idioma=CAS&idnoticia_PK=597537&idseccio_PK=1021

19 MAR 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper, The Guardian:

EFCC returns fraud proceed to Indian victim

From Emeka Anuforo, Abuja

THE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) yesterday returned the sum of \$5, 400 recovered from suspected scammers to an Indian victim.

The action is in compliance with the judgment of the court and the Advanced Fee Fraud Act, 2006.

Handing over the money through the Indian High Commission to Nigeria, the EFCC Chairperson, Mrs. Farida Waziri, said the two young men who defrauded the Indian were arrested, investigated and charged to the Federal High Court, Port Harcourt on a five-count charge.

She disclosed that they were tried, convicted and sentenced on all the five counts to one-year imprisonment in October 2008.

Waziri explained how the crime was perpetrated: "It was the case of 419 by Peter Iniova, (28 years) (alias George Gordon), and Okuns Augustine, 22 years (alias

Engineer Charles Brown).

"Both claimed to be expatriate human resources manager with Maxtone group Nigeria, Apapa Way, Port Harcourt and the Department of Petroleum Resources respectively. They pretended to offer a job of an electrical engineer to Mr. Mushtag Ahmed Gana (an Indian national) in Maxtone Group Nigeria. Gana believed them and wired the sum of \$5,400 through an account with Guaranty Trust Bank in three instalments. When he realised that he was defrauded, he reported to the bank, which in turn complained to the EFCC in 2007."

The EFCC chief warned Nigerians and the nation's youths to refrain from fraudulent activities that paint a bad picture of the country. She vowed to track down perpetrators of graft in Nigeria and bring them to book.

She said: "I use this occasion to re-establish our good economic and political relations with India and to assure the High Commissioner that Nigeria is a safe country for investments by Indian nationals. We shall continue to protect foreign investors and their investments in Nigeria and punish perpetrators of crimes."

Acting Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. C. Rommel, who received the returned money on behalf of the victim, stressed that bilateral trade between Nigeria and India is the highest in Africa.

He expressed joy that Nigeria is re-branding its image, noting that he had no doubt that the effort would further boost investors' confidence in Nigeria.

"Nigeria and India are great friends. We are proud of our relations with Nigeria. We will continue to work together to promote value system. We will need to inculcate this value system in our children right from the school stage and help them grow with the right attitudes to promote national pride," he said.

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:

http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/news/article15//indexn3_html?pdate=200309&ptitle=EFCC%20returns%20fraud%20proceed%20to%20Indian%20victim&cpdate=

419 Coalition comment: Now, this is the type of report we like to see. More stories like this, and with larger amounts repatriated, ought to be routine, in our view - this \$5400 is but a small drop in the ocean of monies stolen by 419ers that needs to be repatriated. Take the famous Odiawa case, for example, where the 419er Odiawa was convicted and sent to jail over 2 years ago (see 24 NOV 2008 News and the News sections of previous years) where over \$2 million was stolen and there has been NO repatriation to the victim of the monies stolen to date. If the EFCC wants to gain credibility in matters of repatriation of 419ed funds, we'd suggest that the Odiawa case would be a good way to start. Good People in a Great Nation should indubitably see to such matters, after all :)

18 MAR 2009

From the Grand Forks Herald, Grand Forks, North Dakota:

Area residents unknowingly laundered money in Nigerian scams

By: Archie Ingersoll, Grand Forks Herald

The Grand Forks Police Department says Nigerian swindlers have been using unwitting locals as reshipping points for thousands of dollars worth of fraudulently obtained checks and money orders.

Nigerian money laundering mechanics

The Grand Forks Police Department says Nigerian swindlers have been using unwitting locals as reshipping points for thousands of dollars worth of fraudulently obtained checks and money orders.

Two area residents who sensed they were involved in scams came forward to police and had their suspicions confirmed in the past week and a half, Detective Mike Flannery said.

Flannery said most people are aware of Nigerian wire fraud, so scammers there have started laundering checks and money orders through American "partners."

"People have heard: counterfeit checks - Nigeria - red flag. So, you have got to have a buffer," he said.

The gun business

One of those buffers was Deb Navarro.

