

Nigeria - [419 Coalition](#) 2001 News on Nigerian Scam / 419 Operations

20 DEC 2001

Sent in by a concerned Nigerian:

The Guardian Online - <http://www.nguardiannews.com>
Thursday, December 20, 2001

Nigeria, U.S, others adopt anti-scam strategy

By Ben Akparanta, Police Affairs Correspondent

NIGERIA, with the assistance of some European nations and the United States (U.S), is putting in place a more sophisticated, almost fool-proof of method checking the activities of fraudsters who this year alone, milked their foreign victims an estimated \$500 million (about N50 billion).

Already, no fewer than 200 businesses including investment houses are under the lenses of security agents whose investigations are now boosted by foreign experts among whom are U.S. Secret Service Personnel and men of the Internal Revenue Department.

Recently, at the Louis Edet Building Police Headquarters in Abuja, the preliminary report of advance fee fraud investigators metamorphosed into a National Committee on Advance Fee Fraud (NCAFF) inaugurated by President Olusegun Obasanjo to formulate the more effective strategy against fraud perpetrators and their cohorts in Nigeria.

Haz Iwendi, spokesman of the Nigeria Police told The Guardian that alarming reports of continuing activities of fraudsters in the country despite government efforts to check them led the Presidency to set up the national committee.

"This committee shall analyse reports from field agents, and make recommendations to governments," Iwendi, an assistant police commissioner, said.

The committee is among a few of such similar think-tanks to comprise members of the diplomatic community such as the U.S, Britain, France and Spain whose citizens are more vulnerable to the antics of fraudsters.

Iwendi declined to give an insight into the much touted method security operatives now use to thwart fraud.

"I can only tell you that we have devised an early warning system to alert mugus (vulnerable people) and steer them away from paying to a criminal."

The Guardian, however, learnt that the police early warning system is internet-based and enhanced with state-of-the-art equipment capable of intercepting especially outbox information from a target personality or audience.

A U.S. secret service agent who asked not to be named explained that whereas it is known that some marked out fraudsters of Nigerian origin operate from bases outside Nigeria, it is also true much of their funds are channelled back through certain investment houses.

Asked if a concerted effort against investment houses such as banks would not be against the interest of Nigeria, the agent said possible foreign investors are being scared away by continuing scam so that Nigeria stands to gain on the long run if business are properly done.

The amount allegedly lost to fraudsters this year is a total estimate of monies allegedly sent to bogus business associates in Nigeria by Europeans who later complained to their home countries.

It is said that the purported \$500 million may have been grossly exaggerated considering that some of the supposed victims may have borrowed money with particularly high interest hoping to pay off their soon as the expected amounts usually in hundreds of millions of dollars is cleared through the Nigerian banking system.
(419 Coalition note: It is irrelevant whether the funds that victims lost were owned or borrowed, what is relevant is that they lost them - therefore this claim of "gross exaggeration" of losses is baseless.
A loss is a loss is a loss :))

419 Coalition comment: Anything that the Nigerian Government does to address supply-side 419 is very welcome, and this National Committee on Advance Fee Fraud is a positive development. On educating the demand-side of 419 away from participation, many nations and NGO's (including 419 Coalition) do this, but the more

the merrier. As always, when counter-419 measures are taken by the Nigerian and other governments, including the US, the proof is in the pudding as to their effectiveness, which can be tangibly measured by numbers of arrests and convictions for 419 and whether the amount of funds recovered and repatriated are in any way commensurate with the magnitude of funds stolen.

12 DEC 2001
PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA 12 DECEMBER 2001

NEWS MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER,
DETECTIVE SERVICE : COMMISSIONER JOHAN DE BEER

PUBLIC WARNING : NIGERIAN CIRCULAR "419" LETTER SCAM :
ADVANCE FEE FRAUD

Due to the apparent recent increase in the number of Nigerian scam letters received in amasureddd e numerous warnings that have been issued by the South African Police Service to members of the public previously, recipients of these scam letters are still falling victim to these unscrupulous fraudsters.

Nigerian advance Fee Fraud, known internationally as 4-1-9 (after a section of the Nigerian penal code), has emerged as one of the most lucrative fraudulent activities perpetrated by organised crime elements within the Nigerian community. The scheme is operated by fraudsters, usually a member of a criminal syndicate, who obtains money or goods from a company or its representative through deception.

According to information at our disposal, as well as the result of recent investigations, these unscrupulous con artists who have now set up a home base in South Africa from where they are disseminating these scam letters locally and to foreign businesses.

Most recent trends are for the con artist to claim to represent prominent political leaders (eg the late Laurent Kabila, the late Mobuto Sese Seko) or major business corporations. Victims are targeted at random through circular letters or unauthenticated fax or e-mail messages relating to the purported approved transfer of funds running into millions of American Dollars. It is proposed that the over-budgeted money be transferred to a bank account outside various African countries, which is that of the target company or victim. A plausible explanation is usually given for the transfer, although they basically appeal to the intended victim's greed. The person receiving the letter or fax is generally promised a sizable percentage, between 20 and 35 percent of the money transferred as a commission, for the use of their bank account.

If the intended victim is interested in the deal, they are requested to forward a variety of documents, which generally includes blank company letterheads which are duly signed, blank invoices, telephone and fax numbers and especially banking details in order to effect the transfer of the money into their bank account.

One might think that it is inconceivable that a person could fall victim to such a questionable scheme. However, some prominent people have already fallen prey to the scheme to such an extent, that it has compelled various countries to investigate the Nigerian letter scam.

The South African Police Service once again wishes to earnestly appeal to all recipients of scam letters to exercise extreme caution in this regard or you too could become the victim of advance fee fraudsters.

The aim of this media release is to alert potential victims to the inherent danger in dealing with the fraudsters which may result in loss of money and valuables.

The investigation is presently being co-ordinated by the Commercial Branch, Head Office. If any person has received these scam letters or have been victims of such an advance fee fraud or have any information please contact Superintendent S C Schambriel at telephone number (012) 339-1203 and fax number (012) 3391202 or e-mail address - commdetectiveandci@saps.org.za.

For a look at a short Anti-419 Pamphlet issued by and available from the South African Police Service, [Click Here](#).

11 DEC 2001
Soldier of Fortune magazine has done an excellent two part series on Nigerian 419 operations in the November and December 2001 issues. The articles were done by Frank Hopkins, who deserves kudos for these pieces, as they rank among the best ever done so far.

The article in the November issue is titled "Gullible's Travels: Nigerians Fleece Unwary of Billions". It covers various types of 419; lists the most common; and explains the magnitude and longevity of Nigerian 419 Adanced Fee Fraud operations. It also gives contact data for various governmental and private

organizations/agencies that are trying to Do something to combat 419.

The article in the December issue is titled "Who Wants to be a Millionaire? Part II". This article covers the magnitude of Nigerian 419 Advanced Fee Fraud Operations and describes in some detail the efforts of various governmental and private organizations that are trying to control 419, including increased coverage of 419 matters in the Nigerian media and signs that the Nigerian authorities may be gearing up for a serious effort against the 419ers (see 5 DEC 2001 News piece below).

Both of these articles are a must read for anyone interested in 419. Back issues can be obtained through the Soldier of Fortune website at <http://www.sofmag.com>

5 DEC 2001

From THISDAYOnline.com , sent in by a concerned Nigerian:

Subject: 419 Operators: Be Warned

FG Inaugurates Committee to Check 419
From Donald Andoor in Abuja

In a bid to check the menace of Advance Fee Fraud, popularly known as 419, the Federal Goveiod of time.

The Committee, inepresentatives from sensitive government ministries and security organisations as well as representatives of some foreign missions in Nigeria.

Those ministries that have one representative each on the committee include the Ministries of Justice, Information and National Orientation, Foreign Affairs and the office of the chief economic adviser to the President. The sensitive security organisations on the Committee include a representative of the State Security Service (SSS), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

Others include representatives of the CBN, NIPOST, NITEL, Private Telephone Operators and the representatives of the embassies of USA, Britain, Germany, Canada and South Africa.

Smith, who recalled the President's inaugural address to the nation May 29, 1999 with a call to fight 419 operators, warned that government could not fold its arms and watch fraudsters continue with their operations.

"Government is making a clear statement through the inauguration of this committee, that it intends to leave no stone unturned and will spare no effort in carrying the battle to the doorsteps of fraudsters and those 419 (operators) in particular".

He acknowledged that the "task ahead is daunting" but expressed the hope that with the calibre of members who would be operating in an inter-agency collaborations as well as with all relevant government resources, success would soon be achieved.

419 Coalition comment: The plan sounds good and we applaud it, but of course the proof will be in the pudding as to how many arrests and convictions are produced as a result of it; and equally important, whether it can produce seizures and repatriations of 419ed monies in anything like the amounts in which they were stolen.

It might be a useful start if the 419 cases in which there has been an arrest and which are currently in the Nigeria Courts system, are expeditiously resolved. And, in relation to that, it might be a good thing if the Nigerian Government recognized detained 419ers for the flight risk that they have historically demonstrated that they are, and denied bail.

But this InCountry version of the American USSS 419 Task Force sounds good, it really does, it has promise. 419 Coalition is always glad to give credit where credit is due.

3 DEC 2001

Banjul, Nov 28, 2001 (Gambia Radio & TV News/All Africa Glo al Media via COMTEX)
-- Gambia's National Intelligence Agency (NIA) on Monday night rounded up Nigerian Scam Artists after a team of International experts from the Bahamas, Sierra Leone and the United States used the Internet to lay a trap for the criminals.

The detained Nigerians had been operating the notorious Advanced Fee Fraud (419) from the Gambia for a considerable time now. The 419 Scam, named for an article of the Nigerian criminal code dealing with fraud, targets businesses, and has gained a new life with the expansion of the internet. The intended victim is invited to participate in a crime -- often money-laundering -- in return for a percentage of the ill-gotten funds. A typical version of the scam aims at gaining access to the target company's bank account information. Instead of transferring money in, the scam artist then drains the account of funds and disappears.

There are several versions of the 419 Scam that are perpetuated. This time, the caught scam artist, with the help of his allies, was pretending to be a citizen of the wartorn Sierra Leone, whose father, the non-existent late "King Octopus Camara III" had left 15.5 million United States dollars with a Security Company in The Gambia. According to Investigations undertaken by the Sierra Leone Web, an Internet Site run from the USA, this particular scam had been going on as far back as May 2000.

However, this time, their intended victim, Ms. Alexa Henderson-Russell, a rich businesswoman from the Bahamas, forwarded the scam emails to the US Secret Service and also to the US-based editor, Peter Andersen of the Sierra Leone Web.

Mr. Andersen in turn forwarded the documents to the State House in the Gambia where President Jammeh immediately set in motion the National Intelligence Agency to trace the criminals.

Diligent Tracking of the IP Numbers on the email as well as the full co-operation of Ms. Henderson-Russell in Bahamas, Peter Andersen in Minnesota, USA and the Gambian State House Website Experts led to the arrest of the Nigerians who were caught in the act of sending out even more emails from the Westfield Gamtel Internet Cafe.

Meanwhile, the NIA's continued investigation into the scam has led to the arrest of even more people. The Investigations are continuing and this story will be developed further soon.

by Omar Sallah

19 OCT 2001

Sent in from BBC World Service by a concerned Nigerian:

Nigerian kidnapper gets seven years

A court in Kenya has sentenced a Nigerian man to seven years imprisonment for kidnapping three United States businessmen and trying to obtain a ransom of over \$5m.

The Nigerian, Augustine Azubuike Nwanga, was arrested in April with two suspected accomplices, who are still on trial, in an operation by Kenyan police supported by the American Federal Bureau for Investigation.

They tracked down the gang and rescued the hostages when Mr Nwanga went to pick up part of the ransom.

The Americans were lured to the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, after being approached on the internet to invest in fishing and diamond mining companies.

14 OCT 2001

The largest recorded 419 case in history, \$181 million USD, of a Brazilian man, as published in The News, a Nigerian publication. Sent in by a concerned Nigerian.

N23 Billion '419' Swindle

The News

October 9, 2001

Posted to the web October 8, 2001

Bamidele Adebayo
Lagos

A Brazilian bizman is duped of N23 billion by a group of Nigerian conmen. It is the biggest money scam ever.

Nelson Sakaguchi, Brazilian and a director in Banco Noereste Brazil, will forever curse that day in 1994 when he was introduced to a group of Nigerians by a man who claimed to be his friend, Dr. Hakim Ukeh, an Enugu businessman. Sakaguchi who was on a business trip to Nigeria was introduced to three Nigerians, two of whom supposedly controlled Nigeria's Central Bank.

They were Chief Paul Ogwuma, the bank's governor; Alhaji Mahey Rafindadi Rasheed, the deputy governor, in charge of foreign operations. The third character was cast that night as Mrs. Agbakoba. She was not for real. In real life, her name was Amaka Anajemba, the real wife of character Rafindadi Rasheed. The entire cast, except Sakaguchi and Ukeh were impostors.

Amaka's husband, Ikechukwu Anajemba had posed as Rasheed, while Chief Emmanuel Nwude-Odinigwe, now a director of Union Bank, posed as Paul Ogwuma.

The characters had rehearsed their script well enough, ahead of this encounter. Only Sakaguchi played real, plain, innocent. He came all the way from Brazil to explore business prospects in Nigeria. But the guys who came to meet with him had other business ideas. It was an investment scheme in which Sakaguchi would pour a lot of dollars, millions of it, all down the drain, reaping nothing but sorrow and tears. The nature of the business they would do together would be unfolded later. That night's meeting was merely exploratory, to size up, and even psyche up their potential prey.

The Brazilian believed the theatrics of his guests. He did not know they were merely imitating the real characters. He didn't know that these three men and a woman would soon throw him into a deep financial abyss. By the time he woke up to his senses, four years after, he had lost \$181.6 million, about N23 billion. He lost his job too as a director of Bank Noroeste in Sao Paulo. He was declared wanted by the police after the auditors, Price Waterhouse found that \$181.6 million had disappeared from the coffers of the bank that is Latin America's 46th largest, according to a 1996 ranking of banks in that region.

All the money paid at various times between 1995 and 1997 were parceled into various bank accounts in Switzerland, China, United States, England and Nigeria. All the monies were all destined to three beneficiaries in Nigeria and their host of phantom companies and fronts.

As far as 419 operations go, the swindle carried out against the Brazilian was the biggest in the history of 419 heists. At \$181 million, the amount was too staggering to comprehend. At N23 billion, in the hands of a few Nigerians, it is enough to bankroll a guerrilla war against any democratic government.

How the Anajembas and Nwude Odinigwe carried out the record swindle followed the same pattern of advance fee fraud operation. Except that this time, the operation was easier. They knew their prey inside out.

They knew which button to press to make him disgorge mouth watering dollars.

For a start, they sent a fax about a phantom contract won by Sakaguchi in Nigeria. This was in 1995. Of course to facilitate the contract, Sakaguchi began to send money to designated accounts controlled by the Anajemba and Odinigwe gang. When the phantom job was said to have been completed and payment was not forthcoming, the fraudsters devised another method to milk Sakaguchi further. Enter the phantom contract review panel. On the Central Bank of Nigeria's letter head, the fake panel wrote to Sakaguchi, informing him of its decision to pay all foreign contractors, including himself all outstanding debts.

According to the letter, Sakaguchi was said to have had a contract worth \$187 million with the Ministry of Aviation. The job having been done and money not paid on time, the phantom review panel recommended that Sakaguchi be paid his money, with interest. The amount to be paid now stood at \$200.8 million!

But to facilitate this, Sakaguchi, recommended the contract panel, must forward "fluctuational charges" of \$6.7 million. That money was deposited in the foreign banks recommended by the gang. Then all other demands followed: money to bribe "His Excellency"; money to bribe the "minister" and other persons as concocted by the gang in Nigeria. Sakaguchi kept sending millions after millions of dollars, hoping that his pay day would come soonest. There was no pay day for Sakaguchi, till now, only sorrow-day.

