



Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



December 24, 2007

FRAUDULENT INHERITANCE SCHEME E-MAIL CLAIMS TO BE FROM UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Criminals have added posing as the United States Department of State to their array of frauds. Fraudulent e-mails are being distributed claiming to have verified an inheritance from another country belonging to the victim. To make these e-mails appear legitimate, they contain information taken from the Department of State's website.

The e-mail contains a lengthy explanation of how the Department of State has verified that there is nothing fraudulent about the inheritance and names numerous international organization which are involved in monitoring the transaction to prevent fraud. After using false assurances to gain a victim's confidence that this fraud scheme is actually a legitimate inheritance, the criminals send a request for a payment which the criminals claim is required due to a discrepancy in the currency conversion or for taxes. This e-mail purports to be from a foreign governmental agency. The criminals go so far as to follow up by advising the victim not to contact law enforcement or governmental authorities but to continue to communicate with the criminals' e-mail accounts.

THIS E-MAIL IS A FRAUD.

Be cautious when responding to requests or special offers delivered through unsolicited e-mail:

- The Department of State does not make unsolicited contact with individuals regarding matters such as inheritances.
- The e-mail addresses used in these frauds are spoofed versions of a Department of State e-mail address.
- Cyber criminals will use the names of various government agencies or companies in their e-mails to attempt to secure new victims using the same scheme.
- Cyber criminals use the name of a government agency or law firm or use the identity of a government official, business person or reputable attorney to add an air of legitimacy to a scam.
- Cyber criminals claim that government agencies such as the FBI or the IRS will prosecute or investigate people who do not participate in their scheme as a form of intimidation.
- Please review the tips and public service announcements regarding other fraud schemes on www.IC3.gov, www.LooksTooGoodToBeTrue.com, and www.FBI.gov to help you avoid becoming a victim.