The 33-year-old single mother of two was looking for a gig that would let her work from her Grand Forks home. She got an online offer to do payroll work for what she thought was a Texas oil refinery.

The job seemed easy enough: Receive checks in the mail, take a 10 percent cut and forward the balance to Texas. She signed up and the checks - six totaling roughly \$6,000 - started rolling in this week.

But things weren't adding up. The checks had nothing to do with an oil

refinery; they were coming from people around the country looking to buy guns.

"I'm not a gun dealer" she said. "I didn't even own a gun."

Navarro called a man who had sent her a check, hoping he could offer some clarity. She found out he sent the money as payment for a gun listed on GunsAmerica.com, an online marketplace for weapons.

On top of that discovery, she received instructions from whoever hired her to wire the money to a Nigerian address.

"That sent up the biggest red flag possible," she said.

Threats by phone

Having heard of Nigerian frauds, Navarro went to the authorities earlier this week. She handed over the checks to police who plan to return them.

Flannery alerted GunsAmerica.com to the scam that involved at least two different guns.

Navarro said the person who hired her has demanded the money, threatening her and her kids. But Navarro said she's not sweating it: "I'm not afraid of a guy coming from another country."

Navarro said that after learning she was part of a scam, she was never tempted to skim her cut from the checks. She said her boyfriend teased her, suggesting she skip town and head to Mexico.

"It would be great to be there; it would be great to have that tropical drink, but I couldn't live with myself," she said.

Flannery said Navarro likely will not face criminal charges.

"We can only charge criminally if the person knowingly does this knowing they're part of a fraud," he said. "There is no criminal intent otherwise."

\$45,000 gone

The detective said the same holds true for a Minnesota man who had been unwittingly laundering American Express Travelers Cheques since August 2008.

Flannery said the man in his early 30s wired a total of roughly \$45,000 to Nigeria from Grand Forks on 25 occasions. The man told police last week he'd been contacted and hired through his e-mail account.

The man said he's not very computer savvy and that he's going to have to learn how to delete e-mails, Flannery said.

The man skimmed about \$7,000 from the checks he received, Flannery said. It's not known whether the man plans to return the money.

No justice

Professor Gregory Gordon at UND Law School said unwitting launderers could possibly be sued for negligence. It would have to be determined if the launderers breached "a standard of reasonable care" to those who sent money, Gordon said.

Flannery said these two scams snared no local victims but struck people in various states, including California, Arkansas, Texas and Connecticut.

Because their money was sent overseas, getting criminal justice isn't likely.

"There are a lot of hurdles that would have to be overcome," Gordon said

Ingersoll reports on crime and courts. Reach him at (701) 780-1269; (800) 477-6572, ext. 269; or send e-mail to aingersoll@gfherald.com.

The URL of this article, for as long as it is good, is:

<http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/article/id/111157>

17 MAR 2009

From the Nigerian newspaper ThisDay - this story was also picked up by Reuters, CNN, and other media worldwide:

419: Unilag Student Bags 19-year Jail Term

A final year student of the Department of Survey and Geo-Informatics Engineering, University of Lagos, Mr. Lawal Adekunle Nurudeen, has been sentenced to 19 years imprisonment for obtaining \$27,900.91 from an Australian woman, Pee Loo Rosalind

Summer.

The convict was arraigned before Justice M.O Obadina of Ikeja High Court on 19-count charge bordering on obtaining money by false pretence and forgery.

He was found guilty on all the counts and consequently sentenced to 12 months imprisonment on each count. The convict was also ordered to pay the sums of \$5,900, N526, 117.15 and any interest standing to his credit in his savings account with the Ikorodu Branch of a new generation bank, to the victim.

In addition, the convict is to pay \$250 monthly to the victim until the total sum fraudulently obtained by him is liquidated. His two plots of land lying and situate at Mowo Kekere Ikorodu bought from the proceeds of the crime, is to be sold and the money realised remitted to the victim.

The Honda prelude car recovered by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) from the convict is also to be sold and its proceeds remitted to the victim.

A statement signed by EFCC's Head of Media and Publicity, Femi Babafemi, said sometime in 2007, the convict who was an undergraduate of UNILAG met the victim on the internet and introduced himself as Engineer Benson Lawson, a Briton working with a multi-national company in Nigeria.