The systematic looting of Sakaguchi reached a climax with the said letter by the so-called review panel. The unsigned letter that was written on a forged CBN letterhead and that sounded so illiterate read: "It has been brought to our notice that a contract sum of \$187,381,000 excluding an overriding interest accrued which is \$13,470,070 which sums it up to \$200,851.07, this includes the first, second and final phase respectively for contract number (FMA/132/019/82) by Federal Ministry of Aviation, which was duly completed has not been paid for." Furthermore, the letter goes, "we confirmed that we irrevocably hold (on) to your

\$200,851,000 until we receive the fluctuational charges of \$6,730,000, this payment schedule is to be made on or before 18 October 1996. As soon as we receive the above sum, we shall forward your fund simultaneously to the Chemical Bank of New York." On 16 October same year, another letter was written to the Brazilian informing him that all necessary documentations have been duly perfected for the immediate release and transfer of his fund by telegraphic transfer to the designated accounts.

As the swindling continued, the Lagos gang kept concocting all kinds of obstacles to be overcome to get the so-called debt out of the CBN vaults. In an amusing letter sent by a phantom "Rasheed", the letter urged Sakaguchi to pay \$1.75 million into the Dockland branch of Barclays Bank in London to bribe officials who would do "the second phase of indigenisation and completion certificate", preparatory to making payment. The letter actually demanded \$4.5 million, but asked Sakaguchi to pay an advance of \$1.75 million, and pay the rest after collecting the so-called acknowledged debt of \$200 million. In the course of the operation, the phantom debt ballooned to \$387 million, enough to make sakaguchi go bananas if paid into his account.

Meanwhile, Sakaguchi got desperate to get the windfall from Lagos as his bankers began to raise queries about the uni-direction of the transactions. But he mollified them and still squeezed \$4.2 million out of the bank, which he wired to his financial emasculators in Lagos, Nigeria. The money was sent on 6 August 1997, to Standard Finance Clearing House, New York, in care of his excellency, Paul Ogwuma, CBN governor. The letter entitled Re: Final Cable Charges Phase One, Two and Final On FMA 132/019/82, reads: "After a very tough and strong argument with senior bankers, they finally agreed to release an additional last portion of this \$4,200,000. With conditions that you will be transferring immediately on 8 August 1997 by wire/swift the full amount of \$374,682,000.15 only to the account at Chase Manhattan Bank, New York (former Chemical Bank New York) account number 544/7/07768 of Bank Noreste SA Kayman Island Branch in favour of Stanton Development Company." The Lagos gang was unperturbed by Sakaguchi's desperation. Sakaguchi's desperation triggered another desperation of their own. They pestered him with demands for more money. A minister was the new obstacle to payment, not the people in charge of the "indigenisation and completion certificate". They therefore sent a letter to him on 1 October 1997 to ginger him into action. According to the letter, the fraudsters told their victim that any delay was dangerous, and they assumed that the fund would be released into their nominated accounts. They, therefore asked him to wire immediately to "EXCEL" account the sum of \$5 million as agreed with the minister. The letter concluded that it was confidential.

Poor Sakaguchi. Like a zombie in the hands of voodoo priests, the Lagos letter spurred him into action. He mobilized all the money in his bank (Banco Noroeste) and his company, Stanton Development Corporation, desperately to meet the targets of his 'business partners.' He informed the chairman of his company who is also his father-in-law. They went cap in hand borrowing money from different sources. The money was remitted to designated accounts to facilitate the 'business.' The whole operation was of course spurious. There was no dime coming from Lagos. And none came. Sakaguchi had been an unsuspecting sucker!

He had lost \$181 million. When he started calling Lagos for the money, the Lagos gang sent him a letter, reeking with wicked humour. The letter dated 19 February 2001 and set on a Paul Ogwuma and Associates letterhead announced to Sakaguchi.

"I regret to inform you that I have already paid the sum of \$250 million to the bank of Noroute, which was collected on July 1998". There is no bank of Noroute anywhere in the world. The letter was signed by chairman Paul Ogwuma and a lawyer, John Nemota and a Jose Lavana of the Brazilian embassy in Lagos. All the names of course were fictitious.

The huge sums of money stolen from Sakaguchi were got by instalments. The first instalment of \$1.2 million was paid into an account in Crystal Bank of Africa on 9 August 1995 with O.E. Odinigwe, who represented Stanton, as beneficiary. On 25 August 1995, \$1.5 million was paid to Commercial Trust Bank with FynBaz Nigeria Ltd as beneficiary, 31 August 1995, \$500,000 into Nwude Christian Kachi as beneficiary. On 27 September 1995 the sum of \$2.55 million was paid to UWS Landmark as beneficiary; 8 December 1995, the sum of \$2 million was paid into an account of Gulf Bank of Nigeria with Fynbaz as beneficiary.

Others are Nigeria Intercontinental Merchant Bank in which \$2 million was paid on the 12 of February 1996.

\$1.3 million was paid into the account of Stanton Development Corporation On 1 January 1996 and 28 October 1997, \$4.75 million was paid to Pentagon Co.

Ltd. and \$1.35 million was paid through an account in Nigeria Intercontinental Merchant Bank Ltd., to Emrus Nigeria Limited.

When Sakaguchi finally came to his senses that he had been a victim of a monumental fraud, he nearly went berserk. First of all, his employers sacked him. Then they dragged him to court, asking him to repay all the money he had wired to the Lagos gang. Then he became a fugitive running away from justice.

For him, it was time to be desperate again and to hope that he would recover the money. Not knowing where to begin, he contacted his "friend" in Nigeria, Dr. Kim Ukeh, the Enugu based businessman who had introduced the phantom Rasheed and Paul Ogwuma and the phantom Mrs. Agbakoba to Sakaguchi in 1994.

Whether Dr. Ukeh was part of the swindling is not very clear. But close sources to the gang told TheNEWS that Emmanuel Nwude Odinigwe gave him N200 million, out of the proceeds that ran into N23 billion. When we called Dr. Ukeh last week, he was not available in Enugu. We also called his mobile phone. He was also not reachable.

But significantly, Ukeh has turned the recovery agent for Sakaguchi, who in a letter last August pleaded with Ukeh to help him recover his "robbed money from Paul Ogwuma" and send to his account at Chase Manhattan in New York.

Ukeh, in difference to his smitten friend has petitioned the Inspector General of Police on the matter. He has informed the Fraud Squad at Milverton Road, Ikoyi. And the squad is said to be disinterested in the matter, which should be their big concern. He has taken Emmanuel Nwude Odinigwe to the Arochukwu shrine in Igbo heartland. He has reported him to the elders. And sources said he is contemplating a legal action.

Ukeh of course knew he is walking a mine field and he could get bombed along the way. He has already had a foretaste of the dangers that confront him in his bid to square up with the con men, his former pals, who swindled the Brazilian, so mercilessly and so callously.

Last October, the police in Enugu framed what is believed to be a concocted charge of firearms possession against Ukeh. The case is still pending at a magistrate court in Enugu. And Ukeh now goes about watching his shoulders. He has real reasons to fear.

A friend of his, Ikechukwu Anajemba with whom he introduced Emmanuel Nwude Odinigwe to Sakaguchi, along with Amaka in 1994, was mysteriously killed last year.

His death came after the scam had been completed and the mind-blowing mega bucks raked in. Death by robbery was what was reported about Ikechukwu, but it is believed that he was murdered.

Sakaguchi himself is going through hard times. At present, he is a fugitive. Unable to bear the psychological trauma and prosecution, he has left Brazil for Africa. A source revealed to this magazine that the former director of Banco Noereste wanted to come to Nigeria to claim his money, but he was afraid that he might be assassinated.

Emmanuel Nwude Odinigwe is not going through any hassle. He is still celebrating his triumphant execution of the unprecedented 419 scam. He lives big on Victoria Island, Lagos. He junkets around the world. He sits on the board of Nigeria's leading bank since 1999. He has acquired a string of assets in Abuja, Lagos, Enugu and Onitsha. He chairs a host of companies. He is the wonder boy of the nouveau riche in Nigeria, stupendously rich.

Emmanuel Nwude Odinigwe came from the blues in September 1998 and bought shares that were worth \$1.2 million from Union Bank. His shares total 4.1 million, making him the largest shareholder in the bank. In Abagana,

he produces Lamour Water. He is a socialite, who on the surface looks like a gentleman, but possessing the sting of a bee. He also bought shares in more than 20 companies both locally and internationally, within five years.

Ikechukwu Anajemba, before he was killed also lived big. He had about 28 houses scattered in special areas in Lagos, Abuja and Enugu. But he has left everything to his surviving wife, Amaka, a.k.a Mrs. Agbakoba.

The stung Brazilian requires help for the recovery of \$181 million plus the accrued compound interests of \$70 million. Whether he can get the money from the Nigerian crooks will be an acid test of Nigeria's avowed war against the 419ners, giving our nation bad name internationally.

Last week, when we spoke with Nwude Odinigwe on his role in this monumental fraud, he pestered us to enter a deal with him to kill the story. When we persisted that he must speak on his role, he offered a taciturn response: "I am not in the mood to talk now. All I can say is that the person that can speak about the matter is dead", a reference to his partner who died in circumstances very mysterious.

TheNEWS also spoke with Sakaguchi where he was holed in Africa. He said he would only talk after getting clarifications from his contacts in Nigeria. He promised to get back to us. He never did.

Additional reports by Michael Mukwuzi, Amos Adetunji.

14 OCT 2001

The Ghasemi case was featured in a Nigerian publication, The News. Sent in by a concerned Nigerian.

A Victim Complains to 419 Coalition

The News

October 9, 2001

Posted to the web October 8, 2001

Bamidele Adebayo
Lagos

Dr. and Mrs. Ghazami were among the foreigners duped by Nigerian 419ners. But for the terrorist attacks on the US, they planned to stage protests in Washington against the fraudsters on October 11-13.

The protests will now wait as they narrate their experience here 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. This is what had happened to us and how we got involved in the Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud.

About three months ago, we got a phone call from Nigeria by a man named Dr. Ali Abubakar- 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 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 14 August 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 number is 234-1-774-0939. We contacted Mr. Williams and he asked us to send him \$7,250 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. Abubakar 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. Abubakar 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 in 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 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. He introduced himself as an NCB bank representative with telephone number of 404-944-1842. He said that our money was ready and that we needed to fly to Atlanta to transfer the money into our account. We asked why and he said because the money was big and he needed to transfer the money in front of us. He told us to bring a copy of our driver's license, a copy of the contract paper, and \$11,500 in cash. The same evening, my husband, daughter, and myself flew to Atlanta. We checked in to an hotel. Then next day, we called Mr. White to book an appointment with him at our bank, First Union. He said he will send a bank representative to meet us in our hotel room. When we got back, he sent two men by name, 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 on our cell phone. We told him that we were on our way 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 booked another room. We called Mr.

White and he said that he would be sending two people.

After two hours, two people arrived by name, 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 that our money be paid in 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. They then 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. Sharif called Carlos White and 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 he was cleaning 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. Abubakar 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 us 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 opening of 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 had happened to us and he said that we had been involved in a scam. He showed us the many different stories and examples 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. 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 different places to pay these people. Now, we have lost our credit and everything else.

We are begging the government of Nigeria to please, help us arrest these people and get our money back.

Please feel free to contact us through our phone number above for any further information. 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 in Nigeria who works for the Bank of New York. He is in Lagos and his name is Mr.

Shay (phone number 234-1-2693327).

The bank representative said that they sent the money to him and he sent it to Omega Bank (phone number is 234-1-262085). I called 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 2 November 2000, I contacted Mr. Ikye Eugwu, 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. Eugwu, 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. Bashiru and I explained what Mr. Eugwu 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 if he had given anything in place 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 in 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 making income, besides the oil that is coming into the country. He said that the president and the government of Nigeria knows about this. He also proceeded by using curses and threat. Now, I believe that not only are Dr. Ali Abubakar, 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 of 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 me told me to call him on 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 on 44-870-134-9987. I asked him where this is and he said it is in London. It was then, 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 yet there are some wonderful and innocent people out there whom our money should go to, but not to these 419ers.

Investigations into Nigerian 419 scam yields success

Police on Friday arrested three suspects in connection with a fraudulent business transaction believed to be a Nigerian 419 scam. Two of the suspects, including an attorney(41) from Stellenbosch and one Australian man(52), who had temporary residency in South Africa, were arrested in Stellenbosch whilst the third suspect a Jordanian man(58) was arrested in Kempton Park.

The arrests followed a crime intelligence driven operation by members from Crime Intelligence Gathering Head Office, members from the Johannesburg Commercial Branch and members from the Pretoria Intervention Unit.

The operation was launched after a European citizen was approached and requested to assist in transferring 65 million US dollars from an account in Spain to South Africa.

Potential victims are usually requested to pay a substantial amount, into a trust account, in order to cover banking costs. In return the victims are promised returns of more than 100% of what is deposited. These profits are however never paid as the suspects simply disappear with the deposited money.

The three suspects are expected to appear in the court soon.

The South African Police Service once again wishes to earnestly appeal to all recipients of these scam letters to exercise extreme caution in this regard, as to prevent them from falling victim to these fraudsters.

Any person who has received these scam letters or have been the victim of such a fraud or have any information that could assist can contact Superintendent SC Schambriel at fax (012) 339 1202 or telephone number (012) 339 1203.

Enquiries: Senior Superintendent Martin Aylward
082 8000 513

21 SEP 2001

Given the tragic events in New York and Washington DC, Dr. and Shahla Ghasami have postponed until further notice the anti-419 protests which were scheduled for 11-13 OCT in Washington DC.

6 SEP 2001

Dr. and Shahla Ghasemi have issued an Open Letter to Nigerian President Olesegun Obasanjo and have asked 419 Coalition to post it here. Their case is detailed in several previous News entries and Dr. and Mrs. Ghasemi are the organizers of the Protests in front of the White House and Nigerian Embassy in DC next month. Here is the Open Letter to President Obasanjo:

It has come to my attention that you have issued the Zero Tolerance Policy against Nigerian 419ers. I am extremely gracious that someone in Nigeria is finally doing something against the 419ers and is admitting responsibility to those actions. My name is Shahla Ghasemi and I live in Tampa, FL. I am a victim of the Nigerian scam and have been working on my case for over a year.

I have lost over \$400,000.00 in US dollars in this case. I have contacted your office numerous times by forwarding my documents twice by DHL mail, and by email to your office every day for 3 months, and by calling your office many times, but I have not received any response from you. I also have contacted the Nigerian Embassy in America in Washington, DC. I have communicated with a representative (Mr. Mohammad Ibrahim) numerous times, but no acceptable answer has been given.

Five people in Nigeria have already admitted responsibility of my money yet no action has been taken upon them. These people are Mr. Eugwu from the Atlantic Precision Co. LTD, Mrs. Odunsi, the manager of the Omega Bank, in Lagos and Mr. Bashiru Ibrahim in Lagos, Nigeria, according to the police in zone 2 Lagos Ref no. CR: 3000/ ZN.2/X/AF/ VOL.23/709 the other two used alias names which are James Cardoso Alisa Ali Abubaker, Ola Michael Alisa FA Williams.

I have already organized an international protest against the 419ers. We will begin our protest Oct. 11 across from the White House and the 12th across from the Nigerian Embassy. A "Zero Tolerance" policy on 419 by the Nigerian Government would be most welcome, But it must be backed by action, resulting in Tangible and Quantifiable mass successes against the 419ers including arrests, convictions, seizure of assets, and repatriation of stolen funds in something like the massive amounts in which they have been stolen over the years. I am asking you to please start taking actions upon your countries civilians because many lives are ruined each day regarding this matter. I am asking for your assistance in the prosecution of these criminals before your trip to the United States of America. If you truly love your country as much as the media portrays. Then I'm sure you would be greatly Interested in joining us in our fight, and bringing these criminals to justice and to stop the 419 action.

Very Sincerely,
Shahla Ghasemi
e-mail: Rubycafe1@aol.com

31 AUG 2001

The History Channel had an Excellent segment on 419 fraud last evening 30 AUG on the "From the Files of Interpol - the World's Most Wanted" program. The first part of the show was about a Chinese counterfeiter, interesting but not relevant here, and the second half hour was "419 Fraud".

