Undercover in search of

**THE ILLUSIONARY POT OF GOLD (2)**

Confessions of a Gold Scammer;

As the Criminal Underworld offers bribe to Silence the Story

 **Anas Aremeyaw Anas reports from Nairobi, Kenya**

“The fraud business is like the Al-Qaeda network. Al-Qaeda has a motive and mission of revenge. In our case, it is revenge on what the colonial masters did to our grandparents in the olden days. That is the money that we are collecting back from them (through the scams). When they came to Africa, they carried our grandparents and gave just one bottle of wine and left. Now we are taking the money back. We are taking the money back. All the work that our grandparents did in America, in London, in Europe, we are coming back to collect the money. That is the motive and the mission”.

That was the summary of mission and purpose, given by a gold scammer who spoke to our ace investigative reporter, Anas Aremeyaw Anas in an hour-long interviewduring our recent investigations (with Al Jazeera) into the issue of gold scamming in Ghana.

The gold scammer, who granted the interview on condition of anonymity, revealed the inner workings of the criminal underworld. He also gave insights into the scammer’s mind, motivations and challenges.

“It’s a big work. Involves money, involves ideas. Most of the people who scam have good degrees. We have marketers, we have banking and finance. We have lawyers, we have engineers; but because of what? It’s because there isn't any employment for them”, he revealed.

**HOW THE SCAMMING NETWORK OPERATES**

It may appear to be the work of a few individuals engaged in a life of defrauding others; but this is far from the reality that persists. The *New Crusading GUIDE’s* interview with the gold scammer, brings evidence that the gold scamming comprises of several network across the world. Like most organized crimes, this network is composed of some professionals and institutions which knowingly (sometimes unknowingly) contribute to and benefit from the successes of their operations. In Ghana, the network is composed of lawyers, police officers, customs officials, banking institutions, government offices and officials, politicians and traditional rulers. As revealed by our investigations, the hour-long interview with this scammer further lifts the lead off the operation of these scammers. Here are excerpts:

**Anas:** So what kind of network are we talking about? And how big is this network?

**Gold Scammer: What I can say is that this scamming or fraudster network is like Al-Qaeda. In Ghana, outside Africa, Europe, Asia and Arab states, we are working together as one.**

**Anas:** How many people are we talking about?

**Gold Scammer: Many people, massive numbers of people. This business is not only for one group, there is division of labour.**

**Anas:** Who are the victims, where do they come from?

**Gold Scammer: A victim can be anybody...it can be you! Can by father; a minister, can be an outside person – anybody who wants to buy and sell gold. The most important thing is that victims fall because of their greediness. That is why they fall. Everybody knows the price of gold in the market, but when they come to Ghana, they want to buy gold at the lower price.**

**Anas:** So which people do you normally get as victims?

**Gold Scammer: We get a lot people to defraud from Europe, Asia, and any part of the world and they want to come and buy and sell the gold. We got America in the business too much. Americans are most of the people victim in this area; more than any other country. Asia and Arab states follow.**

**Anas:** So how many millions of dollars have you seen people be defrauded?

**Gold Scammer: Many people, it depends on the quantity of the gold you need... because if you want a tonnes of gold, people will sell it to you...if you want 100kg, 50kg, 2 tonnes, we will get it for you. Any amount of gold that you want. People lose money! 10 million, 5 million, 5m U.S Dollar, 5m pounds, 5m Euros, people lost.**

**Anas:** Is it one person?

**Gold Scammer: One person can lose it. One person can lose 1, 2,3 million dollars. It depends on what quantity of gold you are looking for.**

 **A GOLD SCAMMER’S ROADMAP OF FRAUD**

**Anas:** Can you tell me how it is done; from the beginning to the end?

**Gold Scammer: From beginning to end, it is just as simple as selling and buying in any business. In the beginning, you contact someone through a proposal, or a letter. Or send a letter by post to the victim’s address. If they reply, everything starts. Send them the documents, stick it in the email. After we satisfy what I have said about the gold, I have satisfied the price and all the information I have given to you. They arrive in Ghana for dispensing.**

