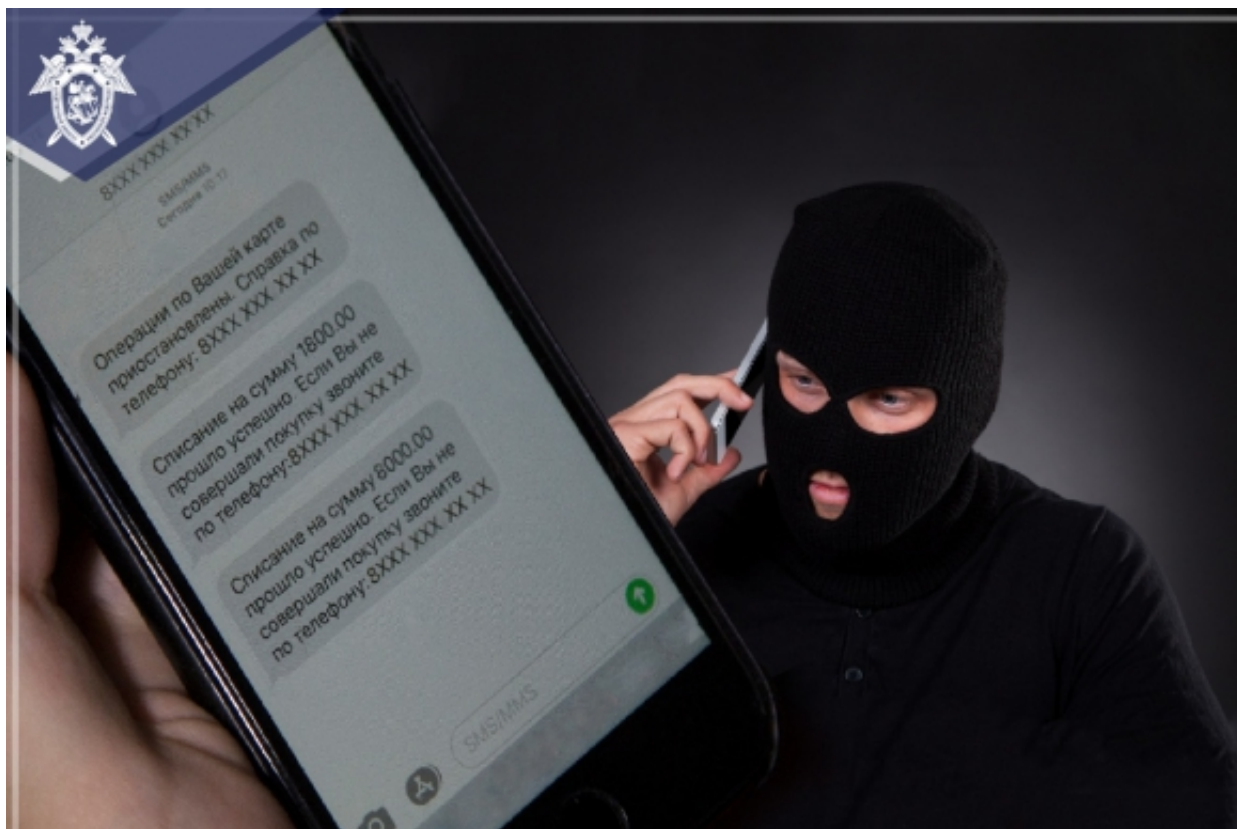

The Investigative Committee again warns citizens against telephone scammers



Cases of telephone fraud continue to be recorded throughout the country. Citizens report unlawful actions on the part of persons who introduce themselves as law enforcement officers and bankers and induce residents of the regions to take actions that lead to the loss of personal funds. Scammers have technical capabilities to disguise their outgoing numbers as phone numbers of official organizations and institutions, and for convincing purposes they can send a fake photo of caller's identity documents or other official documents. Often the victims of such scams are elderly people, the disabled, veterans and other persons from socially unprotected categories of citizens. In a number of regions, criminal cases are being investigated for telephone fraud, and some of the criminals who deceived gullible citizens have already appeared in court.

