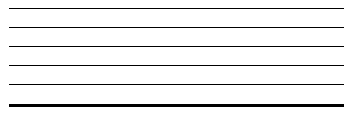


Mason City Police Department



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: JUNE 17, 2020

Contact Person: Mike McKelvey

Re: \$18,000 of Drained Gift Cards from on Overseas Romance Scam

A north Iowan who banks at a Mason City bank purchased approximately \$18,000 of gift cards in the last 2 weeks after an unknown subject contacted the resident electronically (text messages and emails). The victim claims he never talked to "her" directly or over the phone but she wrote that she wanted to be his girlfriend and lives in Nigeria. The resident gave the unknown person his personal bank account info. The unknown person started initiating bogus ACH electronic payments to his acct. He would then quickly withdraw money before the pending ACH cleared, go purchase gift cards, scratch off the access code info and send photos of the access code info back to the unknown person. The unknown person would then drain the cards quickly.

This is another example of the numerous people who succumb to these types of scams. We have seen several losses that exceed \$10,000 for each victim. Many of the victims are contacted through social media and online dating sites. Two popular apps being used by scammers to find victims for these types of scams are "Whats App" and "Hangouts."

Attached are 2 photos.

One shows what the \$18,000 in gift cards purchased over the last 2 weeks looks like. All gift cards have been drained.

2nd photo is an example of the text communication between victim and prey. ♦

"AN ARREST WITHOUT DISPOSITION IS NOT AN INDICATION OF GUILT"

**Citizens with information about a crime are encouraged to call
CrimeStoppers at 1-800-383-0088. Rewards are available.**