**First we tell them not to pay all the money, just come to pay only the shipment fees; but when you arrive, the story will change.** **After the story changes, I will take you to the mining site.**

**When we go to the mining site I explain that we need to buy gifts for the chiefs, and the community. You can buy rice, oil, so many things for presentation to the chief...and wine, gin; you buy it and present it to them.**

**Chief welcomes you, do everything for you. From there you are out of the place. They start the business, they show you gold. After you accept, you pick your sample and go back to Accra.**

**From the village down to Accra, you test. Though you were already informed to come and will only pay shipment fees, but after, the chief and the villagers say they need some money before the gold can be moved. You are made to pay 10%, 20%, 40% of the full price. You feel like paying, because you have already seen the truth.**

**After that, you need to pay. If you don't have the money, you will call because you have already seen the goods. Cough up the money, after you pay the processes start for the shipment.**

**We meet later meet at office. That's the office we are using. After that, we will present everything for you to pick the sample from the gold. Take it to the Geological, PMMC, Asavasa or any refinery in Ghana that you want.**

**Anywhere you take it, there are insiders over there. Any result will come out in our favour so you can believe that what we are doing is good.**

**After you are satisfied with the test, or the result of the gold sample, we ask you to pay the money, the shipment fees. We take you to the shipping agency. We decide how the money will be entered by card or by cash, and don't forget that the shipping agent is also part of the network.**

**From there, we move to the airport. When at the airport, a messenger from the community will arrive saying that that the chiefs say no; the community wants part of the money to be paid before the gold can be shipped. They would say “you cannot just come to Africa and come and carry their gold, without paying anything”, even though you paid at least 20% or 30% before leaving them. So everything goes back to the office or is kept with the Custom officials at the airport, or you can ask for safe keeping at a bank.**

**If it ever gets shipped, remember what is shipped to you is not pure gold. If 5 kilos is shipped, maybe 2 kilos or 1.5 kilo is genuine. When it reaches there, maybe your friend or your partner gets the gold and goes to do the tests. They confirm that only one kilo or so is genuine.**

**We then say it’s not our fault, it’s the airlines fault. The airline, many airline, we pay money. Many servers company we pay them in this matter. That’s how everything we do from beginning to end. It appears to be legal. All the procedure seems legal from the way the government gives its procedures down to how to buy, how to ship, how to move the good out of Ghana. Every procedure is carefully planned.**

**But the end is the last show. If you are not there I cannot just explain it until you are on ground and you will see, what is going on. Everybody in this world needs money. We cannot just call it corruption, it’s just a gift. People receive a gift to add to their own salary. We influence them with what we have, to get what we want from them.**

**In Bank, in Customs, in PMMC, in any refinery, even customs officer. To get what we want, we have to satisfy our own links, that’s the way it is.**

**Anas:** So from the bank what else happens? How do we get to that end?

**Gold Scammer: The person will finally be defrauded when, that is where we will call a scam. From the beginning to the bank, it is genuine. If the client doesn't pay, he has not been defrauded.**

**Let me just give you some little idea of how they change from real to fake. They have two types of gold that everyone knows in the world. You have gold bar, and dust. Its easy to defraud clients on bar than dust.**

**Bar made with iron, covered with gold water. And even they have acid proof, to secure the quality of the gold; because when they come down with the acid to test the bar. When you put the acid, the bar starts to shine, shinier like original.**

**For the dust the only way to change let’s say a hundred kilos, maybe only one or two kilos are genuine inside, and they will put your real bit on top. All the 99 below are fake.**

**After you have already accepted the result of the test of the gold we give you a padlock to lock the box by yourself and hold the key. We have another box with the same colour and same padlock key, and we change it with yours.**

**Usually, that one is not real gold inside, just ordinary sawdust, or paper, or brass for you to go and ship at the airport. People are there who will ship it for us.**