The show did many things well, about as well as the subject could be covered in half an hour. The magnitude and longevity of 419 was well covered. They had some good on site shots from Lagos. Various competent authorities were interviewed, including Tom Johnston, who formerly headed up the Atlanta branch of USSS 419 Task Force (if we remember correctly) and who currently heads up the branch of Task Force on site in Nigeria.

They also showed a sting operation run by the Brits a couple of years ago, in which a Portuguese target of 419 served as a "pigeon" to catch a ring of 419ers in London, that was well done as well.

The show also did a good job explaining that 419ed proceeds are invested into other illegal operations like the drug trade etc.

There were some things that were not done quite right, as Excellent as the show was. We will go over some of these things below, please do not get us wrong here, we thought the show was Excellent, as good as can be done in half an hour, but these things do need to be noted:

- The show gave the impression that Classic 419 was the only kind of 419, and of course that is not the case. There are the various forms of so-called "legal" 419 like the Will Scam; Real Estate Scam etc. as well in which there is no basis for the victim as potential criminal, as Task Force notes in its own literature.

-The show implied that more "sting" operations like the Brits ran with the Portuguese volunteer "pigeon" would be run if more of the targets were willing to come forward and serve as pigeons etc. They said sting operations were rare and gave that as a reason. This is simply NOT the case. There are hundreds if not thousands of targets and victims every year who are willing to serve as pigeons for sting operations by the authorities. There are even More who are willing to have a "ringer" for them run in by the authorities to serve as "pigeon" in a sting operation. The actual reasons there aren't more sting operations are: shortage of men, money and material to conduct them; fear for the "pigeon"; and fear for the Agent serving as "pigeon" if the authorities run in a ringer. These are the actual reasons there are not more sting operations run, Not lack of target or victim willingness to assist in such operations.

-The show also, in parts, implied that Law Enforcement (especially Nigerian law enforcement) is having a greater impact on 419 than it has actually had, to date. In other parts, the show does note that 419 continues to expand both within Nigeria and that more and more "branch offices" are being set up in other (primarily African) countries, which is of course accurate.

-The show also implied that the tracking and seizing of 419ed monies is becoming much more prevalent etc. 419 Coalition is aware that efforts are beign made in that regard, but to date it remains accurate to say that if one loses money to the 419ers the authorities will not recover it for you, ie. that you will never see it again. That remains the way it is in the vast, vast, majority of 419 cases. This is an area in which there remains Much improvement needed, over and above what has been accomplished so far.

- The show acknowledged that there have been meetings in bona fide Nigerian Government offiices between 419ers and victims, but indicated that htese were always after hours and that the "officials" met with were imposters. This is not always the case. There have been cases where victims have had meetings with genuine Nigerian Government officials in their offices to discuss a 419 "deal" during office hours (Adler Case, for example). There are also cases of victims getting the phone number of the relevant Parastatal from Lagos directory assistance, calling that number (CBN, for example), asking for their Scammer by name, and getting put through during office hours.

-The show seemed to accept the Nigerian telecommunications industry's inability to trace calls or to know who their customers are. The truth is, that until recent years, NITEL pretty much just told people it was impossible to trace calls and that they didn't even know who their paying customers were. Things have gotten better of late. NITEL can now trace lines if they really want to, they say.

On a side note, 419 Coalition proposed a simple approach to the "get at the 419ers through their commo" problem to Task Force a couple of years ago, and to certain Nigeria Police officials a year or so ago that we think has considerable promise. In brief, that is this:

When a report of a 419er number comes in, don't bother to trace it, simply shut off the number at the phone company "frame". This will cut off that number and any illegal taps that have been made into that line. When somebody calls to ask why the phone doesn't work, tell them that there is some difficulty with their bill that requires them to come in before the line can be turned back on.

Then, whoever shows up to deal with the snafu, detain and question them, and get them to rat up the line. How to fund this? The Government orders NITEL and the other phone companies in Nigeria to pay for the maintenance of a Nigeria Police Special Fraud Unit man at each office where bills may be paid in person.

The Nigeria Police who liaise with 419 Coalition thought this was a good idea. Nobody has told us yet how it could fail to put the heat on the 419ers communications. Sounds like a Plan to Us :) :)

There were a couple of other minor problems with the show, but all in all this was a Great primer on 419 and we here at 419 Coalition are Very Grateful to the History Channel and to the Producers of the show for running it. It will continue to be shown, of course, and each time it is shown it will educate Millions on 419. This is an example of Media Power at its best being applied to make it harder for the 419ers to find victims, thereby driving up their cost of operations. Kudos to the History Channel!

30 AUG 2001
Accra Mail (Accra) reported at allafrica.com
August 30, 2001
Posted to the web August 29, 2001

Amos Safo
Lagos

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo has in a Kufuor style "zero tolerance for corruption", promised his government's readiness to eradicate, 419, an advance fee fraud scam employed by Nigerian fraudsters to outsmart unsuspecting businessmen and women.

General Obasanjo who was the special guest speaker at the on going Abuja National Seminar on Economic Crime identified 419 as one of the numerous economic crimes in Nigeria, which pose a serious threat to economic stability. He mentioned the other crimes as money laundering and corruption in high places.

Obasanjo whose address was read for him by Vice President Atiku Abubakar said without the extermination of economic crime, the country's economy will not grow. He said Nigeria, like other developing countries has put measures in place to ensure the elimination of economic crime, especially 419. Obasanjo however, admitted that the battle against economic crime could only be won if the economy is made more productive. He urged all Nigerians to join the battle against crime.

The tightening of anti-corruption measures in Nigeria, if effective, could lead to a spill over of the 419 gangs to Ghana. Ghana is already struggling to contain violent crime and the white-collar crime, some of which has been blamed on Nigerian criminals. The 419 gang operates all over West Africa and gullible businessmen and women have caught in their strangulating webs of shady deals. In Ghana they have succeeded in bilking unsuspecting members of the business community of billions of cedis. Since the Ghanaian President's zero tolerance policy started biting, there have been few reports of any 419 scams.

Their main tools are modern communication conveniences. What they do is to obtain phone numbers of people and offer them business opportunities. Of late they also are increasingly using the Internet. They give their targeted victim the impression that there is a huge amount of money to be made through some simple paper work. Once the victim bites the bait, a number of instructions are issued, linking the victim to a complex arrangement of bank accounts, transfer of money, etc. Before long, a major swindle is effected.

In Ghana, President Kufuor launched what he described as a "Zero Tolerance for Corruption" in order to stem the tide of white-collar crime in his country. This has already set its first example. A "fast track" court last month sentenced Mallam Yusuf Ali Isa, former Minister of Youth and Sports to four years in jail. The ongoing trials of former ministers involved in the Quality Grain and court computerisation scandals are further examples of zero tolerance.

If zero tolerance for corruption is able to take root in Nigeria, West Africa's most populous and arguably also most corrupt giant, then perhaps the sub-region would be on the way to a renaissance and economic development. But this is easier said than done for corruption is endemic in Nigeria.

In a number of international surveys on corruption, Nigeria has always featured in the top league. Obasanjo defeated the much dreaded Abacha, can he defeat the equally much dreaded 419? If he succeeds in that, he would have earned himself the most enviable place in history as the greatest African ever!

419 Coalition Comment; A "Zero Tolerance" policy on 419 by the Nigerian Government would be most welcome, but it must be backed by the will and muscle to enforce it, resulting in Tangible and Quantifiable mass successes against the 419ers including arrests, convictions, seizure of assets, and repatriation of stolen funds in something like the massive amounts in which they have been stolen over the years. We are, however, pleased to note that President Obasanjo continues to say all the right things about the need to control 419, for which we are grateful. We'd much rather say good things than bad about the progress the Obasanjo Government has made in curtailing 419, and we always like to give credit where credit is due.

28 AUG 2001

This sent in by a concerned Nigerian credited to African Newspapers of Nigeria, PLC:

Atiku declares war on '419'

Femi Ojewuyi, Abuja

VICE-PRESIDENT Atiku Abubakar has charged Nigerians to unite and fight against the escalating crimes of vandalism and abuse of public utilities and the Advanced Free-Fraud (419) insisting that the fight against economic crimes is a fight for all Nigerians. Speaking in Abuja on Monday, at the opening of the National Seminar on Economic Crimes, the Vice President argued that economic crimes were not committed only in the banking industry, but in all sectors of the economy.

According to him, government had also realised that the fight against economic crimes could be won in the long run if the economy was more productive. It is in this regard that the Federal Government has come up with policies and strategies that can address the structural problems of the economy, by taking steps to restructure the Nigerian economy in order to make it more market-oriented, private-sector-led and technology-driven, reduce lending rates and improve domestic savings, increase productivity, and institutionalize probity, transparency and accountability, he added.

He said government had realised the need to fight economic and financial crimes because we all have become aware of the real threat it poses to stability, to the national and indeed to global economic and financial systems.

The Vice President said measures put in place to maintain confidence in Nigeria's financial system included the promulgation of the Failed Banks and Money Laundering Act of 1994, strengthening of the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), introduction of a Code of Conduct for bank directors and promulgation of the Banks and other Financial Institutions Act No 25 of 1991, in order to regulate banking operations.

The Vice President, therefore, charged participants at the seminar to come up with workable suggestions on how to effectively check the menace of economic crimes in the country.

419 Coalition Comment: We welcome, as always, any tangible and quantifiable efforts of the Government of Nigerian to curtail 419 and look forward to the repatriation of 419ed funds in amounts commensurate to the massive amounts which have been stolen over recent years.

24 AUG 2001

This news article was posted in the Naijanet at Topica.com discussion group:

Friday, August 24, 2001

IMF blacklists Nigeria over advance fee fraud

DUE to alleged involvement of Nigerians in the advance fee fraud (419) sham, the country has been blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force, an arm of the

International Monetary Fund (IMF). This was disclosed yesterday in Abuja, at a pre-seminar press conference by the Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Mr. Shamsudeen Usman. He regretted that Nigeria's bad image has not changed significantly.

His words: "The 419 scourge has dented the image of Nigeria before the international community so much that most Nigerians that travel out of the do not want to present themselves as Nigerians because they are often perceived as dubious. The culmination of this bad image is the recent blacklisting of Nigeria by the financial action task force as a non-co-operating country."

The apex bank's deputy governor added that the forthcoming international seminar holding next Monday in Abuja on economic crimes to be organised by the office of the Special Adviser to the President on Drugs and Financial Crimes in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Central Bank of Nigeria...

21 AUG 2001

This is from the Nigerian publication Newswatch
Volume 34 No 8, August 27, 2001:

No thanks to 419

Advance-fee fraud, popularly known as 419, perpetrated by Nigerians scares away American investors

By Chris Ajaero

The low level of American investments in Nigeria has been attributed to the advance-fee fraud, also known as 419. Howard Jeter, United States ambassador to Nigeria said while handing over some equipment worth \$150,000 to the Interpol office of the Nigeria Police Force, NPF, and the special fraud unit, SFU, in Lagos August 8. He sees 419 as a serious problem for Nigeria.

According to Jeter, much of this type of financial fraud has been committed by Nigerian crime syndicates. He emphasised that 419 fraud has not only tarnished Nigeria's image but also hindered potential foreign investment and trade.

"Legitimate Nigerian businessmen attempting to establish links with the United States and Europe or to solicit foreign investment are greeted too often with negative reactions based on suspicions of 419 fraud schemes," he said.

Hundreds of Americans, each year, allegedly receive fraudulent letters from Nigerians who perpetrate the 419 scam. Many greedy Americans have been victims to the 419 scam.

Jeter told Newswatch that he personally received 419 letters. "Now, you have so much sophisticated 419 schemes. This phenomenon is spilling over to neighbouring countries of Nigeria. It is a new criminal activity that is transnational in form and I think it requires international attention. It is a national problem for Nigeria," he said.

Frank Boudreaux, a secret service agent of the American Consulate General in Lagos said that his office has an excellent working relationship with NPF's special fraud unit and Interpol office in an attempt to check millions of dollars lost to Nigerian 419 fraudsters by Americans. According to him, American citizens lost about \$100 million to Nigerian 419 syndicates in the year 2000.

"The secret service shares information with the NPF, and both the Interpol office and the SFU have reciprocated, passing to the secret service information that pertains to US victims of 419 fraud," Boudreaux said.

He noted that 419 fraud was not limited to the advance-fee fraud schemes caused by the "get rich quick" mentality of some individuals. Counterfeit corporate bank drafts, money orders, and stolen credit cards are also part of the 419 fraudster's diverse criminal portfolio. Identity theft is another growing problem. Identities of Americans and citizens of many countries surfing the web have been stolen by criminals in the United Kingdom, Romania, Russia, and the United States, among other countries. As technology evolves, so does the criminal. Advanced computer graphics, internet web solicitations and desk top publishing of counterfeit currency, cheques, and credit cards facilitate these crimes, he said.

The equipment donated to the SFU and Interpol were vehicles, computers, generators, fax machines, fire proof safes, and VHF radios. The US Department of State's bureau of international narcotics and law enforcement affairs, INL, funded the equipment donated by the U.S government. INL will organise computer training programme for investigators fighting 419 fraud in the SFU and Interpol offices in Nigeria.

Hafez Ringim, commissioner of police, Interpol and Chris Dega, deputy

commissioner of police, special fraud unit received the donation on behalf of the federal government. Ringim thanked the US embassy for the donation. "I want to promise that these equipment will be used for the purposes they were meant for," Ringim said.

419 Coalition note: Yes, we agree that 419 has been devastating to foreign investment in Nigeria, and not just US foreign investment. Also, a couple clarifications of material in the article - the number of letters, emails received by US citizens per annum ranges from the Hundreds of Thousands on up to the Millions (not "thousands") each year.

Additionally, The \$100 million in losses per annum figure given is Reported and confirmable losses, the actual loss figure per annum for US citizens is estimated to be from \$300 Million to \$350 Million dollars per annum. And that is just for One year, and for Just the US. Of course, 419 has been running large scale for nearly 20 years now, and it is Global.

17 AUG 2001

There is an email going around from a group of people in Canada who claim that they, and they alone, have been informed that reimbursement of 419 losses by the Government of Nigeria is imminent. Needless to say, the Government of Nigeria has Never said that it will make good 419 losses.

In fact, 419 Coalition liaison with the Nigerian Police Special Fraud Unit in Abuja, the capital, had this to say about the supposed reimbursement offer, verbatim:

"Never heard such crap before."

These are the same people who sent the epistles covered in the 23 NOV 2000 and 5 DEC 2000 News sections.

Here is who they say they represent and who they say they are:

>>INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S
>>LIBERATION AND DEMOCRACY (ICN-PLD)
>>
>>ANTI-REFUGEE SLAVERY INTERNATIONAL (INTERNATIONAL
>>CAMPAIGN PROJECT)
>>
>>AFRICAN CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (ACHRA)
>>
>>NETLINK INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (NLICS)
>>
>>OIL AND CHEMICAL WATCH INTERNATIONAL (OCWI)
>>
>>AFRICAN CANADIAN IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATION
>>(ACISA)
>>
>>Contact:
>>Godson Etiebet - Assistant Crisis Investigator (1)
>>Paul N. Clarke - Campaign Coordinator(2)
>>Paul Achala - Campaign Officer (4)
>>Phillip C. Ofume - Senior Policy Researcher (1)
>>Margaret McDonough - Coordinator, International
>>Coalition Project (ICP)
>>Aviva Meridor, Senior Campaign Officer, Middle East
>>and Asia Project
>>
>>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,
>>ngozi2000@yahoo.com

12 AUG 2001

This is today from the AAFA (African Anti-Fraud Control Agency)
<http://www.africaservice.com/fraud/> :

BUSINESSMAN KILLS SELF AFTER "419" INCIDENT

A businessman killed himself in a London hotel room after losing his life savings to Nigerian con men, an inquest was told yesterday. Jerry Stratton, 47, an American, took a drugs overdose and slashed his wrists after he was tricked into believing he could make £7m by handing over £48,000, in a classic case of an international swindle known as advance-fee fraud "419".

