

New Scam Center Strike Force Battles Southeast Asian Crypto Investment Fraud Targeting Americans

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Strike Force Targets Chinese TCOs Behind the Schemes & Works in Public-Private Partnership

WASHINGTON – U.S. Attorney Jeanine Ferris Pirro, together with major federal law enforcement and interagency partners, [announced](#) the creation of the first District of Columbia Scam Center Strike Force to secure America against Southeast Asian cryptocurrency-related fraud and scams.

Joining in the announcement were Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew R. Galeotti of the Department of Justice, FBI Deputy Assistant Director Gregory A. Heeb, and Assistant Director Kyo Dolan of the United States Secret Service, Office of Field Operations.

Chinese transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are using cryptocurrency investment scams and a variety of confidence scams to steal the life savings of everyday Americans. Often using U.S. social media networks or text messages to U.S.-based cell phones, the scammers first gain the trust of their targeted victims. Over time, the scammers convince their victims to invest in real cryptocurrency, only to then trick their victims to transfer those funds into fake cryptocurrency investment websites and applications. Many of those websites are hosted by companies in the United States, but once funds are transferred, the cryptocurrency is quickly laundered into other accounts outside of U.S. jurisdiction.

These schemes, which fraudsters refer to as “pig butchering” because they are “fattening” up their victims, are often run out of scam compounds in Southeast Asia. Workers in the compounds often are victims of human trafficking, held against their will, abused, and guarded by armed groups as they are instructed to target Americans. In some of the Southeast Asian countries where these compounds operate, scam-generated revenue is so massive that it amounts to nearly half of the country’s GDP. Recent reporting estimates that this scam industry defrauds Americans of nearly \$10 billion per year.

“Scam centers are creating a generational wealth transfer from Main Street America into the pockets of Chinese organized crime. As the prosecuting office in the nation’s capital, my office has the authority to charge foreign defendants and seize foreign property,” said U.S. Attorney Pirro. “President Trump wants the United States to be the global center of the world’s cryptocurrency industry. So it is absolutely crucial that Americans understand the safe use of this commodity. We will expose and prosecute the criminals who would abuse their trust so that all Americans can feel secure in their investments.”

U.S. Attorney Pirro specifically called on U.S. corporations to partner in the initiative. “Working together in public-private partnership, we must secure the U.S. infrastructure, which is being used as an instrument to defraud Americans in these scams.”

"The FBI is committed to the important work of the Scam Center Strike Force," said FBI Criminal Division Deputy Assistant Director, Gregory Heeb. "The lasting impact from the highly sophisticated, transnational financial crimes emanating from scam centers can be devastating to victims and their

families. It is the FBI's job to stop these criminals, and with the help of our partners around the globe, we will do just that."

"Since 2019, the U.S. Secret Service has seen a major uptick in cryptocurrency investment scams," said Assistant Director Kyo Dolan of the United States Secret Service. The organizations behind these scams leverage an 'ecosystem of criminality,' often weaving an intricate web of illicit activities together to perpetrate their schemes. In fiscal year 2025 alone, the U.S. Secret Service has responded to approximately 3,000 victims who contacted us regarding cryptocurrency investment schemes."

The new Scam Center Strike Force combines the power, reach, and resources of the U.S. Attorney's Office with the Department of Justice's Criminal Division, the FBI, and the U.S. Secret Service to crackdown and disrupt these schemes. The Scam Center Strike Force is also seeking to use all government tools available, partnering with the State Department, the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), and the Department of Commerce.

The Scam Center Strike Force is investigating the worst scam compounds located in Southeast Asia. Strike Force teams focus on identifying and pursuing key leaders—including Chinese organized crime affiliates operating in Cambodia, Laos, and Burma—to bring them to justice.

The Strike Force also is working to seize and disable the U.S.-based facilities and infrastructure that provide the manner and means to execute these scams, which includes U.S. internet service provider and social media accounts scammers use to prey on Americans. The Strike Force will collaborate with U.S. companies to sever access to the scam centers, and prevent U.S. infrastructure from being weaponized against American citizens.

As announced today, the Strike Force is already up and running.

The Strike Force Crypto Seizure team has seized and forfeited \$401,657,274.33 in crypto currency from these schemes, and announced today the filing of forfeiture proceedings for \$80 million in stolen funds. The Crypto Seizure team is focused on recovering stolen funds and returning them to victims.

The Strike Force Burma team conducted operations against two scam centers located in Burma. At the Tai Chang scam compound, the team seized websites used to victimize Americans. At another Burmese scam center, the team is seeking warrants to seize satellite terminals used to connect the facilities to the internet and enable fraud and money laundering. Today, [the Treasury Department designated](#) the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), and other entities related to these scam compounds, as specially-designated nationals (SDN). Established by the Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control, the SDN list contains the names of individuals, groups, and entities, such as terrorists, narcotics traffickers, and transnational criminal organizations, whose assets are blocked and with whom U.S. persons are generally prohibited from conducting business.

A Strike Force Regional team investigated a network of Bali scam centers. The suspects, directed by Cambodia-based facilitators, targeted more than 150 U.S.-based victims. Information the Strike Force provided to local police was critical and essential to the prosecution of 38 Indonesian nationals.

The Strike Force also deployed FBI agents to Bangkok to embed with the Royal Thai Police War Room Task Force to combat scam compounds, such as KK Park in Burma.

The Scam Center Strike Force will use every tool available to help secure Main Street Americans from these scams. With its interagency and public partners, the Strike Force will educate Americans on how to identify these scams, prevent generational wealth from flowing into the pockets of international and domestic criminals, and work with unwavering focus to return stolen funds to victims.

The Scam Center Strike Force is a collaboration of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia; DOJ's Criminal Division, including the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, Fraud Section, and Money Laundering, Narcotics and Forfeiture Section; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the U.S. Secret Service. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Rhode Island is also collaborating on the initiative.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Karen P. Seifert and Kevin Rosenberg^[EK1] represent the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia on the Strike Force. Today's cryptocurrency seizures were handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Rick Blaylock and Trial Attorneys Ethan Cantor and Stefanie Schwartz of DOJ's Computer Crime & Intellectual Property Section, with the FBI San Francisco, San Diego, Phoenix, Nashville, and Honolulu Field Offices, and the U.S. Secret Service San Francisco and Memphis Field Offices. Today's seizures related to Tai Chang were handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jolie Zimmerman and Trial Attorney Ethan Cantor with the FBI San Diego Field Office, and additional Burma seizures were handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jolie Zimmerman, with assistance from Assistant U.S. Attorney Raj Datta, and the FBI Washington Field Office.

If you have been defrauded out of your money by a Southeast Asian Scam Center scheme, please contact the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center at ic3.gov.

Contact

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