

# The Cheque Scam

More than \$2.1 billion in **counterfeit** cheques have been **seized** and 77 people arrested in an international **crackdown** on **scam artists**, the U.S. Postal Service said today. The crackdown involved **enforcement officials** from Canada, the United States, Nigeria, Britain and the Netherlands, the Postal Inspection Service said at a news briefing. "There is no room in the mail for any of these phone come-ons," U.S. Postmaster General John Potter said.

Most of the **swindles** start with e-mails telling of an inheritance or lottery win. The victim is asked to cash a cheque and send part of the money back to the person purporting to represent the estate or lottery corporation, said Postal Inspector Greg Campbell.

The scam artist then disappears with the return money sent by the victim, who is stuck with a loss when the original cheque bounces.

Retired people have lost their nest eggs and young families have been **defrauded** of their savings for a home, Potter said.

Many of the cases originate in the Netherlands, where West African confidence artists operate from internet cafes, said Johan Van Hartkamp of the Amsterdam police.

In what he called "Operation Dutch Treat," police have arrested 60 people. Three have been **extradited** to the United States, four more are being extradited and the rest are being **prosecuted** in the Netherlands, he said.

Information on the other arrests was not **immediately** available.

Ibrahim Lamorde, director of the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, said the problem is monumental and "will only be surmounted through global efforts."

## Discussion questions

- 1.What was the international crackdown?
- 2.Who were arrested and what were they charged for?
- 3.How did the scam artists fool people?
- 4.What group of people were victims?
- 5.Where did this crime originate from?
- 6.Does anything like this happen in your country? Can you write cheques in your country?
- 7.Have you ever been mobbed or tricked into doing something?
- 8.What happens to criminals like this in your country?
- 9.Why do you think people commit crimes like this?
- 10.How do you think crimes like this can be prevented?

### Vocabulary:

- counterfeit
- seized
- crackdown
- scam artists
- enforcement officials
- swindles
- defrauded
- extradited
- prosecuted