His body was found at the Cumberland Hotel in Marylebone last October when his relatives telephoned the manager. Police found a note written by Mr Stratton, a plumbing contractor from Live Oak, Florida, which said: "If anything happens to me, look for three people. They are Nigerians. They are responsible." But yesterday, Detective Inspector

Chris Byrne told the Westminster Coroners' Court that police inquiries showed no signs of foul play. "There is nothing to indicate otherwise from the scene and from the body," he said. The Westminster coroner, Dr Paul Knapman, recorded a verdict of suicide, despite his family's belief that he might have been murdered.

Mr Byrne said Mr Stratton was caught up in a con operated by West African fraudsters, in which potential victims are offered huge profits if they put up money supposedly to help bribe officials at overseas banks to release huge sums of cash held on account. The con men disappear with the victims' money leaving them with worthless contracts, or "promissory notes". Notes for \$50,000 (£35,000) were found in Mr Stratton's room. He had been persuaded by the criminals that he could expect vast profits from the \$10m (£7m) deal, but lost his money and flew to Britain on 5 October in a last-ditch attempt to salvage the deal.

The inquest was told he had unsuccessfully tried to raise \$65,000 (£46,000) from family and friends to keep the deal going. Relatives became worried when he told them he "had nothing to come home for". A pathologist, Dr Nicholas Hunt, said the cause of death was four deep incised wounds to the left forearm, and one to the right wrist causing heavy bleeding. Mr Stratton had taken five times the recommended amount of an insomnia drug called Nytol, he said.

Police are still investigating the fraud. Organised gangs from West Africa have been behind a series of other multi-million pound frauds operating in Britain over decades. The National Criminal Intelligence Service said earlier this year that the gangs were using British frontmen, who hire temporary offices in Mayfair, central London, to lure victims from all over the world. One fraud, which became known as the "419 scam" after a relevant section of the Nigerian penal code was responsible for about 150 stings every day. When the scam first emerged a decade ago, fraudsters would attempt to lure victims to Nigeria with letters purporting to be from high-ranking government officials, offering fortunes in return for assistance in moving huge sums of money.

10 AUG 2001

This in today from Mr. Tony Kakhu at naijanet@topica.com :

MBI, www.minaj.net, an international TV station broadcasting from Nigeria, ran a feature on 419 this evening (10th August). There were lots of evidence on how the Nigerian police is succeeding in fighting it from the Nigerian end. Seized goods were on display and mention was made of people arrested. The American Ambassador to Nigeria featured in the program and praised the efforts of the Nigerian Police!!! There is a big collaborative effort between the Nigerian Police and U.S authorities. Lots of computer, communications, and counter-fraud equipment have been donated by the U.S. govt. The results have been yielding so much success that many of the 419 operatives have run from Nigeria to other countries. These are the observations of the U.S. Ambassador.

419 Coalition Comment: We are always pleased to report any progress by the Nigerian authorities in counter-419 operations. We have of course reported previously that US has been trying to assist the Nigerian police with personnel, equipment, and training in that regard; most recently in our 3 AUG News piece below. 419 Coalition favors such assistance so long as tangible, quantifiable, results are produced.

To the Nigerian Police we say "more grease to your elbow" on this recent success and we hope for Many more. We look forward to any convictions resulting from this effort and to the repatriation of the monies stolen by these 419ers in something approaching the amounts they stole.

7 AUG 2001

Here is an amusing article on 419 that appeared at salon.com:

I crave your distinguished indulgence (and all your cash)

In which the hapless author falls under the syntactically challenged spell of the legendary Nigerian e-mail scam.

By Douglas Cruickshank

Aug. 7, 2001 | Born in Africa over a decade ago, a renaissance in short fiction writing is spreading across the globe via the Internet, breathing new life into the always troubled romance between art and crime. Like the incessant e-mail come-ons for breast and penis enlargement, "advance fee" or "419" fraud scheme messages, which have been coming out of West Africa in one form or another since the 1980s, show up daily in in boxes around the world. There have been TV

news features and magazine and newspaper articles about the scam, and even a novel based on 419 fraud. Law enforcement agencies from Canada to Australia and Europe have special details assigned to the 419 problem and there's a 419 Coalition Web site that serves as an online Grand Central Station for 419 information, along with numerous other sites on the Web devoted to the subject. In 1999, Howard Jeter, the U.S. State Department's deputy assistant secretary for African affairs, claimed that "Americans lose \$2 billion annually to white collar crime syndicates based in Nigeria." Yet the literary merit of the letters themselves is rarely discussed.

I've received a half-dozen or more of the missives some weeks, offering to give me as much as a third (but never less than 15 to 20 percent) of, say, \$60 million if I'll just allow the use of my bank account for storage of the fortune, or let the funds be invested in my company or in some other way assist in liberating the humongous amount of cash from the shaky, unstable situation in which it's being held. One writer assured me that "for your assistance, sir, the family [of former Nigerian head of state General Sani Abacha] has decided to bless you with one third of the above stated sum," which in that case would have been nearly \$8 million. It's an absurd amount, but when dropped into a narrative right at the outset it does focus one's attention; it's seductive, especially to those of us who are greedy. I, the letters usually inform me, am the very last hope for bringing the money to the land of the free.

Some poor souls do fall for the scam, but we'll get to that in a moment. The truth is I've fallen for them, too -- not for the scam part, but for the writing, the plots (fragmented as they are), the characters, the earnest, alluring evocations of dark deeds and urgent needs, Lebanese mistresses, governments spun out of control, people abruptly "sacked" for "official misdemeanors" and all manner of other imaginative details all delivered in a prose style that is as awkward and archaic as it is enchanting. It's some of the most entertaining short fiction around these days. Even the U.S. Secret Service, which would very much like to put the kibosh on the 419 writers workshop, concedes that the letters "are often very creative and innovative."

Most of the messages seem to come from Nigeria (419 refers to the section of the Nigerian penal code that covers fraud), though one came in the other day from Sierra Leone and another from Côte d'Ivoire. The return addresses are effectively untraceable Web-based e-mail accounts with extensions like yahoo.com or hotmail.com or, in at least one case, the strangely familiar-sounding salon.com. The senders have names such as "Barrister Momoh Sanni Momoh" or "Colonel Timi Phillips" or "Dr. Bisi Odum, Notary Public" or -- the first one I've received from a female -- the jazzy-sounding "Susan Lateef," who claims to be doing business from within the peaceful walls of La Paix Hotel in Abidjan.

There is an almost poetic sweetness (swaddled in lavishly stilted prose excavated from an 18th century protocol handbook) in how the letters begin. "It is with a heart full of hope ..." reads one. "Compliments of the season. Grace and peace and love from this part of the Atlantic to you" is how another starts. "Goodday to you, I would here crave your distinguished indulgence" begins a third. And still another opens, "It is with my profound dignity that I write you."

My favorite is perhaps this one (the phrasing is less lyrical than the others, but its deep sense of purpose and utmost sincerity can't be matched):

"It is with deep sense of purpose and utmost sincerity that I write this letter to you knowing full well how you will feel as regards to receiving a mail from somebody you have not met or seen before. There is no need to fear, I got your address from a business directory which lends credence to my humble belief. I also assure you of my honesty and trustworthiness."

You've no sooner started to read one of these slyly poignant pleas before you're bathing in the warmth of the author's lofty intentions, a soothing hot tub bubbling over with reassurance, honesty and trustworthiness.

The writers' plans for you and your money, however, are bad, maybe even terminal, and according to the U.S. Secret Service (which devotes a special page on its Web site to 419 scams), "The letter, while appearing transparent and even ridiculous to most, unfortunately is growing in its effectiveness."

The 419 perpetrators employ a "con within a con" strategy, as the Secret Service explains it, and getting your bank account number in order to plunder your checking or savings is not the goal of the West African grifters. It's just the beginning of the relationship. As for the plundering, if things work out the way they hope, you'll do that for them. "The goal," the Secret Service says, "is to delude the

target into thinking that he is being drawn into a very lucrative, albeit questionable, arrangement. [The victim] will become the primary supporter of the scheme and willingly contribute a large amount of money when the deal is threatened."

In most cases, once the sucker's on the hook, the scamsters inform him that there have been complications, a special upfront fee or tax is needed urgently or a government official must be bribed. The amounts of these advance fees can be extremely large (though they may seem a pittance next to the \$8 million or so you'll be collecting for helping your new business partner), and it's by paying them that victims of the fraud bid farewell to their savings.

Anyway, that's all very illegal, not nice and boring, but the letters themselves are a hoot and worth spending a little time with. I've yet to receive two that duplicate each another. Each seems to be handcrafted and the writers pour in plenty of ostensibly personal details. Consider the syntactically challenged one I received just the other night from "Maurice Elodie Davidson":

"As a result of my father's death, and with the news of my uncle's involvement in an air crash in January, dashed our hope of survival. The untimely deaths caused my mother's heart failure and other related complications of which she later died in the hospital after we must have spent a lot of money on her."

One's heart goes out to poor Maurice, who, if he should ever give up creative writing and international fraud, might consider a career in accounting -- or grief counseling. But there is hope, he confided in me, because his late father, "Sir Etienn Davidson, the [former] General Manager of Sierra Leone Mining Cooperation," left behind a wee nest egg -- "\$US32,800,000" to be exact. "This money," Maurice explained, "was the income accrued from overpayments and personal diamond business at the mining cooperation."

In all the letters there is some kind of explanation as to where the glorious sum came from. The source is variously described as part of "\$620 million which the late head of state placed in Luxembourg branch of German Bank warburg ... Luckily for us sir, the sum of 23.4 million has eluded the eyes of the Nigerian authority or their agents," or:

"When I was a director in the Ministry Of Mines and Natural Resources, I was the link between the foreign buyers of DIAMOND and the SIERRA-LOENIAN Government. Just before the out broke of the Civil War in SIERRA-LEONE, there was some payment made to the Government of SIERRA-LEONE by our foreign Diamond buyers for the Diamond they purchased. I had to divert the sum Totaling up to Thirty-Two Million Dollars (US\$32,000,000.00) into a security and finance company in Holland for safe keeping because of the Civil War."

or (note the use in the following passage of the ever popular "mistress in Lebanon" ploy to add a piquant dash of authenticity):

"The former chief security officer to the late head of state major Hamza al Mustapha had private accounts that are worth 100 million United States dollars around the world. Presently he has been arrested by the government of the day and is presently in prison waiting to be taken to court on charges of gross human right abuses on the citizens of Nigeria. Shortly before the present government arrested my client, he entrusted to me the sum of twenty-six million, four hundred thousand united states d dollars (us\$26,400,000.00) for safekeeping. This amount was to be sent to his mistress in Lebanon to launder for him."

Just how, one wonders after reading the above, would the Lebanese mistress of Major Hamza al Mustapha have laundered \$26,400,000? That's a considerable pile of laundry, and any misstep could cause great friction between her and her imprisoned lover, a relationship that sounds as if it is already a little complicated. Fortunately -- for reasons not altogether clear -- she was relieved of this onerous chore before it could begin.

The Secret Service claims that "in June of 1995, an American was murdered in Lagos, Nigeria, while pursuing a 419 scam, and numerous other foreign nationals have been reported as missing." And yet, because the letters have a certain rough-hewn charm and indicate a vivid imagination at work, one likes to think these bad rascals are not all murderers but, instead, simply hardworking con artists who've missed their true calling as novelists and have had to take up fiction writing's more lucrative sister vocation: fraud.

The 419 writers have a gift for cooking up characters that William Boyd would envy and a penchant for wonderful names that must have Charles Dickens, wherever he is, standing up and applauding. After a

typical letter's splendid greeting, the author introduces himself or herself:

"I am Sir Sambujang Jammeh, the personal Assistant to Mohammed Abacha (the eldest son of the late Nigerian Head of State, General Sani Abacha).

"I am Timi Phillips, a soldier by profession and a colonel by rank. I was the immediate director in Ministry Of Mines and Natural Resources (M.M.N.R) in my country Sierra Leone before the out break of the war."

"I am Ahmed Grema Esq.(san) senior partner of Ahmed & Associates law chambers, a lawyer/attorney to Hamza al Mustapha who was the former chief security officer to the military dictator of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha."

"I am barrister Momoh Sanni Momoh. I represent Mohammed Abacha, son of the late Gen. Sani Abacha, who was the former military head of state in Nigeria."

"I ['Mallam Sadiq Abacha'] am one of the sons of the late Nigerian head of state, General Sani Abacha."

"I am Susan Lateef the first daughter of the late chief Joseph Lateef. My father until his death was the director of DIAMOND mining field of Kalangba district in Sierra Leone."

The story's out of the gate at a gallop and we've only just met our new friends. And what a colorful cast they are. It seems likely that Sir Sambujang, Mallam, son of the general, Ahmed and his fellow "lawyer/attorney," Momoh, have some history together, some of it not pretty and all of it the makings for a succulent subplot. As for Colonel Timi and Susan, first daughter of the diamonds' best friend, we can only speculate what sort of relationship might exist between the handsome professional soldier and the comely offspring of Chief Lateef, but they say that in Côte d' Ivoire in the city of Abidjan on Avenue 32, Rue 44 at La Paix Hotel, even with the sea breeze blowing, the nights can get very, very warm.

As in all good fiction, it's the little touches that give the 419 stories their sparkle and verisimilitude. No effort is spared in keeping the letter's recipient informed and reassured. For example, this, from Mallam Sadiq Abacha himself,

"Be rest assured that this transaction is 100% risk free as all modalities have been put in place for a smooth and successful conclusion. However, should you be intrested in assisting us, I will not hesistate to furnish you with the access code of the secret account, code which you will present at the Central Bank of Nigeria."

"All modalities." Could anything be more comforting than that? I think not, but I had to look up "modalities" just to be certain I knew what the late general's son was referring to. Perhaps Mallam and I have the same dictionary (Webster's New World) as the definition that seemed most applicable bore an uncanny resemblance to the 419 prose style: "Logic the qualification in a proposition that indicates that what is affirmed or denied is possible, impossible, necessary, contingent, etc." Yes, quite. That, coupled with the furnishing of the access code of the secret account, conveys an unquestionable degree of solidity to the deal.

When unpleasant personnel issues have disrupted the otherwise smooth functioning of my correspondent's operation, I've been thoughtfully apprised. Last May, for instance, I received a 419 message from "Dr. Bisi Odum," representative "of a very wealthy group in the West African sub region." After the usual revelation of a mountain of cash desperately looking for a new home, Odum implored, "We pray God touches your heart to see the urgency and importance of this pending mutually beneficial transaction." The good doctor then closed his letter -- rather winningly, I thought -- with "I would go to await your swift response."

Unfortunately, I'd only just begun to consider his generous offer when, little more than an hour later, a second letter arrived, this one signed by the hapless Dr. Odum's superior, "Dr. Akmed Haruna." The postscript explained the duplicate messages:

"PS. I instructed my personal assistant (Dr.Bisi Odum) to send this mail earlier, but unfortunately, he just got sacked, reason being official misdemeanor. Hence I am sending directly this time, please bear with the inconvenience associated with same."

The letters' authors are sensitive souls and while they are clearly concerned with my feelings, they also ask for delicacy in the off chance I don't wish to become a multimillionaire. Jacob Maisha, "a

Sierra Leone investor," ended the letter he wrote this way: "Please, note that if you cannot help I will not wish to be insulted, just save your time and do not reply."

The plot turns employed by the 419 writers can be a little hard to follow, but what the accounts lack in narrative drive, they make up for with picaresque shading. "I cannot send the money to my client's mistress any more," Ahmed Grema Esq. confided in me. "Since the death of my father, the government of my country has subjected our family to solitary confinement, which I believe is the most traumatic punishment that can be inflicted on anyone," General Abacha's son, Mallam told me. (Fortunately, he still had a computer and e-mail in his cell.) And in his second letter to me, Sir Sambujang Jammeh, an openly emotional man despite his high station, really let his hair down:

"Everybody I know will face God's judgment one day and we shall all account for our sins and if we are guided by the fact that there is life, then we will eschew violence and stop lying. The bible says, after death, then judgment what matters is how we use that which was given to us to affect people like or to dupe, cheat and maltreat them, we shall all account for these. The judgment of God will be terrible, yes terrible. I can go on and on to lament. "

Then, as if to prove he was a man of his word, he did go on. "Okay, supposing millions of dollars were found in [General Abacha's] house, but the question is all these money holed from the state treasury? Some may have been gifts from friends."

