

Nigeria - [419 Coalition](#) 2006 News on Nigerian Scam / 419 Operations

31 DEC 2006

From Vanguard, a Nigerian newspaper:

Nuhu Ribadu: The anti-corruption czar
By Ochereome Nnanna

Vanguard Editors, at a meeting a fortnight ago, chose Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as the newspaper's Man-of-the-Year 2006. It was not a unanimous vote, but the lead was comfortable enough for the few stragglers to finally concede that indeed, this lanky Fulani-born police officer and lawyer who likes to dress up in safari suits, touched lives and influenced events, for better or worse, in Nigeria more than any other person or issue in the past year.
[the article continues]

419 Coalition Note: We thank Messrs. Ribadu and Lamorde and the rest of the EFCC staff for their efforts, and say "more grease to their elbows" in 2007.

20 DEC 2006

Here is more Nigerian "take" on the recent ABC News 20/20 piece on 419 (see 8 DEC 2006, 11 DEC 2006, and 12 DEC 2006 News). This is from The Guardian, a Nigerian newspaper:

ABC News' unfair attack on Nigeria

NIGERIA bashing has become a favourite pastime of American media. First it was the Cable News Network (CNN) with a story of Nigeria as a den of artful identity theft and bank fraudsters fleecing Americans. Now the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) - America's second largest network - has followed up with a rejoinder in which Nigeria is perceived as a beehive of 419 activities.

In the same week that Mr. Frank Nweke, the Minister of Information, accompanied by two other ministers and a host of other notables, was laundering the 'Heart of Africa' image of Nigeria to an American audience, the ABC News carried an unflattering story on Nigeria. An ABC reporter came to Lagos and after visiting the rundown metropolis of Oshodi declared that Lagos is a crime-ridden disgrace of a city. While in Nigeria, the reporter visited several cyber cafes where he found Nigerians sending mass e-mails designed to lure greedy Americans into their lair. The reporter even participated in a fake delivery to a 419 operator.

The minister's entourage must have been thoroughly embarrassed by the merciless attack on Nigerians at home and abroad. But for many Nigerians in America where the programme was aired, there was outrage at the adverse characterisation of Nigeria as a crime-prone country in which all manner of vices have taken root and are flourishing. They point out that in the United States, there are many Nigerian professionals, academics and businessmen of sterling quality whose contributions to the great American enterprise are not in doubt.

Nigerians at home are no less offended. The idea that the activities of a few miscreants in our midst are being used to stigmatise an entire nation cannot be supported. Moreover, even the U.S. government admits that the Nigerian government is doing its utmost to wipe out all forms of corruption including cyber cafe crimes. Criminal activity by its nature is not the preserve of any one nation or people and all are susceptible to it, including the U.S.

The so-called 419 Nigerian scam has received unprecedented publicity on the internet, so that gullible and greedy Americans must have themselves to blame for ignoring a warning writ large on almost all web sites. We cannot deny that the image of this country has been soiled by a few miscreants in our midst. Neither can we deny that 419 - a section under the Criminal Code of Nigeria dealing with obtaining under false pretences - has entered into the lexicography of the world. But the truth is that most Nigerians are honest, hard-working people who are doing their best in a difficult environment where governments have frequently distanced themselves from the real problems of the people.

It is this condition that leads individuals to a culture of self-help which in some cases results in criminal activity. But criminality as a concept is condemned by the vast majority of our people. Most Nigerians are religious and law abiding and must feel offended at the thought that the world now sees us as habitual criminals. Western reporters breezing in and out of Nigeria are fond of making assertions based on insufficient knowledge.

They exaggerate the bad aspects of Nigeria while remaining oblivious of the good qualities that are in greater abundance. Lagos is much more than the notorious bazaar of Oshodi. Lagos also boasts of villas and facilities that compare with the best elsewhere. Moreover the vibrancy and the robust sense of humour of the Nigerian have earned us the epithet of the happiest people on earth. If Nigeria has a problem, it has to do with governance or the lack of it and accountability. There is a basic disconnect between the government and the governed.

Our infrastructure is in a state of decay, there are bad roads everywhere, garbage on the streets, crises in education, lack of employment for school graduates, a few hours of electricity per day even for industry, and lack of good drinking water for the majority of our people. Our law enforcement is not quite up to the mark with too many unsolved murders and continuing violence in the polity. The gap between the rich and the poor is now at its widest margin since Nigeria attained independence and yet the country has more than \$40 billion in external reserves. How to use our resources to transform the lives of Nigerians is the challenge facing our governments at federal, state and local levels.

Nearly eight years of civilian administration has unfortunately not transformed the lives of our people. As believers in democracy, we continue to hope for better times. In the meantime, we remain convinced that no amount of seminars in hotel suites or advertisements on the airwaves can successfully project the image of Nigeria when we ignore the basics of good governance. This may well be the point which the ABC reporter so irreverently tried to bring home to us.

Here is a link to the article for as long as it is good:
http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/editorial_opinion/article01

419 Coalition Note: We think that the 20/20 "419er Bashed" rather than "Nigeria bashed". The general situation in Nigeria is what it is, good and bad, and that was not the focus of the piece. 419 Advance Fee Fraud was the focus of the piece. Not this crime, not that crime, not crime here, not crime there, but Nigerian 419 Advance Fee Fraud. That is what the piece was about.

We thought the piece made it clear that the vast majority of Nigerians at home and abroad are hard working, law abiding people (and we of course agree with that). But Nigeria does indisputably have a problem with Nigerian criminal 419 Advance Fee Fraud criminals operating from Nigeria and "branch offices" abroad. The problem is massive and longstanding. In fact, it is fair to say that Nigerian 419 is one of the longest running and most effective direct mass marketing campaigns in history, albeit a criminal one. As such, with 419 solicitations arriving en masse in homes and offices of people all over the world each day for the last 20 years, it would be absurd to think that people's opinion of Nigeria and Nigerians would not be shaped by the deluge, rightly or wrongly.

In terms of the Nigerian authorities doing their "utmost" in combating 419, that they are doing Anything at All is a relatively recent (but very welcome) thing. The EFF has indeed arrested a couple of thousand people over the last few years, and there have been some convictions, though not many to date. The EFCC also says it has recovered nearly a Billion dollars in 419ed funds, and claims it has returned most of that to somebody, that they (the EFCC) have not kept it. However, the fact is, that very little given the amounts said to have been recovered has been repatriated to victims, which of course brings up the obvious question.... where are the recovered funds and When will they be repatriated to the victims? In short, in terms of both counter-419 operations and in terms of repatriation of stolen funds to victims of 419, only the tip of the iceberg has been dealt with so far there is a long, long, way to go. We think that the EFCC has made a good Beginning but it will take a long term, sustained effort over many years to get Nigerian 419

AFF reduced to nuisance levels. But at least the EFCC is indeed Trying, and that in itself is welcome. We look forward to a continuation and expansion of their efforts over the next years, and trust that the lack of repatriation of recovered funds to victims situation will improve over time.

Finally, here is a comment on the Guardian editorial by Mr. Rotimi Ogunsuyi, a Nigerian expat living and working in Chicago which appeared in Nigeria oriented discussion group called Naijanet, at Google Groups. He also wrote an earlier essay on the 20/20 piece, see 12 DEC 2006 News below for that.

Here are his comments, verbatim:

Guardian's jingoistic "editorial" is full of lies and half truths.

My question to the editor of the Guardian, will he take a check from me? I bet the dude or dudess will not even take a check from most people at the Guardian. Yet he pretends the problem is with ABC and CNN.

If the Guardian and other Nigerian newspapers continue to engage in massive cover-up of the moral corruption in Nigeria, including the retail kind called 419, why are they angry that foreign press has taken over what should rightly be their role?

When was the last time Guardian or any of the other major mainstream Nigerian newspapers expose any crime or scam in Nigeria? Yet they continue to try to insulate themselves from what is not really a secret in Nigeria, especially Lagos, where everybody spends every waking hour trying to out-smart (scam) the other.

Building fortresses is not the answer to Nigeria's problem. We have to admit we have a problem, not an image problem.

Very untrue, very biased - if you ask me.

Rotimi Ogunsuyi
Chicago, IL

13 DEC 2006
Our associates Ultrascam in the Netherlands report that 13 Nigerian 419 scammers have been arrested there, most for Lottery 419 and Inheritance 419. Their victims were from the US, Jamaica, and Germany with losses ranging from 8,000 to 250,000 each, it is reported.

12 DEC 2006
This is a short essay by Mr. Rotimi Ogunsuyi, a Nigerian expat living and working in Chicago. It appeared in a Nigeria oriented discussion group called Naijanet, at Google Groups (which is an excellent group for anyone interested in Nigeria, we might add). It just put things so well, we asked for and received permission to post it in our News section, so here it is:

Awe(?) Ola,

This debate on how to react to Nigerian scam artists is not new and probably will never be conclusively resolved. There are some who argue that it is the victim's greed that ultimately does them in because why would anyone actually believe that some stranger would send money to another unconnected stranger out of the 6 billion inhabitants of this planet Earth!

My sympathy is with the victim for three reasons:

1. In any foul situation, we must never ignore who initiated the contact, not just that two legs were broken. In ALL 419 situations, the Nigerian scamsters initiate the contact.

2. We are not all of equal intelligence and a decent society must always protect its most vulnerable. That is the mark of a civilized society. All those who blame the victim's greed only must remember that we all have different thresholds of gullibility. This happens because of different reasons including education, age and God-given sensibility. (Mine is very high BTW. Maybe that's why I may never be very rich :)

We cannot on one hand go to churches, mosques and other places of worship and on the other hand cheer on those who prey on the weakest of nature and call that a fair game or even a game for that matter.

3. If not sanctioned, the 419ners will come back to haunt Nigerians. In fact, they already are. There are many of us who have either been scammed or been intended victims. How many of our older parents have either been scammed or almost scammed with one story or the other about someone delivering money from their children abroad - on the payment of a "small" sum?

My eighty-year old father escaped by the whiskers of his sixth sense about ten years ago. He just had the intuition to order the driver to run for it at Ilesha. As he gets older, how alert would he be?

The reasons more Nigerians are not victimized right now is a paradigm of bank robbery. There was a notorious bank robber who was asked why he kept holding up banks. He smiled and point blank retorted: "Because that's where the money is". The reason we have largely escaped being victimized by these 419 scoundrels is because Nigeria is still by and large a destitute country. Unless we really don't aspire to more prosperity, as Nigeria gets wealthier, more would be just as susceptible to being scammed as the foreign "muguns".

Lastly, the 419ners hurt you and I in ways we would never really know.

If you have been held up several times by natives of a particular community, would it be unwise for you to start suspecting anybody from that community when they come to your store? Would you hire anybody from that community to man your cash register? Would you hire them for any job of big responsibility at all? Would you invest in that particular community of all available communities of the world, unless you were from there?

Some would advance that foreigners invest in Nigeria anyway. I argue that we are getting a small fraction of what we would if our image is not so battered by the crooks that some so lawyerly cuddle. Even Nigerians would be more enthusiastic about investing in Nigeria.

As it is now, these criminals are dragging the country back. There is no way of sugar-coating it and no amount of image laundry by Information Minister Nweke can veil that.

In the end, I argue that these Nigerians are making "muguns" of their sympathizers and they need to wake up and join the fight to reduce, if not eliminate the scourge of 419 on our collective image.

Have a nice and productive week working hard and honestly everybody.

Rotimi Ogunsuyi
Chicago, IL

11 DEC 2006

Here is a Nigerian take on the 20/20 News piece on 419
(see 8 DEC News below) from The Guardian, a Nigerian
newspaper:

Uproar as American TV airs report on Nigerian scams

LAOLU AKANDE NEW YORK

ON the same week that three Nigerian ministers visited the United States to launch the Federal Government's new image laundering programme named the Heart of Africa, the second leading US network TV, ABC described Lagos, "a crime-ridden disgrace of a city."

In a stinging report on fraud among Nigerians at home and in the United States, the ABC report-20/20-an investigative programe broadcast on Friday even played parts of a

musical video and soundtrack of the movie "The Master" which depicts how fraudsters operate.

The report played clips from the film and from the musical video, even drawing from the words used in the musical that "419" victims are the "muguns", and the "419" operatives are the masters. The report blamed the film and the music video for celebrating 419 and treating their kingpins "folk heroes." The report says the film mocks the "muguns."

The programme which was broadcast on Friday evening, got US-based Nigerians worried and troubled. A Nigerian Lawyer in the US said by the next day, he had received several calls from his clients and partners asking questions about the report on Nigeria. Others feared that on resumption of work today, their colleagues would bombard them with all kinds of questions and even negative attitude as a result of the ABC report.

Presented by Brian Ross, the report which took about 30 minutes including commercial breaks dwelt on how Nigerian 419 agents in the US lay prey for their American victims, showing scenes in Washington, DC, Dallas and California where the ABC investigative teams confronted some of them on camera having disguised as willing victims of fraud. At first, the "419" operatives were not aware they were being filmed by undercover cameras. Once they knew they were on films, they turned apologetic and repentant.

The ABC report did not show whether the investigative team turned the 419 operatives to the police. But the most telling part of the report was the ABC team's visit to Lagos, which the report says has a population of 20 million. Showing parts of Oshodi, the report described Lagos as a "crime-ridden disgrace of a city."

Before visiting Nigeria, the ABC news team had played along with the "419" operatives and promised to send advance cash of \$12,000 to Lagos after receiving a letter from the e-mail that promised them \$25m once they send the advance fee. The ABC team parked monopoly paper money in a DHL box and sent it to Lagos. They arrived with their teams and proceeded to a DHL office where someone had come to claim the mail. There, the ABC team confronted the "419" accomplice who had by then picked up the box mailed by the Americans reporters from the US.

The ABC report also showed how 419 operatives used Internet cafes in Lagos to send mass e-mails to Americans preying on what the report accurately described as the "greed" of the Americans themselves. Although the report says there are scams all over the world from Europe to Nigeria, this report focusses primarily on what it called "Nigerian scams."

Only last week Nigeria's Information Minister Frank Nweke, while speaking with the Nigerian press here in the US, said Nigeria continued to be unfairly profiled. Although he and Nigerians abroad acknowledged the existence of this "419" operatives at home and here in the US, they still argued that such Nigerians were being isolated in a world where criminal minds are not the exclusive afflictions of one country. They point to other criminal gangs, families and operations all over the world especially in the US and Europe.

Nweke said the crime committed by ENRON alone in the US, by whatever name it is called, has a far greater impact on Americans and the entire financial system of the world than Nigerian fraudsters, but the western press has not focussed on it the way they focus on the few Nigerians involved in fraud.

The ABC report which also featured EFCC officials including some of their raids on Internet cafe where the "419" letters are being sent, however showed that the Nigerian government is now confronting the menace.

419 Coalition Comment: Somebody needs to remind Minister Nweke that 419 Scams are by definition West African, primarily Nigerian, related Advance Fee Fraud scams, and that, although there are indeed many criminal gangs of other nationalities all over the world, this news report was on 419 crimes not those other crimes. And, in truth, the 419 crimes are much more "in the face" of people all over the world every day as masses of 419 materials arrive in their homes and offices each day than many other types of crime. That's one of the most annoying things about 419... the ubiquitousness of 419 criminal operations. And yes, Nigeria has finally done some things to deal with 419, but the matter is so Huge that only the tip of the iceberg has been addressed to date, and the effect on Nigerian 419 operations of Nigerian government efforts remains largely at nuisance levels. Much more needs to be done, and the effort needs to be sustained for many

years, if the Nigerian government is to get 419 operations minimized.

8 DEC 2006

ABC News 20/20 and journalist **Brian Ross** did an excellent 30 minute piece on 419. It was one of the better educational pieces we have seen of late, and included descriptions of 419 operations, the stories of several high profile victims of 419, and sting operations on camera showing Nigerian 419 scammers caught red-handed in both the US and Nigeria.

There were also excellent descriptions and videos of Black Currency 419 operations.

It also featured an interview with Ibrahim Lamorde, the Director of Operations of the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in which he described both EFCC counter-419er efforts and explained the sheer magnitude of the problem.

An arrest by EFCC operatives of a 419 scammer caught signing for a delivery of 419 materials was shown, as was an EFCC raid on a Lagos cyber-cafe frequented by 419ers in which a vanload of 419ers were taken into custody.

The Lagos mansion of a former 419 kingpin which had been seized by the EFCC was shown, as was footage of the former Head of the Nigerian police, Tafa Balogun, who has been convicted of various large scale financial frauds, including, the program said, of accepting bribes from 419 kingpins (we had not heard that specific allegation against Balogun before, though always assumed it was the case).

The piece with the help of the US Postal Inspection Service did a good job of showing how 419 operations use snailmail and fax as well as email to troll for targets. Although the trend has segued into email in recent years, 419 began with snailmail in the early 80's, then moved to combo snailmail and fax in the early to mid-90's, and then to both of those Plus email in the late 1990's.

