

FROM GHANA AND NIGERIA WITH MUCH APPRECIATION

By Brad Williams

There have been some amazing gold scams over the centuries but perhaps the most successful scams are occurring right here and now. It is a multi-billion dollar business and it's global. It has become a scourge of civilized societies and the bad guys simply don't care who they scam, even the poor in third world countries are targeted. The prime medium of these scams is the internet.

The first internet robberies originated in third world countries of northern Africa, the most notable being Nigeria. Today all such gold scams are referred to as '419 scams', the number 419 referring to the article of the Nigerian Criminal Code dealing with fraud.

Originally these frauds were perpetrated by unemployed university students in oil-rich Nigeria when oil prices collapsed in the early 1980s. The scams proved very successful and the creators of these frauds graduated to the internet as early as 1992.

Common to all such scams is an offer of great wealth but not all of them involve cheap gold dust. Lottery scams have been doing the rounds for a number of years. For example, the criminals will send a generic email to hundreds of thousands of people suggesting that the recipient has been fortunate to win a UK lottery prize or similar, to the tune of millions of pounds. However, to retrieve your money, you must provide your contact details and also send a small amount of money to pay for administrative costs. Amazingly, although people have never even bought a ticket in a UK lottery, they send money to these criminals and in some cases quite significant amounts. I personally know a man from a third world country who, although having been warned that the email came from fraudsters, sent US\$7,500 to them to get his \$1,000,000 prize.

Today there is such a proliferation of internet gold scams it's hard to keep track but some of the criminals are becoming

quite sophisticated in their methods of operation and at times they cloak their offers in what appear to be legitimate business presences, including web sites and even UK phone numbers representing offices in London.

The first gold scammer that targeted me was a rather naïve criminal from Indonesia. He had obtained an email address from a Singapore internet carrier and emailed me asking to buy gold with a credit card.

Very few traders ever sell gold using credit facilities but this criminal actually wanted about \$20,000 worth of gold bullion and forwarded three credit cards with all their details. Although he had signed his name as being of Chinese origin, the credit cards had clearly English names such as Bill Smith and so.

A less suspecting trader might have accepted them without even checking and forwarded gold as requested, as he appeared to be a legitimate buyer from Singapore. No doubt it was a scam that had been successful in some areas as this criminal had a sophisticated network established in Singapore to forward his ill-gotten booty to Indonesia.

The Singapore police were informed and the legitimate transport company closed his account down.

The most flagrant gold scam currently operating comes from Ghana, or at least that is where they say they are from. Most use free internet addresses at well known internet providers and after searching the internet for gold dealers, they begin their criminal enterprise.

The usual scenario is that they will offer gold at extremely reduced rates.

The gold price today is about US\$21,000 per kilo but the offer from these scammers is generally US\$10,000 per kilo, making it very attractive to the unwary.

The offer is initially made with no mention of paying anything up front. It takes one or two emails before the 'sting'

is revealed whereupon they detail the funds you are required to forward before they can get the gold out of Ghana.

It should be noted that the government Ghana requires gold to be exported in lots of at least 50kg.

Following is a sample of a scam email along with my replies. I was aware that the offer was a scam but replied as I wanted to see how long it would be before I was hit for the cash. The English used in the scam emails is appalling and is reproduced here word for word.

NOTE:

1. The initial unsolicited email contains very little information. This is designed to get a response as they know that human nature is inquisitive. The company name, in this case The Black Ark Mining Company, is usually phony.
2. The FCO (Full Corporate Offer) shown below displays a completely different company name.
3. The sting comes in the form of requiring a 25% upfront payment.
4. Gold from Ghana is generally 92% pure. The claim that the assay result was 97.37% is fraudulent, although they will present fake documentation to support the claim.
5. Often there will be a request for a copy of a passport. If scanned and sent it will be copied and on-sold with different particulars.
6. The face-to-face meeting is designed to extract more money from the unsuspecting victim.

I am aware of a gold dealer from Texas in the US, who took up such an offer and after meeting with the 'miners' in Accra, Ghana, he paid US\$8,000 per kilo for 30 kilos of gold, which was assay tested in his presence. He kept the gold with him and at Ghana airport handed it into customs as required. When he arrived in Texas he had a bag of sand.

