

Digital Fraud and Identity Theft: A Case Study

Truth is the correlation
that exists between consciousness
and reality.

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This is an invitation to read, reflect, and recognize how we must protect ourselves from new forms of digital fraud through identity theft and financial extortion. The following is a first-hand testimony.

The Beginning of the Deception: Identity Impersonation

An individual posing as a former student, identified under the name MGP, contacted me via WhatsApp, impersonating and compromising her identity. She requested that I receive a piece of luggage she was allegedly sending through El Dorado Airport, claiming she had been urgently hospitalized in Orlando, Florida (USA) due to a health emergency.

Speaking in a kind and persuasive tone, she insisted she desperately needed my help—appealing to my empathy and sense of trust. She asked for my address and national ID number so the shipment could be delivered to my residence. Acting in good faith, I complied.

The Call from the Fake Officer: The Onset of Extortion

The following day, around 2:00 p.m., I received a call from a man identifying himself as a Federal Express officer, named *Carlos Marín*. His tone was authoritative and convincing; he spoke in legalistic, procedural terms that inspired both respect and fear.

He informed me that the luggage sent by the supposed MGP had arrived and, upon X-ray inspection, was found to contain computers, jewelry, and a substantial amount of U.S. dollars. According to him, this situation legally implicated me as the recipient of undeclared international goods.

He asserted that, to avoid a judicial investigation, I needed to immediately pay 8,800,000 Colombian pesos (2.200 USD) in customs fees. Shortly after, he claimed there had been a mistake—the actual amount was 15,000,000 pesos (3.750 USD), which I eventually transferred, believing I was dealing with legitimate officials and merely resolving a serious legal misunderstanding.

Technological Interference and Digital Surveillance

During this process, my phone began exhibiting strange malfunctions—dropped calls, lagging applications, and intermittent disconnections from WhatsApp and email. I later learned that my device had been compromised with malware and spyware, allowing the criminals to monitor my communications and sustain a pervasive sense of control and threat.

I genuinely came to believe I was being investigated by law enforcement or customs authorities, as the extortionists perfectly mimicked the protocols and terminology of official agencies, creating the illusion of a legitimate legal procedure.

Psychological Pressure and Emotional Manipulation

Over the course of October 14 and 15, coinciding with a long holiday weekend, the calls persisted relentlessly. The supposed agents employed psychological pressure—alternating between threats, legal demands, and false reassurances of assistance.

They warned that if I failed to comply with their payment requests, I would be charged with money laundering and sent to prison. Each call intensified the fear and reinforced the illusion that I had no way out.

It was a sustained nightmare, an emotional hell meticulously orchestrated to wear down my resolve and plunge me into panic. In truth, I experienced a deep and consuming fear and trembling that ravaged both my emotional and physical health—manifesting as anxiety, insomnia, and profound distress, natural reactions in a 77-year-old person under continuous psychological coercion.

Escalation of Demands and Heightened Blackmail

The extortion escalated: they demanded an additional 10,000,000 pesos (2.500 USD) to “regularize” the customs process with the DIAN (Colombian tax authority). Their arguments were cold, precise, and convincing; they even simulated conference calls with “supervisors” and “attorneys” to reinforce a sense of institutional legitimacy.

Believing cooperation was the only way to avoid criminal charges, I made another transfer to a Bancolombia savings account, later identified as linked to those accused of the crime. The alleged Mr. Marín, with calculated firmness, suggested I would need to bribe customs officers to “avoid a public scandal,” using a tone that blended intimidation, blackmail, and feigned goodwill.

False Responsibility and Emotional Breakdown

The following day, the threats intensified. I received repeated calls demanding 70,000,000 pesos (17.500 USD), claiming that judicial agents already had a warrant for my arrest should I fail to “cooperate.” Overwhelmed and under unbearable psychological terror, I used my credit cards to transfer an additional 30,000,000 pesos (7.500 USD) to the same account.

During those hours, I lived through a true psychological inferno—fear paralyzed reason. The carefully manipulative tone of the scammers made me feel trapped, guilty, and defenseless. They exploited isolation and the impossibility of verifying their information over the long weekend to prolong my submission and confusion.

Anxiety and Communication with the Supposedly Hospitalized Accomplice

Throughout the various stages of extortion, the pressure was reinforced by urgent and desperate messages from MGP, claiming she was hospitalized and in critical condition.

Overwhelmed and disoriented, I responded defensively, striving to remain calm amid the growing fear triggered by the supposed agents and their demands. I repeatedly stated that she—not I—was responsible for the shipment, and that all I wanted was for this nightmare to end and for the money I had transferred in good faith to be returned.

The anxiety was constant; every message or incoming call reignited panic and helplessness. It was as if I were trapped in an invisible web from which there was no escape.

Discovery of the Fraud and Its Consequences

The ordeal finally ended when an information technology engineer, Mr. Carlos Gómez, explained that this was a type of scam orchestrated from prisons, specifically targeting elderly individuals or people with academic and professional credibility.

He visited my home that same evening and confirmed that my phone had indeed been digitally compromised. He proceeded to clean the system and restore its security, verifying the extent of both the technological breach and the psychological trauma I had endured.

The total loss amounted to 55,000,000 pesos (13.750 USD), having exhausted the limits of all my credit cards—an alarming situation that calls for strict investigation and accountability of the bank accounts involved in the fraud.

Analytical Questions

What emotional and cognitive factors may have influenced the victim's trust in the supposed agents, leading him to continue making payments despite warning signs?

How did the perpetrators' communication strategies successfully simulate institutional credibility and moral authority?

What preventive measures could be implemented within educational, familial, and digital contexts to prevent similar cases?

What ethical lessons can be drawn from this case regarding trust, prudence, and the importance of verifying information before acting?

How can such a painful experience be transformed into a tool for social awareness and personal resilience against digital manipulation?

A Day of Hope, a Day of Being
For joys given and received,
is, in truth, to know how to bloom.

In sowing seeds of kindness,
we harvest what is real,
and taste the fruits
grown with care and sincerity.

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