The only criticisms we have of the piece are that it made Nigerian 419 operations seem like a 419ers vs Americans sort of thing, when in fact 419ers steal from victims in nearly every nation of the world. 419 is a truly global phenomenon which transcends all national, cultural, and ethnic lines - and 419ers have been doing it successfully, large scale, for over 20 years. 419ers are equal opportunity thieves.

Also, the piece made it sound like the authorities in the US and in Nigeria are having a major impact on 419 operations, which is simply not the case. Of course, anything is better than nothing, but 419 operations are so Huge that the efforts of authorities to date have been little more than a minor impediment to 419 operations, and this is especially true within Nigeria. Though the EFCC is trying, the problem is so large that it will take years and years of effort to bring 419 emanating from Nigeria down to nuisance levels.

Here are some URLs to some of the video on the piece, which was titled "Scamming the Scammers" by the way, for as long as they are good:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=2705157>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=2711477>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=2710727>

You can purchase transcripts of the 12/08/2006 20/20 show, including the segment "Scamming the Scammers" at this URL, for as long as it is good:

<http://www.transcripts.tv/2020.cfm>

4 DEC 2006

Our colleagues at .NExt Web Security say that **ABC News 20/20 program will do a piece on Nigerian 419 AFF Friday 8 December.** Supposed to be a good piece with 419 scam complete with 419ers on camera, fake Nigerian government employees, a sting and bust of 419ers in Nigeria etc. So tune in Friday evening.

Also, we would like to note that it is the last few days of the first ever art show and expo dedicated to 419 AFF operations, which is being held in Vic, Barcelona, Spain through 10 DEC. The show has gotten good reviews, though the "Spanish Prisoner" subtitle of the show is a bit of artistic license, and is definitely worth a look if you are in the area. Here once again is a press release on the show, which we gave in our 2 NOV 2006 News:

There will an art exhibit on 419 Sala H, Vic, Spain under the auspices of the Barcelona Cultural Studio. Here is the press release for the event:

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419, or 'THE SPANISH PRISONER' , at the Sala H

The cycle "Where Far Ends Meet" finalizes with a project on the Nigerian e-mail scam known as the 419, developed by myself [Jeffrey Swartz, Canadian exhibitions curator and art critic, residing in Spain] and Catalan artist Pep Dardanyà, opening on Friday November 10.

Part of the space will be dedicated to a documentary portrait of the 419 advanced fee fraud, including an analysis of the internet culture that facilitates its success, its legal ramifications, the world of anti-scam activism and scam-baiting, as well as a view into present day Nigeria and the cultural dynamics of Lagos where the scam originated.

Pep Dardanyà contributes the video installation "Co-relation 1.1", which astutely points up the contradictions and ambivalences of culture contact between post-colonial Nigeria and the First World.

Full overview of the documentation to be exhibited and internet links related to the show will be posted here soon. A more complete press release is available here .

Project produced in collaboration with Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona, where it will be shown in Sala Consulta in October, 2007.

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Here is another press release on the show:

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Press release: 419, or 'THE SPANISH PRISONER'

419, or 'THE SPANISH PRISONER'

a project by Pep Dardanyà and Jeffrey Swartz

Sala H, Vic

Opening: November 10, 2006, at 8 PM

Open until December 10, 2006

419 is the name of one of the best known types of e-mail scams, activated by means of the massive sending of spam. Originating out of the Festac neighbourhood in Lagos, Nigeria, the typical 419 tells a story out of present-day Africa featuring dictators, military coups, fatal accidents, murders and offers a large sum of money to the person willing to assist in freeing up a fortune blocked in a bank account in Nigeria or another African country. This scam has been so successful over recent years that it is considered to be one of the main sources of income in Nigeria, rivalling the oil industry, with estimates of billions of dollars moved each year.

The number '419' refers to the article of the Nigerian criminal code dealing with postal fraud. In the English-speaking world this type of fraud was already known in the seventeenth century as "the Spanish prisoner", a term which inspired the film of the same name by David Mamet, from 1997. It is now commonly referred to as 'advance fee' fraud. [419 Coalition Note: In reality, the notion that the roots of 419 are somehow in the Spanish Prisoner scam is a bit of a canard, as the roots of 419 are actually in centuries old traditional West African scams like the "red mercury" scam, whereby one must wash something valuable in "red mercury" for it to be usable, and one must of course first buy the red mercury solution to do it with etc. But, after all, this is an Art show and a little "artistic license" is therefore quite understandable that being the case :) Also, the term 419 comes from an obsolete section of the Nigerian criminal code (and before that the criminal code of Lagos State in Nigeria), concerning the obtaining of monies by false pretence, and was not limited to only postal fraud. But once again, this is a small detail, and this is of course an Art show not a dissertation or somesuch.]

419, or 'THE SPANISH PRISONER' is conceived as an exhibition on the multiple facets of this type of digital scam. One part is a documentary display analyzing the culture of Internet interaction, the business of e-mail scams and resultant criminal investigations and anti-fraud activism, the context of modern Nigeria - vibrant, source of Afrobeat music, frequently corrupt, though the place where Nollywood has emerged, the third largest movie industry in the world in numbers of films produced, which often deal with 419 - and attempts to draw closer to the world of the 419 from different perspectives, including websites on 419 culture and humorous scam baiting.

The exhibition also features a work in the format of a TV ad created specifically on the theme by Barcelona visual artist Pep Dardanyà. Dardanyà has developed an audiovisual installation, Co-relation 1.1, that deals with the complex relationships of power and money between post-colonial Africa and the globalizing First World.

Produced in collaboration with the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona

For more information:

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Here is the URL of the first above English language article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.barcelonaculture.com/principal.asp?0=1&l=276990>

Here is the URL of a Spanish language article on the show for as long as it is good:

http://www.elpais.com/articulo/portada/fraude/nigeriano/elpeuteccib/20061123elpcibpor_3/Tes/

Here is another URL of a Spanish language article of the show for as long as it is good:

http://www.vilaweb.cat/www/noticia?p_idcmp=2173298

6 NOV 2006

From The Sun, a Nigerian newspaper:

Obasanjo's aide in money laundering mess

- Plus the Otta farm connection

A United States District Court of Portland, Oregon, has seized money believed to have been laundered from Mr Andy Uba, President Olusegun Obasanjo's Senior Special Assistant on Domestic Affairs.

According to investigation by the U.S secret service, the sum of \$170,000 (about N25 million at the time) was smuggled into New York on September 22, 2003, by Andy Uba

aboard the Nigerian presidential plane, without a report to U.S customs and border protection as legally required.

The investigation report says Uba (full name, Emmanuel Nnamdi (Andy) Uba) handed the money to one Loretta Mabinton, who claimed in court documents that the presidential aide is her fiancé, and that he gave her the money to take care of his affairs in the U.S.

Another curious side to the money laundering scandal is the disclosure in the U.S secret service report that a portion of the money, \$45,487.28 (about N6.5 million) was used to pay Mabinton's MBNA credit card account, which was deployed to purchase assorted farm equipment that were shipped to Obasanjo farms in Otta, Ogun State.

The report equally says \$91,262.50 (about N12.9 million) was used to purchase a Mercedes Benz car SL500 for Uba, which was to be shipped to Nigeria.

The car, and the remainder of the laundered funds, have now been ordered seized by the U.S District court of Oregon, being proceeds of bulk cash smuggling, violations of currency and monetary instrument reporting requirements, currency transaction reporting requirements, and money laundering.

Loretta Mabinton had confessed to U.S law enforcement agents that she flew into New York on September 22, 2003, and received \$170,000 from Uba while he was at the United Nations Plaza Hotel. The latter had accompanied President Obasanjo to New York to attend a meeting of the United Nations.

U.S law enforcement agents also indicate that the Service Atlanta field office had listed Andy Uba as a previous subject of an Advance Fee Fraud (419) investigation, and that the \$170,000 was not wired into Mabinton's accounts because it would have brought attention to numerous other past suspicious transactions. [highlight by 419 Coalition]

The implications of all these, according to diplomatic sources, is that President Obasanjo's plane may be impounded over illegal importation of bulk cash into the U.S the next time it lands on any American territory, while Uba himself remains under surveillance whenever he steps into the U.S.

The forfeiture order of the remainder of the cash (\$26,000) as well as the Mercedes Benz SL 500 car was signed by United States District Judge, Malcolm F. Marsh, on September 27, this year.

In an affidavit deposed to by special agent, Guy Gino, who investigated the case from 2003 when the money was reportedly ferried into the U.S aboard the presidential plane, "\$45,487.28 was utilized to pay Mabinton's MBNA credit card account. The credit card was utilized by Mabinton to purchase farm equipment (that was shipped to Obasanjo Farms Nigeria Ltd. The farm is owned by Nigerian President Obasanjo)."

The affidavit also stated that throughout 2003, "Mabinton's statements show numerous high-dollar transactions including funds wired into and out of her account from multiple and suspicious sources. The financial analysis of these bank accounts showed that throughout 2003, Mabinton was living well above her means."

Below is full text of affidavit of special agent Guy Gino, which eventually led to forfeiture of the car and money reportedly belonging to Andy Uda to American authorities: [the article continues and the entire Affidavit in this case]

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

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/news/national/2006/nov/06/national-06-11-2006-01.htm>

4 NOV 2006

From the Portland Press Herald, Portland Maine:

Victim who fell for scam pulls his own

By GREGORY D. KESICH, Staff Writer

A Westbrook man who lost \$60,000 of his own money in a fraudulent Internet scheme run out of Africa now faces a federal prison sentence for using \$78,600 of other people's money after his funds ran out.

Todd Denson, 46, told investigators that he received an e-mail that convinced him he could get an inheritance worth more than \$9 million from a murdered man in Ghana by sending \$1,000 overseas.

Denson sent the money, followed by another \$59,000. Eventually he ran out of his own money and told a variety of stories to get money from other "investors." He convinced one victim to invest in patented window-washing inventions and another to invest in an international construction company.

On Thursday, Denson pleaded guilty to mail and wire fraud in U.S. District Court in Portland and faces up to 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and will owe restitution to his seven victims.

His case offers a cautionary tale for people who think they can get rich quickly, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Clark.

"The old saying is true: If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is," Clark said.

Denson, who owned a window-washing business, and his victims are among an unknown number of Americans who have fallen for Internet scams that are estimated by the U.S. Secret Service to cost the public millions every year.

The scams have become so popular that state attorneys general have enlisted the help of Western Union offices to warn people before they send money overseas. Maine banks are looking into ways that employees can, without violating customer confidentiality, intercede on behalf of customers who look as though they are about to lose their money.

"Maine financial institutions are wrestling with this problem," said Will Lund, director of the state Office of Consumer Credit Regulation. The schemes are sometimes known as "Nigerian frauds" because many of them originated in that country. They operated through mailed letters and fax machines for decades before they moved to the Internet in the 1990s.

They usually start with a letter from someone claiming to be a former government official, a general or a dead dictator's widow who needs a small amount of money to access a huge fortune. But once a victim starts sending money, snags occur and require another payment.

According to court records, Denson, who had the window-washing business and was going through a divorce, received an e-mail saying he was entitled to \$9 million if he paid a \$1,000 transfer fee.

After he spent \$60,000, he was told he had to send an additional \$36,000 to collect the money. Since he had no more money, Denson said, he had to find other "investors." Denson is out on bail while awaiting sentencing and could not be reached Friday for comment. His lawyer, Joel Vincent, did not return a phone message left at his office Friday.

In the summer of 2005, according to court records, Denson placed a classified ad in the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram under the headline "Investors Wanted." A local man, who is not named in court records, responded to the ad. Denson convinced the man that he had earned millions from his window-washing inventions, but needed the cash to access his money without paying taxes.

He said he needed \$40,000 for 48 hours and promised a \$20,000 return on the loan. The money was never repaid.

Denson told another investor that his father had died and left him \$9 million in an overseas account, and that he needed \$11,200 to pay the inheritance tax so he could collect it.

Denson sold his Mercedes-Benz to a friend for \$4,000, and then never delivered the car or title.

Studying Western Union records, investigators determined that Denson did not keep the money. He wired it overseas instead.

Maine Assistant Attorney General Jim McKenna said he regularly receives solicitation e-mails forwarded to his office, but has only heard from one person who says he was

fooled in a scam.

It is difficult to say how many people fall for them, McKenna said, because most of the scams enlist the victim into an illegal activity, such as tax evasion. When people get stung, they usually don't report it to law enforcement, he said.

Here is the URL of the piece for as long as it is good:
<http://pressherald.mainetoday.com/news/local/061104plea.html>

2 NOV 2006

There will an art exhibit on 419 Sala H, Vic, Spain under the auspices of the Barcelona Cultural Studio. Here is the press release for the event:

419, or 'THE SPANISH PRISONER' , at the Sala H

The cycle "Where Far Ends Meet" finalizes with a project on the Nigerian e-mail scam known as the 419, developed by myself [Jeffrey Swartz, Canadian exhibitions curator and art critic, residing in Spain] and Catalan artist Pep Dardanyà, opening on Friday November 10.

Part of the space will be dedicated to a documentary portrait of the 419 advanced fee fraud, including an analysis of the internet culture that facilitates its success, its legal ramifications, the world of anti-scam activism and scam-baiting, as well as a view into present day Nigeria and the cultural dynamics of Lagos where the scam originated.

Pep Dardanyà contributes the video installation "Co-relation 1.1", which astutely points up the contradictions and ambivalences of culture contact between post-colonial Nigeria and the First World.

Full overview of the documentation to be exhibited and internet links related to the show will be posted here soon. A more complete press release is available here .

Project produced in collaboration with Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona, where it will be shown in Sala Consulta in October, 2007.

Here is a link to the article for as long as it is good:
<http://www.barcelonaculture.com/principal.asp?0=1&1=276990>

24 OCT 2006

From ThisDay, a Nigerian newspaper:

Fraudsters Hijack N/Assembly Website

From Chuks Akunna in Abuja

The National Assembly has raised alarm on the activities of fraudsters who allegedly use the Assembly's official websites to defraud unsuspecting persons, including foreigners.

In a warning message posted on the Assembly's websites, the legislative arm said it found the activities of "dishonest and disreputable Nigerians" who pose as either Senators or members of the House of Representatives to defraud very embarrassing. The Nigerians involved in the activities, the statement said, "are mainly perpetrators of the reprehensible e-mail scamming practices that have become a national embarrassment."

According to the National Assembly, the scammers usually pose as chairmen of committees in either arm of the Assembly and offer juicy business deals and contracts, including offering to transact business on behalf of the Nigerian government.

The statement advised persons who get such messages to contact the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), on info@efccnigeria.org, the U.S. Secret Service Financial Crimes Division on 419.fcd@usss.treas.gov, or its webmaster on webmaster@nigeriacongress.org.

The statement with the caption "Warning", reads: "It has come to our notice that dishonest Nigerians are using the Nigeria Congress Web site for despicable activities. These Nigerian are mainly perpetrators of the reprehensible e-mail scamming

practices that have become a national embarrassment."

The officials warned "disreputable Nigerians who would want to use the Nigeria Congress Web site <http://www.nigeriacongress.org>; <http://www.nigerianassembly.com> and <http://www.nigerian-assembly.org> as reference of validity for their mail scamming and criminal pursuits.

The officials cautioned that fraudsters "will either claim to be a Senator or a representative in the Nigerian National Assembly, heading a committee involved with some foreign contract, foreign payment or foreign currency disbursement on the behalf of the Nigerian Government."

The usual offer the statement disclosed, "is to use a foreign account to transfer monies."

If you receive any such mail messages, the warning said "please contact webmaster@nigeriacongress.org You can also report to the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission info@efccnigeria.org or the U.S. Secret Service Financial Crimes Division 419.fcd@uss.treas.gov "

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

<http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=61399>

19 OCT 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper Daily Sun:

Yahoo boys in police net

Three young men have been held by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) after they swindled a foreigner of 3,600 dollars.

The suspects, who are now undergoing interrogation at the EFCC office, in Ikoyi, Lagos, are identified as Kareem Lateef, Temitope Sola Disu and Hassan Abiodun David.

The suspects were said to have met their Waterloo on August 21 when Lateef walked into a bank at the Ikoyi area of Lagos and tried to cash the 3,600 dollars through Western Union with an international passport bearing Lateef's name and identity card.

But the eagle eye bank official, sensed foul play when Lateef walked into the banking hall with Disu and David. One of the bank officials was said to have asked Lateef his date of birth and the boy simply crashed like a pack of cards and sent his gang into police net when he gave a date different from the one on the International Passport. The suspects revealed that they usually get their victims through the Internet by telling horrifying, sorrowful stories to the victims to elicit sympathy.

Disu admitted that he had been extracting money from people for long. According to him, he said: "I have been chatting with the woman (victim) for long. I told her that I was an abandoned child from separated parents. My mother left me with my father and traveled to London. I had an ambition to further my education, but my father refused to sponsor me."