According to the statement, "Along the line the victim, a 56- year old woman from Australia told the convict that she wanted a husband and all the men she had met always disappointed her. The convict, who is married with three children instantly applied and told the victim that she had met her Mr. Right.

"To convince his prey, he told the woman that he was a 57 -year old widower and that few years back, his wife and their only child died in a ghastly motor accident in Lagos. He sent the picture of a white man to the victim to foreclose any suspicions. The victim accepted his proposal and that gave room for the next stage of the 419 heist."

Few weeks later, he called the woman to introduce himself as Dr. Saheed Bakare and informed her that her 'fiancé,' Benson Lawson had an accident and needed money for his treatment. The love-struck woman sent some money.

"Two weeks after the convict called the victim and thanked her profusely for her kindness. He now told her that he would like to visit her in Australia so that they could consummate their relationship. He demanded for money for air ticket, police and customs clearances and all sorts. "At the end of the day he duped the woman to the tune of \$47,000 before his arrest and arraignment by EFCC."

Here is the URL of the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=138339>

419 Coalition note: We would have no problem with a shortening of the sentence AFTER total compensation has been remitted to and confirmed as received by the victim.

23 FEB 2009

This News item may not be Exactly 419 Advance Fee Fraud, but it is close enough and of sufficient magnitude (\$27 Million Stolen from Citibank by Nigeria based criminal operations) to be posted here.

From ITExaminer.com:

Citibank fell for Nigerian Scam

Will give cash to anyone who asks

By Nick Farrell in Rome

Part of the reason why Citibank needed a bail out is because it fell for a Nigerian scam.

According to the New York Times, Paul Gabriel Amos, from Nigeria hatched out a cunning plan to create official-looking documents that instructed Citibank to wire the money, in two dozen transactions, to accounts he controlled.

The money came from a Citibank account in New York held by the National Bank of Ethiopia. When Citibank asked to verify the transactions, Amos and his chums posed as Ethiopian bank officials and approved the transfers. He was arrested at Los Angeles airport and was charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bank and wire fraud. He insists that he is innocent, but if convicted he could do 30 years inside.

Citibank was fine with the money going out until several banks where the conspirators held accounts returned money to Citibank, saying they had been unable to process the transactions. A bank official at the National Bank of Ethiopia also failed to approve some of them.

A Citigroup spokeswoman told the New York Times that it worked closely with coppers throughout the investigation and were happy that Amos was arrested. The bank said that it "constantly reviews and upgrades its physical, electronic and procedural safeguards to detect, prevent and mitigate theft." However it looks like Citi fell for a very simple scam which was a variation of the Internet Nigerian scheme.

Citibank received a package with documents purportedly signed by officials of the Ethiopian bank instructing Citibank to accept instructions by fax. There was also a list of officials who could be called to confirm such requests. The signatures of the officials appeared to match those in Citibank's records and were accepted. However the numbers belonged to the scammers and had nothing to do with the original people. Citibank received 24 faxed requests for money to be wired, and it transferred \$27 million to accounts controlled by the scammers in Japan, South Korea, Australia, China, Cyprus and the United States. To make sure Citibank called the officials whose names and numbers it had been given which turned out to be mobilephone numbers in Nigeria, South Africa and Britain.

When it was picking up the pieces from the fraud, Citibank had a look at the original package of documents and worked out that they came via a courier from Lagos, Nigeria, rather than from the offices of the National Bank of Ethiopia, in Addis Ababa.

The Bank has since had to pay back the National Bank of Ethiopia and the \$27 million has not been seen since.

Citibank was rescued by the US government to the tune of \$25 billion in cash and \$25 billion in investment. The Government also made guarantees for risky assets amounting to \$306 billion.

Here is the URL of this article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.itexaminer.com/citibank-fell-for-nigerian-scam.aspx>

Here is the URL of the US Department of Justice/FBI Press Release on this case for as long as it is good:
<http://newyork.fbi.gov/dojpressrel/pressrel09/nyfo022009.htm>

Here is the URL of the New York Times article on the case for as long as it is good:
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/21/nyregion/21scam.html?_r=2&ref=business

This case was also reported extensively in the Nigerian media and the media worldwide, for that matter.

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