

Dumbasses helping Nigerians...



Mother-Daughter Duo Sentenced in Fake Soldier Internet 'Romance Scam' (ABC News)

A mother and daughter who tricked hundreds of people into sending money to individuals they thought were U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan were sentenced to prison for their role in the "romance scam," Colorado's attorney general announced Wednesday.

Prosecutors said the pair helped funnel money to Nigeria after their accomplices lured women on online dating sites into becoming romantically involved with and giving thousands of dollars to people they thought were members of the military. The two stole more than \$1 million, ultimately roping in 374 victims in more than 40 countries, the attorney general said.

The mostly female victims were looking for love on the Internet, but instead had their hearts broken when they realized the soldiers weren't real, prosecutors said in their indictment last year.

They fell victim to the scheme on dating and social networking sites, including Facebook, prosecutors said. The perpetrators sent photographs and military documents to the victims to convince them they were soldiers, then asked the victims to wire money to pay for satellite phones or travel expenses so they could visit, prosecutors said.

Tracy Vasseur and her mother, Karen Vasseur, acted as agents who received those payments and passed them on to Nigeria, prosecutors said, and now they each face a dozen or more years of prison time after pleading guilty to violating the Colorado Organized Crime Control Act, the attorney general's office said. Prosecutors accused them of posing as "agents" who opened 20 bank accounts and wired money from the victims to individuals in Nigeria from 2009 to 2012.

Colorado Attorney General John W. Suthers told ABC News the scam was the first he dealt with in which the perpetrators invoked the military to win over victims. Exploiting the military led to particularly harsh sentences, he said.

"The military angle was something that was very offensive to us, and we were able to convey that to the court, and they were similarly repulsed by it," Suthers said.

The mother-daughter team sent the money to 94 locations in Nigeria, and an ongoing investigation by the U.S. Secret Service and others has yet to pinpoint the people who directed the Vasseurs, Suthers said. The pair also sent money to Ecuador, Great Britain, India, the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere in the United States, last year's indictment read.

Suthers said the way in which the duo become involved in the fraud in the first place remained a "loose end" that had yet to be resolved.

Tracy Vasseur admitted to investigators that she used her 16-year-old daughter to send and receive tens of thousands of dollars in the wire transfers, prosecutors said in their indictment of the pair last year.

She was sentenced on Monday to 15 years in jail and five years parole in the Internet scam case. She also received a four-year sentence for crimes she committed while free on bond.

Her mother was sentenced in July to 12 years in jail and five years parole for her role in the scam, in addition to a 10-year sentence for stealing money by promising loans that never materialized.

Tracy Vasseur's lawyer, Christian Earle, declined to comment on the sentencing, and her mother's lawyer, James Aber, did not respond to a request for comment.

A hearing to determine restitution is forthcoming, according to the attorney general's office.