He said this has not been the first time of defrauding her. According to Disu, he had collected 100, 300 and 150 dollars respectively from the same person. But he was apprehended this time when he went with his partners to withdraw the sum of 3,600 dollars. Also, he had collecting money from the bank with different fake names and had always claimed that they were sent to him by his father. When EFCC got to his house, American cheque of 40,000 dollars suspected to be fake, was also found.

David, who is a third year student of Mass Communication Department, Lagos State University, on his own part claimed that he went to the bank to deposit some money given to him by his father for his project and a laptop when he met the duo of Lateef and Disu who he said live in the same neighbourhood with him. They told him that they came to collect money sent to Disu by his brother in USA.

EFCC has discovered David owns a Honda car, which he claimed he bought three years ago but could not give a satisfactory account of how he got the money used in buying the car.

Lateef, on his part, said that Disu has approached him for international passport, so as to receive money which was sent to him through the Western Union Money Transfer with it, but did not tell him how much he was to cash. He however, promised to give him the

sum of 200,000 dollars if he accepted to give him the international passport and go to the bank with him.

Daily Sun also learnt that Disu is a kingpin of internet fraud. It was discovered that he had spent nine months in Kirikiri Prison yard for Internet scam

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

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/crimewatch/2006/oct/19/crimewatch-19-10-2006-002.htm>

12 OCT 2006

From the Nigerian Tribune, a Nigerian newspaper:

3 Internet fraudsters held for duping Swiss national

By ROTIMI OMOLE

Three Internet fraudsters who connived with an employee of a courier company to dupe a Swiss national have been held by the police in Oyo State.

The suspects, Jeremiah Elijah, Bukola Adefisayo and Bawa Monsur, were alleged to have defrauded one Mrs. Goedner, through Adefisayo who worked with the company.

Bawa Monsur was alleged to be the receiver of the laptop computers and one DVD player, acquired through Internet fraud.

A police source who pleaded anonymity told the Nigerian Tribune that Elijah, while on the Internet, posed as one Carl Edward in Canada and ordered Goedner to release the items to one Jeremiah Elijah in Ibadan after fake money transfer through Royal Bank, Switzerland, was allegedly done.

Items recovered from the suspects were three laptop computers...
[the article continues on to cover a non-419 related matter]

12 OCT 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper Daily Sun:

Foreigner recounts bitter encounter with 419 kingpin

By OLUWATOYOSI OGUNSEYE

A man, who was duped of several millions of dollars, has slammed the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) over the handling of the matter.

Shaarlene Lightbourne, a citizen of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, claimed to have received less than six per cent of the total sum of money that was alleged to have been fraudulently collected from him by one Igwe Madu, who presented himself as Mustapha.

According to him, out of the \$1.5 million he gave to the suspect, he had received \$88,000 from the EFCC after two years of investigation.

He said: "While I am happy to have received some money from EFCC, the amount received is less than six per cent of N1.5 million paid to Mustapha. I would have expected to receive a better return after some two years of investigations by the EFCC. I am greatly encouraged by the excellent news that the EFCC has recovered some \$800,000 and if it is so, I am very concerned that only small amount of money has been sent to date."

"I am hoping that there would be some major recovery within the next few days which would be an indication that the EFCC is serious about recovering and returning the money that was fraudulently taken," he said.

Lightbourne further explained how he got himself into a deep mess, adding that the whole incident started when he visited South Africa.

His words: "I visited Johannesburg, South Africa, sometime in February 2002, on a business trip. During my stay, I met a man who introduced himself as Mustapha, a Nigerian, who had come to visit the Nigerian ambassador to South Africa and some of his muslim brothers from Iraq."

"He claimed that Ambassador Shehu Malami was his cousin. Coincidentally, my mission in South Africa was to examine the possibility of investing in Nigeria in collaboration with a South Africa-based company because I had been informed by my associates in the USA that it was easier and fraud-free to invest in Nigeria if you operate from an office in South Africa. Therefore, I saw my meeting with Mustapha as timely and we discussed likely areas of business that I would be interested in. He told me of his past relationship with the late Nigerian Head of State, General Sani Abacha and his nephew, who was Chief Security Officer and of the troubles he was having with the present government".

"He talked of Ambassador Shehu Malami's intervention and other matters. He concluded that his nephew's problem was with the government particularly Chief Olusegun Obasanjo the incumbent president. He also claimed to be the Emir of Gwandu, a first class traditional ruler in Nigeria. He produced a photograph in support of his claim."

"He boasted of his wide influence in some African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Togo, etc and the widespread influence of his holding company, Goddyson West African Ltd. We parted ways but agreed to keep in touch. Mustapha called me from Nigeria and informed me that he had already made a successful arrangement with some top government officials to award a big contract to my company from Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC)."

"In the summer of 2002, Mustapha suggested a meeting between me, himself and some Nigerian government officials. I agreed to meet with them in Nigeria and requested an official invitation to enable me to obtain a visitor's visa to travel to Nigeria. He disagreed citing bureaucratic bottleneck but suggested Ghana instead. I agreed since at this point I had already committed substantial amounts of money into this venture. During my meeting with him and his group in Ghana, we had a supposedly fruitful discussions on how best to actualize the contract which, he said, was valued at \$30 million."

"Mustapha informed me that he was successful in negotiating a contract on behalf of my company with the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). "He sent me some documents purported to have originated from the said corporation. In my honest effort to get mobilized for the supposed contract, money was remitted by me to him through various accounts as requested and nominated by him. I have copies of evidence of remission."

"Funds were transferred to Mustapha's bank accounts in Ghana, Nigeria, London, Taiwan and Wales. It became evident that Mustapha had associates in all these countries, including Ireland. Subsequently, he began to make more and more demands for money to enable him to facilitate the award of the contract. When his demand for money in respect of the supposed contract became endless, I was disenchanted and developed cold feet around September 2003."

"Surprisingly, sometimes during the late 2003 and early 2004, I was contacted by someone who claimed to be Chief Joseph Sanusi, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, who informed me that he had been given a mandate from Mustapha to contact me. The supposed Central Bank of Nigeria Governor said he was in sole position to transfer part of the contract sum to my nominated account but the vicious circle of demand for money continued unabated until the supposed governor sent me some documents showing that my company did a job for Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation Company."

"I was surprised and showed it to a friend who confirmed to me that I was a victim of the famous Nigerian 419 scammers. This was after I had again transferred substantial funds to meet various charges, fees and commissions as demanded by Mustapha who had now resurfaced as Chief Joseph Sanusi, the governor of Central Bank of Nigeria."

When Daily Sun contacted EFCC, a source said: "We have arrested Madu again and we are making more progress towards recovering the money."

419 Coalition Comment: Yes, there are major problems in getting monies recovered from 419ers repatriated to the victims. Except for one case in which something like a million and a half dollars was returned to a Chinese woman in Hong Kong, large scale repatriations of recovered funds are rare. For example, Shahla Ghasemi is still waiting for her recovered monies to be returned. Years after the recovery was announced by Central Bank of Nigeria at a major function attended by President Obasanjo

in New York. In short, in the area of repatriation or recovered funds, the Government of Nigeria's counter-419 efforts remains inadequate at this time. From the point of view of many victims, it doesn't seem to make much difference Who has their money, the 419ers or the Government of Nigeria, all they know is that They don't have it.... A pretty practical point, we think. Let us hope that Nigerian Government performance in these matters gets better quickly and stays better long term.

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

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/crimewatch/2006/oct/12/crimewatch-12-10-2006-003.htm>

11 OCT 2006

From ThisDay, a Nigerian newspaper:

EFCC returns N128bn to fraud victims

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EF-CC), said yesterday, that it had returned about N128 billion to victims of advanced fee fraud, also known as 419.

EFCC Chairman, Malam Nuhu Ribadu, made the disclosure in Abuja, at a National Brand and Economic Development Conference: tagged "Mind the Gap," adding that the money was returned to victims in various countries.

He promised that more money would be returned, as the commission catches up with fraudsters.

Ribadu said the Commission still had 90 cases against fraudsters and corrupt public officials pending in courts, adding that some lawyers, judges and policemen serve as accomplices to fraudsters, collecting money from them to stall cases.
[the article continues with matters not related to 419 AFF]

419 Coalition Comment: We'd like to see a list of those to whom monies have been returned, as in most of cases of which we are aware, like the Ghasemi, Khan, and Blick cases we are not aware of any monies being repatriated. Additionally, we have seen in the news only one large repatriation of recovered funds to an individual, to a Chinese lady from Hong Kong. So to whom did EFCC repatriate all these other monies cited in the above article? Enquiring minds want to know :) And even if all the funds cited above were in fact repatriated, it still amounts to only a fraction of the monies recovered, and only a miniscule portion of the amounts stolen, so there still remains a huge amount of work to be done on recovery and repatriation efforts.

8 OCT 2006

Here is an amusing (sortof) and cautionary piece from the Daily Sun, a Nigerian newspaper:

Taking 419 one step higher

by Mike Jimoh

Chima was rather surprised one day last month when friends and relations began trooping in to his house to see in person their brother and friend who had been in detention. One by one they all came wearing long faces, not saying much but sympathising with the just-released detainee from a notorious detention facility in the Centre of Excellence.

It could have been worse, some said. You may have been killed or sodomised even, others voiced out aloud. But weren't you lucky, others insisted, not a scratch on you! Thinking that a great joke was being played on him, Chima asked where in the world did they get to know he was ever detained?

And they proceeded to narrate, one by one, how they got a text message from Chima some days before. After all, didn't Chima's number appear on their screens asking them to quickly come to the sender's aid? The sms stated it so clearly: Chima, it read, was being held for an unspecified offence in one of the most feared detention centres in town. So, could the receiver be kind enough to send as little as N1500 voucher to process his bail?

Of course, who can forsake his brother/ friend at a time like this? Who does not know what detention centres are like in Lagos? And, by the way, isn't this a particularly notorious one?

The short but precise sms was enough to galvanize all of them to action. After all, what is some naira worth of vouchers to a brother/ friend in distress?

All of the recipients quickly arranged something sharp, sharp, as they say, and immediately despatched it to their man in trouble. Those who could sent half of what was requested. Some sent the exact sum while a few others doubled their effort, supposedly to Chima so he can use them to secure his release. In the end, approximately a hundred people had responded to Chima's SOS.

Which explains why Chima woke up on that day to literally find his sitting room overflowing with sympathisers. Of course, by now, you would've guessed that Chima was never in jail. He wasn't. In truth, he was detained in a much more sober way. Tired and work-weary, Chima decided that very day in question to prop up his feet on his desk, fold his hands across his belly and just nod off. His handset was nearby on the table.

The clearing and forwarding agent was thus reclined when some smart alics, seeing a way to make some change, quickly took their chance. Presto, they proceeded to send the sms to nearly all the numbers in Chima's phone, knowing full well that many or all of them will respond positively long before Chima gets up. They were dead on the beam!

By the time Chima woke up later, his handset was where he left it but unknown to him it had helpfully served to defraud some of his friends/ relations - at his expense of course.

Here is a link to the piece for as long as it is good:

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/sauceofsun/2006/oct/08/sauce-oct-08-2006-001.htm>

8 OCT 2006

From the Sunday Times (online) UK:

Ireland hosts online scams

Liam Clarke

AT least six west African gangs, involving up to 117 people, are operating internet swindles from Ireland, according to an expert on advance-fee fraud.

Frank Engelsman, an investigator in Amsterdam, says his figures are based on information gleaned from scammers' e-mails. He has offered to give the details to gardai.

Advance-fee fraud, referred to as 419 fraud because of the section of the Nigerian penal code which forbids it, is traditionally operated by Nigerians from the Ibo or Igbo tribal group in the south of the country. Other groups have become involved in the swindle in recent years.

Scammers ask for fees in return for the release of an object of value, such as a lottery jackpot or an inheritance. It can also involve fake jobs, with a victim being asked to bank cheques and forward the proceeds in return for commission. The cheques later bounce or turn out to be fraudulently obtained, leaving the victim liable.

One Japanese woman known to Engelsman claims to have paid £50,000 (€74,000) to an Allied Irish Bank account in Blanchardstown. The AIB has refused to comment.

The largest number of scam rings, 24, operate in the Netherlands, according to Engelsman. There are 20 in the UK and 18 in Spain.

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

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,176-2393803,00.html>

There is also a longer companion piece on this story in the Sunday Times (online) Ireland. Here is the URL of that piece:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2091-2393725_1,00.html

13 SEP 2006

From the Nigerian Tribune, a Nigerian newspaper:

EFCC takes war against crimes to cyber cafes

by SEUN AYANTOKUN, Lagos

IN its bid to curtail cyber crimes in Nigeria, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has ordered all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and operators of internet cafes, popularly called cyber cafes, in the country to register their businesses with it.

Cafe customers are also mandated to register their various cafes with all details about them. The registration is, however, free.

The commission had earlier put a stop to the operation of the cafes in the night believing that cyber criminals spent the period to perpetrate crimes.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that the operators of internet cafes were initially not well disposed to the idea of not operating in the night, saying it would reduce their revenue.

Some of them, as a result, began to increase their tariffs by 100 per cent, claiming that the EFCC encouraged them to take the step. In most parts of Lagos, the Nigerian Tribune gathered that the cost of internet browsing per hour is now N200 as against the N100 that was previously charged, while 30 minutes now attracts N100 or N120 as against the previous N50 or N60.

Here is the URL of the piece for as long as it is good:
<http://www.tribune.com.ng/13092006/news/news7.html>

18 AUG 2006

Here is the URL of a BBC News video of a counter-419 raid by the Nigerian EFCC on a Cyber Cafe, for as long as the link is good. About a 5 minute video:

<http://www.feedthegoose.com/page.php?7>

Here is another URL of the same material, furnished by a concerned Nigerian:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fLn86Q4wSM>

12 AUG 2006

From the Daily Graphic, a Ghanaian newspaper:

Five Nabbed Over Fake Dollars

Story by Albert K. Salia

The police have arrested five persons believed to be members of an advanced fee fraud gang, popularly known as '419', at a house in Community 18 in Tema.

The five, made up of two Nigerians, two Ghanaians and a Canadian, are Joseph Ohia, 35, Eze Kalu, 52, both Nigerians; Alex Ampiah, 35, a taxi driver, and David Adjei, 31, both Ghanaians and Bill Chase, 55, the Canadian.

A trunk full of fake dollar bills was retrieved from the home of the suspects.

Two other Nigerians, identified only as Philip and Sony Achiba, escaped arrest and have been declared wanted by the police.

The Officer in charge of Operations at the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), Chief Superintendent Amadu Salifu, told the Daily Graphic yesterday that the police had information that there was an

advanced fee fraud gang operating in a house at Community 18.

He said the information indicated that the gang had been inviting unsuspecting foreigners, particularly whites, to come and help them transfer treasures they had inherited from their deceased relatives.

Chief Supt. Salifu said following the tip-off, the police monitored the activities of occupants of the house for sometime and became convinced that there was some unusual business being transacted there.

He said that was because the police detected that a lot of people, including whites, frequently went in and out of the house.

According to him, it also came to light that David Adjei was the custodian of the trunk full of the fake dollar bills and brought it to the house each time there was a victim to exploit.

Chief Supt. Salifu said the police swooped on the house last Tuesday and arrested the suspects.

He said subsequent investigations also revealed that Ampiah, was always in court to stand surety for suspected 419 criminals.

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

<http://www.graphicghana.info/article.asp?artid=13559>

7 AUG 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Guardian:

EFCC to register cybercafes, others

By Sonny Aragba Akpore Asst. Communications Editor

INTERNET Service Providers (ISPs) who intend to remain in business have up till September 7 to register with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Cybercafe operators have up till November 30 to do so.

Similarly, GSM service providers and Private Telecommunications Operators (PTOs) which offer skeletal Internet services on their networks have till the same September 7 to register with the anti-graft body.

The foregoing conditions are contained in a new law to combat cybercrime and fraud-related offences.

Christened "Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act 2006," the law was signed recently by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

It prescribes, among others, ways to combat cybercrime and other related online frauds.

But while in previous laws the onus was on the government to carry out a surveillance on such crimes and alleged criminals, the new law vests this responsibility on industry players, including ISPs and cybercafe operators, among others.

While the EFCC becomes the sub-sector regulator, the law prescribes that henceforth, any user of Internet services shall no longer be accepted as anonymous.

Through what has been prescribed as Due Care Measure, cybercafe operators and ISPs will henceforth monitor the use of their systems and keep a record of transactions of users.

Such details include, but not limited to, photographs of users, their home addresses, telephone numbers and next-of-kin.

This means that to register as a user, the user's name, address, telephone, e-mail address and photograph should be available, according to the Act.

The President signed the law on June 5, 2006.

And for the purposes of identification, three key data should be provided, from the

following: national identification card, drivers licence, international passport, utility bill and/or certificate of incorporation if need be.

The onus is on the service provider to define an anonymous or known user.