If I have a favorite among the 419 writers group, I suppose it's Sir Sambujang Jammeh -- indefatigable, effusive and a deep believer in the terrible, terrible judgment of God. I favor him because while I responded to all the letters to express interest in the writers' stories, only the noble knight wrote back to me, signing his reply simply Jammeh. "Dear Sir," began his 465-word response, "Thank you so much for your most thoughtful letter. The more I go through your letter each passing day, the more encouraged I give to the traumatized Abacha family; at least they are begging to feel that there might be light at the end of the tunnel."

I believe I see the glow from here. My response to Jammeh apparently opened a floodgate of emotion; his feelings for the Abacha family are equaled only by the overflowing cornucopia of cash -- about \$8 million -- he wishes to bestow upon me.

"What does one expect from a family that has seen it All -- the best things of late and suddenly had crashed into poverty-penury ... since the former head of state died, he has been personified by everything evil. One man who suffered to put things right in the country -- a man of vision and an Iron in his own stead. Today illation has taken over the reins of the government, terror has been the order of the day and thank God that people are having a rethink."

An Iron in his own stead! The reins of government grabbed by illation! ("To infer ...") But, like the guy at the end of the bar who won't stop bellowing at the TV news, Jammeh's just warming up. He is so furious at the present Nigerian government headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo (the country's first democratically elected chief executive in over 15 years), so incensed by the way the Abacha family has been mistreated that, well, I'll let him tell you:

"One wonders really the present administration cannot allow the former first family to rest. Everyday, it is Abacha this and Abacha that, one thing that marvels the reasoning mind is that some of these cronies are still serving in Obasanjo's govt ... People are realizing that Abacha is not really the evil genius but these men were. Abacha was able to rid this country of crime-people had to work to eat."

OK, OK, calm down, Jammeh. Get to the point, will you?

"To my point sir, all we need is your name, company name to start the process of changing the certificate of the deed of deposit in your favour to enable you come over to claim the money. That's all. Let me know what you think about this."

I could certainly use \$8 million -- that on top of my tax rebate would enable me to return from my lucrative trip to Nigeria and move right up to one of the nicer lots on the Big Rock Candy Mountain -- but I haven't quite found the time to sort out my thoughts and reply to Jammeh's plea. Until I do, I get some comfort from thinking of him going through my letter each passing day and the light that it brings him from the end of the tunnel. I don't know much about the late General Abacha, but I think that Jammeh is a man of vision and an Iron in his own stead, and, if he keeps at it, a writer with a

future.

By the way, this -- in its entirety -- is the letter that I sent Sambujang Jammeh that ignited his exuberant response: "Dear Sambujang Jammeh, Your story is an interesting one. What more can you tell me about your situation?"

3 AUG 2001

The US State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, through the US Embassy in Nigeria, is donating equipment to the Nigerian Police Force Special Fraud Unit and to the Nigerian Police Interpol Office \$150,000 in equipment to be used to fight 419. The equipment includes; 4 complete Pentium III computer systems; 4 fireproof safes; 2 fax machines; 2 Toyota pickup trucks; 2 Toyota vans; 1 100KVA generator; and one 72.5 KVA generator. Training on the computer systems is also included.

The Nigerian Police Force has agreed that this equipment will be properly used to address 419 matters; to provide all maintenance and repairs etc. on the equipment, and not to use the equipment outside the two Nigerian Police Force offices specified without prior consultation with the US Embassy's INL office.

The US government has been assisting the Nigerian authorities in counter 419 activities for some time. A branch of the Secret Service led 419 Task Force has been stationed there for the last couple of years.

419 Coalition says: Outstanding! We favor anything reasonable which has a chance of producing tangible results in curtailing 419.

3 AUG 2001

Dr. and Shahla Ghasemiof Tampa, Florida have received a permit from the proper authorities for a protest against 419 at the Nigerian Embassy in Washington DC on 12 OCT 2001. This is to follow the protest scheduled for the day previously, 11 OCT 2001 at the White House (see News piece of 23 JUL 2001). These protests have been timed to coincide with the scheduled visit of Nigerian President Olesegun Obasanjo and other Nigerian high officials to DC. Contact Mrs. Ghasemi via email at Rubycafe1@aol.com (email preferred) or at 813-874-2044 (voice daytime) phone for more details etc.

24 JUL 2001

CHURCH LOSES \$75,000 IN TITHE 419
Sunday Vanguard, Lagos 22nd July, 2001
By Olasunkanmi Akoni

DETECTIVES from Special Fraud Unit (SFU) Ikoyi, Lagos have arrested a computer expert (name withheld) for allegedly defrauding a foreign based church to the tune of \$75,000.

The 35 year-old suspect who, according to sources, specialised in advanced fee fraud known as '419' is said to be a graduate of computer science from one of the Eastern universities in Nigeria.

He was said to have been arrested in Imo, Abeokuta in Ogun State on July 4, 2001 by police detectives who trailed him to the place following a tip-off by a complainant.

The police commissioner in charge of the unit, Mr. Adewole Ajakaiye, Friday, told Sunday Vanguard that a manhunt had been launched by the police to apprehend other members of the suspect's syndicate with a view to bringing them to book.

According to Mr. Ajakaiye, "the arrest of the suspect was sequel to a complaint by a representative of the foreign church from a neighbouring African country who alerted the SFU of the alleged fraudulent act by the suspect.

"The complainant reportedly provided the necessary document which later led to the arrest of the suspect."

Narrating how the incident happened, police sources claimed the suspect prepared a letter sometime in May, 2001 in collaboration with other members of the syndicate still at large.

The letter was later sent to the church abroad convincing them of a plan to pay a large sum of money as his tithe to the church but claimed he could not do so because he would not want to take out of the tithe to remit the money.

The church, after receiving the letter, allegedly sent in its representatives to the country who after meeting with the supposed tither lodged them at Sheraton Hotel, Ikeja. The church

representatives were said to have returned to their country after parting with \$75,000 which was to enable the tither to remit the tithe over to the church, not knowing that they were dealing with a '419' syndicate.

Sunday Vanguard further learnt that it dawned on the church authorities after waiting endlessly for the money to come that knew they had been duped.

Consequent upon this, the church contacted a neighbouring country to lodge a complaint with the police authority in Nigeria with a view to at least recover the \$75,000.

Based on this information, the police at the unit swung into action and after preliminary investigation, their efforts paid off with the arrest of the suspect.

According to the police boss, "the suspect has made confessional statements and will soon be arraigned in court as soon as investigation is concluded."

23 JUL 2001

Dr. and Mrs. Shahla Ghasemi of Tampa, Florida have received a permit from the US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, to Protest against Nigerian Corruption and 419 in Lafayette Park in front of the White House on 11 OCT 2001. The protest is scheduled to run during the expected visit of Nigerian high officials, including President Obasanjo, to Washington DC this fall. The South East Quadrant of Lafayette Park will be the specific site of the protest. Those interested in attending are urged to contact Mrs. Ghasemi at 813-874-2400 (daytime voice phone) or preferably via email at Rubycafe1@aol.com for further details.

23 JUL 2001

The Joy/Daily Graphic, which we assume is a Ghanaian publication, reports as follows:

General News of Monday, 23 July 2001

News of 2001-07-23

Nigerians Arrested Over Internet "419"

Four Nigerians suspected to be operating a "419" scam on the Internet to dupe unsuspecting foreign investors in Ghana have been arrested by security agencies. Their activities are believed to have led to the loss of several millions of foreign currencies by prospective investors. William Gbenka Obanla, alias William Stobofield; Obijagwan Polycarp, alias Tony Ibrahim Watara; Stanly Bateren and Blessing Orhreiato are currently on bail pending further investigations.

They were arrested by security agencies when a correspondence with a prospective investor, Mr. Michael Smith was intercepted. A source close to the security agencies told the "Daily Graphic" that William Stobofield wrote a letter to Smith describing himself as the son of the late Sierra Leonean Minister of Mines.

Stobofield told Mr. Smith that before his father's death, he gave him three metallic boxes containing \$25 million each, which have been deposited with a security agency in Ghana, Trans-Gold Security Insurance Services (Gh) Limited. He then told him that the monies were not secured in Ghana and he therefore needed assistance to transfer them from Ghana at a commission of 20 per cent.

Several correspondence between Stobofield and the investor on the Internet were intercepted by security agencies leading to the arrest of Stobofield at an Osu restaurant where he had been invited to meet an investor for discussion. Stobofield led the security team to retrieve other correspondence stored at an Internet café after which he led them to arrest his other three accomplices. Investigations continue.

16 JUL 2001

Here are the names of the 419ers arrested in Toronto:

Wenceslaus Utomi, Ainsley Anthony Drakes and Richard Brewster, who allegedly worked from a hidden office in Toronto, were charged with conspiracy to commit fraud, fraud against the general public and laundering the proceeds of crime.

Police said letters or faxes with fake letterheads from Nigerian institutions such as the central bank were sent to individuals or companies in North America, Europe and Asia, soliciting assistance to set up foreign bank accounts in exchange for a commission.

The fraudsters would ask for "advance fees" and personal financial information from their victims to secure the fraudulent business arrangement. Toronto "agents", posing for bankers in New York, Detroit or the Bahamas, would then call the victims and ask for more money until the victim was broke, the Mounties said.

The victims were promised up to 30 percent of the multimillion-dollar contracts but instead would lose between \$52,000 to \$5 million.

"Greed is a very good part of it," RCMP officer Darryl Ross told a news conference. He said the money, which was not recovered, was used to finance other criminal activities, including drug trafficking.

12 JUL 2001

The following is a news item posted on CBC NEWS ONLINE at <http://cbc.ca/news> It was also reported in the Toronto Star.

RCMP MAKE ARRESTS IN INTERNATIONAL PHONE SCAM
WebPosted Tue Jul 10 17:27:29 2001

TORONTO--The RCMP, along with the FBI and the U.S. Secret Service, have cracked a multi-million dollar scam originating in Nigeria and arrested three people in the Toronto area.

More than 300 people around the world, most of them Americans; were duped into giving money to a fake organization. The RCMP say some people lost more than \$50,000. Others lost millions.

Police say the fraud was sophisticated, high tech and organized.

Typically, victims received a letter either by mail or fax allegedly from officials of a large Nigerian institution, such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation or the Central Bank of Nigeria.

The letters would contain an urgent request for help in transferring millions of dollars out of Nigeria to financial institutions in the victim's country. If the victims would help, they'd be in line for a handsome profit, in some cases as much as 30 per cent of the monies being transferred.

The letter says foreign accounts are needed and victims were asked to wire personal banking information and \$10,000 US to cover administration fees.

'Boiler room' in Toronto

Then, victims were contacted by a person posing as a merchant banker of the Central Bank of Nigeria. They were told the funds were now in a clearing house or mercantile bank in North America.

Phone numbers given for the fake banks actually rang in a "boiler room" in the Toronto area.

The scam continued with the victim asked to pay taxes, duties and other fees, all with the promise of a windfall, until the victim was bankrupt.

The RCMP began a co-ordinated effort with U.S. police forces in 1998. According to an RCMP news release, police detachments in the Toronto area have received at least one complaint a week for the past eight years from victims who lost money in the scam.

Staff Sergeant Darryl Ross says victims lost more than money. Some suffered health problems, mental breakdowns, divorce and the break-up of their families.

419 Coalition note: Informed sources stated that victims have lost in excess of \$20,000,000 to this particular group of 419ers.

12 JUN 2001

This piece sent in by a concerned Nigerian. It is a good short piece describing Classic 419 operations, though it does not address so the so called "legal" 419 operations like Will Scam 419, Good and Services 419 etc. etc. Here is the piece:

Police say Evansville residents targeted by international scam

By STEVE SACKS Courier & Press staff writer 464-6723
Evansville Courier & Press

An international scam has entrapped at least four people in Evansville.

Police say a scam known as the Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud, or 4-1-9, after the penal code in Nigeria for fraud, is swindling individuals here.

Evansville Police Capt. Bill Welcher said that one individual still refuses to believe it's a scam.

Once someone falls prey to the Nigerian it means they've lost money. If they're lucky, that's all they've lost.

According to the U.S. Secret Service, the scam can lead to kidnapping, extortion or even death.

Like any cunning operation, the Nigerian places faith in human greed.

That faith has grossed hundreds of millions of dollars annually, according to the Secret Service, and the amount could be higher because some victims don't contact authorities out of fear or embarrassment.

The perpetrators dangle a huge payout to potential victims.

They target business professionals or individuals with above-average wealth. They gather names from trade journals, professional directories, newspapers and commercial libraries.

It's often referred to as a scam within a scam, because victims are told they're scamming the Nigerian government.

Although there are variations of the scheme, they all involve assistance in transferring a substantial amount of money out of the country.

In one case, a potential victim will receive an unsolicited letter from a Nigerian claiming to be a senior civil servant and asking for help depositing \$10 million to \$60 million, which the Nigerian government overpaid in a contract.

Instead of returning the money to the government, they want to transfer it to a foreign account.

They then tempt the potential victim with up to a 30 percent commission for assisting the transfer.

The perpetrators use falsified documents disguised as official Nigerian government issue to establish credibility.

But the operation gets threatened, and this leads to the scheme's pivotal moment.

Another official demands a bribe, a tax must be paid, or there are licensing fees before the money can be transferred. The victim is asked to provide money to save the deal.

If the victim pays, there will be other problems requiring more money.

Sometimes they'll be asked to go to Nigeria or another border country. This, police say, is absolutely the worst thing to do.

In 1995 an American was murdered in Lagos, Nigeria, while pursuing the scam, and numerous other foreign nationals have been reported as missing, according to the Secret Service.

1 JUN 2001

More on the the Tolliver case, see 18 May 2001 news for the initial item on this matter. Here is the new piece, as posted in the soc.culture.nigeria newsgroup:

Grand Rapids engineer sues Nigerians for \$100 million

Lawsuit claims African officials took his money, but refused to pay him

By Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- A Grand Rapids engineer has filed a \$100-million federal lawsuit against Nigeria and its state-run oil company, alleging that they refused to make good on a \$25-million contract and that he was cheated out of \$500,000 while trying to recover the money.

Will Tolliver's lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court, accuses the western Africa nation and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corp. of breach of contract and racketeering, which, if sustained, could triple any damages awarded.

More than 20 Nigerian individuals also are listed as defendants.

No defendants' lawyers were listed on the lawsuit, which was assigned to Judge Douglas W. Hillman. Because of a Nigerian holiday, there was

no one available Tuesday at that nation's embassy in Washington, D.C., to comment on the suit.

Tolliver's attorney, Todd Knecht, said Nigeria contacted the American Concrete Pipe Association about an oil pipeline problem. The pipe association suggested the job go to Tolliver, a highly regarded specialist with 54 patents and four others pending.

"My client was recommended," Knecht said. "He actually had a contract."

Tolliver first heard from the Nigerians in 1994, after they learned that a concrete pipe faced rupture because it was not settling properly underground.

The proposed solution was very expensive, so the state oil company turned to Tolliver for a cheaper alternative.

Nigerian officials proposed giving him 10 percent of whatever he would save over the original engineering proposal. The repair project was completed and the savings were pegged at \$250 million.

"When I did the job, I thought, there won't be any trouble. I'm working with the Nigerian government. It's an oil-rich country. They should be able to pay their debts," Tolliver told The Grand Rapids Press for a story Tuesday.

Tolliver never received his \$25 million, however, and resigned himself to getting nothing.

Then, in July 1999, four years after the work was completed, he received a letter from officials who claimed to represent the government. They told Tolliver that he would get his money, although he first would have to pay a few "routine" fees.

What followed, according to the lawsuit filed May 9, was a scam of international proportions in which Tolliver, who was ill at the time, had an associate travel the world negotiating with Nigerians. Each step of the way, the associate paid tens of thousands of dollars for pledges that the money soon would be coming.

"When you're looking at collecting \$25 million, you're willing to spend a few dollars in order to affect collection," Tolliver said. "They just keep you on a string and you just keep following."

