



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

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For Information Contact:
Public Affairs (202) 981-6000

Fraud Alert: Law Enforcement Telephone Numbers Used in Two-Part Scam to Extort Money from Victims

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) is issuing this fraud alert to warn citizens of recent reports that publically available law enforcement telephone numbers, including those of DHS OIG Field Offices, are being used in a two-part spoofing scam targeting individuals throughout the country.

Part 1: The perpetrator befriends a victim using a mobile app that has a built-in chat feature, such as *Facebook Messenger* or *Words with Friends*. Alternatively, the perpetrator feigns romantic interest and pursues the victim through online dating services or chat rooms. After gaining the victim's trust through the online relationship, the perpetrator describes a minor hardship and persuades the victim to send them a small amount of money.

Part 2: The next day, the victim receives a phone call from a fraudster claiming to be an employee of DHS or another law enforcement organization. The fraudsters will spoof the caller ID of a legitimate law enforcement phone number. The fraudster tells the victim that the funds they provided the day before went to a criminal organization or terrorist group, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Al-Qaeda, and threatens them with arrest and imprisonment. They then direct the victim to contact a "lawyer" who can help them resolve the matter. The victim contacts the "lawyer" via email or phone and is instructed to pay them \$1,000 or more via check, wire transfer, or other methods as a "retainer."

DHS OIG takes this matter very seriously. While we investigate the situation, we remind the public that law enforcement and other U.S. Government numbers may be subject to spoofing. Individuals receiving phone calls from these numbers should not provide any personal information. Legitimate law enforcement callers will never ask you to pay fines over the phone or request money from you. If there is a question about the validity of a call, we encourage the public to call the relevant



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field office number of the government agency and ask to be put in touch with the individual who called you.

Anyone who believes they may have been a victim of this scam is urged to call the DHS OIG Hotline (1-800-323-8603) or file a complaint online via the DHS OIG website www.oig.dhs.gov. By asking the perpetrators for a phone number or email address you can use to contact them to facilitate payment, you may be able to obtain valuable information that could assist DHS OIG investigate the scam.

You may also contact the Federal Trade Commission to [file a complaint](#) and/or [report identity theft](#).

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For more information visit our website, www.oig.dhs.gov