The act complements the EFCC Due Care Committee guidelines, which among others, stipulate that:

the new advance fee fraud law requires service providers to keep and maintain a record of all customers and users:

the records to be kept are detailed in Part II, Section 12 of the law, which concerns identity of users;

upon request by the EFCC, of the details of a customer who has allegedly committed a fraud, the service provider will oblige such details of the customers;

that service providers must guard against the use of their network for criminal activities. But ISPs and Cybercafe operators say that due to the nature of technology, it may be difficult to completely eradicate cybercrimes and to properly identify the criminals.

The new Act says all ISPs have up till September 7, 2006 to register with the EFCC while the cybercafe operators, have up till November 30, 2006 to do the same.

President, Nigeria Internet Group (NIG), Mr. Lanre Ajayi, and his Association of Cybercafe and Telecentre Operators of Nigeria (ACTO Nigeria) counterpart, Mr. Lao Omotola, confirmed the development.

Ajayi explained that the EFCC has been on this subject for quite some time and "has tried to carry everybody along. His words: "We were aware of this before the policy or law came out. The EFCC wants to know who is in business and how it is being done."

Ajayi, who is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pinet Informatics Limited, an ISP-based firm in Lagos said: "We want to rise to the occasion and the challenges therefrom."

He explained that electronic commerce (e-commerce) thrives on trust and "if it must be realistic here, we must put in place rules to checkmate online crimes."

"We share the views of the EFCC but in carrying out the process of authentication, we must be careful so that we don't infringe on the user's rights," Ajayi advised.

Omotola spoke in a similar vein, saying the idea is not novel in Nigeria since, South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and to some extent, Brazil have adopted similar approaches to chock the cybercrime scourge.

Omotola, who is the CEO of Next Technology Limited, further explained that even upstream operators, like Intelsat, Gilat, New Skies, among others, will also have their services registered with the EFCC for their products and services to be sold locally.

The reasons for this, according to EFCC officials, is that "in the past, we ran into difficulty in prosecuting these upstream operators "because our laws did not cover their jurisdictions."

So far, over 20 cybercafes have been raided by the EFCC in the last one month.

The operators appear set to comply with the law by notifying users of the relevant portion of the law, corporate user policy, firewall recommendation, protection procedure, indemnity and right of disclosure among others.

According to the Act, telecommunication operators, including GSM service providers and PTOs, which now offer skeletal Internet services on their networks, also have up till September 7, 2006 to register such services with the EFCC.

They are also to show evidence of Due Care and Surveillance System, which they have installed in their networks for the purposes of the monitoring of cybercrimes.

All operators are to develop and put in place compliance standard, certification procedure to monitor certification compliance.

They are also expected to put in place a filter technology to determine the expectations

and standards for a filter to be deployed at the service provider's gateway.

Restrictions of Spam mails and other letters that may be letters of threats are also to be monitored by the filter technology. All such reports should be available online for a period of three months and archived for up to one year.

The EFCC will see to the enforcement of the laws.

The registration of all users and operators will subsist, despite the existence of the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003.

Offenders would be tried by the Federal High Court or the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory or High Courts in the states.

Every cybercafe operator must expose all computers used in browsing because the era of hidden computers is over, according to Omotola.

He explained that this was one of the highpoints of the agreement his association reached with the EFCC.

According to him, each cybercafe will henceforth be a watchdog to others and if any of them is found indulging in cybercrime "we will dialogue with the operator and if dialogue fails, after three attempts, we shall have no option than to expose the cybercafe to the EFCC."

Besides, there will be a monthly meeting between the EFCC and cybercafes to review progress and new ways to uncover new tactics, he added.

419 Coalition Comment: Sounds great in in theory, we also hope it works great in practice.

4 AUG 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper ThisDay:

Terrorism: EFCC Confirms Arrests of 14 Suspects

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, have arrested a terrorism suspect in a raid on a cybercafe, NetXpress, located on Road 51, Festac town, Lagos. The commission disclosed that 13 other suspects caught in the act of sending scam mails to Europe and America, were also arrested.

The suspect who claimed to represent a faceless terror group, Terrorist International was caught demanding payoff from a multinational oil company to forestall the kidnap of its expatriate staff in the Niger Delta. The other suspects were caught sending scanned documents purportedly issued by Chief Executives of Nigerian government agencies such as the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC.

During the operation which lasted for two hours, several documents and equipment being used by the fraudsters to commit advance fee fraud were confiscated. Among these were more than 30 computer units.

The suspects will be charged to court as soon as investigation, which is still ongoing, is concluded.

The Commission has in recent weeks stepped up the arrest of Internet fraudsters following the enactment of the new Advance Fee Fraud Act, which empowers EFCC to close down any cyber- cafe being used to send 419 letters. Apart from the scam artist, both the owner of the cafe and the landlord of the building where it is located are also held liable for the crime.

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

<http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=54850>

15 JUL 2006

There is an excellent article in the Nigerian newspaper Vanguard on the history etc. of 419 in Nigeria but it is too long to be posted here.

However, here is a link to the piece for as long as it is good:

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/cover/july06/15072006/f615072006.html>

6 JUL 2006

From the Ghana News Agency:

Three computer fraudsters arrested

Accra, July 6, GNA - Three Nigerians have been arrested for attempting to dupe a bank by using fake Western Union authorisation notes to withdraw monies.

They are Alexander Nwabueze; Joshua Alamu Thomas, 29, and Kelvin Oziri, 22.

Mr Patrick Ampewuah, Deputy Director-General of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), told the Ghana News Agency in Accra that a pen drive was found with the suspects on which letterheads of both national and international institutions used for fraudulent activities were found.

He said most of these computer criminals, who were mainly foreigners, were now into attempts to defraud banks by trying to access their computer systems.

Police said on June 20, Nwabueze went to the Western Union branch at Prudential Bank at Makola in Accra to cash 950 dollars. However, on verifying the authenticity of the note for the claim it was identified to be faked. He was, therefore, handed over to the Police.

On June 28, two of the suspects, Thomas and Oziri also came to cash 5,500 Euros through the same methods but their inability to know, who was remitting the money and where it was coming from led to suspicion, upon which it was discovered that the note they were using was faked. Information on the pen drive retrieved from the suspects revealed that they included forged documents of Bank of Ghana; Barclays Bank; ECOWAS Financial Monitoring Union; Swiss Financial Trust Bank; Federal Reserve Bank of the United States; Supreme Court certified affidavits and a United Arab Emirates passport.

The others are Ghanaian passports with the same picture but different names, pictures of gold mines and workers working in these mines.

4 JUL 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper Vanguard. This was a 2 subject story, we have edited out the subject not relevant to 419:

EFCC swoop on Lagos cyber cafes

From Chuks Akunna in Abuja

... the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has started the enforcement of the new Advance Fee Fraud Act, signed into law last month by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Operatives of the commission, last week, swooped on cyber cafes in Orile and Festac suburbs of Lagos and arrested cyber crime suspects aged between 18 and 25 years, caught in the act of sending scam mails to Europe and America.

Arrested along with them, were the owners of the cyber cafes and landlords of the buildings in which they were located.

A total of 74 computer systems were confiscated in the operations and would be tendered as evidence in court.

According to EFCC spokesman, Osita Nwajah, "the Commission wishes to draw the attention of Nigerians to the provisions of the Advance Fee Fraud Act, 2006, which imposes a sentence of up to 15 years without an option of fine for anyone who permits his/her premises to be used for 419 activities. The law also prescribes a jail term of up to 20 years without the option of fine for convicted 419ers."

419 Coalition Comment: More grease to the EFCC's collective elbow!

24 JUN 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper Vanguard:

Advanced fee fraud: EFCC indicts NCC

By Chinyere Amalu, Abuja

The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) has indicted Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) for being responsible for all related electronic telecommunication offences. Speaking at a one day meeting aimed at finding lasting solution to end ISPs/ Cybercafe' crime related issues, with all ISP/Cybercaféés providers yesterday in Abuja, the Executive Secretary of EFCC Mallam Nuhu Ribadu said that NCC has failed in its regulatory roles in curtailing fraud emanating from telecommunication service. His words, "I think NCC should take the blame for all the advanced fee fraud cases emanating from the ISPs/ Cybercaféés service providers."

"This is because they issue license to all service providers without taking the required measures. NCC has failed in its regulatory role and should stand up to their responsibilities. It has failed the nation, it is its duty to monitor all telecommunication service providers and sanction the erring ones."

"We have not heard a number of them being sanctioned. Yet cyber crimes keep increasing every day", he said. The EFCC Chairman whocriticised ISPs/Cybercafe's providers urged them to stop all fraudsters from using their cybercafe or any of their telecommunication service in carrying out their 419 businesses. "We must stop all 419 in our country, we must stop fraudsters. I know that you are making money from the business, but that should not be to the detriment of the entire nation. We will not allow you to keep on destroying Nigeria simply because you are making money. It is not fair," he said. "You will go to jail if you continue. And we will confiscate all your facilities and lock them up. We called all of you here so that we can reason together and find out the lasting solution to stop all these, 419."

"Fraudsters must stop. If not we will close all cybercaféés and their sources of income," he emphasized. Ribadu stated that proliferation of cybercafe in the recent past has led to an upsurge in Internet commerce, dating, employment, scholarship, and lottery, inheritance scams. According to him, "Activities of customers must be monitored, while all night browsing now common among young Internet scammers should be discouraged."

"Deployment of basic text categorization filtering software by ISPs and Cybercafe operators will prevent abuse of facilities by criminals." He, however, warned that systems at public cybercafes must be configured to block access to popular hackers' websites from where fraudsters download free credit card details and obtain hints on cyber fraud techniques.

419 Coalition Note: Sounds good to us, denying the use of cybercafes in Nigeria to the 419ers would indeed be a major positive step towards getting the problem under control.

22 JUN 2006

From the Dutch newspaper Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant
English translation followed by Dutch original:

Dutch police hunts internet gangs
By Ferdi Schrooten PZC

The Hague- In the last quarter of 2006 the Dutch police will start an attack on West African fraudster rings. Thereto a super regional team of investigators is founded. Chambers of Commerce, telephone companies, internet providers and banks are supposed to help on fighting these gangs, who world-wide harm people with losses of millions of euros.

"The 'West-Africans team' consists of the three regional police forces of Haaglanden, Kennemerland and Amsterdam" explains an Amsterdam-

Amstelland police spokesman. The three police forces work with investigators who are specialized and experienced in scams by primarily Nigerian gangs. By means of e-mail these gangs let potential business partners believe that they are gaining millions because they have inherited a big sum of money or because they have won a lottery. At the end of the day the investors lose money (most of the time thousands of euros).

The attack will last six months and is meant to make the Netherlands less attractive for these West African gangs. At this moment it's too easy for them to set up their 419 (the relevant section in Nigerian criminal law) scams in the Netherlands. The Netherlands are an international well known centre of West African networks. In due time the Dutch ministry of internal affairs will start deliberations with companies and institutions which are being abused by these gangs.

It's the intention that internet providers will block the accounts of those who send malign e-mails. Telephone-operators will block the telephones of fraudsters.

Better checks by the chambers of commerce must make it more difficult for gangsters to register ghost companies under a false name with which they can open bank accounts to launder money. The 'West-Africans team' will trace these accounts. For this purpose they can use the Dutch "Meldpunt Ongebruikelijke Transacties (MOT)", where unusual financial transactions are being registered. The MOT works in close co-operation with the Dutch banks.

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Dutch version
PZC
Politie jaagt op internetbendes
door Ferdi Schrooten

DEN HAAG - De politie begint dit najaar een offensief tegen oplichtersnetwerken uit het westen van Afrika. Drie korpsen vormen daartoe samen een bovenregionaal opsporingsteam. Kamers van Koophandel, telefoonmaatschappijen, internetproviders en banken moeten helpen bij het bestrijden van de bendes, die wereldwijd mensen voor miljoenen euro's duperen.

Het 'West-Afrikanenteam' wordt gevormd door de regiokorpsen Haaglanden, Kennemerland en Amsterdam, zegt een woordvoerder van de politie Amsterdam-Amstelland. In de drie korpsen hebben gespecialiseerde rechercheurs al vaak te maken met oplichting door vooral Nigeriaanse bendes. In e-mails spiegelen die potentiële zakenpartners miljoenenopbrengsten voor uit niet bestaande erfenissen en loterijprijzen. Investeerders zijn hun geld - meestal vele duizenden euro's - kwijt.

419-fraude

Het offensief dat een half jaar duurt, moet Nederland onaantrekkelijk maken voor de vanuit het westen van Afrika opererende oplichters. Die kunnen hier nu veel te makkelijk hun gang gaan met hun '419-fraude', vernoemd naar het artikel over oplichting in de Nigeriaanse strafwet. Nederland staat internationaal te boek als 'knooppunt' van netwerken uit het westen van Afrika. Het ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken overlegt binnenkort met bedrijven en instellingen die door deze bendes worden misbruikt.

Het is de bedoeling dat internetproviders afzenders van malafide e-mails blokkeren. Telefoonbedrijven moeten de telefoons van oplichters blokkeren.

Betere controles bij de Kamers van Koophandel moeten het moeilijker maken voor bendes om onder valse naam dekmantelbedrijven in te schrijven, waarmee ze bij banken witwasrekeningen openen. Die rekeningen spoort het West-Afrikanenteam op met het Meldpunt Ongebruikelijke Transacties, dat nauw samenwerkt met de banken.

Here is a link to the article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.pzc.nl/internationaal/binnenland/article434434.ece>

419 Coalition Comment: The recent actions of the Dutch authorities against 419 are very welcome, as the Netherlands is a hotbed of 419 operations, particularly Lottery 419. However, we must note that the problem there is so large that a six month operation, though welcome, will only superficially inconvenience the 419ers.... What is needed is an extended, ongoing operation, coupled with Centralized Reporting, if 419 is to be controlled in the Netherlands (and that is also true elsewhere for that matter).

3 JUN 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Punch:

EFCC traces N18.7 million to school leavers' accounts

Sesan Olufowobi

Two secondary school leavers are currently explaining to the operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission on how they managed to accumulate a total sum of N18.7 million in their accounts at Access Bank.

Officials of the Onikan, Lagos branch of the bank initially arrested Stephen Uwem Silas (25) and Kennedy Aifuwa Umweni (23), who were bosom friends, before handing them over to EFCC.

Saturday Punch was told that they were alarmed that the young boys, who also confessed that they were unemployed, could have such large amount of deposit in their accounts. It was learnt that while Silas had N13.7 million in his account, Umweni had over N5 million.

Interestingly, Silas' younger brother, Aniekal, unwittingly caused the duo's journey to trouble. An official of the EFCC told our correspondent that Aniekal had gone to the bank in the morning to make N5,000 withdrawal, but could not do so as he had just N522 in the account. A few hours later, he returned to the bank, but this time clutching Umweni's cheque book. Luck ran out on him as the signature was discovered to be forged. He was subsequently arrested.

Aniekal had then mentioned that the owner of the account was a family friend, which prompted the bank official to call Umweni, inviting him to come and identify Aniekal.

However, when Umweni arrived in company with Silas, the officials of Access Bank found it difficult to believe that such a young man, who had earlier said he was unemployed and applying to the university to study, could command a large sum as N5 million in his account.

In the course of their investigation, it was also discovered that Silas was a customer of the bank. After discreetly checking his own account, the bank officials found N13.7million. They subsequently invited the EFCC.

An official of the commission told Saturday Punch that the team that investigated the case discovered that there was a pattern in the deposits of both suspects. "We discovered that they usually deposit their funds on the same day and almost the same amount."

He said that initially, the boys claimed that their fathers and relatives deposited the money in their accounts, "but now they are singing different tunes. Silas said he got just N300,000 of the amount from Internet fraud, the rest was from two unknown friends in Nigeria and England. But for Umweni, he said those who gave him the money are all Nigerians from the Internet. We have however, gone through their E-mail and discovered a lot of scam letters. They are Internet fraudsters," the official said.

Spokesman of the commission, Osita Nwaja who confirmed the case said the three boys involved in the scam had cases to answer, adding that they would face trial as soon as investigation was completed.

28 MAY 2006

From the Washington Post:

Even Smarties Get Swindled on the Net
New Twists on an Old Scam Are Circulating

By Don Oldenburg

Who falls for this stuff?

Who's so greedy or naive to get suckered by those Nigerian scams that litter inboxes and spam filters with rubbish so clearly a ruse you'd have to be a knucklehead or on drugs not to just delete 'em?

That's the question people ask. Readers raise it all the time. Whenever the column or talk turns to swindles and the Nigerian e-mail nonsense in particular, they want to know: Who could possibly fall for this?

You might be surprised.

Sami Klein received an e-mail a few months ago from someone named "Susan Bryant," purportedly an art dealer in London who needed a representative in the United States to "facilitate money exchanges" with her U.S. customers. Something about Americans who buy her artwork always paying with money orders that are difficult to cash in London.

Thinking it was legit, and maybe an interesting opportunity, Klein replied with her name and address as requested.

"I didn't worry about sending it to her," says Klein, 66, a retired science librarian from Columbia, who knows better than to give out her Social Security number, credit card and banking information to strangers but figured sending her name and address wouldn't hurt.

