

Nigerian Scam

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Although this scam has its root from Nigeria dated a decade back, nowadays, you receive similar scam letters from many African countries, notably, Nigeria, Benin, Togo and even South Africa.

The subject lines of these emails are pretty similar. Something like: Business relationship, Urgent Assistance needed, Soliciting for your assistance, A cry for help etc. Most of the emails from this scam begin in the same way. Here are two excerpts from most recent emails that we received:

"I am Engr Moses Ekpen a director in the budget and planning department of the Federal Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources (FMPNR), I had a seven man Tenders Board Committee in charge of contract award and Payment approvals. I came to know of you in my search for a reliable and reputable person to handle a very confidential transaction, which involves the transfer of a huge sum of money to a foreign account."

Or

"I am Mrs. Mariam Abacha, the widow of Gen. Sani Abacha, The Late Nigerian Military Head of State. You were introduced to me through the Chamber of Commerce. I am presently in distress and under House arrest while my son Mohammed is undergoing trial in Lagos and Abuja. He is presently detained in prison custody. The government has frozen all the family account and auctioned all our properties.

To save the family from total bankruptcy I have managed to ship to Europe and Asia through a Shipping company, the sum of US20, 000,000.00 respectively kept by my late husband."

The essence of these emails are also basically the same – the person although does not know you, thanks to your business reputation, has decided to contact you with a very confidential proposal to transfer a mind boggling amount of money from his country to any foreign land.

There could be numerous stories but the bottom line is they require your help to transfer the amount. For your service they will promise you something from 10 to 40% of the whole amount. There would be a telephone no or an email address to contact the person.

You may wonder how they swindle people.

There are various ways that the crooks rip off their victims. Some of the most common ones of them are described below:

They will ask you to open a bank account under their name. On their second step, they will ask you to deposit a sum of say US\$ 10000 to that account, explaining if the account does not have any decent amount, the officials those who are responsible for transferring the promised millions of dollars would become suspicious and won't authorize the transaction. Once you deposited the asked sum, they simply withdraw it and disappear. Usually they choose a bank where they might have some connections. So you, after losing your money, do not get any help from the bank either.

They will ask you to send some merchandise or gifts for the officials they need to bribe in order to make the transactions of the assumed millions of dollars smoothly. Naturally, you never hear from them once you sent the requested gifts to their address.

We even heard stories like this one: A man was persuaded to come to Nigeria to look after the transaction by himself. Over there he was kept hostage until he shifted all his liquid assets to the thugs.

Looking at the increasing quantity of scam emails that we receive, this only convinces that many fall for this seemingly simple trap. According to FBI these swindlers have defrauded millions of dollars from gullible people.

There could be other variations of this scam, next time you read an email that feels suspicious, just delete it! There are other ways of making money!

Some words of cautions! Although most of these scams originate from African countries, please do not generalize and consider that all companies from these countries are bad. As usual a few people are responsible for tarnishing the reputation of a country.

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