

## MEDIA FACTS

# Facts About Foreign Scam Centers

## Fraud At Scale — Inside the Shadow Industry of Scam Centers

Scam centers (or scam factories) are transnational criminal operations where organized groups run industrial-scale fraud schemes — often under the radar of local law enforcement. These centers are frequently located in regions with limited oversight, such as parts of **Southeast Asia, West Africa, and Eastern Europe**. The people working in these scam centers are many times victims of human trafficking themselves.

They are offered promises of high-paying jobs but then trapped, exploited, and forced to operate 24/7 scam operations by their criminal bosses.



### Scammers' methods include



#### Impersonation

Scammers sometimes use deepfake technology to fabricate images or alter their voice to impersonate government officials, police officers, celebrities, and family members of their American victims. Scammers also spoof phone numbers to make calls look like they are coming from someone the victim trusts.



#### Pig-butchering

Scammers reach out with what appears to be a "wrong number" text message. They "fatten up" victims by creating an emotional connection over weeks or months, often luring victims to additional platforms like apps or websites that look legitimate. Then, scammers "butcher them," by stealing their money.



#### Romance scams

Scammers build an emotional connection with their victims by sharing heartfelt stories or sending fake photos, developing trust, and creating a personal relationship. Victims end up sending money directly to the criminal posing as a love interest.

## Inside the Engine Room: How Scam Centers Execute Their Fraud

Scam centers are organized, disciplined, and ruthlessly efficient operations that function more like call centers than street-level fraud rings. Behind high walls or guarded compounds, trafficked workers are forced into regimented shifts where they follow scripts, adopt fake personas, and use psychological manipulation to exploit victims online.

**\$75 billion**

have been lost globally to scam centers through pig butchering, a foreign scam center strategy, since 2020.



### It's Not About the Payment Method. It's About the Criminal Infrastructure.

While much public attention has focused on the means of money movement, the real threat lies upstream: the scam operations exploiting human beings to carry out mass fraud. Cracking down on the point of payment alone is like trying to stop drug trafficking by regulating handoffs — it misses the factories producing the product and the criminal networks distributing it.

In the meantime, these scam centers continue to operate with impunity.

### Squeeze the Source. Pressure Abroad and Unity at Home.

Stopping the scam center epidemic requires coordinated pressure on the governments that allow these operations to thrive. The United States must use every diplomatic and economic lever to compel foreign partners to shut them down, prosecute the organizers, and protect trafficking victims.

At the same time, government, tech companies, financial institutions, and telecom providers must come together to cut off these criminal networks. Fragmented efforts won't solve a problem this complex — only unified actions, both internationally and across industry, will begin to dismantle the infrastructure enabling these scams to flourish.