A week later, Klein received an envelope containing five Wal-Mart money orders made out to her, each for \$925. As instructed, she cashed the money at her bank, kept 10 percent and wired the remainder via Western Union to "Bryant's" husband who just happened to be in Nigeria collecting wood for art work.

"I never knew that money orders could be recalled, but that is what happened," says Klein, whose bank deducted the \$4,000 she wired to Nigeria from her own funds. Never mind the \$462 commission she thought she earned -- that was as bogus as the counterfeit Wal-Mart money orders.

But that didn't end the scam. Even as Klein was making out the police report and putting her bank on notice, she was still receiving e-mails from Bryant prepping her for more transactions. She messaged back that she wanted the \$4,000 restored to her account and wasn't doing any more work until it was.

Bryant sent an apologizing e-mail to Klein, filled with lousy grammar and misspellings, blaming the "delay" on the U.S. customer. She promised to wire 20 percent commissions directly to a Wells Fargo bank account for Klein's future help. Oh, and she said she'd happily instruct Klein how to open that account.

Klein declined. "I could be a sucker once, but I'm not stupid," she says. "Lesson learned."

Look, Klein doesn't qualify as a greedy or naive person. Other than being retired, she's not standard scam-victim material. She has traveled the globe and lived in Japan, Italy and Malta. Since retiring, she has stayed active -- she gardens, reads extensively, does computer database work, knits hats for cancer patients and even serves as president of her temple. If she could fall for it, so could lots of people. And they do.

Last March, it was Louis A. Gottschalk, the respected founding chairman of the psychiatry department at the University of California at Irvine. He wired \$3 million to Nigeria. In April, there was an Idaho financial planner. Last year, a Los Angeles record producer. How about the Massachusetts psychotherapist profiled in New Yorker this month?

"There are some highly educated people who for whatever reasons fall victim to this," says Tom Mazur, spokesman for the U.S. Secret Service, which investigates such scams. "I don't know their motivation for getting pulled into one of these schemes. Certainly these types of criminals prey on the emotions and on people's sympathies sometimes. But somewhere in the back of their minds, the victim's got to be thinking about getting rich quick."

Nigerian fraud scams (aka "419 scams" after the Nigerian penal code addressing fraud) have been around since the '70s when money was swindled the old-fashioned way -- con artists had to lick stamps and send letters. The Internet changed all that, making it easy to spam millions of potential victims with classic 419 scam e-mails, purportedly from the daughter of a deposed African dictator or a former finance minister of an African nation who seeks your help in transferring millions of dollars to the United States -- and promises a tasty percentage for your help!

Too absurd to work? Ultrascan Advanced Global Investigations, a Dutch private investigation firm that has been studying 419 scams worldwide for a decade, released its latest damage estimates in March. Companies and individuals in the United States were scammed for \$720 million in losses in 2005, it estimates. Total losses from 37 nations to these scams is almost \$3.2 billion. The United Kingdom has the second-highest losses at \$520 million, and Spain and Japan tied for third at \$320 million in losses.

Tens of thousands of victims worldwide fall victim to the scams each year -- and while the losses per victim are decreasing due to more scammers working the lower-amount swindles (like phony money orders, lottery fraud and auction overpayment schemes), the number of victims are increasing, UAGI reports on its Web site. The Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) estimates that, based on complaints it received, the average loss to a 419 swindle last year was \$5,000. According to the Federal Trade Commission, Internet-related fraud complaints involving a "wire transfer" of money as the payment method -- typical of 419 scams -- more than tripled from 2004 and 2005.

Mazur says that since the explosion of the Internet, these criminals can spam a whole group of individuals at home and at work and have gained wide access to an unsuspecting public. "If they put out 100,000 e-mails and two people bite," he says, "it would be a successful day."

Adding to the success of these scams is the number of sophisticated variations. The "London art dealer" ploy in Klein's case was a relatively new twist that started showing up in January. In late March, a rash of e-mails targeted bed-and-breakfast inns nationwide. Scammers made reservations, purportedly for a UNICEF representative in Ghana. Payments arrived as cashier's checks for too much money and the scammers asked that the difference be returned. Last August, the 419 scammers stooped so low as to take advantage of the London terrorist bombings, informing e-mail recipients they'd been left money by one of the victims.

"These schemes run the gamut of sounding very lucrative, but there is that questionable arrangement," warns Mazur.

Rich Siegel has a word of advice. "No one is going to give you \$12 million. . . . You don't have a long-lost uncle who died in a car accident on Sagbama Road in the jungles of Nigeria. You never purchased the winning ticket in a Sub-Saharan international lottery," he writes on his Web site.

Siegel received just such an absurd e-mail, supposedly from a Mr. Ibrahim Mantu, who promised him more than \$10 million from a Nigerian monetary fund. All Siegel had to do was assist the transfer of funds to the United States.

Weary of receiving scam spam, he decided to scam the scammer. Using a fake name (that when articulated slowly in English is obscene), Siegel began an e-mail exchange that lasted seven months.

"I knew about the scams but I thought writing back to them was kind of a lark," says Siegel, author of the book "Tuesdays With Mantu: My Adventures With a Nigerian Con Artist."

Siegel thinks it isn't fair to say people are victims of their own greed. "That's an easy way out, to attribute this to greed," he says. "Surely greed may be part of it. But a lot of the e-mails target retirees with inheritance scams that seem feasible. And they target sympathetic victims who figure they'll help someone out of a jam. For them, this is in the realm of possibilities."

By the way, law enforcement authorities have mixed feelings about "scam-baiters" like Siegel who string along criminals and sabotage their scams for amusement or revenge -- no matter how many precautions they take. Scammers have been known to turn threatening and dangerous.

"My advice is to ditch it," says Siegel. "The minute you recognize it for what it is, just ditch it -- unless you have nothing better to do like I did and want to have to fun. But you have to be careful."

Mazur recommends deleting the suspect e-mails. "Let standard business practices take place -- that's the message," he says. "Nothing is free in our lifetimes. If it is too good to be true, it probably is."

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

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/27/AR2006052700079.html>

20 MAY 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Punch:

Internet fraud syndicate held over botched \$31m scam

Sesan Olufowobi

Four Internet fraudsters, aka 'Yahoo boys' and the proprietor of a cyber café in Lagos, have been arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission over their alleged involvement in a potential scams worth \$31 million.

Saturday Punch gathered that the EFCC took interest in the cyber café, located in Surulere, Lagos, after it received an anonymous e-mail about economic crimes which were allegedly being committed at the business centre.

A senior EFCC official told our correspondent during the week that the petition alleged among other things that the café was being used by fraudsters. The letter also indicated that the centre was run on a 24-hour basis, while the proprietor was actively involved in the operations of the fraudsters.

The official said EFCC operatives carried out a covert check on the business centre to verify the allegations before swooping on its operators on Wednesday.

"We got there around 2.30 pm and discovered that about 40 people were there. Some of them managed to escape but the rest that were caught were made to undergo screening and at the end of the day, we caught four of them in the middle of different scams," the EFCC operative said.

The four suspects as well as the proprietor were taken to the EFCC's office in Lagos.

Saturday Punch gathered that one of them was in the middle of a \$10.5 million scam using a fake company, Heritage, as a front. Another was allegedly in the middle of \$15.2 million fraud, using the October 22, 2005 Bellview plane crash as the ground for the extortion of a potential victim while the third was involved in a \$5.5 million scam.

The official said the suspects signed documents relating to their foiled scams after the operatives had printed them out, adding that 85 computers were taken from the café.

"The M.D. said his server is in the United States, that he was being served directly from the US but we are still looking at that," he said.

When contacted, the EFCC's Head of Media and Publicity, Mr. Osita Nwaja, said the case was being investigated to ascertain the involvement of the suspects in the scams.

8 MAY 2006

The New Yorker magazine has published a good article on a Classic 419 and Check 419 case, which is too long to be published here. Here is the URL of the piece for as long as it is good:

http://www.newyorker.com/printables/fact/060515fa_fact

1 MAY 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Punch. Several other Nigerian newspapers also carried the story:

419: S'Court confirms ex-bank chief's conviction

Tobi Soniyi and Oluyinka Akintunde, Abuja

The Supreme Court has confirmed a three-and-a half-year jail term slammed on a former Chairman of the defunct Ivory Merchant Bank Limited, Dr. Edwin Onwudiwe, by the Failed Bank Tribunal.

Onwudiwe was convicted of theft, obtaining money by false pretence and corrupt enrichment on November 11, 1998.

He was charged with eight-count offences, but was convicted on four counts only.

The tribunal sentenced him to 18 months imprisonment or N50,000 fine in count three where he was charged with fraudulent conversion of the proceeds of a Crystal Bank of Africa Limited certified cheque issued in favour of Ivory Merchant Bank in the sum of N16.56 million. The offence is punishable under section 390 (7) of the Criminal Code Act.

The tribunal also convicted him of defrauding Partnership Investment Company Limited by making a false representation to the company that Ivory Merchant Bank Limited had \$345,000 for sale, thereby inducing the company to deliver to him a Crystal Bank of Africa Limited certified cheque for N16.5 million issued in favour of Ivory Merchant Bank Limited.

He was accused of diverting the proceeds, which he dishonestly obtained and appropriated, to his own use.

The offence is punishable under Section 419 of the Criminal Code Act. On this count, the tribunal slammed a two-year-jail term on Onwudiwe without any option of fine.

He was dissatisfied with the tribunal's judgment and appealed to the Court of Appeal for an order discharging and acquitting him.

His arguments did not find favour with the Court of Appeal's justice and he finally appealed to the Supreme Court.

Justice Dahiru Musdapher, who delivered the lead judgment, dismissed Onwudiwe's appeal on the grounds that it lacked merit.

He was supported by Justices Umaru Kalgo, Niki Tobi Mahmud Mohammed and Walter Onnoghen

13 APR 2006

From the Daily Sun, a Nigerian newspaper:

Nigeria's anti-graft war excites US
Dept of State rates EFCC high
From Collins Edomaruse in Abuja

The United States of America has expressed satisfaction with Nigeria's strides in the fight against corruption and related offences and says it will continue to encourage the country (Nigeria) in her efforts to eradicate corruption.

The US also said it was excited by the successes recorded so far by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which it described as an organisation that had performed creditably in the discharge of its duties.

In its latest report on Nigeria, the US Department of State said of the EFCC: "In 2005, the EFCC marked significant successes in combating financial crime. During 2005, the EFCC seized money laundering-related assets worth \$1billion, more than a 100 percent increase from 2004."

Giving a historical overview of Nigeria's demonstration of determination to wage war against corruption, money laundering and related activities, the United States said in the report, which was released few days ago, that in spite the federal government's steps at eradicating the scourge, "Nigerian criminal organizations have proven adept at devising new ways of subverting international and domestic law enforcement efforts and evading detection.

"Their success in avoiding detection and prosecution has led to an increase in many

types of financial crimes, including bank fraud, real estate fraud, identity theft, and advance fee fraud. Despite years of government effort to counter rampant crime and corruption, Nigerians continue to be plagued by crime.

"The establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the improvement in training qualified prosecutors in Nigerian courts has yielded some successes in 2005."

It also said that: "In addition to narcotics-related money laundering, advance fee fraud is a lucrative financial crime that generates hundreds of millions of illicit dollars annually for criminals. Initially, Nigerian criminals made advance fee fraud infamous; more recently, nationals of many African countries and from a variety of countries around the world have begun to perpetrate advance fee fraud.

"This type of fraud is referred to internationally as "Four-One-Nine" fraud (419 is a reference to the fraud section in Nigeria's criminal code). While there are many variations, the main goal of 419 frauds is to deceive victims into payment of an advance fee by persuading them that they will receive a very large benefit in return.

"These 'get rich quick' schemes have ended for some victims in monetary losses, kidnapping, or murder. Through the Internet, businesses and individuals around the world have been and continue to be targeted by perpetrators of 419 scams. The EFCC has tried to combat 419-related cyber crimes, but there have only been a few recorded successes as a result of their cyber crime initiatives."

The report also underscored the role of the legislature in passing laws that in the main enhanced the effectiveness of the EFCC and the desire of the Federal Government to wipe out corruption.

Specifically, it noted that: "In 2004, the National Assembly passed the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act (2004), which applies to the proceeds of all financial crimes. It also covers stock brokerage firms and foreign currency exchange facilities, in addition to banks and financial institutions.

"The legislation gives the CBN greater power to deny bank licenses and freeze suspicious accounts. This legislation also strengthens financial institutions by requiring more stringent identification of accounts, removing a threshold for suspicious transactions, and lengthening the period for retention of records.

"In November 2004, the EFCC reported that the great majority of Nigeria's banks were not in compliance with the new law, typically by not adhering to the know-your-customer and know-your-customer's-business provisions of the law and by neglecting to file suspicious transactions reports (STRs). The EFCC promised a new initiative to educate bank personnel and the general public about the provisions of the law before imposing sanctions for non-compliance."

The laws and their amendment the report added, paved the way for the EFCC and its sister organisations to make huge hauls of seizures and arrests of criminals, including their prosecution.

"Two fraudsters in a Brazilian bank scam involving a total of \$242 million in assets were successfully prosecuted and convicted for terms of 25 and 12 years in prison, respectively.

"Their assets were seized, and they were ordered to give \$110 million in restitution to the bank. Last in 2005, the EFCC returned \$4.481 million to an elderly woman swindled by a Nigerian 419 kingpin in 1995.

"The kingpin was arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and is serving his prison sentence. A former inspector general of police (Mr. Tafa Balogun) was arrested and prosecuted for financial crimes valued at over \$13 million. His assets were seized and bank accounts frozen. He served a prison sentence of six months and still faces 92 charges of money laundering and official corruption.

"Two sitting state governors are currently the subject of money laundering investigations.

"The EFCC, working with the FBI, also has an active case involving a group of money brokers using banks in the United States to launder money. The money laundering legislation of 2004 has given the EFCC the authority to investigate and prosecute such cases.

"The EFCC also has the authority to prevent the use of charitable and non-profit entities as laundering vehicles, though no such case has yet been reported. There were 23 money-laundering convictions in 2005. The trial court process has improved after several experienced judges were assigned specifically to handle EFCC cases; this has motivated EFCC officials to bring more cases to court. During 2005, the EFCC seized money laundering-related assets worth \$1billion, more than a 100 percent increase from 2004."

The US government, therefore, rated Nigeria high in the prosecution of the corruption war, saying: "The Government of Nigeria has done a better job preventing and pursuing money laundering both within and outside the country in 2005."

"It should continue to engage with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to ensure that Nigeria's remaining anti-money laundering deficiencies are corrected. The Nigerian Government should continue to pursue their anti-corruption programme and support both the ICPC and EFCC in their mandates to investigate and prosecute corrupt government officials and individuals, while at the same time maintaining the independence of those entities from the realm of politics."

"The supervision of banking and non-banking financial institutions should be strengthened and moved from the Ministry of Commerce. Nigeria should construct a comprehensive anti-money laundering regime that willingly shares information with foreign regulatory and law enforcement agencies, is capable of thwarting money laundering and terrorist financing, and conforms to all relevant international standards."

Most major Nigerian newspapers also covered this story.

8 APR 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Punch:

103 Sri-Lankan job seekers fall prey to Nigerian dupe

Sesan Olufowobi

No fewer than one hundred and three Sri-Lankans, who had hoped to work in the United States of America, are currently licking their wounds after they discovered that they had been conned by Nigerian fraudsters.

Also, about eight of the Sri-Lankans are currently serving jail terms in their home country for attempting to use forged passports and visas that emanated from Nigeria to travel to the US.

Besides, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission(EFCC), in an attempt to get at the bottom of the scam has beamed its searchlights on the Nigerian Immigration Service to fish out two officials of the commission that allegedly aided the fraudsters in their crime.

Saturday Punch learnt that the fraud started with a notice that was posted on the internet by one John Franken, who was supposed to be the Executive Director of King Fishers, Sea Food Charter, operating from Alaska USA.

The notice requested for people from Bagladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam, Phillipine, Algeria, Sri-Lanka, Malaysia, India among other countries, who could work as a lobster parkers, Sea food labourers, parkers and delivery drivers.

An official of the EFCC told our correspondent that a Sri-Lankan, P.S Obali, got in touch with Franken and later Atuegbu Kelvin, who told Obali that his people, would need to get passports, Nigerian Visas, US visa among other documents. "The arrangement then was that the people would first come to Nigeria before moving to US. And all these documents cost \$400 each," said the official.

It was learnt that at a point, it was agreed that the people would come in batches, "that was how four came to Nigeria not too long ago. But they were arrested and detained for 15 days for using fake documents."

The fraudsters, however, managed to pacify Obali, and when Obali visited Nigeria, another man, Stanley Atuegbu, who claimed to be the son of Kelvin, met him. It was then agreed that visas would be acquired in Nigeria and sent back to Sri-Lanka. Also a Nigerian Immigration official would go to Sri-Lanka to clear the people so that it would

seem that they were truly in Nigeria to get the visas.