At one point, the contract was re-negotiated and Tolliver was told that he would receive \$100 million for his efforts. The fees also continued, and after paying about \$500,000, Tolliver ended his spending.

"You look at it and realize, I am throwing good money after bad money," he said.

31 MAY 2001

An educational/alert type story on 419 by Julia Scheeres was published today in [Wired](#) online newsmagazine, and another by James Daw was published in the [Toronto Star](#).

You can read either in the searchable archives on their respective sites.

18 MAY 2001

This is from attorney Michael Ravnitzky by way of "Nigerian 419 Scam: Game Over!" author Brian Wizard:

> sour crude: The proprietor of a Michigan engineering firm is suing the
> government of Nigeria, the state-owned petroleum company and bank and
> several high government officials for, among other claims, racketeering and
> fraud. According to Todd T.R. Knecht, a partner at Grand Rapids, Mich.'s
> Twohey Maggini, who represents pipeline specialist Will Tolliver and his
> Grand Rapids-based company Tradco Inc., the plaintiffs were hired in the
> early 1990s by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corp. to troubleshoot an oil
> pipeline with difficult and potentially expensive alignment problems. The
> plaintiff claims that his company was not paid and that officials of the
> Nigerian government and oil company executives exacted "processing,
> administrative and security" fees, ostensibly to release payment funds.
> During the process, according to Mr. Knecht, Tradco incurred more than
> \$500,000 in expenses and fees. The U.S. Secret Service has a task force
> assigned to investigate Nigerian financial scams. Most experts studying
> these scams, including Brian Wizard, author of the book Nigerian 419 Scam
> "Game Over," believe that the frauds are tacitly sanctioned by the Nigerian
> government and that many government officials are involved. Tolliver v.
> Federal Republic of Nigeria, No. 1:01cv290 (W.D. Mich. May 9, 2001).

5 MAY 2001

This article is from the U.S. News and World Report
of 5 MAY 2001, World section, page 28:

A land where con is king

When it comes to bilking foreigners,
no one beats Nigerian scammers

By David E. Kaplan

LAGOS, NIGERIA "Prince" Joseph I. Amore was hiding behind a padlocked wooden door with an iron gate. Outside, a handful of police pounded on the entrance of his Cajim Motors, a ramshackle office along the highway to Lagos airport. Metal cutters and a battering ram made short work of the door, and soon his place filled with cops waving automatic weapons and a search warrant. Inside, police say they found what they were after: fraudulent passports, counterfeit visas, and scam letters designed to trick Americans into opening their bank accounts.

Amore, who denies any wrongdoing, was arrested on fraud charges in February by Nigerian authorities. He is among the latest targets in an innovative program run by the Nigerian National Police and the U.S. Secret Service. Better known for its job protecting presidents, the Secret Service is also a key player in fighting financial fraud, and no group gives the agency more headaches these days than Nigerian con artists. "We're looking at a Mount Everest of fraud," says Bruce Townsend, chief of the Secret Service's Financial Crimes Division. "Nobody comes close to being as good as the Nigerians."

Each year, Nigerian flimflammers' brilliant schemes defraud Americans, Britons, Japanese, and others of billions of dollars. So prevalent are the scams that a quarter of all major fraud cases seen by the Secret Service now involve Nigerians, with U.S. losses alone estimated at well over \$100 million a year. Those profits, in turn, have fueled an epidemic of drug smuggling and human trafficking by Nigerian crime syndicates, and helped spread West African gangs to some 80 countries worldwide. The frauds take on many forms—dubious business deals with advance fees; insurance and bank scams; credit card and identity theft. And the con artists couldn't hope for a safer haven than Nigeria. Mired in poverty after 30 years of looting by military regimes, oil-rich Nigeria recently ranked dead last in a 90-nation survey of corruption by the nonprofit Transparency International.

The most notorious scams are dubbed advance-fee frauds or 419 cases, after a statute in the Nigerian criminal code. A spate of news reports in the 1990s drew wide attention to the scams, but despite a return to civilian rule in 1999 and pressure from police, the frauds have never been bigger or more profitable. Since March 1998, New York postal authorities have seized a whopping 6 million letters tied to the scams.

"Inside" deals. The frauds typically begin with an unsolicited letter, fax, or, increasingly, E-mail, many on letterhead lifted from Nigerian banks and government ministries. The various pitches often arrive addressed personally to potential victims. Most are requests to transfer money from overinvoiced contracts, but others offer "inside" deals on crude-oil sales, currency conversion, or real estate. All of them offer too-good-to-be-true profits in exchange for use of a foreign bank account or payment of "advance" fees.

Most people ignore the letters, but even a tiny response can net a fortune for those in a country where per capita income hits only \$960 a year. The widespread poverty, combined with Nigeria's enduring corruption, has made the 419 trade more popular than ever. "In the beginning, a 419 criminal was a

high school dropout," says Hafez Ringim, head of the Nigerian National Police's Interpol bureau. "Now they are attorneys, chartered accountants, chemical engineers."

The schemes are as ingenious as they are plentiful. Con artists have lifted stationery from Nigeria's Central Bank and the U.S. Embassy. Some scammers simply empty their victims' bank accounts at the first chance, but smoother operators play their victims for weeks, months, even years, wheedling one fee after another. "You're dealing with consummate actors and masters of deception," says the Secret Service's Townsend. Those foolish enough to send their money rarely see it again.

Among those targeted was businessman Lawrence Siler of Portland, Ore. In September, Siler received a fax urgently asking his help to invest \$25.6 million—the purported proceeds of a dubious kickback scheme involving a steel plant. The writers needed to move the money and promised Siler 20 percent if he would first pay for "shipping and insurance." Siler refused, as he did their attempts to meet him in Spain or England. Eventually, they agreed to meet in Texas.

At a Houston hotel in March, Siler watched as Victor Okiti, a white-robed Nigerian, allegedly opened two trunks of U.S. dollars—oddly stamped with the initials "U.N." Okiti claimed the money was only for overseas use, officials say, and that Siler needed a special chemical to remove the stamp. The chemical's cost: \$18,500. Unknown to Okiti, Siler was working with the Secret Service, and a squad of agents soon burst into the room, where they say they found Okiti with stolen ATM, Visa, and ID cards. The money, too, was counterfeit. Okiti has pleaded innocent to charges of fraud and counterfeiting.

Murder and money. Although most schemes are strictly theft, once victims are lured overseas, their hosts can quickly turn violent. At least 15 foreign business people, including one American, have been murdered in advance-fee scams. Just last week, Kenyan police rescued three Americans held for weeks by a Nigerian gang who enticed them to Nairobi with bogus offers over the Internet. The gangs, say police, are increasingly active outside Nigeria, posting 419 letters from around the world. Others are diversifying into insurance, healthcare, and other financial frauds, operating largely among the 15 million Nigerians living overseas. Last year, the FBI stopped a Nigerian group behind America's largest case ever of check fraud, involving \$50 million in stolen and counterfeit checks.

The pervasive fraud has seriously damaged Nigeria's business image, prompting some companies to disregard even legitimate correspondence from that nation. So bad are conditions that travelers are advised not to use credit cards in Lagos, while 50 percent of all Federal Express, UPS, and DHL shipments to Nigeria are returned because of fraud and theft, say embassy officials. The lawless culture has also made Nigeria a haven for narcotics and human trafficking: Nigerian smugglers have accounted for a quarter of the heroin seized at U.S. international airports in recent years. In Lagos, meanwhile, U.S. officials routinely pull five to 10 passengers from every westbound jumbo jet after finding fake passports and visas. It is the sheer scale of Nigerian financial fraud that leaves law enforcement officials scratching their heads. "Just when you think you're making some real progress, you find another million-dollar case," says the Nigerian police's Ringim. "It's frightening."

4 MAY 2001

This letter from Siobahn O' Donnell is slated for publication in several Nigerian newspapers within the next week. There was also a lengthy article on her case which appeared in the Nigerian publication TheNews at the end of January this year. The main thrust of that article was that the Vice President of Nigeria had recently been an honored guest at the home of a family whom the VP knew were 419ers, having been incontrovertibly informed of that fact.

Open letter to President Olusegun Obasanjo on Advance Fee Fraud, '419'
Dear President Obasanjo,

Before you visit President George Bush on 11 May 2001 in Washington, D.C., would you please explain why you have not put in effect the proclamations that you made on your trips around the world declaring a campaign against corruption? Corruption is hurting business in Nigeria as it repels foreign investment. I am not talking about the foreign investment that benefits the wealthy companies. I am talking about the kind of investment that could benefit the bulk of your constituency of nearly 120 million people. The rich are getting richer and the flow of these riches continues to be traced to foreign banks leaving the overwhelming majority of Nigerians even worse off than ever. In 1997, some of Nigeria's leading scammers, Moses Agwuna, Chukwudi Agwuna and Ms. Uchenna Agwuna - all, members of a royal family in Eastern Nigeria - defrauded me in the United States where I live to the tune of US\$330,000.00 (N46.2 million). They returned to Nigeria and have since found safe haven from the law despite the war against corruption.

I have incurred a lot of expenses in my bid to retrieve my money. Twice, I have traveled to your country to report the crime and I have hired attorneys to file law suits against the Agwunas. I have written you an open letter

asking for your help and it was published last June in three major newspapers in Nigeria. I have written, faxed, emailed and personally visited countless officials in your government and law enforcement asking for their assistance to bring these crooks to justice. But, in the three and a half years that I have struggled and worked to petition your government to enforce your laws and prosecute the Agwuna scammers, they still walk free on your streets. To my utter dismay the Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, went to the crooks' home and enjoyed their hospitality on 6 January, 2001, as reported by several Nigeria newspapers in spite of the fact that I wrote him a letter over a year ago detailing the crimes of the family members. The Special Fraud Unit of the Nigeria Police has identified and declared the Agwunas "Wanted" for an array of fraud-related crimes and it was published in several major Nigerian daily newspapers! The United States Secret Service, in conjunction with the United States Justice Department have issued arrest warrants for the criminals if they return. Is it acceptable for the second most powerful official of Nigeria to cavort with Wanted Criminals? How is this permissible in view of your much touted "Anti Corruption Campaign?"

It may interest you to know that the Nigerian Police succeeded in impounding three of the vehicles bought from the proceeds of the scam. But the scammers managed to bribe a Nigerian Judge in the Ikeja High Court in December 2000 to release the vehicles to them. I understand that the judge has no jurisdiction to order the release of the vehicles. Although the case of the scammers has been transferred to another judge following the petition of my attorney, the judge is still sitting eminently on the bench! For goodness how is it possible in Nigeria for wanted criminals apparently in hiding, to file suits in Court and obtain redress against the victim of their scam?

Mr. President, you have been commended for the success recorded so far in tracing and recovering part of Abacha's loot stashed in foreign banks. Foreigners are wondering whether this war on corruption is against Abacha because he is dead. It still remains a mystery why General Ibrahim Babangida, the architect of massive corruption in Nigeria is not only free but now trying to buy the presidency with his ill-gotten wealth.

As long as the Babangidas and the Agwunas remain sacred cows, your war against corruption cannot be taken seriously at home and abroad. If I may ask, "why are billions of naira of the Nigerian people's money used to fly around the globe to proclaim an anti-corruption campaign when corruption is on the rise in Nigeria?" For the war against corruption to succeed, fraudsters who have been identified Must be brought to book. Now you may wish to start with the Agwunas before coming to the United State on 11 May, 2001.
Signed: Siobhan O'Donnell, New York

21 APR 2001

This was posted in the soc.culture.nigeria newsgroup.
419 Coalition has added comments between the lines:

NIPOST destroys 2m 419 letters

By Wahab Gbadamosi, Abuja

Nigerian Postal Services (NIPOST) has destroyed some two million letters in the last two years as there are indications that Advanced Fee Fraud, also called 419, has gone global.

419 Coalition comment: All help from NIPOST is appreciated. However, 419 is really no more global than it has been. The letters and emails still come from all over. In most cases, the Home Office remains Nigeria wherever the origination of the 419 solicitation.

Attorney-General of the Federation and Justice Minister Chief Bola Ige who disclosed this yesterday said drug barons have fled and are fleeing the country, reeling from President Olusegun Obasanjo administration war against drugs and financial crimes.

419 Coalition comment: That is simply not the case regarding 419 from what we see here. We're sure that Chief Ige means well, but he has certainly been misinformed if he feels that the 419ers are "fleeing" from Nigeria "reeling" from Obasanjo administration anti-419 efforts :) :) We wish they Were, but they're not :) :) Trust us on this one.

Ige spoke at the first interactive forum for stakeholders in the fight against drugs and financial crimes at Sheraton Hotels, Abuja. It was organised by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Drugs and Financial Crimes.

419 Coalition comment: These forums are worthless if they are used primarily for propaganda purposes and have no tangible results. However, 419 Coalition would certainly agree that meaningful cooperation between Nigeria and other nations in anti-419 matters would be a good thing -- the operative term being Meaningful.

He said: "Last year, I know that the NIPOST people destroyed some two million 419 letters. The letters were to leave this country.

419 Coalition comment: As above, all help from NIPOST is appreciated.

But because NIPOST has made it impossible for these fraudsters to send letters from Nigeria, they now use countries like South Africa, Congo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Singapore, Hong Kong.

419 Coalition comments: Firstly, NIPOST has not made it impossible for 419 letters to leave Nigeria, in fact most 419 letters still do originate from Nigeria. Secondly, 419 letters have often been bulk-mailed from other nations, primarily to avoid the stigma that has come to be attached by many to incoming mail from Nigeria. There is absolutely nothing new in any of this, it remains business as usual for the 419ers.

"Everyday, I get potential letters by 419 people, with bank account numbers in Tokyo, London and Singapore. They have bank accounts there. Frankly, 419 has gone global and international?"

419 Coalition comment: This has always been the case with 419. Nothing new here. Business as usual for the 419ers, and the Home Office remains Nigeria.

Though some bad Nigerians started it, the mafia in various countries have outsmarted Nigerians. It is now a global financial crime."

419 Coalition comment: That is simply not the case. 419 remains primarily a Nigerian thing, though there has always been some attempted copycatting elsewhere.

Citing the example of 14 cars stolen in United Kingdom, but recovered in Lagos, Ige said trans-border collaboration amidst countries and joint efforts through Interpol, Scotland Yard, Nigerian authorities and other security agencies are thwarting drugs and financial crimes.

419 Coalition: 14 cars? 14 cars is the BIG example of cooperation? Although we are glad that something was done about the 14 cars what has been done to repatriate the BILLIONS of dollars already stolen by the 419ers with thefts continuing into the millions DAILY? 14 Cars? Goodness, what a Coup! :) :) Ah well, at least it is Some tangible progress in the repatriation of stolen goods and monies.....

The Justice Minister hailed the effort of Alhaji Bello Lafiaji, the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) chairman, who has made Nigeria "a perilous country for drug addicts." Ige, who said he had been a victim of the disrespect Nigerians get when they travel to Europe and America, said such treatments were a product of stigmatisation by Nigeria friends and foes. He added that Nigerian s must work towards crushing drug and financial crimes which stain others. Senior Special Assistant, Dr. Ibrahim Yakubu Lame, said the interactive forum was for stakeholders cross-fertilisation of ideas, and broach how organised crimes, to which no society is immune could be tackled. Lame isolated some of the constraints to the war against drugs and crime: "A major constraint to our fight against organised crimes is poor level of cooperation with key countries that serve as transit hub or located at the very epicentre of international narcotics production Columbia, Uruguay and Paraguay. Similarly, the continued restriction of NDLEA at Nigeria? seaports consequent upon the promulgation of Decree 61 has denied the agency the opportunity to effectively control drug trafficking through the use of seaports. "Irrespective of all these constraints, this administration shall continue to ensure that our society is free of crimes. We intend to keep up and improve on our achievements by sustaining the inter-services cooperation, encouraging cooperation and liaison with other countries, and ensuring massive public enlightenment campaign including organisation and attendance of international seminars and conferences." The forum, which Lame said will be at regular periodic intervals is to provide a regular opportunity for all the major operatives, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and the media to meet, discuss and share information and new ideas in our onerous task.