**Anas:** When you get to the airport, won't the customs ask you, what is inside?

**Gold Scammer: We use money to influence anybody, to get what we want. There are insiders everywhere.**

**Anas:** Don't you leave traces that will lead to your arrest?

**Gold Scammer: We rent the offices to use for just one week when the client is around, so they cannot trace it. And even the car we are using is not our own personal car...it’s usually a rental car. And most of the cars are not registered cars. We use temporary DV number plates for running about. After he will dismantle everything after the scam.**

**Anas:** We sometimes hear that you are able to use lawyers?

**Gold Scammer: It depends on clients. If the client wants the lawyer to secure his service here in Ghana, we acquire a lawyer for him. Sometimes, we acquire a real lawyer to keep him, to just know that this is what is going on. Sometime people pretend, by being an imposter using somebody’s name.**

**Anas:** Is it an easy thing? Don't you get caught by the police?

**Gold Scammer: Caught by police? That’s why I told you earlier that we use what we have to be able to move. In police language, the police have (fell to hostisay??). Police are here to keep the law; we are here to dismantle the law. And the two of us, in the face of everybody are cat and rats but at the back, we are one. Not all...most. We are using it to get what we want.**

**In this scammer game, there are three things that follow it – money. You get your money... if you don't get money, you can be caught by police or put inside jail, or some people die. They can be caught by some area boys, beaten to death. It's not easy to get caught because any amount of money that you collect from the clients, we have a certain percentage to give to any group. That if any case rises up, we can bring the case down.**

**We have the lawyer that we are paying a monthly salary to. If anything happens, the lawyer will come and defend us... we are paying his salary every month. We have police people that are given information. That is what is there.**

**We can buy anyone. Anybody: official, police, immigration, custom to get what we want. We even use immigration to get cable visa. We get visa without coming down from the Ghana embassy.**

**Most people coming here are not coming for gold. I will let you know that about 80% of taxi drivers at the airport are working for us. When they pick a foreigner from the airport to the hotel, they start asking questions about what they want in Ghana. If you want to buy gold I can introduce you etc. If the person doesn't want, the driver gives us the hotel number. If they buy a SIM card for the phone, he is the one who communicates with the person and gives the number to you. He'll say let me have your number, call me, I will take you out. The taxi driver will come and give us the information. We then plan to defraud the person.**

**Anas:** Don't you feel guilty that you are ruining people’s lives?

**Gold Scammer: It’s a big question. You know, I don't how to put it. When you want to plant a seed, the seed needs to spoil before it can germinate a big new thing out. When I need something, I need to quell before somebody, for me to go up.**

**You need to use some people as a step for you to reach where you are going. It’s already there in the bible...that you collect from somebody that has, to get for what I need. You read you r bible yea, it’s there. No matter what you want to do in this life, you have to climb somebody as your step case to get to the top.**

**BRIBE OFFERINGS TO SILENCE THE STORY**

Meanwhile, some of the scammers and their partners have contacted *The New Crusading GUIDE* offering sums of money to stop the publication of the story. In separate calls to our investigative reporter, Anas Aremeyaw Anas and the Editor-in-Chief, Kweku Baako Jnr, frantic efforts are being made by the scamming network to influence the newspaper’s editorial independence.

Recordings made by *The New Crusading GUIDE* regarding these developments show the scammers calling to offer the investigative reporter $20,000 as a preliminary bribe to stop the story’s publication. The scammers, who wanted a meeting in the night at a secret location somewhere in Osu with the reporter, promised to pay some more money if the reporter is interested.

The reporter and the newspaper have however stated in no uncertain terms to remain true to the journalistic duty of being a voice to the voiceless and shinning light on the dark places in society.

Stay tuned.

**Don’t miss the documentary, FOOL’S GOLD showing at the following times on Al Jazeera ---- Monday: 0930; Tuesday: 0330; Wednesday: 1630. Coming soon on all local TV stations**