"Obali agreed and arrangement were made to send 20 people in first batch while the documents for the others would be undergoing processing. In all, there were 103 passports," an EFCC officials said.

The official added that two immigration officials based in Lagos and Abuja collected money to clear the people in Sri-Lanka but failed to appear.

He continued that, however, the new arrangement with Obali fell through when eight people Obali placed on an aircraft for onward journey to USA were arrested for using forged documents. It was then that it dawned on Obali that he had been taken for a ride.

He subsequently came to Nigeria and contacted the EFCC, which arrested Atuegbu. "We are still looking for Franken. But for now, we have managed to recover \$35,892.81."

EFCC spokesman, Osita Nwaja said the investigation was continuing.

6 APR 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Daily Sun:

Court orders sale of 419 convict's buildings

It was a double tragedy for a fleeing 419 convict in Lagos, as a court ordered that his multi-million naira property be disposed of and the proceeds given to his victim as restitution.

Bright Ezekuse was convicted eight years ago by Justice Eyamba Idem of the Miscellaneous Offences Tribunal for defrauding a German national, Marinder Bajwa, to the tune of 353,900 dollars in a hoax business transaction.

Ezekuse has, however, evaded serving 15 years prison term, having been granted questionable bail in 2000.

He was found in his house when the prosecution took steps to cost the value of his building in Ikotun to raise money to pay the victim. Sensing danger at the discovery of his presence in the country, Ezekuse developed wings and has since not been seen. However, the judge, who gave him the bail was sacked following a petition sent to the National Judicial Council (NJC) by the complainant.

Justice Yetunde Idowu gave the order directing the deputy sheriff of the court to dispose of the convict's property located in Ikotun, Ejigbo and Isolo areas of Lagos, following the applications by the prosecution and the victim.

The applications, among others, sought the court's order authorizing the sale of Ezekuse's buildings located at 16, Oludotun Shobunkola street, Ikotun, valued at N5 million, a hotel complex at 56, Association Avenue, Ikotun, valued at N52 million and the one at 35, Yusuff street, Ejigbo valued at N4.5 million.

Before granting the order to sell the property, Justice Idowu took time to review the history of the case and steps taken by her court to ensure that justice was done to the parties involved.

To ensure that the course of justice was not sacrificed, the court ordered that the defendant be served the substituted service, by pasting the court processes on his house and through advertisement in a national (daily) newspaper.

The judge also directed that a professional valuer be contracted, to ensure proper and correct value of the property, listed in the suit.

But in order to stall the sale of the property, the defendant brought application, which, among others, sought an order to stay the execution of the consequential order for payment of restitution, through the sales of his property as ordered by Justice Eyamba in the November 26, 1998, judgement.

Specifically, the defendant contended that he was not the owner of the property listed in the suit.

However, the claimants insisted that the defendant had fully exercised his right of appeal, which he lost in the Court of Appeal, which re-affirmed his conviction and the 15-years sentence earlier passed on him.

Besides, the claimants argued that efforts were made by the deputy sheriff and the prosecution to ensure that defendant's counsel witnessed the sale of the property, but because of the defendant's status as a fugitive convict, nobody was willing to be associated with him.

After reviewing the case, Justice Idowu dismissed Ezekuse's application seeking to perpetually stall the execution of the consequential order of restitution, as contained in the judgement of the Miscellaneous Offence Tribunal in 1998.

The trial judge noted that throughout the proceedings, the defendant did not appear in court, adding that no reason was given for his absence.

Besides, the court also noted that no explanation was given for the delay in bringing the application for stay of execution despite that it was served on time.

Consequently, the court held that there must be an end to litigation. "Courts are not to deprive a successful litigant the fruits of its success and the machinery of justice is not to be used such as to amount to an abuse of the process of court."

In her reaction to the judgment, victim's representative, Freida Springer-Beck, expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the trial.

She said: "though, it may be a bit late, the most important thing is that justice has been done and of course, the message that Nigeria is no longer a haven for fraudsters is also implied by the outcome."

Here is a link to the article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/crimewatch/2006/apr/06/crimewatch-06-04-2006-004.htm>

30 MAR 2006

From BBC News:

'Scammed by my internet lover'

Ghanaian Robert Adda, 35, told the BBC News website how he got scammed on the internet while searching for love.

I was scammed two years ago, via the internet, by a woman I thought was pushing me into love.

Initially she wasn't too ambitious to meet me. She just wanted to build a friendship, it seemed and so we exchanged photographs and communicated by email.

A few months went by and as time passed our intimacy increased. Not a day went by without us being in contact.

I was single at the time and was looking to have a relationship.

Preyed upon

I didn't think it would lead to what it did. I believe that she preyed upon my wish to find love.

She started talking to me about us being together, physically. She was living in the US and I in Ghana. But I explained that I didn't have immediate plans of travelling, and because I was working, it would be

difficult for me to travel any time soon.

She understood but then as time went by she started being pushy - continuing to say that if I loved her then I would find a way to be with her so that we could stay together.

She then introduced me to a programme called WRAHA which I think she said stood for West African Refugee and Humanitarian Authority or something like that.

Initially I objected. I didn't want to be a part of it. It was devious and dishonest and purely, I really didn't want to travel abroad - that was my major thing.

But as I discussed it with friends they encouraged me to try.

There were actually a lot of people who wanted to give it a go. Even someone I know who had been previously been a victim to a similar scam wanted to try.

Tricked

He told me that these matters were all down to luck and if you were lucky then you would succeed.

For months afterwards I had to manage on very little money. I had to use all my savings

We were not lucky, my friends and I.

We were tricked into making advance payments for emigrating to the US.

We paid a number of fees ranging between \$110 and \$346 as our applications progressed from one stage to the next.

Each time we were told that time was limited, because of deadlines, and so there were only a few hours to get our payment through.

This deadline rush ended up being our trigger to suspect that something was not right.

Disappointed

Sitting together and thinking and we all concluded that we'd been scammed. My friends were disappointed, like me, but they were not angry with me.

They knew that I was not the one who collected their money and they knew that it had been a risk.

I never heard from my so-called friend in the US once I told her that it was not going to be possible to continue making all the payments. That was when our relationship came to an end.

I wonder if she ever even existed.

I was really disappointed in myself for having got involved in such things. I couldn't be angry though. Instead I took as a lesson and put it down to a bad experience.

For months afterwards I had to manage on very little money. I had to use all my savings and start again from scratch.

If she actually existed and something more had happened then I would have felt heartbroken, instead I felt as though someone had played with me.

I am sorry that I allowed someone to play with me like that.

The reason these terrible scammers get away with their troublemaking

is because people are not satisfied with what they have.

Unfortunately, people's wish to travel abroad keeps these groups going. I know some people who have fallen for these tricks not just once but twice, even thrice.

Here is the URL of the piece for as long as it is good:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4860864.stm>

419 Coalition Note: Although part of this 419ers "tale" was that she was a US resident, in reality she could have been operating from anywhere. If there is Real evidence that she was operating from the US, then this gent needs to give it to the US Secret Service immediately and file the necessary complaint.

24 MAR 2006

Here is a piece from consumeraffairs.com on the recent arrests of 419ers in the Netherlands (see news items for 23, 24, and 26 FEB below):

Feds Indict Four in Nigerian Advance-Fee Scam

Four people have been indicted on federal charges of running an "advance-fee" scheme that targeted U.S. victims with promises of millions of dollars, including money from an estate and from a lottery, according to federal prosecutors.

Three of the defendants named in the 11-count indictment -- two of whom were Nigerian citizens residing in the Netherlands -- were arrested in Amsterdam by Dutch authorities on February 21, 2006, based on a criminal complaint filed in the United States. They are being held by the Dutch authorities pending extradition to the United States. The fourth defendant, also a Nigerian citizen, is a fugitive.

The charges include one count of conspiracy, eight counts of wire fraud, one count of mail fraud and one count of bank fraud, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Roslynn R. Mauskopf of the Eastern District of New York.

As part of a massive advance-fee scheme, the defendants allegedly sent spam e-mail to thousands of potential victims in which they falsely claim to have control of millions of dollars located in a foreign country that belongs to an individual with a terminal illness.

They are said to have then allegedly solicited the help of the potential victims to collect and distribute the funds to charity.

In exchange for the victims' help, the defendants allegedly promised the victims a share of a large inheritance, and inform the victims that they must pay a variety of advance fees for legal representation, taxes or bogus documentation. After the victims wire-transfer funds to pay the "required fees," the defendants do not deliver the funds as promised. The victims lost more than \$1.2 million.

"The defendants in this scheme allegedly fleeced many unsuspecting American victims with promises of charitable contributions and personal riches," said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. "We cannot allow these scam artists to prey on innocent victims in this country, and we will work across the globe to knock out these fraudulent get-rich-quick schemes."

"Global fraudsters need to know that we are determined to find and prosecute them," said U.S. Attorney Mauskopf. "Potential victims need to know that any email offering millions of dollars that requires that they send money to receive this windfall is a scheme. Delete it."

The investigation was initiated by Dutch authorities. After identifying victims in the United States, Dutch authorities notified the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, which opened its own investigation. Dutch authorities, as part of "Operation Dutch Treat," arrested three of the defendants on a criminal complaint filed in the Eastern District of New York.

The maximum penalty for mail and wire fraud is 20 years in prison, and the maximum sentence for bank fraud is 30 years in prison. The conspiracy charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

Here is the URL of the piece for as long as it is good:
http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2006/03/us_nigerian_scam.html

23 MAR 2006

Here is a piece from IDG News which appeared in infoworld.com on the US indictments of the four recently arrested Dutch based 419ers:

New York City grand jury return 10 and 11-count indictments against four in Nigerian e-mail scam

By Grant Gross

Four people have been indicted and could face 30 years in prison for a variation on a popular scam in which e-mail senders claim they're trying to transfer money out of Nigeria, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) announced Thursday.

A grand jury in New York City on Wednesday returned a 10-count indictment against three of the defendants and an 11-count indictment against the fourth. Alleged victims of the four individuals lost more than \$1.2 million, the DOJ said.

Three of the defendants were arrested in Amsterdam by Dutch authorities on Feb. 21, based on a U.S. criminal complaint. They are being held by the Dutch authorities pending extradition to the U.S., the DOJ said. The fourth defendant, a Nigerian citizen, is a fugitive.

The four are Nnamdi Chizuba Anisiobi, also known as Yellowman, Abdul Rahman, Helmut Schkinger, Nancy White, and other aliases; Anthony Friday Ehis, also known as John J. Smith, Toni N. Amokwu and Mr. T; Kesandu Egwuonwu, also known as KeKe, Joey Martin Maxwell, and David Mark; and an unnamed defendant known as Eric Williams, Lee, Chucks and Nago.

The four are charged with one count of conspiracy, eight counts of wire fraud and one count of mail fraud. Anisiobi is also charged with one count of bank fraud.

The maximum penalty for mail and wire fraud is 20 years in prison, and the maximum sentence for bank fraud is 30 years in prison. The conspiracy charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

The defendants allegedly sent spam e-mail messages to thousands of potential victims, and they falsely claimed to have control of millions of dollars located in a foreign country that belongs to an individual with a terminal illness, DOJ said.

These aren't the first charges in the e-mail advance-fee scam, popular with Nigerian criminals. In January 2004, Dutch police arrested 52 people allegedly involved in Nigerian e-mail and related scams, and in May 2002, South African police arrested six people on related charges. U.S. authorities have also brought charges against other Nigerian scammers.

The defendants allegedly solicited the help of the potential victims to collect and distribute the funds to charity. In exchange for the victims' help, the defendants promised the victims a share of the large inheritance, but told victims they must pay advance fees for legal representation, taxes or bogus documentation.

After the victims wire transferred funds to pay the "required fees," the defendants did not deliver the funds as promised, DOJ said.

"Global fraudsters need to know that we are determined to find and prosecute them," U.S. Attorney Roslynn Mauskopf of the Eastern District of New York said in a statement. "Potential victims need to know that any e-mail offering millions of dollars that requires that they send money to receive this windfall is a scheme. Delete it."

Here is a link to the article for as long as it is good:
http://www.infoworld.com/article/06/03/23/76750_HNnigerianscamindictments_1.html

21 MAR 2006

From the MetroWest Daily News, Framingham, Massachusetts:

Toying with scam artists
By Andrew J. Manuse

A Framingham-based software engineer decided to play along with some Nigerians who were attempting to steal his money, and released a report yesterday detailing his experience.

"If you've had an e-mail account for even a short period of time, there's an excellent chance that you've received at least one spam message that's (known as) a 419 (Nigerian) scam message," wrote Michael Lamont, a senior software engineer for Process Software LLC in his report, "Exposing Nigerian Email Scams."

The 419 scam is named after a Nigerian law that addresses this type of scheme, prevalent in the poverty-stricken West African nation. The unsolicited e-mail messages usually come from an alleged Nigerian "official" who "urgently" needs to unload his millions, and promises recipients a cut of the spoils if they provide safe haven in their bank account.

They actually come from "serious criminals" who are usually in Nigeria and try to get gullible Westerners, often senior citizens, to send them money "when they're not otherwise engaged in murder, kidnap, narco-trafficking and armed robbery," the report says. They may also have ties to criminal organizations closer to home, it says.

"I was personally curious what these guys do," Lamont said yesterday. "The main thing I wanted to accomplish was to educate people."

Process Software also makes anti-spam software, called PreciseMail Anti-Spam Gateway, which blocks 419 messages.

Lamont, who responded to several 419 scam e-mails using the alias "Michael Hawk," said the e-mail form of the scam dates back about 10 years. The "advance fee scam" is also detailed on the U.S. Secret Service's Web site, and can be traced back to even earlier times in fax and regular mail form.

The Nigerian scammers send forged bank documents and other identification to build trust, most recently via e-mail. Then they ask the victim to send their bank account numbers, not to steal money, but to make sure they have a willing victim on the other end, said Lamont, who tested the idea by sending fake bank numbers. His Nigerian "benefactor" did not flinch, he said.

Then they ask for several thousand dollars, \$3,600 in Lamont's case, to cover "legal fees" for processing the transaction. They invent subsequent fees, which victims often pay because they have already "invested" money in the deal.

Lamont took his experiment a step further, and asked the Nigerians to send photos of themselves holding signs advertising the initials of his company's software.

"I want a photo of you that I know can't be faked by a scammer," Lamont wrote. "Once I have the photo, I will send the money for the attorney's fees via Western Union."

In the report, Lamont says Western Union is the perfect tool for scammers who can use a fake name and walk out the door with cash in their hands.

Some of the scammers actually sent pictures, Lamont said, but others stopped corresponding at that point. He never actually sent the money.

However, about 100,000 Americans have been victims of 419 scams since the 1980s, and Americans have lost about \$300 million a year to the scammers, according to C.A. Pascale, coordinator for the Web-based 419 Coalition.

Pascale, whose organization works to fight the Nigerian scammers, is

based in Virginia. About one-third of the organization's 50 members were victims of 419 scams, he said.

The Nigerian government, which does have the 419 laws making these scams illegal, blames Westerners' greed for their losses. If the e-mails were legitimate, the American recipients of the Nigerians' money would likely go to jail for laundering money.

For more detailed information about Lamont's experiment, download his reports from www.process.com/nigerian.

(Andrew J. Manuse can be reached at amanuse@cnc.com or 508-626-3964.)

Here is a link to the piece for as long as it is good:
<http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/businessNews/view.bg?articleid=124995&format=text>

419 Coalition note: 419ers are, of course, equal opportunity scammers and steal from people of all nations, races, and creeds, not just Westerners. And though this piece is using Classic 419 as the primary model for 419 operations, other forms of 419 such as Lottery 419, Cashier's Check 419, Romance 419, and Employment 419 have become more and more prevalent over recent years.

2 MAR 2006

From the Associated Press as appeared on KNBC 4
Los Angeles:

SoCal Psychiatrist Allegedly Duped in Nigerian Internet Scam

Santa Ana, Calif. -- An orange county doctor says his father, a renowned UC Irvine psychiatrist, lost millions to a Nigerian internet scam and should be removed as head of their family partnership.

Guy Gottschalk alleges that his father, Louis A. Gottschalk, traveled to Africa to meet a shadowy figure known as "The General." He says his father destroyed bank records to conceal losses of up to \$3 million over 10 years.

He filed a lawsuit last month asking a judge to remove his father as administrator of the family's \$8 million partnership. He says in court papers he filed the suit to prevent his father from being further victimized.

The elder Gottschalk acknowledges losing \$900,000 to "some bad investments" in court papers. He and his attorney accuse Guy Gottschalk of carrying out an unspecified "vendetta" against his father.

Louis Gottschalk is the founding chairman of the UC Irvine's department of psychiatry and human behavior. A university medical plaza is named after him.

Here is an URL of where the piece appeared for as long as it is good:
<http://www.nbc4.tv/news/7613465/detail.html>

27 FEB 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Punch:

\$242m scam: Nwude appeals against judgment

by Kayode Ketefe

ONE of the three persons convicted for their involvement in the celebrated scam case on a Brazilian bank, Emmanuel Nwude, has appealed against the judgment of the high court.