Dear Sir/Mad,

We will be please to introduce our company Black Ark Mining Company

Ltd, as dealers in rough uncut germ stones of high quality originating from Sierra Leone and Guinea and also Alluvial Gold Dust Originating from Ghana. We will appreciate it, if you could indicate your interest for the purchases in any of the above commodities so that an appraisal or FCO could be forwarded to you for an immediate study.

Your quick response will be highly appreciable.

Waiting to hear from you asap.

Regards,
Nana Kojo Asare

Nana,
We are interested in all gold
Please advise
Brad

Dear Sir,
Thanks for your prompt reply to our mail.

In order to proceed, we will be please to have your corporated contact including telephone, fax and cell phone numbers so that an FCO could be forwarded to you.

The above is requested for the purpose of or records.

Your immediate response will be very much appreciated.

Regards,
Nana K. Asare

Nana
My details are on my website
You can send FCO by email.

Dear Mr.Brad,
Kindly find in the file attachment our full corporate offer. Your immediate response to it will be highly appreciable.

Regards,
Nana K. Asare

The accompanying attachment was a document with an official-looking letterhead from the Duabin Co-Operative Gold Prospecting Society. There was a post office box address and a phone/fax number supplied.

FCO FOR THE SALE OF GOLD DUST

Whereas the seller with full corporate authority and responsibility certifies, represents and warrants and make an irrevocable firm commitment it can fulfill the requirement of this agreement to sell and provide the commodity herein mentioned in

a timely manner, under the terms specified and agreed upon herein after:

DESCRIPTION

PRODUCT: ALLUVIAL GOLD DUST
QUANTITY: 500 KILOS
DELIVERY: 200 KGS EVERY MONTH
QUALITY: +22. CARATS
PURITY: 97.37%
PRICE (ALLUVIAL): US\$13,000 PER KG
ORIGIN: GHANA WEST AFRICA

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

The buyer will be required to come down to the seller's destination for a face to face meeting with buyer and also for the purpose of inspecting and conducting a preliminary assay on the total stock as stated above to ascertain the genuineness of the transaction.

SHIPMENT:

The shipment will be carried out by a freight and forwarding Agent based at the Aviance Export Village at Kotoka International Airport, Accra.

TERMS OF PAYMENT:

A negotiable upfront payment of 25% which shall be use among all other things including the following: Documentation, Government Taxes, Freight and Handling charges as well as insurance shall be made to the buyer in defraying the above. Thus the remaining 75% or more shall be made payable in the seller's nominated account after the final assay at the buyer's destination.

3 Copies each of the following approved documents:

- (1) CERTIFICATE OF OWNERSHIP
- (2) CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN
- (3) MOVEMENT CERTIFICATE
- (4) BANK OF GHANA FORM A2
- (5) AIR WAY BILL

These shall be the covering documents which shall accompany the commodity to the refinery. An Irrevocable letter of intent shall be required from the buyer after a notification of acceptance of our FCO.

A contract agreement stipulating terms and conditions of this transaction will be signed between seller or his Representative and buyer. Buyer must arrive to meet and sign all business and legal documents in respect of the transaction.

We shall consider it a privilege entering into a long a lasting business relationship.

Thank for your co-operation.

Yours Faithfully,
NANA KOJO ASARE
(MARKETING DIRECTOR)

After receiving this document I discontinued communications with these people.

I have included more unsolicited emails that give some idea of the 'bait' offered to the unsuspecting. In the first email the writer is passing himself off as a person of some note. It is not unusual for the scammer to present himself or herself as a chief, prince, princess or the like.

I Am Prince Nana Opuku Asare Jr. I Am 37 Years And The Eldest Male Child Of Late, Chief Kwesi Opoku Asare the Late Traditional Ruler of the Central Region Ghana. Our Father Died On 16th June 2004 leaving the bereaved family with 102 Kilos of Au Gold Dust as legacy. After His Burial 18 months after, The Bereaved Family Has In Our possession 97kg Of The Said Precious Metal Presented because 5 Kilos was sold locally for the organizing his burial as tradition demands. The Bereaved Family Has Unanimously, Mandated Me To Seek For a foreign assistance who will help us in buying the Gold to enable us use the money realized for purchase of properties. In The Light Of This, The Bereaved Family Is Seeking Your Assistance In Purchase Or Selling Of These Quantities Of Gold. According to our master plan, we shall invest any money realize from the sale in Real Estates Management/ Property Investment. If You Have Any Interest In Buying or assisting us in setting up this standard, You Should Contact Me So That We Can Discuss About The Price, Possible Means Of Exporting and we could be part of your Estate Management Business. Thanks And God Bless. Prince Nana Opuku Jr. For The Bereaved family Chief Nana Opoku.

