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SCAM OF THE WEEK

This scam of the week has been around since the 1920's in one form or another. I actually receive one of these scams about once a month by mail, fax, or email. It could be by telephone as well. The scam is what's commonly known as the "Nigerian Letter Scam." The correspondence will usually come to you from any foreign country. The targets are businesses, churches, non-profits, and individuals.

The scam goes something like this. You receive a letter, email, or fax from someone claiming to be a company or government official from a foreign country. It will usually be on official looking stationery or letterhead of a real company or agency by someone with an important title by their name. The real company knows nothing about it. The correspondence is usually marked urgent or confidential on the envelope, or document. The letter gives some reason for the "official" need to transfer large amounts of money out of the country and the "official" has contacted you because they need a trustworthy U.S. Bank Account to deposit the money. The "official" promises to reward you or leave a percentage of the funds in your bank account for using your bank account. To get your reward they want you to provide your credit card, debit card, bank account number and the name, address, phone and fax numbers of your bank and other personal information; or they may request that you send them money directly to cover transfer fees, travel expenses, taxes or necessary bribes before the transaction can occur. They usually want the checks in guaranteed form or money orders sent to them by overnight mail, wired or by Western Union.

What happens next is that the "official" takes your money from your bank account and you will never hear from them again after they rob your account or you quit sending them money. The reason it comes from a foreign country is so law enforcement has no way to investigate or arrest anyone. Just as the Nigerian police cannot come and arrest you, our law enforcement officials cannot go to Nigeria to arrest someone there. Anytime someone contacts you out of the nowhere, is going to give you thousands or millions of dollars and wants you to send them money quickly it is most likely a scam. You should be suspicious and contact a trusted friend, your own attorney, your banker, a law enforcement officer, the County Attorney at (307) 283-1090 or the Consumer Protection Unit at the Attorney General Office at 1-800-438-5799.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph M. Baron". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph M. Baron