A Lagos High Court, sitting in Ikeja, convicted Nwude and sentenced him to 25 years imprisonment on November 18, 2005.

Justice Joseph Oyewole, gave the verdict after Nwude pleaded guilty to the amended 12-count charge brought against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes

Commission.

The convict was also ordered to forfeit 14 real estates he had in London, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enuga and Abuja.

He was also to make restitution, among other things, by paying \$110 million to the victim of the crime, the Brazilian banker, Mr. Nelson Sakaguchi.

In his notice of appeal dated December 19, 2005, and filed by his lawyer Mr. Alex Izinyon (SAN), Nwude is asking the appellate court to quash a part of the judgment forfeited his property and the part that ordered him to pay \$110 million to the victim.

He is contending that the court has no jurisdiction to make the order of forfeiture against his property and to impose fine on him on the grounds that such decision amounted to "double jeopardy".

According to him, the Criminal Code under which the charge was preferred did not empower the judge to make order of forfeiture.

He also faulted the amount of the restitution (\$110 million) reasoning that his entire assets as contained in the Schedule attached to the amended charge, was valued at \$58,901, 097.

The 25 years imprisonment term passed on Nwude, in effect, amounted to five years since the five separate terms of five years each were made to run concurrently.

24 FEB 2006

Here is a piece from ThisDay, a Nigerian newspaper, on the recent arrests of 419ers in the Netherlands:

12 Nigerians Arrested in Netherlands

DUTCH police have arrested 12 Nigerians in connection with an internet scam that tricked people into investing in non-existent schemes.

The Nigerians were detained on suspicion of committing fraud or involvement in fraud in the scheme, which earned them a total \$US2 million (\$2.7 million).

They were arrested Tuesday after raids on premises in Amsterdam and the central city of Zaandam, during which police seized €25,000 (\$45,000) in cash, computers and fake travel documents.

Most of the victims of the scam were US citizens. Four of the men detained were arrested on the request of US authorities, who co-operated on the investigation. The gang sent some 100,000 emails to potential victims, police said.

Computer users across the world are regularly bombarded by emails from Nigerian crooks seeking to trick them into handing over bank details or making advance payments on non-existent money-making schemes. Experts say the so-called "419" fraudsters - named after the relevant section in Nigeria's criminal code - steal hundreds of millions of dollars every year from unsuspecting targets.

Here is a link to the article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=41500>

23 FEB 2006

Here is a translation of a follow up piece on the arrests of 419ers in Amsterdam, again from the Dutch newspaper Volksrant:

Nigerian scammers closed down.
de Volkskrant, Economy, Februari 23th 2006 (page 07)
From our reporter Ferry Haan

Background

The American justice asked for the arrest and the extradition of Nigerians setting up large scale fraud schemes. The Amsterdam police, seventy officers all together, granted that request.

Dirty money and fake inheritances.

The so called 419 Nigerian scam comes around in many flavours. Most common is a letter or an e-mail announcing one has won the lottery. Another form is the one in which one is informed about a big inheritance from a far away family member somewhere in Africa. Common to all the schemes is the fact that always some kind of advanced fee has to be paid in order to release the money.

Next step in the process is usually the showing of bank notes that are made black, for so called 'security reasons'. Upon again the payment of several thousand euros a special cleaning fluid can be bought.

As a service, the con man offer to clean the money themselves. Upon completion of that task they will deposit the money in to an account held with a fake bank. The victim is urged to open that account, which again cost a couples of thousand euros.

Nigerian fraud frequently involves high amounts of money. For that reason experts tend to call the Nigerian fraud the 'advanced fee scam'. The con man try to hold on to their victims as long as possible. The process can go on for many years.

Most recent the fraud appears on the internet in chat boxes. In this 'love scam' the con artist pretends to be a man or a woman, feeling emotionally attracted to the victim, in desperate need of money to get e.g. goods across the border. 'Especially women fall massively for this kind of scam', Frank Engelsman says, fraud expert at Ultrascan, an organization conducting research on a regular basis on Nigerian scams.

'We got hem', is announced on the American US Postal Inspection Service. The Nigerian Fatai Adebayo Busari was arrested last year. This week the Americans can add three more names to their list of captured Nigerian fraudsters: requested by America the Amsterdam Police arrested twelve suspects. Hopes are high that the Police department to have hit the Amsterdam Nigerian mafia hard. In and around Amsterdam another eight hundred Africans are actively engaged in this kind of fraud, values Frank Engelsman on behalf of the investigation company Ultrascan.

On top of the arrest of twelve of them, the Nigerians will especially be scared off by the seven American police officers involved in the action. The US Postal Police it not to be laughed at. They carry fire arms and are for example responsible for the investigations concerning bomb letters containing Antrax.

The US asked for the extradition of the Nigerians because they swindled Americans by post for at least USD two million.

The real damage is probably be much higher, Frank Engelsman suspects. He is shouting for years now that Amsterdam is 'the Lagos of Europe'. According to Engelsman, at least twelve gangs are operating, from which one has now been closed down.

The 'Nigerian' or '419'-scam (called according to the Nigerian law against fraud) is worldwide the most expensive fraud. American authorities budget the damage on at least USD 750 million yearly.

Engelsman claims that this fraud should be seen as the "third Nigerian industry. In the whole of Europe more than ten thousand Nigerians are more or less engaged in this kind of fraud."

Two years ago the police arrested about 50 Africans having to release them afterward due to lack of evidence. The spokesman of the Public Prosecutor in Amsterdam explains that the demands of the courts regarding 419-scam evidence are very high. The prosecutor has to proof which person was behind the computer when the scam was executed. 'This is very hard upon entering a house occupied by ten man watching the Africacup all testifying they know nothing', according to the press officer. On Tuesday twelve people were arrested on eight locations. To do this seventy inspectors were needed.

22 FEB 2006

Here is a rough translation of a piece from the Dutch newspaper Volksrant. Pieces on this story appeared in many major Dutch newspapers:

NIGERIAN FRAUD GANG ARRESTED

Amsterdam - Tuesday morning the Amsterdam Police arrested a gang of 12 Nigerians who are suspected of fraud. The United States have asked for extradition of four gangmembers.

In the arrests, spreading over eight addresses in Amsterdam and Zaandam, the police used 70 officers. There were also seven US Postal Service Inspection officers present. That agency deals with mail fraud.

The Nigerians are being suspected of conning their victims out of at least two million dollars. Most victims come from the US.

Frank Engelsman, frauds specialist at the US company Ultrascan, says it's great that the Amsterdam Police force finally took some action. He fears though that the action is but a small achievement in the larger scale of things. According to him there are still eleven such Nigerian fraud gangs active in Amsterdam.

The Nigerians sent e-mails and letters to their victims where in was suggested they got an inheritance from a distant relative or a prize in a lottery. To collect the money the victims had to send several thousands of dollars as transaction fees.

The Dutch department of Financial Investigations has worked on this case since september 2005.

419 Coalition Note: Kudos to the Dutch authorities and also high marks for the international cooperation in this case. In our experience the Netherlands has been a hotbed for 419ers for several years now, with Lottery 419 being a local specialty. In fact, over the last couple of years, we have seen more 419 solicitations with Dutch phone numbers on them than those of any other nation, including Nigeria, though the Dutch based 419ers are of course Nigerians operating primarily from Amsterdam (though we do not ask for 419 letters etc. to be sent in to us, we receive them anyway, and that has been the trend in 419 soliciations we have seen over the past few years - a purely unscientific observation). It is good that the 419ers can no longer count of having a relatively safe haven in Holland. Now, if the Dutch will follow up on this success by instituting simplified and centralized 419 reporting; obtaining the ability to quickly shut down reported 419 phone numbers; and additional continued attention to counter-419 operations, they will better able to control the 419 operations emanating from their jurisdiction.

14 FEB 2006

From the Nigerian Newspaper The Register. Also see other articles on this story in our 16 JAN 2006 News item below (scroll down):

419er jailed for 376 years
Hard time for \$2m scammer

By Lester Haines

A Nigerian 419er was last Friday jailed for 376 years by a Lagos court for "stealing, forgery, impersonation and conspiracy to obtain money by false pretences" contrary to the Advance Fee Fraud Act, the Nigerian Daily Independent reports.

Harrison Odiawa, 38, aka Abu Belgori, managed to extract \$1,939,710 from US national George Robert Blake on the promise of a percentage of a bogus \$20.45m Ministry of Health contract. The classic advance fee scam saw a duped Blake transfer the "advance payments" after seeing forged documents - including a certificate of registration with the Corporate Affairs Ministry and the aforementioned forged Ministry contract - which convinced him he was indeed about to get rich. Blake raised the cash from his company, Quest Exploration and Development, and his own personal assets.

Odiawa was eventually tracked and arrested in Lagos by Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) operatives. During his trial, Blake appeared as the star witness and identified Odiawa from his voice because "because they had conversations for more than 100 times over the telephone". Odiawa countered that he was not in fact the person who had scammed the American but rather "chanced on the telephone number he found on a computer that was not lodged out from the internet in his cyber café".

Judge Joseph Olubumi Oyewale was unimpressed, and in jailing the 419er on 48 of the 58 counts on which he was charged, also ordered him to pay back \$1.6m to his victim. He said he hoped the sentence would serve as a deterrent to others.

Blake has already served a 30-month jail sentence in the US for money laundering and bank wire offences.

419 Coaliton note: The sentences on the various counts are to be served concurrently, which means that the actual time served by Odiawawill be 12 years maximum.

14 FEB 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper ThisDay

Court Acquits, Discharges 419 Suspect
By Abimbola Akosile,

Two years after his arrest by officials of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), an Ikeja High Court Judge, Justice Olubunmi Oyewole, yesterday faulted the prosecution's case, and went ahead to discharge and acquit a 22-year-old advance fee fraud suspect, Mr Fasade Tomide, of both counts of conspiracy and obtaining goods by false pretence.

Oyewole, who ironically had received three death threat letters from suspected '419' practitioners (between November 2005 to January 2006), said he could not find any sufficient evidence upon which the accused could be convicted for attempt to commit the offences alleged against him, and also identified several defects and obvious inconsistencies in the testimonies of prosecution witnesses.

Tomide, alias Mike Cole, arraigned before the court on October 22, 2004, on a two-count charge, was alleged to have conspired on April 20, 2004, with one Seun Cole (now at large), to obtain goods by false pretences from Thill Track & Tractor Service, based in the United States of America through the internet; and obtained a parcel containing tractor spare parts valued at \$7,900.00, approximately N1,106,000.00 from the company. After a trial which began, on January 12, 2005 with four prosecution witnesses called, Oyewole said there was a fallacy on the accused's alleged confessional statement, which proved fatal to the prosecution's case.

"It is a deficiency engendered by ignorance of investigators, which has set limitations on such assumptions. I am unable to hold that the said confession is true and cannot make a finding that the accused person is the Mike Cole being sought for the alleged fraud.

Prosecution has failed to establish the charge of obtaining goods by false pretences as laid against the accused person in count 2.

He is, therefore, discharged and acquitted on that count. Prosecution also failed to establish the count on conspiracy, and as such the accused is equally discharged and acquitted on count 1.

In conclusion, I hold that the prosecution has failed to prove each of the counts of offences alleged against the accused person beyond reasonable doubt, and I therefore discharge and acquit him accordingly," Oyewole ruled.

The Nigerian newspapers Punch and Guardian, among others, also covered this story.

14 FEB 2006

Here's a cautionary piece on this Valentine's Day from the Nigerian newspaper The Daily Sun:

Trans-Atlantic love costs American lady \$50,000 -

Duped by Nigerian fraudster

By JULIANA FRANCIS

A 42-year-old American lady, who came to Nigeria from Texas, United States, with her wedding accessories to tie the nuptial knot with a supposed male American Muslim she met on the internet has gone back home heartbroken.

This followed the discovery that the man she had travelled to Africa to be joined to in wedlock was not the one in the photograph sent to her, but a 24-year-old Nigerian posing as an expatriate engineer, working in an oil company.

The victim, Thumbelina Henshaw, a Muslim, did not only lose her heart to the fraudster but also lost more than 50,000 dollars, as well as several gift items she had been sending to the con man through courier services.

When Henshaw met the fraudster identified as Abdulakeem Yekini, rather than yell at him for fooling her, she was said to have calmly handed him a copy of the Holy Quran and told him to seek Allah's forgiveness. Already, Yekini has become a guest of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

One of the precious things Henshaw salvaged from the relationship was a 20,000 dollars worth of jewelry she brought to Nigeria. She had initially planned to present it to her heart-throb and his Muslim brothers to sell and then add the proceeds to the funds for the wedding preparation.

Daily Sun gathered that Yekini allegedly found Henshaw, a nurse, on a website for singles and began to chat her up.

Within a few days of chatting, Yekini knew the lady was a dedicated Muslim and decided to use her religion to ensnare her. He told her he was a staunch Muslim named William Phillips, an American, working in an oil company in Nigeria.

Yekini further told Henshaw that he has two children, named Hakim and Jane. Pretending to be Phillips, he also said his wife died in an automobile accident. The fraudster finally hoodwinked her when he told Henshaw he loved her and was looking for a dedicated Muslim wife, who would be a mother to his children.

When Henshaw asked him to send his picture, Yekini downloaded a white man's picture from the internet and forwarded it to her. The chatting, which started in June 2005, snowballed into talks about marriage.

In the course of the discussions, Yekini told the lovesick woman that the mosque he attends in Nigeria needed renovation and that good Muslims were contributing funds towards the repairs. He also introduced her to the Imam at the non-existent mosque. But operatives of the EFCC believe that Yekini was also the person posing as Imam and chatting with Henshaw on the internet. When Yekini told Henshaw that the mosque was where they would get married when she comes to Nigeria, she immediately sent him 1,500 dollars. After sending the first dollars, Henshaw continued sending more money whenever Yekini told her about any Muslim project. Aside from the money, she never relented in sending valuable items.

To further fool her into believing his lies, Yekini said he would be coming home to America. Trying to assist him in reducing cost, Henshaw sent a return ticket to Nigeria for him at 1,700 dollars, but he never showed up. When Henshaw said she would like to come to Nigeria for the wedding as agreed, Yekini asked for postponement of the ceremony, claiming he needed urgently to go to Liberia for a job.

After two postponements of the wedding, Henshaw felt it was better to just come to Nigeria herself for the wedding. She went shopping. She called the Imam and told him she was coming to Nigeria.

She met another Muslim on the flight to Nigeria and became friendly with him. She told him her story and he hinted her that she could be dealing with fraudsters. They had contacted EFCC, which agreed to set a trap for the fraudster.

Having arrived Nigeria, December 2, 2005, she called Yekini and asked him to come to a hotel in Ikeja. A trap was set for Yekini, who came, thinking he could still deceive the woman.

When it dawned on him that he had walked into a trap, he tried to jump a fence, but

EFCC operatives caught him. Recovered from him was a cellular phone that Henshaw identified as one of the items she sent to the supposed American, called William Phillips.

The EFCC spokesman, Mr Osita Nwajah, told Daily Sun that the suspect would soon be charged to court.

He said: "We are sure to get a clean conviction."

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

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/news/national/2006/feb/14/national%20-14-02-2006-001.htm>

30 JAN 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper The Guardian:

EFCC begins sale of fraud convicts' property
By Emmanuel Badejo

THE multi-million naira houses of three Nigerians, who were convicted two months ago for defrauding a Brazilian bank of \$242 million, are now being sold to indemnify the judgment sum against them.

The convicts are Chief Emmanuel Nwude, Nzeribe Okolo and Mrs. Matina Amaka Anajemba.

Justice Olubunmi Oyewole of a Lagos High Court, two months ago, brought to an end the celebrated fraud trial, sentencing Nwude and Okolo to a total of 37 years imprisonment.

Besides, the convicts are to forfeit a total of \$121.5 million, including all their property, both home and abroad to the Brazilian bank and the Federal Government.

The third convict, Anajemba, had on July 16, 2005 pleaded guilty to the charges against her. She forfeited N32 billion both in cash and assets and was sentenced to two and half years imprisonment.

But for Nwude and Okolo, their trial went sour when EFCC brought the former Managing Director of Banco, Noroaster Sa (the bank that was defrauded) Mr. Nelson Sakaguchi.

Subsequently, a plea-bargaining was reached with the prosecutor, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). This led to the accused pleading guilty for a light sentence in addition to forfeiting all their known assets.

About 34 property are being offered to buyers by the EFCC.

One common feature of these property is that they are located at highbrow areas and commercial centres in the country. They also run into billions of naira.

The Guardian learnt that a popular petroleum dealer and Chief Executive Officer of Zenon Petroleum, Femi Otedola, might have purchased one of the property situated at 1, Copper Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.

Though this was not confirmed, The Guardian's visit to the Copper Street revealed that the firm has taken possession of the building and re-christened it Zenon Towers.

