



## **FORT BRAGG POLICE DEPARTMENT**

250 Cypress Street  
Fort Bragg, CA 95437-5437

**FABIAN E. LIZARRAGA**  
Chief of Police

(707) 961-2800  
Fax: (707) 961-2806

### **\*PRESS RELEASE\***

**Releasing Officer:** Officer Thomas N. O'Neal  
**Report Number:** FG1701733, FG1800018  
**Date / Time Incident:** December 2017  
**Location of Incident:** Unknown  
**Crime or Incident:** Payroll Check Fraud, 470 PC (Forgery)  
**Suspects:** Unknown (Investigation Continues)  
**Victims:** Withheld

### **CIRCUMSTANCES:**

Over the course of the last two months, Officers of the Fort Bragg Police Department have received two separate reports of a highly sophisticated payroll check fraud operation. The two reported incidents involve a local business and a local non-profit organization.

During the course of these investigations, the Fort Bragg Police Department has identified these criminal incidents as representing a new nationwide online threat. This type of scam starts with employees of a business or organization releasing their online bank account information in order to receive payments from fraudulent organizations. Similar to previously identified scams, the victim believes they are receiving deposits into their bank in exchange for returning a portion of that deposit to the criminal organization. The criminal organization convinces the victim that the funds must either be electronically deposited or deposited through a mobile phone deposit program. These deposits come in the form of fraudulent payroll checks from other victimized businesses or organizations. While simultaneously making fraudulent deposits into the victim's account, the criminal organization also obtains scanned payroll checks from the victim's online bank account. This allows the criminal organization to reproduce those scanned checks in order to continue the cycle. Once the fraudulent checks are identified by the victimized business or organization, the original victim who accepted the deposits is forced to repay all of the fraudulent deposits while also losing any funds they returned to the criminal organization.

Similar to other types of online scams, these investigations often lead to suspects and criminal organizations outside of the United States. This makes these crimes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prosecute.

Employers are encouraged to educate their employees about this online scam, and to remain extra vigilant in accounting procedures and reviewing payroll withdrawals. Any questions regarding these investigations may be directed to Officer O'Neal at (707) 961-2800 ext. 167 or at [toneal@fortbragg.com](mailto:toneal@fortbragg.com).

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