Thus, the Novosibirsk Regional Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of Russia investigated a criminal case against a previously convicted 37-year-old man on charges of

committing a crime under Paragraph B of Part 4 of Article 158 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (theft committed by a group of persons by prior conspiracy, on a particularly large scale). According to investigators, in the winter of 2018, the accused, being in the city of Lyubertsy, Moscow region, made repeated calls to both landline and cell phone of the victim, who is a veteran of the Great Patriotic War. In the course of these telephone conversations, the defendant, posing as an employee of one of the services, informed the victim that he was entitled to compensation payments for previously purchased poor-quality dietary supplements. By misleading the Great Patriotic War veteran, the defendant persuaded him to give him his bank card details. Having got access to the cell phone system on behalf of the victim, the man has stolen money of over 1 million 100 thousand rubles. The criminal case is currently being considered in court.

Also the Moscow Main Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of Russia completed investigation of a criminal case against two men born in 1992 and 1980. They are accused of committing three episodes of the crime under Part 4 of Article 159 of the Criminal Code (fraud committed by an organized group), and four episodes under Part 3 of Article 30 of Part 4 of Article 159 of the Criminal Code (attempted fraud committed by an organized group). According to investigators, between May and June 2020 the accused, while serving their sentence in a penal colony in the Orenburg region, using mobile communications, made calls to citizens in different regions of the Russian Federation and by deception, under the pretext of providing sponsorship and payment for medicines intended for the treatment of children with cancer, convinced them to transfer money to them. By their actions the defendants caused significant damage to the victims in the amount of more than 1 million rubles. The criminal case against the accused of the crimes is also being considered in court.

In addition, the St. Petersburg Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of Russia is investigating a criminal case into the activities of an organized criminal group that specializes in telephone fraud (Part 3, Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation). Investigators established that an organized criminal group that specializes in committing frauds by remote means has been operating on the territory of the Northern capital city for several years. The co-conspirators made telephone connections that excluded the possibility of identifying the subscriber and the incoming signal, using the service of substitution of subscriber numbers, using stolen personal data of clients of various banks in advance. In the course of the conversation, the bank clients were misled about the funds they owned, after which the victims made transactions into accounts controlled by the criminal group, and then the funds were cashed out through ATMs or converted into cryptocurrency.

Another criminal case is being investigated by Main Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of Russia for the Krasnoyarsk Territory and the Republic of Khakassia for the theft of a large sum of money from a resident of Norilsk. A resident of Moscow was charged with committing a crime under Paragraph D of Part 3 of Article 158 of the Criminal Code (theft from a bank account, committed with causing significant harm to a citizen). According to the investigation, in August 2020 a resident of Norilsk received a call on her cell phone from the alleged bank security

officers, who misled her about an attempt to steal her money by third parties. Because of the victim's credulity, she transferred over 380,000 rubles through banking transactions to the accounts specified by the scammers. The man was detained and transported to Krasnoyarsk. He was charged with committing this crime and a preventive measure in the form of detention was chosen. During the investigation of the criminal case, the defendant fully reimbursed the damage caused to the citizen.

For all of the above facts of illegal seizure of funds, the persons brought to criminal responsibility will be punished. Depending on the gravity of the crime, the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation provides for punishment in the form of fines, compulsory, correctional and compulsory works or imprisonment up to ten years.

Investigative bodies of the Investigative Committee once again urge citizens to be vigilant and not to let themselves be deceived. In order not to become a victim of fraudsters, it is necessary to be guided by a number of recommendations and pay attention to the following details:

- law enforcement officials authorized to conduct preliminary investigations summon citizens with a subpoena. In this case, the official never asks for personal data, bank details, information on accounts and plastic cards over the phone;
- neither over the phone nor in a face-to-face interview, law enforcement officers make demands for funds to be transferred to any accounts. This is illegal!
- wanting to check out scammers, you should not call back on such incoming calls;
- if you find yourself in such situations (if the caller introduced himself as a law enforcement officer or a bank employee), you should call the trust line, the hotline of the relevant law enforcement agency or banking institution and verify the information voiced by the caller;
- any offers on behalf of law enforcement agencies, such as assistance in catching a criminal by transferring money to accounts indicated by the interlocutor or in order to secure savings, are a clear sign of fraud. Such facts should be immediately reported to law enforcement agencies;
- immediately report the loss of your phone, card or additional charges to the bank;
- do not transfer your money to receive prizes, winnings, reimbursements for goods purchased, including medical ones;
- do not give your card data to other people, including bank clerks, employees of online stores (remember, no organization, including the bank, has the right to demand your pin code);
- once you receive an SMS-message about the card blocking by the bank, immediately contact the contact center of the bank that issued the card. **IT IS IMPORTANT** to call the phone numbers indicated on the card, not in the SMS message.

Citizens need to remember these simple recommendations and conduct an explanatory discussion about how not to become victims of scammers, with their relatives, especially the elder!

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