



### DSI joins hands with MJIB to crack down on transnational “Call Center Gang”

From November 2016 up until now, the Information Center at the Thailand Post Co.,Ltd. has received complaints from approximately 8,000 members of the public about fraudulent phone calls from a call center gang, posing themselves as officers from several different agencies: the Thailand Post, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), the Investigation Divisions of the Provincial Police Regions 1 – 9, the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO), the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB), and the Bank of Thailand. It is estimated that the gang defrauded around 100 victims of over 200 million baht.

The Department of Special Investigation (DSI), under the direction of DSI Director-General Police Colonel Paisit Wongmuang as well as his deputies Police Colonel Songsak Raksaksakul and Police Major Suriya Singhakamol, thus assigned Police Lieutenant Colonel Wichai Suwanprasert (Director of Cyber and Technology Crime Bureau) and Police Lieutenant Colonel Paisith Sungkahapong (Director of Foreign Affairs and Transnational Crime Bureau) to launch an investigation into the “call center gang”, which has escalated their activities during the past three months.

The investigation reveals that their base of operations is stationed overseas and run by both foreign and Thai nationals, using high technology to make VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone calls to avoid tracking. To gain credibility, the caller ID numbers are disguised as the phone numbers of government agencies, such as the DSI and the Thailand Post. The callers deceived and pressured the victims into transferring money to the pre-opened bank accounts belonging to gang members or a third party, who had opened and gave their bank accounts to the gang in return for money. At the same time, a group of foreign nationals, who came to Thailand under the guise of tourists, would immediately withdraw the money from the accounts. In the past, the authorities could only arrest the owners of the accounts, the persons withdrawing the money, and minor facilitators (consisting of both Thai and foreign nationals).

The investigation by the DSI focuses on cracking down on the criminal organization to break the cycle of criminal activities. It further uncovers the VoIP calls made through the service provider P.M.N. Network Solution Co.,Ltd. (located at Thosaphon Land 4 Building in Bangna District of Bangkok). At the same time, the investigation team also conducted surveillance on a group of Thai suspects with links to Taiwanese people. The suspects have made several overseas trips and gained suspicious wealth. As the intelligence indicates that they would travel to Taiwan during 20 and 25 September 2017, the investigation team thus shared the information with Taiwan’s Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB), which helped conduct surveillance on the group and obtained the prime evidence

– the Thai-language scripts used in deceiving the victims. This group of Thai nationals were under the protection of Taiwanese people with criminal records of fraud and theft.

The DSI therefore coordinated with the MJIB and conducted concurrent raids on the targets on 12 September 2017 at 11.00 hours. Police Lieutenant Colonel Thavatchai Srivorakul, Head of Cyber Crime Division 2, with the team of DSI officers and Pathumwan Metropolitan Police conducted a search on the P.M.N. Network Solution Co.,Ltd. (located at Thosaphon Land 4 Building in Bangna District of Bangkok) to obtain the evidence regarding the VoIP calls. The search uncovered the computer traffic of the criminal gang, with links to the registered networks in Hong Kong, the UK and the USA.

Concurrently, the MJIB searched the targets in Taichung City and Miaoli City, and uncovered the scripts used in deceiving the victims, computers and communication devices - all of which indicate their collusion in a call center fraud. During the raids, the officers arrested 7 Taiwanese people and 18 Thai nationals. Among the Thai nationals arrested are Thanyawan Wongphakdi (female) and Nattasit Samtaku (male), who are under the arrest warrants in a call center fraud case jointly investigated by the DSI’s Cyber and Technology Crime Bureau and the Nakhon Chai Sri Provincial Police. The two offenders are accused of procuring for the gang the bank accounts for money transfers and persuading Thai nationals to work in the call center in Taiwan, earning them over 100,000 baht a month.

The crackdowns against the “call center gang”, conducted concurrently in Thailand and overseas, result from the coordinated operations by the DSI, the MJIB, the Royal Thai Police, the Immigration Bureau and the Thailand Post. After the raids, the number of complaints is found to subside. However, the Department of Special Investigation has assigned the Cyber and Technology Crime Bureau to continue monitoring fraudulent activities, and members of the public are cautioned to:

1. Never trust the phone calls claiming to be from government officers and persuading you to do something. Be reminded that the Bank of Thailand or financial institutions never call and ask you to transfer money to close your bank account. If someone claims to be a DSI officer, please call the DSI Call Center at tel. 1202.
2. Never aid offenders, in the hope of a small sum of money, by opening a bank account and giving an ATM card to another person. Your account might be used in the transfer of defrauded money, in which case the account owner will be prosecuted for colluding in the crime.
3. Never collude with foreigners in committing fraud. The opportunity for an overseas trip and a financial gain comes at the expense of innocent victims who lose their life savings intended for their retirement.

The MJIB also voices concern over the Thai nationals illegally seeking employment in Taiwan that it is not easy to walk free after committing an offence in Taiwan, and once it is found, all offenders will be brought to justice.

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