Dear Sir,
It is a pleasure for me to send you this present letter of intend to the aim to propose this offer to you.

We presently have in our costody some important quantity of ALLUVIAL GOLD DUST that we want to sell to any overseas buyers actually in asian countries that is the reason why I am submitting this offer

to your company. These are the characteristics of the metal:

QUANTITY: 225 KGS

QUALITY: 22 carat and plus.

PRICE: \$USD 5400/KG

ORIGINE: MALI

In case you are interested in our products let us know your intentions as soon as possible to enable us continue the transaction. At the same time I want to inform that we are also interested in buying your final products so can you kindly send us your catalogues so that we will have ideas on your products.

Until I read you positively

BEST REGARDS.

Nana Kwame

ATTN: DEAR FRIEND

From: Nana Agyeman

Dear Sir,

SUBJECT AU OFFER

I hereby write to propose a business offer in alluvial gold dust from our family's long accumulated of gold dust.

Our family Ahan-tanfo clan has private mining site at Tarkwah in the western region of Ghana where gold is produce in large quantities along the Birim River belt.

BELOW IS THE SALES TERMS

1. PRODUCT: NON REFINED ALLUVIAL A.U. DUST
2. QUANTITY: 350 KILOS
3. QUALITY: ABOVE 22 KARATS
4. PRICE: \$6000 PER KILO (SIX THOUSAND DOLLARS PER KILO)

We require interested partners to proceed to our mining site inspect the A.U. in stock after testing a sample, the buyer will be required to pay 30% of the total quantity to enable us arrange for all the necessary documents to air lift the stock to the buyers destination for refinery.

Two delegates will accompany the A.U. to the refinery for the balance 70%. The buyer will be required finally to assist us open foreign bank accounts to deposit the balance which will be use in purchasing modern mining machines to help boost product back in Ghana.

Sir, we count on your co-operation and assistance to make this joint venture business proposal a mutually beneficial and prosperous.

Commission of 5% will be paid to Agents/Brokers who can assist us obtain serious buyers.

Yours faithfully,

NANA AGYEMAN

(PRESIDENT)

Hello Sir,

I am an Ophan Girl from one of the villages in Ghana. My parents were having a very big Mining Site of about 62 workers.

We now have about 187kgs of Alluvial Gold Dust in Volt which we need urgent and Reliable Buyers to Sign a long term Supply agreement/Contract With, So if you received this email then in case you are interesting kindly get back to me then we can build relationship well then we start processing .

You are always welcome.

All of the above offers are fraudulent and anything similar originating from Ghana or Nigeria or anywhere else will be fraudulent. The fact that Ghana does produce, through legitimate miners, about 65 tons of gold per year encourages the criminals.

All too often the scammers will send documents that appear quite legitimate. Some even appear to be from government departments in Ghana and other countries.

Almost all will contain what appears to be a stamp. These are usually computer generated and are not legitimate.

Always be aware that if you do receive unsolicited emails offering cheap gold from Ghana or other African countries, they will be fake. Under no circumstances should you send any money for any reason whatsoever.

The great tragedy of this type of fraud is the staggering amount of money that makes its way to these criminals. A figure of US\$5,000,000,000, yes that's 5 billion US dollars, for one year is the estimated earnings for criminals globally from this type of scam. Is it any wonder such scams are Nigeria's second largest industry after oil. And it's fast becoming a huge earner for criminal elements within Ghana and many other third world countries.

I am continually phoned and emailed by people who have been targeted by these scams offering to sell me gold that is on its way to them from Ghana. Far too many have already parted with their hard-earned cash only to find they have been ripped off.

So, once again, if you do receive one of these emails, DO NOT send any money. Do not even respond to them. Enjoy the atrocious abuse of the English language and then just trash the email and save yourself a lot of heartache.

Also, don't open anything attached to such emails as you risk downloading a virus that might slip past your computer's anti-virus software.



The name that means Treasure

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For more information contact

Paul Knee at North East Metal Detectors on (02) 6059 1666 or 0428 810 157 or email gold@northeastmetaldetectors.com.au

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