



Specialised
Security Services



PROJECT:
KNOCKS AND SCAMS
SWEETHEART SCAMS

WARNING!

"Specialised Security Services" has been warning the public on a continuous basis against various scams, especially those targeting vulnerable and usually elderly women.

We are therefore delighted in confirming some arrests have been made recently.

- In the Western Cape, 8 suspects between the ages of 33 and 52 were arrested for internet scams, money laundering and international wide-scale financial fraud.
 - The successful arrests were made possible by a joint operation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI), United States Secret Service (USSS) Investigations, Interpol and with assistance from the Hawks Serious Commercial Crime Investigation Unit, Crime Intelligence (CI), K9, National Intervention Unit, Special Task Force (STF), Tactical Operations Management Section (TOMS), Criminal Record Centre and Cape Town Metro police.
 - The suspects in this investigation are alleged to have ties to a transnational organized crime syndicate originating in Nigeria.
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As warned continuously in our projects, the victims are groomed over long periods - lured into believing that they are involved in genuine romantic relationships and scammed out of hard-earned money, pensions, and inheritances. Elderly ladies and widows are contacted via social media and online dating sites, enticed by handsome photos of stolen identities, religious phrases and sweet but empty promises.

Once they have ingratiated themselves with their victims and won their trust, the perpetrators usually fabricate poignant stories about why they would need money from their victims:

- Taxes to release an inheritance.
- Essential overseas travel.
- Crippling debt.
- Sick/dying child.
- Travel money to meet the victims.
- Money for fleeing a country at war, where they were doing voluntary work, etc.

The fraudsters eventually intimidate and berate their victims when the money dries up. Some threaten their victims with exposure to family and friends. The perpetrators ruin their victims' lives and then disappear as soon as the payments stop. The victims are left financially devastated and emotionally humiliated and scared.

COMMON TACTICS OF ROMANCE/SWEETHEART SCAMS:

- Requests of money for emergencies.
 - The scammers profess their love and offer marriage, but they can't meet in person because they live too far away.
 - Then they claim that an emergency has occurred, and they need money.
 - In 2020, some scammers claimed that they had tested positive for COVID-19 and that they needed money for treatment.
- Investment opportunities.
 - The scammer tries to lure victims into investing by asking victims to wire money to them or sending them links to "investment applications".
 - These links are malicious or phishing links, designed to trick the victim into sending sign-in details and personal information to the scammers.
- Offers, gifts or cash.
 - The scammers claim that they want to send a gift from overseas, but a tariff or shipment fee is needed to send the goods.
 - They ask the victim to wire money or send them prepaid cards and once they get the money, they disappear.
- Intimate messages.
 - Many victims have reported sextortion after exchanging private photos or having intimate video chats.
 - The scammers threaten to share the explicit images and screenshots to the victim's contacts unless they receive money.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF A ROMANCE/SWEETHEART SCAM:

- They live in another country, or far from you.
- The profile seems too good to be true.
- They ask you for money.
- There are always excuses for not meeting you in person.
- They write in poor English.

5 WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

- Do a reverse image search on the person's photo to see if they are a catfisher.
 - Romance scammers fake their online profiles and use other people's photos and information.
- Don't wire money to people that you only know from the internet.
 - Requests for money should be a major red flag.
- Never give out your personal information.
 - Avoid sharing phone numbers, addresses, passwords to bank accounts, and other identifying information.
 - Be smart with your personal information to avoid identity theft and other scams.
- If you suspect a romance scam, contact Mr. Mike Bolhuis, or the social media network where you met the person online.

SA AND GLOBAL STATS

South Africa only accounts for 2% of all reported catfish incidents in the top-20 countries, the average victim loses almost three times more money when falling for a South African scammer.

- Of the 20 countries with the highest number of reported catfish scams, South Africa ranks at 18, having recorded 190 incidents in 2020.
- These scams cost victims some R134 million.

Rank	Country	Total number of reports	Overall money lost	Average money lost per victim*
1	Philippines	1315	\$4,578,000	\$3,481.37
2	Nigeria	1129	\$16,814,000	\$14,892.83
3	Canada	1054	\$7,857,000	\$7,454.46
4	United Kingdom	978	\$34,124,000	\$34,891.62
5	Turkey	683	\$25,668,000	\$37,581.26
6	Ghana	534	\$11,425,000	\$21,395.13
7	Afghanistan	485	\$6,443,000	\$13,284.54
8	Germany	361	\$4,619,000	\$12,795.01
9	Morocco	314	\$414,000	\$1,318.47
10	Mexico	259	\$2,777,000	\$10,722.01
11	United Arab Emirates	249	\$10,001,000	\$40,164.66
12	China	243	\$15,195,000	\$62,530.86
13	Jamaica	243	\$1,139,000	\$4,687.24
14	Cote d'Ivoire	229	\$194,000	\$847.16
15	Dominican Republic	221	\$380,000	\$1,719.46
16	France	213	\$1,251,000	\$5,873.24
17	Italy	208	\$4,108,000	\$19,750.00
18	South Africa	190	\$9,354,000	\$49,231.58
19	Syria	190	\$3,586,000	\$18,873.68
20	Colombia	183	\$1,040,000	\$5,683.06

*The average amount of money reported lost by victims was calculated by dividing the overall money lost by the number of reports.

REFERENCES:

- <https://techshielder.com/catfish-analysis-the-countries-with-the-highest-rates>

RELATED PROJECTS:

- <https://mailchi.mp/mikebolhuis.co.za/project-sweetheart-scam>
- <https://mailchi.mp/mikebolhuis.co.za/project-sweetheart-scams>
- <https://mailchi.mp/mikebolhuis.co.za/interview-tussen-ons-monday-afternoon-22-february-2021-1730>
- <https://mailchi.mp/a5ade860598c/project-knocks-and-scams>

If anyone has any information, please contact us.

**All information will be treated with the utmost
privacy and confidentiality.**

FORWARD THIS IMPORTANT DOCUMENT TO EVERYBODY.

Regards,

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EXTREMELY IMPORTANT: Our biggest enemy is disinformation. If you receive any information regarding my organisation that concerns you, please contact me, Mike Bolhuis, directly to confirm whether the information is indeed factual or not.

STANDARD RULES APPLY: Upon appointment, we require a formal mandate with detailed instructions. Please take note that should you not make use of our services – you may not under any circumstance use my name or the name of my organisation as a means to achieve whatever end.

POPI ACT 4 of 2013 South Africa: Mike Bolhuis Specialised Security Services falls under Section 6 of the act. [Read more here.](#)

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You are receiving this email to inform and keep you up to date with violent and/or economic crimes. This is important to enable you to inform and protect your loved ones and everyone you know.

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