419 Coalition: We cannot speak to the Drug stuff, not our field directly. However, the fact of the matter is that in terms of anti-419 operations there have been only minimal improvements in Nigerian Government cooperation under the Obasanjo government. Unfortunately.

We hope by this modest effort, to promote the spirit of understanding and cooperation as well as strengthen the bond of cordial relationship in order to enhance the effectiveness of our collective efforts in this endeavour. "We also hope that the periodic sessions will provide us the opportunity to regularly update you on the successes recorded and constraints encountered by this administration in our determination to achieve maximum success in the fight against drug-related, financial and indeed all other organised crimes."

419 Coalition: The Obasanjo administration is going to have to do more than jawbone concerning 419 to get any credibility at all as a 419 fighting administration, and the TRUTH of the matter is that the Obasanjo administration really hasn't done anything much to date BUT jawbone. That's the bottom line here, folks. The Obasanjo administration's claims as 419 fighters are more spin than substance. There have been certain Minor improvements. But there is a very long way to go. We wish we could be more positive about this matter, but that's the way it is.

We got an interesting note in from a concerned Nigerian today expressing a rather common point of view concerning 419 held by many Nigerians. In the interest of fair play etc. we have put the note in verbatim, along with the responses we gave. Hope that you readers will find this of interest:

419 Coalition: Thank you for your thoughtful note, we have answered between the lines:

At 02:45 AM 2/21/01 -0800, you wrote:

Correspondent: Your site on 419 is 100% solid on the fraud issues. But who is wrong here? Is we the brilliant Nigerians or you guys, the greedy people? How can someone mail/write/call to say he has millions to transfer and the profit would be close to 70% returns and then the victim falls for the trick. Americans are very greedy people. The UK has not really suffered from the scam like Americans and others.

419 Coalition: Yes, there is of course a demand side to the equation. The demand side is being punished by losing their monies. The supply side is being punished by.... what? :) :) Therein lies the problem with 419. The lack of a downside for the supply side 419ers.

Also, it is important to note that in the so-called "legal" forms of 419 like the will scam etc. there is no question of victim as criminal.

Additionally, your comment on UK was interesting, as we have seen very heavy 419 activity and reports out of UK and our view here is that 419 runs at about the same levels, proportionately, in the UK as in the US and other primary targets. What exactly has given you the idea that 419 operations are not as prevalent in the UK as elsewhere, we're curious.

Finally, the governments of the world have decided to date on Education to address the demand side. It is our view that it will stay that way Until Nigeria actually takes concerted and sustained actions against the supply siders (who make the money). Surely, in your analysis, you cannot be suggesting that demand siders who lose monies get prosecuted on top of their loss and that Nothing happens to the supply siders who get to Keep the monies?

Correspondent: Yes to 419. Yes to bringing home money which has been stolen from us by your governments.

You want to run that by us again? :) :) Exactly what stolen money are you talking about? And even if the governments on the demand side do somehow owe Nigeria money, that is a government to government matter to be taken up with the State dept etc. Nothing gives the 419ers the right to steal money directly from the citizens of other nations no matter what grievance the 419ers imagine they are redressing.

And also, we have had 419 reports from nearly every nation on earth, including Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Columbia, Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, etc.etc.; Poland, Czech Republic, Russia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Austria etc. etc., China, Japan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, etc. etc.; Israel, Jordan, Arabia, Pakistan, India, Egypt, etc. etc. ---- we find it hard to believe that the Governments and Peoples of most of those nations can be seen as somehow owing Nigeria anything.....

Correspondent: Finally can you imagine that Chicago University is actually (on Friday) honoring some previous Nigerian leaders. Babangida for example started and told us to do 419. He advertised it. Now he is getting an award with some of his northern mates. So who is the fool here. They are actually giving the University millions of dollars which was scammed via their agents.

419 Coalition: Yes, we know this. We're sick about it. It's hard to believe that this could be happening. We support the protests planned against their appearance. You are correct, their appearance there makes University of Chicago a laughingstock. However, it is also fair to note that 419 did not originate with IBB, it was sortof the second national sport in Nigeria for many years prior to IBB coming to power and remains so.

Correspondent: Your site is solid, I have introduced people to it. But we still believe you should create an article blaming the victims for their greed. You are blaming

Nigerians, fine, but please blame people who want to reap where they did not sow.

419 Coalition: We aren't going to even consider doing that until the Government of Nigeria does something about those those who in FACT (rather than "want to") reap where they did not sow. We'll follow the lead of our Government and other governments and stick to Education in dealing with the demand side and not even seriously consider other actions until Gov of Nigeria deals effectively with the supply siders (who Get and Keep the money).

In short, to answer the question "Who is Wrong here" we would submit that primary wrongs are with the 419ers who get to keep the money and the Government of Nigeria for permitting a safe haven for the 419ers. Though we'd certainly agree that there is plenty of blame to go around, we'd say that in terms of grades of culpability we think that is pretty self-evident.

Correspondent: Peace.

419 Coalition: Thank you for your thoughtful note. We are always glad to discuss other views on 419, discussion is Good, our view. We don't claim to have all the answers and are always open to learning something new. Thank you again for writing.

Coordinator
419 Coalition

26 JAN 2001

This piece is from the New Zealand Nelson Herald of 24 JAN 2001, republished from the the Bay of Plenty Times, an affiliated newspaper.

It was sent in by "controversial New Zealand writer Neil Foord, author of The Scam. A publisher outside New Zealand is sought for the second edition of The Scam and other books" - reviews and introductions can be seen at <http://nzpublishing.bizland.com>

Here is the piece:

Mount real estate deals default

24.01.2001 - BOP Times

By Lindy Andrews

A MAN believed to have signed several bogus multi-million dollar real estate contracts during a December shopping spree in Mount Maunganui has defaulted on a deal to buy two \$500,000 apartments in Mount Maunganui's prestigious Oceanside Towers.

Lawyer Nigel Harrison, of Auckland's Duthie, Whyte and Co, said today a settlement notice issued by his client, Oceanside Holdings, to self-styled "reverend" and international missionary Gavin Morehu, had expired.

Although the law allowed Oceanside Holdings' managing director Clive Tippins to sue Mr Morehu to recover costs, it was unlikely he would "throw good money after bad".

Late last year, real estate agent Carol MacAleese revealed Mr Morehu, also known as Kawana Morehu, intended to pay for Mr Tippins' apartments with part of \$NZ36 million of Nigerian funds allegedly held in his name in a South African bank.

The deadline of at least one agreement was extended to allow Mr Morehu - who featured on Television One's Fair Go last year - time to transfer funds to New Zealand.

Mr Harrison said he was sceptical of anyone who said money was coming from off-shore. The default had in effect cancelled the contract and Oceanside Holdings would put the apartments back on the market, he said.

Detective Sergeant Chris Page of Hamilton CIB confirmed police spoke to Morehu two years ago, after he defaulted on a \$1.2 million property deal. At the time, Morehu used Nigerian bank documents as "proof" of his ability to pay.

Mr Morehu was not answering calls on his cell phone today

22 JAN 2001

This piece is from the New Zealand Nelson Mail 20 JAN 2001. It was sent in by "controversial New Zealand writer Neil Foord, author of The Scam. A publisher outside New Zealand is sought for the second edition of The Scam and other books" - reviews and introductions can be seen at <http://nzpublishing.bizland.com> Here is the piece:

FEATURES STORY

MARION VAN DIJK/Nelson Mail

20 JANUARY 2001

Nelson accountant Kerry Francis was on Friday convicted and sent to jail for 4½ years on 18 charges of fraud, theft and forgery. Nelson Mail chief reporter Laura Basham spoke to him about what went wrong.

Dishonest Nelson accountant Kerry Francis, jailed for 4½ years, says he "went off the rails" after being "sucked in" by a Nigerian investment.

Candid and not crumpled after being convicted on 18 charges of fraud, theft and forgery, he spoke to the Nelson Mail before his sentencing this week.

"I stuffed up," said the 51-year-old, who ripped off almost \$750,000 of his clients' money after losing \$450,000 in the Nigerian "investment" in 1996.

"I was continually filling up the hole."

It is an astonishing end to what was an apparently successful career. Francis, who ran an accounting business in Trafalgar St with more than 200 trusting clients, was well respected.

He had a degree in commerce and administration from Victoria University, had served on the Brightwater School board of trustees, and had worked as an accountant for a large transport firm for five years.

He spent eight years working on his family's horticulture and market garden property in Brightwater, doing the books for locals, before joining an accounting practice in Nelson in 1989.

When that partnership broke up, he set up KP Francis and Associates in 1991 and his business appeared to be on track.

His lawyer, Garry Barkle, told the Nelson District Court that Francis had sole responsibility without, perhaps, the close association or partnership of colleagues with comparable experience, and did not make objective judgments.

He got close to some clients involved in development projects, which distracted him from looking after his core accounting business.

That lack of judgment led to his "foolish" Nigerian investment and the "quick fix" of using his clients' money, which derailed him.

Francis told the Nelson Mail he never intended to take his clients' money.

"I was not able to get things sorted out quick enough".

He still believes that if he had had more time, and if the Serious Fraud Office had not interfered, it all would have worked out and everyone would have been paid.

Francis is scathing in his criticism of the office, accusing it of "blackmail" and putting pressure on him.

He initially denied the charges against him and was to go to trial, but changed his mind and admitted them last month.

"I was going to fight, and I thought I had a reasonable chance on some of them, although I have done some things wrong," he said. "They put so much pressure on I could not stand it."

He sees it as a conspiracy.

"This whole thing is against a background of the authorities trying to stop any investment in high-yield programmes.

"The authorities don't want the average Joe Bloggs investing in higher-than-normal returns. You can understand the reason - it would put the banking system under threat."

Francis said he became aware 20 years ago of the overnight money market, which produced high returns. But he did not have the opportunity to explore it until he came across a Nelson man who showed him how.

"It's really buying and selling bank instruments," he said.

Prime bank instruments supposedly involve investors pooling their money for high returns in a secret "secondary market". The Serious Fraud Office says these markets do not exist.

While the charges against Francis are not linked to prime bank instrument investments, it was his name being linked to them that sparked the office's investigation in 1999 and led to the other charges.

Francis said the office was investigating Imperial Consolidated, "an offshore company based in the Bahamas which offered significantly higher returns", when it "tripped over" a London investment programme he was involved in.

The office helped the City of London Police investigate that scheme, with a London

detective flying to Nelson to take statements from investors to be used in a prosecution against a suspect in London.

Francis said the London court proved there was no fraud, while the office said the court stayed the prosecution.

Until now, Francis has always said that Nelson investors, who have \$2 million tied up in that scheme, would get their money back. Now he says: "That's the intention. I cannot categorically say they will."

But he is adamant that the victims of the fraud charges for which he has been jailed will get their money back.

"My intention is there will be full reparation within six months. I am not able to say where these funds will come from, because the SFO will jump on them. My phones have been tapped. Just say I am due some commission from an offshore transaction. It's perfectly legitimate."

The office says that of the more than \$700,000 involved, around \$400,000 to \$500,000 has been lost.

"Much of the money received by Francis by way of investment was used for his own personal or business expenses, for a 'Nigerian' investment (\$450,000) or to repay earlier investors," it said.

Incredibly, a chance to catch Francis much earlier was missed.

The warning sign that all was not well came when he resigned from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in February 1998.

Francis said he resigned because he used his trust account inappropriately.

"I wrote to the society and said I did not think I should remain a member because I had been using the trust account inappropriately. They accepted that."

"This whole thing is against a background of the authorities trying to stop any investment in high-yield programmes. The authorities don't want the average Joe Bloggs investing in higher-than-normal returns. You can understand the reason - it would put the banking system under threat" - Kerry Francis.

The society did not take any further action.

The institute last month refused to discuss concerns raised about Francis before his resignation, saying only that it did not let a member resign if there were outstanding complaints, and there were none against him.

Asked whether his other offending might not have occurred if the institute had taken a closer look at his business, Francis replied: "That's fair comment."

He was able to deceive his clients and others because they trusted him.

The court heard that one of his victims was a widow whose funds were held by solicitors Duncan Cotterill. When bills were received or stock was to be purchased for her farm, Francis would request a cheque from Duncan Cotterill drawn on the woman's money, which was held in the firm's trust account. Francis misused the money, putting it in his trust account and pooling it with other money to send overseas for a Nigerian "investment".

Francis said: "Duncan Cotterill trusted me. I had a long and satisfactory relationship."

He said many of his clients, such as farmers, trusted him because he understood them. He had run an orchard for eight years before moving into accounting.

"I had dirt under my fingernails, I'd done the hard yards and understood their problems."

Another victim, a Nelson farmer who invested \$34,000 from his wife's estate with Francis, said he had trusted him.

Francis was charged with defrauding the farmer in May 1998 by falsely representing that his company Cash Flow Finance Ltd was sound.

The farmer said he had no reason to doubt that his investment was secure. He had known Francis for about eight years.

"He (Francis) was our accountant. He did a good job."

He said Francis was obliging and always made time to see him when he came to town.

"I had no reason to think anything was wrong. It was like any investment. You give your money in good faith that they're going to do right."

He attributes Francis's offending to one thing: "Greed."

Francis gives another reason: "I was just trying to improve myself."

He said he got into the offshore schemes because he "had a few development projects, which I thought would give me more accountancy work and a return for myself".

He said they were "added value" projects, but would not give details.

"I was sucked into the Nigerian investment scheme. I stuffed up. I was naive and foolish."

He would not name the person who introduced him to it, saying only that the man had been in Nelson for 12 months and had gone to Europe.

"I should have got out. They would pressure me. They were threatening to expose me to the media."

He smiles at the irony of talking to a reporter now.

Francis said that when the Serious Fraud Office began its investigation, taking away his business records, he lost clients.

"The SFO created a lot of nervousness amongst investors, and affected my accounting practice dramatically."

He said some clients would see him "as a bad egg, but who do not believe I have gone off the rails".

"I have had some good support, good friends and family."

He is divorced, with two daughters and a son. "They've been pretty shocked but supportive."

Asked to describe himself, he said: "I'm a caring person. I've helped a lot of people over the years. I love helping people succeed."

"There's lots of people I have done work for and never been paid."

He said he had no assets and did not receive legal aid - he was advised that he did not qualify.

Mr Barkle said in court Francis's offending did not involve any high living. The court was told that he faced the likelihood of bankruptcy.

Francis's business has been sold to a group of his former staff. "They have a good client base, and I want them to succeed," he said.

Francis had expected a three-year prison sentence, while the Serious Fraud Office called for six years. Judge John Walker gave him credit for his guilty pleas and sentenced him to 4½ years.

"I will take it on the chin. If I have done some wrong things, which I have, I will stand up and be counted. I will deal with this, take my punishment and get on with life."

He vows he will never return to accounting. But he said he had other plans.

"A guy with a group of companies wants me to come and work with him. I have a couple of things, some offshore, maybe management. I'm not lying down."

20 JAN 2001

These pieces from the New Zealand Herald are from last year, but they just came to our attention. They were sent in by "controversial New Zealand writer Neil Foord, author of The Scam. A publisher outside New Zealand is sought for the second edition of The Scam and other books" - reviews and introductions can be seen at <http://nzpublishing.bizland.com>

Here are the pieces:

Pals promised riches from deal, court told

27.10.1999 A former Citibank executive who it is claimed fell for a Nigerian investment scam will stand trial for allegedly defrauding his friends of millions to sink into the scheme.

Graeme Kenneth Rutherford, aged 56, now retired, pleaded not guilty to 21 fraud charges, a forgery charge and theft at a depositions hearing before two JPs in the Auckland District Court.

He was committed for trial and remanded on bail until December 2.

Rutherford, a leading figure in the kiwifruit industry, began approaching friends about investment opportunities in 1997, according to written evidence given to the court yesterday.

A Serious Fraud Office investigator said six of them, all of whom had known Rutherford for at least 10 years, invested or lent him money. Most were told they were investing in European-based schemes.

Among them were a man Rutherford had known since primary school, John Molloy, an Auckland businessman, who lost about \$2.5 million, and John Burton, toastmaster at Rutherford's wedding, who lost \$670,000.

