



Date: 18 Oct 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

Crime Alert: Phone Scam Involving Impersonation of Court Officials

Over the past few months, there were numerous cases where members of public fell prey to cheating scams such as the foreign lottery scam. A recent variation used by culprits involves the impersonation of Supreme Court officials to dupe victims into parting with their money. Generally, the culprits would accuse the victim of being involved in criminal offences such as money laundering. The phone call is then transferred to an accomplice who would instruct the victim to transfer money that was deemed to be 'gained by illicit means' to a bank account in order to exonerate him/her from the criminal charges.

Modus Operandi

2. The scammers usually operate in pairs (male and female) and would call the victim to inform him/her that he/she had failed to attend a Court hearing to answer criminal charges. The call would usually contain some of the following content to mislead the victim:

- i. The female culprit would call the victim up and accuse the latter of being involved in a commercial crime such as money laundering or in unlicensed money lending. In some instances, the initial call was in the form of a voice message which required the victim to "press 9" before the call is transferred to a female operator.
- ii. The scammer would question the victim as to why he/she had failed to attend a court hearing to answer to criminal charges. This would be followed by the transferring of the call to the male accomplice.
- iii. The male accomplice would then impersonate a Police officer who will use various names. In order to add credibility to their claims, the culprit would quote genuine judges' names and provide legitimate contact numbers to the Supreme Court Information counter or Quality Service Management.
- iv. The male accomplice would also ask for the victim's particulars, which includes his/her NRIC number and bank account details for verification purposes. On two occasions, the culprits(s) were able to provide some of the victim's details such as the bank account and credit card numbers.
- v. The culprit(s) would stress the importance for the victim to deposit the 'dirty' money into a specific account which would presumably 'exonerate' the victim from the charges he/she faces.

Crime Prevention Measures

3. The Police would like to advise the public to note the following:
 - i. Ignore any notification calls from unknown persons who claim to be government officials. All notices to attend court hearing would be notified by post or accompanied by an official letter.
 - ii. Police or court officials would **not** ask anyone, especially those who is in connection with a criminal case, to make any transfer of funds to unknown bank accounts.
 - iii. Do not give your personal details such as NRIC and bank account numbers to anyone over telephone or e-mail.
4. Those who receive such calls may wish to pass on such information to the Police at a Neighbourhood Police Centre. Alternatively, you may also contact Community Involvement Division at 6478 2135 for more information.