26 JAN 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper the Daily Sun:

INTERNET RAT: They conned an American lady, using marriage as bait
By Juliana Francis

A joint effort by Nigeria and American authorities has ended the pranks of three Nigerian boys, who were defrauding Americans on the Internet.

The syndicate comprised Michael Evbowera, 21, Mark Paul Udoh 16 and William Emery, who allegedly swindled an American woman of 3000 dollars and a laptop computer.

Investigations between the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have also revealed that the boys sent over one million fraudulent cheques and money orders to different people in the United States, for the shipment of goods.

Posing as a working class man looking for a potential wife, Emery surfed the net and found Shirley Garza. After chatting a couple of times with her, he had told her he loved her and proposed to marry her. Garza, said to be in her mid-30s was said to have fallen for the ruse. She started sending money whenever Emery asked for assistance as an expression of her love.

The scales, however, fell off her eyes when Emery asked her to send a laptop to him. He promised to send her money for it. He further instructed her to write Adesola Joseph as the sender. When she asked him why Adesola, he reportedly said: " Courier companies no longer send goods bearing foreign names to the owners."

Thinking she was dealing with a genuine person, Garza sent the laptop but she later discovered that the information on the credit card he sent her was forged. Suspecting foul play, she ran to the FBI in Louisville, Kentucky and they contacted those in Nigeria. Soon the story got to Mr. Mark, the legal attaché of the United States consulate in Lagos. Mark alerted EFCC, which immediately started investigation. Garza was instructed by the agencies to play along with the fraudsters.

Daily Sun gathered that for three weeks after the laptop arrived Nigeria, the smart alics didn't surface to pick it. And for those three weeks, operatives lay in wait, knowing it was only a matter of time.

Trying to make sure they had not been discovered, Emery called Garza. A source said: " He told her that he heard policemen were at the courier company, that maybe she alerted them. She denied it. He later went with Mark Paul Udoh to collect the laptop. They were arrested as they were collecting it."

EFCC had since searched their home and discovered that the three youngsters live together. Recovered from them were countless numbers of fake cheques, postal orders and money orders. The boys have admitted contributing money each to purchase the fake cheques and money orders. Emery contributed N8000, Mark Paul Udoh N2000 and Michael N3000. They further said that the seller was one Mike, a Ghanaian, they met on line. Whenever they needed the cheque or money order, they would all meet at a designated place in Sango Ota, in Ogun State.

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

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/crimewatch/2006/jan/26/crimewatch-26-01-2006-001.htm>

25 JAN 2006

BlackPressUSA.com has a good article on Lottery 419.

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

<http://www.blackpressusa.com/News/Article.asp?SID=3&Title=National+News&NewsID=6090>

We'd post it up but they have a block on copying their articles, so one has to go to the site to read the piece.

16 JAN 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper, Daily Independent:

Man jailed 376 years for defrauding American of \$1.9m

By Victor Efeizomor, Law Reporter

The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) recorded another major victory last Friday when a Lagos High Court, Ikeja, sentenced a middle-aged man to 376 years imprisonment for defrauding an American national of about \$1.9 million.

The Presiding Judge, Justice Joseph Olubumi Oyewale, while delivering his judgment also ordered Harrison Odiawa, (alias Abu Belgori) to refund the sum of \$1.6million to the victim, George Robert Blake, saying that the prosecution (EFCC) proved its case beyond reasonable doubt that the accused committed the crime as charged.

He said he believed the testimony of the star prosecution witness (George Robert Blake) because "he was sober, candid, and truthful and was not in doubt."

He said the jail term would run currently starting from the date the convict (Odiawa) was remanded in prison custody. He said Odiawa's predicament stemmed out of the desire to lead a life on the "fast track" and should serve as a deterrent to others.

Odiawa, 38, was slammed with a 58- count criminal charge of stealing, forgery, impersonation and conspiracy to obtain money by false pretence contrary to Advance Fee Fraud Act, soon after he was trailed and arrested by EFCC operatives in Ikeja, Lagos for scamming an American national, Mr. George Robert Blake of no less than \$1,939,710 in 2003.

Justice Oyewale discharged Odiawa of 10 count charges and sentenced him on the remaining 48 count charges, saying that during the trial, the prosecution called eight witnesses and tendered 120 exhibits to proof their case while the defense brought three witnesses and paraded 25 exhibits to close their case.

Blake, who has served a 30 month jail term in America for money laundering and bank wiring, during his evidence in chief, told the court that Harrison Odiawa, alias Abu Belgori, lured him to a \$20.45 million bogus contract in Nigeria where he was made to wire about \$1,939,710 in several trenches into Nigeria as advance payments.

He told the court that he identified Odiawa from his voice because they have had conversations for more than 100 times over the telephone and that all the documents sent to him was done through fax and emails while the transaction lasted.

In his defense, Odiawa told the court he was innocent of the charges brought against him because he was the not the actual person that scammed George Robert Blake, arguing that he only chanced on the telephone number he found on a computer that was not lodged out from the inter net in his cyber café.'

Here is a link to the piece for as long as it is good:
<http://www.independentng.com/news/njan160607.htm>

Other major Nigerian papers including ThisDay and The Guardian also covered the story, here is a link to the ThisDay article for as long as it is good:

<http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=38246>

Here is a link to a later piece done on this story in the Nigerian newspaper Daily Sun for as long as it is good:

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/news/national/2006/feb/13/national%20-13-02-2006-010.htm>

419 Coalition Note: 419 Coalition thanks Nuhu Ribadu, Ibrahim Lamorde, Rotimi Jacobs, and the rest of the EFCC for their hard work and excellent performance in bringing this 419er to justice and stripping him of his stolen money.

10 JAN 2006

From the Nigerian newspaper, the Saturday Punch:

Czech murderer of Nigerian consul freed on health grounds

A 74-year-old former Czech army doctor, imprisoned for five years for killing the Nigerian consul in Prague in 2003, will not serve out the sentence because of his poor health, Prague court officials decided on Monday.

Jiri Pasovsky, who shot dead consul Michael Lekara Wayid and injured another embassy employee after falling victim to a financial scam, is suffering from cancer and other illnesses, his lawyer, Klara Samkova, said.

He heard the court verdict lying down and spoke a few barely audible words.

Pasovsky said he shot the consul following financial transactions with Nigeria which eventually cost him around 15 million koruna (510,000 euros).

He received an eight-year jail sentence in June, last year. This was cut on appeal to five years.

The former doctor worked at the end of the 1960s as an agent of the former communist secret police, the StB (Statni Bezpecnost) and at the time even infiltrated the US Central Intelligence Agency, according to one of the main Czech dailies, Mlada Fronta Dnes.

While working with the Czechoslovak mission in Kabul, Pasovsky was mainly responsible for reporting on the activities of the local U.S embassy.

He also denounced some of his compatriots who wanted to defect abroad, the daily said.

The decision of the public prosecutor to dispense with Pasovsky's jail sentence confirms a ruling by a Prague city court last week.

5 JAN 2006

From the Belgian Police site, they have arrested a group of 419ers. The article is in Dutch, with an English translation following:

Nigeriaanse oplichtersbende opgerold

Oplichters bouwen bureau om tot bankkantoor

GENT 05/01/2006. - De Gerechtelijke Dienst van het Arrondissement (GDA) Gent heeft 4 leden van een internationale oplichtersbende opgepakt.

De vier verdachten, allen van Nigeriaanse origine, lieten hun slachtoffers via brief of e-mail geloven dat ze een grote som geld hadden geërfd. Om deze erfenis vrij te maken, moesten de slachtoffers eerst allerlei kosten betalen, maar dit geld zagen ze nooit meer terug. De bende maakte slachtoffers in België, de Verenigde Staten, Canada, Zwitserland, het Verenigd Koninkrijk en Liechtenstein. Eén van de verdachten, een zaakvoerder uit de rand van Gent, is nog steeds aangehouden.

Tweedehandswagens

De speurders kwamen de oplichterbende op het spoor via een zaakvoerder uit de rand van Gent die handelde in tweedehandswagens. Ze ontdekten dat er vanuit het buitenland grote sommen geld werden gestort op zijn rekening. Deze bedragen waren helemaal niet in verhouding tot de kleine omzet van zijn zaak. Na enig onderzoek bleek dit geld afkomstig te zijn van slachtoffers van de zogenaamde 419-fraude (Advance Fee Fraud). Begin juni 2005 werd de zaakvoerder samen met twee kompanen uit Gent aangehouden.

In november 2005 pakten de speurders ook nog een vierde verdachte op toen bleek dat via binnen- en buitenlandse rekeningen van de zaakvoerder voor meer dan 2 miljoen Euro werd witgewassen.

Twee keer opgelicht

De oplichters stelden alles in het werk om hun slachtoffers te laten geloven dat ze oprechte bedoelingen hadden. Sommige slachtoffers werden zelfs uitgenodigd om in een bankgebouw in Gent of Amsterdam documenten te gaan tekenen. Daar bouwden de oplichters een willekeurig bureau om tot een bankkantoor of deden ze zich voor als werknemers van een echt bankkantoor.

Op het ogenblik dat de slachtoffers een vermoeden hadden van de oplichting, werden ze benaderd door zogenaamde "security-bedrijven" uit Nederland. Die beloofden de zaak voor hen uit te klaren tegen een bepaalde kost. Achteraf bleek dat ook deze bedrijven niet bestonden en gewoon deel uitmaakten van de criminele organisatie.

Erfenissen, vermogens, valse cheques

De oplichters probeerden hun slachtoffers op verschillende manieren te misleiden. Sommigen kregen te horen dat ze een grote som geld hadden geërfd, anderen werd voorgesteld om het vermogen van een

overleden Afrikaanse weldoener te beheren. Ook hier bleek er geen geld of Afrikaanse weldoener te bestaan.

Een Belgisch slachtoffer kreeg dan weer een cheque toegestuurd met het verzoek deze op zijn rekening te plaatsen en het bedrag, min een kleine commissie, onmiddellijk over te maken naar het buitenland. Achteraf bleek de cheque vals te zijn en was het geld al cash van de rekening in het buitenland gehaald.

Preventie

De Federale Politie vraagt iedereen om zeer voorzichtig te zijn wanneer ze per post of e-mail worden benaderd in verband met:

- * erfenissen van onbekende familieleden;
- * lottowinsten in het buitenland waar u nooit aan deelnam;
- * beheer van vermogens of nalatenschappen in het buitenland.

Maak in zo'n gevallen nooit geld over om zagezegde kosten te betalen. Geef ook geen persoonlijke gegevens zoals kopies van identiteitskaarten, paspoorten, bankkaarten, ...
Laat uw rekening ook niet gebruiken om cheques van onbekende te incasseren.

Indien u slachtoffer bent van een soortgelijke oplichting, leg dan zo snel mogelijk klacht neer bij de politie.

Meer informatie omtrent deze en andere vormen van oplichting via internet en meer preventietips, vindt u op www.fedpol.be.

Here is a link to the piece:

<http://www.fccu.be/police/fedpol/nieuws/detail.php?recordID=903>

Here is the English translation:

Nigerian swindlers gang rounded up

Swindlers restyle office room as bank office

Gent 2006/01/05 - The Judicial Service of the Arrondissement Gent (GDA) has arrested 4 members of an international swindlers gang.

The four suspects, all of Nigerian origin, made their victims believe via letters or email that they had inherited a large sum of money. To obtain this inheritance, the victims first had to pay all sorts of costs, but they never got any of this money back. The gang made victims in Belgium, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Lichtenstein. One of the suspects, a business owner from the outskirts of Gent, remains apprehended.

Second hand cars

The detectives discovered the swindlers gang via a business owner from the outskirts of Gent who bought and sold second hand cars. They discovered that large sums of money were transferred to his account from abroad. These amounts were not proportionate at all compared to the small turnover of his business. After some investigation it turned out this money came from victims of the so-called 419 fraud (Advance Fee Fraud). At the start of June 2005 the business owner was arrested along with two accomplices from Gent.

In November 2005 the detectives also arrested a fourth suspect when it turned out that, using domestic and foreign bank accounts of the business owner, more than 2 million Euro was laundered.

Cheated twice

The swindlers did everything in their power to make their victims believe they were honest. Some victims were even invited to come and sign documents in a bank office in Gent or Amsterdam. There the swindlers restyled a random office into a bank office, or the

pretended to be employees of a real bank office.

If victims started to suspect they were being cheated, they were approached by so-called "security companies" from the Netherlands. They promised to sort out everything in exchange for a sum of money. Afterwards it turned out these companies did not exist and just were part of the criminal organisation.

Inheritances, assets, counterfeit cheques

The swindlers tried to deceive their victims in various ways. Some were told that they had inherited a large sum of money, others were proposed to manage the assets of a deceased African benefactor. Also in these cases it turned out there was no money or African benefactor.

A Belgian victim was sent a cheque with the request to cash it in on his account and to transfer the sum, minus a small commission, immediately to a foreign country. Afterwards the cheque turned out to be counterfeit and the money was already withdrawn in cash from the foreign account.

Prevention

The Federal Police asks everyone to be very careful when they are contacted by postal mail or by email regarding:

- * inheritances of unknown family members;
- * lottery winnings in foreign countries in which you never participated;
- * managing assets or inheritances in foreign countries.

In such cases, never transfer money to pay for so-called costs. Also do not provide personal data such as copies of id cards, passports, bank cards, ... Neither allow the usage of your account to cash in cheques of strangers.

If you are a victim of a similar swindle, press charges with the police as soon as possible.

More information regarding this and other forms of swindling via the Internet and more prevention tips, can be found at www.fedpol.be.

4 JAN 2006

From The Punch, a Nigerian newspaper:

Cyber fraud leads to blockage of Nigeria's IP address

by Omolola Awe

President Olusegun Obasanjo's war against corruption has once again been dealt another blow. The war, which has swept many serving government officials out of office, seems to be having no effect at the cyber fraud level.

This is because the biggest domain registrar in the world, Go Daddy Software Inc., owners of the web domain www.godaddy.com, where individuals can buy packages of web domains and resell to other individuals willing to own their web addresses, has blocked Nigeria's Internet Protocol address.

Go Daddy has therefore blocked access to its website from Nigeria, and all those who bought packages of web domains from the domain registrar, thereby registering their website with it, have also been denied access to their websites.

The company took this decision based on a survey carried out by its fraud department, which identified Nigeria as a country where there was a high incidence of fraud.

The development came to the notice of a domain registrar in Nigeria, Mr. Deji Onigbinde, who buys .com, .net, and .org domain sites here in Nigeria from the United States-based Go Daddy and resells to Nigerians who desire to own their own web pages.

According to Onigbinde, he tried to access Go Daddy website with no luck throughout

Monday, December 26, despite the fact that the site server was on.

A call to the Customer Care Department of Go Daddy Software Inc. confirmed Onigbinde's fears that probably Nigeria's Internet Protocol address could have been blocked.

A discussion on phone with an unidentified staff of the Customer Support Department confirmed to him that the US Government had added Nigeria to a list of countries not to do business with and that the ban could take a year or more to expire. A mail was sent to him the following day, a copy of which was made available to our correspondent to further confirm this.

The mail read, "The United States Government asks that we do not conduct business with these nations: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, Syria and Nigeria. If your credit card is issued from an establishment located within one of these countries, or if you reside in one of these countries, you will not be able to complete a purchase from our website or access our network. We apologise for any inconvenience that this may cause."

Nick White, a member of the Reseller Support Department, signed the mail, which was sent from support@secureserver.net.

A mail to this address however denied the initial assertion that the United States Government did not encourage it to conduct business with Nigeria but rather that it was due to a high rate of fraud in the country.

The mail sent by our correspondent was replied by one Amber, B. of the Customers Service Department of Go Daddy Software Inc. It stated, "This country is not listed as one that the US Government has asked that we do not do business with. Our Fraud Department identified Nigeria as a country where there was a high incidence of fraud. Because of this, we had to block access to our site from this country. We can cancel and refund any services, or help you move your services elsewhere."

Registering a domain name requires registration with either an accredited domain registrar like Go Daddy or with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the body responsible for managing and coordinating the Domain Name System, to ensure that every address is unique and that all users of the Internet can find all valid addresses.

Individuals however prefer to use accredited domain registrars because their services are cheaper than that of ICANN.

Internet service providers register directly with ICANN. This, perhaps, may be the reason the Corporate Affairs Manager of Linkserve Nigeria Limited, Mrs. Ufuoma Daro, said that the services the company rendered to its customers had not been affected in anyway.

The interesting thing is that someone from an unblocked country can access these websites.

Interestingly too, figures obtained from the US Internet Fraud Centre rate America as the country with the highest rate of Internet fraud.

Onigbinde explained, "A domain registrar can block the IP addresses of countries that it gets high cases of fraud from. But this is usually resolved by not accepting its credit cards for a while but not by entirely refusing access to its websites."

He further argued that the registrar had already collected money for the sale of domain from its customers and cutting them off from managing their domains, Onigbinde says, can be likened to theft; but a theft done in retaliation to another theft, done on a large scale.

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