A Tauranga company director, Paul Adams, invested \$2.68 million in what he thought were funds controlled through a European bank.

Rutherford sent about \$250,000 via Western Union from Auckland to various individuals in Lagos, Nigeria, last year.

Mr Molloy said Rutherford told him early last year that he had been contacted by some Nigerians after retiring from Citibank and placing an ad in the Economist offering services as a financial adviser.

They wanted him to manage proceeds from a \$US50 million (about \$100 million) contract with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company.

Rutherford needed money to pay fees and taxes necessary to extract money from the deal and Mr Molloy lent him money, expecting repayments of \$15.4 million - six times what he put in.

When the returns did not eventuate by June, Rutherford, who had recently been discharged from hospital, blamed his actions on strong medication which made him unable to tell right from wrong, Mr Molloy's evidence said.

The Serious Fraud Office was called in to investigate after deals went sour.

The National Bank is also out of pocket after a manager, Arthur Bell, gave Rutherford a \$140,000 overdraft so he could send money to Nigeria.

"I was sceptical [but] sure with Rutherford's background and experience ... that he knew what he was doing," Mr Bell said.

Rutherford was declared bankrupt in May.

Ex-banker blew \$7m in scam says
prosecutor

06.07.2000

A former senior executive of Citibank is said to have swindled rich buddies and banks out of \$7 million as he fell into a Nigerian investment scam.

The best known of five men allegedly deceived was John Fernyhough, former chairman of Electricity Corporation, Forestry Corporation and Direct Capital Partners.

Graeme Kenneth Rutherford, aged 57, has denied 19 counts of using a document, three of obtaining by false pretences and one each of theft and forgery.

Prosecutor David Jones told a jury in the High Court at Auckland yesterday that the swindles began in 1997 after Rutherford left his Citibank job to become a financial consultant.

"Men from Nigeria" had told him he could gain control of a fund worth \$US30 million (\$64 million) if he was first able to raise enough money.

Mr Jones said Rutherford pumped his own money into the scam, then started lying to childhood friends and people he met while he had been a vice-president at Citibank.

He told some of them that he was seeking funds for solid investments in Europe and the United States, and that he could guarantee excellent returns.

Instead, he sent their cash to Nigeria and could not get it back.

Mr Fernyhough said Rutherford approached him in November 1997 with an offer to go halves in a \$US1 million investment in Europe that would yield "big bucks."

Mr Fernyhough was wary because "nobody makes that kind of money without risk."

Instead, he offered to lend Rutherford money. Rutherford provided a kiwifruit orchard for security and said it had only one small mortgage on it.

Mr Fernyhough investigated the property and found there was a second mortgage, but agreed to lend money when Rutherford assured him that mortgage was tiny and he had simply forgotten about it.

Mr Fernyhough said he then lent Rutherford \$800,000 from a charitable trust that he controlled, on the understanding that the trust would receive \$920,000 back.

"I took the risk on that because I knew him. At least, I thought I did."

Mr Fernyhough became worried when Rutherford failed to pay back the money.

He and another investor then sold Rutherford's orchard to recover their debts.

"If he had told me he was going to put the money on some foreign investment that was as cranky as what he did with it I wouldn't have lent him a penny."

Under cross-examination, Mr Fernyhough said he knew Rutherford as a good, trusted and competent adviser who performed well while at Citibank.

The court is today expected to hear from Tauranga investor Paul Adams, who is said to have been swindled out of \$5 million.

Accused 'agitated' over cash sent to Nigeria

11.07.2000

The man accused of swindling \$7 million from his rich mates is said to have tracked down a money manager in the dead of night and thumped on her door, demanding to know why cash had failed to reach Nigeria.

Maryanne Riechelmann, a manager for Worldwide Transfers, said she had no idea how Graeme Kenneth Rutherford found her home address in Auckland.

But when she answered the door 20 months ago at 1.20 am she faced an agitated 55-year-old claiming that a cash transfer to Nigeria had failed, risking his chance of making an important deal. Rutherford later left, but phoned twice more during the night until she managed to transfer the money.

Rutherford is a former Citibank senior executive said to have swindled banks and friends of millions of dollars from 1997 as he fell into an African investment scam aimed at fleecing wealthy Westerners.

He allegedly told his friends that he was putting their money into safe investments when he actually spent it trying to unlock a bogus Nigerian account holding \$US30 million.

Rutherford has denied 19 counts of using a document, three of obtaining by false pretences and one each of theft and forgery.

Yesterday, the High Court at Auckland heard from former senior accountant Donald McDonald, who said Rutherford visited him three times in three days to borrow nearly \$70,000, which he never saw again.

Maryanne Riechelmann described sending identical sums from Rutherford to Nigeria at about the same time, in November 1998.

But the court also heard from a doctor with 35 years' experience who said Rutherford was taking strong painkillers and antidepressants for back problems that were the worst he had seen.

General practitioner Allan Adair said he prescribed Oxazepam, pethidine and numerous other drugs for Rutherford, who used to squirm with pain while sitting in his surgery.

He gave his "qualified agreement" when defence lawyers asked whether a cocktail of such drugs could spark an "ecstatic rush" affecting mental judgment, and said severe pain could also affect a person's behaviour.

Dr Adair said that on July 1, 1998, he visited Rutherford at home and found him lying in bed choking on vomit, with several empty bottles lying nearby. There was also a letter to the doctor and several others to relatives.

It was "most likely Rutherford would have died" had Dr Adair not found him.

Today, the court is expected to hear from German investor Kai Krasemann, who claims to be one of five men ripped off by Rutherford.

Banker sent 'driver' for fee

13.07.2000

Several large chunks out of \$7 million allegedly squandered in a Nigerian investment scam are said to have been lost in payments to Africans - including a "driver" working for a bank executive.

Former Citibank investment manager Graeme Kenneth Rutherford said in a taped interview that he split payments into small sums and sent them to different accounts so the Nigerians could avoid declaring the money to their Government.

Rutherford, aged 57, is accused of fleecing \$7 million from six of his mates in 1997 and 1998 so he could pay the Africans for control of a fund worth \$US30 million (\$65 million).

He has denied 19 counts of using a document, three of obtaining by false pretences and one each of theft and forgery.

Rutherford said on tapes played in the High Court at Auckland yesterday that the Nigerians kept charging him hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees before they would release the fund.

The fees involved a director of international remittance, Government departments, cash transfer operators, firms in Belgium and Norway, and other organisations.

The Nigerians asked for payments to be split up and sent to accounts around the world so they could avoid "exchange control regulations" that would force them to declare the money if it came in lump sums.

Rutherford said a banker he dealt with, Dennis Frederick, asked for \$US15,000 to be sent in the name of his driver, who was going to pick it up.

The Serious Fraud Office investigator who interviewed Rutherford asked: "Did it not seem odd that this senior person was having funds sent to his driver?"

Rutherford replied "no" because Mr Frederick was travelling elsewhere and the driver had picked up money before.

He also admitted telling one New Zealander that his money would be invested in Europe, rather than sent to Nigeria.

"At no stage did I say it was Nigerian. I should have and I didn't."

Rutherford said he was under extreme pressure at the time and was taking narcotic painkillers that clouded his sense of right and wrong.

"I cannot understand the way I behaved - it was so out of character. It was a bizarre aberration and I can see now

how wrong it was."

The fraud officer said on tape that the Central Bank of Nigeria could find no records of some of the organisations Rutherford had paid.

A letter from the bank said Rutherford must have been dealing with international fraudsters who "succeeded in duping him."

The officer said the use of overseas accounts was a hallmark of Nigerian fraud.

Rutherford left Citibank two years before the Nigerian deal started, citing a sore back, and said on the tapes that he was receiving \$1100 a week from ACC.

The trial is expected to finish tomorrow.

Fraud accused 'intended to repay friends'

19.07.2000

A former Citibank executive lied to get millions of dollars out of his friends but always intended to pay them back, say his lawyers.

Defence counsel Andrew Speed told the High Court at Auckland yesterday that Graeme Kenneth Rutherford was suffering excruciating back pain and the effects of strong prescription drugs when he took the money and lost it to Nigerian fraudsters.

Prosecutor David Jones had said earlier while summing up that Rutherford was a slick, ruthless, cold-blooded swindler who duped close friends out of millions and was trying "the ultimate con" on the jury.

Rutherford is alleged to have milked \$7 million from up to six men in 1997 and 1998 by telling them that their money was going into safe investments, then blew the lot in a fruitless bid to unlock a \$US30 million (\$65 million) fund in Africa.

The 57-year-old has denied 19 counts of using a document, three of obtaining by false pretences and one each of theft and forgery.

Mr Speed said Rutherford's intentions were a crucial factor in whether or not he was guilty. The jury should forget about the words used to describe his client and consider his state of mind and the fact that he was just as much a victim of the scam as anyone else.

He had gained nothing from sending the money to Nigeria, and could easily have fled to Europe and kept the money if he had wanted to.

"Mr Rutherford is not a swindler, he is a man of high moral integrity and he intended at all times to repay his debts," Mr Speed said. "He has lost everything: his farm, his funds, his friends and his reputation."

Mr Speed said the Serious Fraud Office had shown arrogance by failing to call any witnesses from Nigeria. Rutherford admitted lying about the destination of the money, but that was not enough to convict him. His intention had always been to reap huge profits for his friends.

But Mr Jones said Rutherford showed an extraordinary level of calculation, weaved an "incredible fabric of lies" and swindled the money only to benefit himself.

Rutherford left Citibank two years before the Nigerian deal started, citing a sore back. Among those he is said to have conned are former Business Roundtable member Paul Adams and former Electricity Corporation chairman John Fernyhough.

Justice Randerson is due to sum up this morning.

High-roller's dramatic fall a mystery

20.07.2000 By SCOTT McLEOD

It took just three years for a top Citibank executive to become one of this nation's biggest swindlers.

Graeme Kenneth Rutherford resigned as investment manager at Citibank in late 1995, amid plaudits from dozens of happy customers. Reserve Bank Governor Don Brash spoke at his leaving party.

Yesterday, the 57-year-old was convicted of 19 counts of using a document, three of obtaining by false pretences and one each of theft and forgery.

During a two-week trial, the Aucklander was tagged a slick, ruthless, cold-blooded swindler who conned friends out of \$7 million and blew the lot in a blatant Nigerian scam. What went wrong?

Rutherford claimed that a sore back and a cocktail of narcotic painkillers had clouded his judgment, but one of his victims and former friends said Rutherford was simply "a lying little ****."

Most of Rutherford's victims said they had known him for years - in some cases for more than three decades. They saw him as an honest extrovert, a high-roller with a luxury yacht who loved to entertain and was respected for various deals in Auckland and the Bay of Plenty.

While managing funds at Citibank he was said to have nurtured one investment of \$7 million into \$17 million in just three years. Almost as baffling as Rutherford's change in character was the susceptibility of his victims. His prey included ex-Business Roundtable member Paul Adams, Auckland businessman John Fernyhough, German millionaire Kai Krasemann, retired accountant Donald McDonald and a merchant whose name is suppressed.

According to Mr Adams, Rutherford was "a very methodical, dapper little man. His general demeanour was no different over the years that I knew him."

Mr McDonald: "He made a lot of money for a lot of people just manipulating funds from one place to another."

Rutherford's rise began in 1967 when he formed a company that he later sold to Fletcher Challenge.

By the 1980s he had moved into the fruit industry, both as an exporter and part-owner of a kiwifruit orchard in South Auckland.

In 1988 he began the seven-year stint at Citibank, working in global asset management.

Fellow manager Andrew Ayling said Rutherford was an honest and respected team member.

Rutherford's fall apparently started when he left Citibank with a sore back and \$1100 a week in ACC payments.

In 1997, he advertised for work in The Economist and was rewarded in September with a phone call from a man called Davidson Onyeka. The African said the owners of a \$US30 million (\$65.3 million) fund in Nigeria were seeking a money manager.

If Rutherford paid "several million" in fees and shifted the money to a tax haven in Europe, he could reclaim his expenses and receive 1 per cent a year for his skills.

In a taped interview with the Serious Fraud Office, Rutherford said he knew Nigerians were notorious for pulling swindles, so he was careful to check out the scheme. He tried - and failed - to get hold of Dr Brash, but did manage to confirm some details with the Worldwide Directory of Banks.

Nigeria was well-known for its scams - then and now. In the past year African con-artists have promised big money to New Zealanders willing to reveal their bank details for apparently legitimate reasons.

Rutherford decided the fund was real, and claimed he pumped \$US600,000 of his own money into "seemingly endless fees." There was a contract completion

certificate, a transfer fee, another \$US300,000 just to obtain a copy of a contract - all backed up by documents, all followed by another fee request.

Rutherford soon needed more cash, so he looked to his wealthy friends. He knew that none would touch Nigeria, so he told them he had stumbled on an amazing deal in Europe with a locked-in profit, which he would back with a personal guarantee and a mortgage on his orchard.

Rutherford said: "My resolve was hardened by my absolute conviction that the Nigerian scheme was genuine."

Victims were swayed by their friendship with Rutherford. The merchant with name suppression said: "I trusted him implicitly. With his exceptional banking skills he was going to see that this position came to a positive result."

But even after a nine-hour taped interview and a two-week trial, no one could explain why Rutherford was sucked in. Parts of the scam seemed farcical - at one point he was offered 4.2 million barrels of oil if he could rustle up another \$US110,000 fee.

Mr McDonald, who lost \$67,000, was "rather bemused" when he learned his money had gone to Nigeria. "I thought you would have to be rather naive to fall for any scam."

Fraud officers sounded incredulous on the tapes when they asked about fake documents Rutherford had received from Africa.

Why did he fail to notice that some of the Nigerians had two different signatures? What about the amateurish cheque for \$US30 million that bounced when he tried to bank it?

Rutherford spoke of his "general state of mind at the time," brought on by prescription drugs.

But a High Court jury decided after five hours' deliberation yesterday that the excuse was not good enough.

He was remanded in custody. (Seven year sentence)

419 Coalition Note: Authorities tend to take a very dim view of those who lose Other People's Money when they have not represented the "deal" properly to other "investors" with full disclosure. New Zealand is not unique in that regard.

14 JAN 2001

This article was posted in the newsgroup soc.culture.nigeria this date. Here it is verbatim:

Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria; Mr. Rasheed implicated in large 419 Financial Fraud

Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria; Mr. Rasheed implicated in large 419 Financial Fraud in the United States of America.

On January 5th, 2001 the Deputy Governor of the CBN Mr. M. R. Rasheed was charged in a US Federal District Court with lying under oath and providing false testimony regarding his direct involvement in setting up secret offshore accounts and trusts.

A United States of America attorney, currently suing the Central Bank of Nigeria and it's Deputy Governor Mr. M.R. Rasheed, presented documents and evidence substantiating the CBN official Mr. Rasheed personally set up offshore bank accounts and trusts with a UK company named Trident Trust located in London England.

The startling evidence presented to the US Federal Court is said to be so damaging and conclusive that Nigerian President Obasanjo has instructed the Nigerian appointed US legal team to withdraw from the court case, leaving Mr. Rasheed to defend himself. It has been confirmed that the law firm of Williams, Youle and Koenigs has submitted a formal motion to the US court, asking to withdraw as counsel for the Nigerian Central Bank and all Nigerian defendants.

At the center of the evidence is "The Heedras Trust" naming Mr. Rasheed as the prime beneficiary along with numerous supporting documents, including Trident Trust memos outlining; meetings, invoices, account numbers and phone calls with Mr. Rasheed directly.

This new evidence seems to be the first direct link of a CBN official caught in the infamous Nigerian Advance Fee Scam known as the 419 Scam. Mr. Rasheed's exposure comes at a crucial time during President Obasanjo's newly formed democratic government, which vows to operate on a strict anti-corruption platform.

419 Coalition Note: Actually, Rasheed is not the first high CBN official implicated in 419 operations. Former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria Paul Ogwuma and others were, in a "finding of fact" by a US Court in the Adler Case awhile back, found to be 419ers. There is nonpublic evidence concerning at least one other high CBN official as well.

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