



Press Release

TOURIST BOARD ACTING DIRECTOR WARNS SECTOR OF SCAM

Road Town, Tortola, October 6, 2009 – Acting Director of the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board, Hadassah Ward is warning the Territory's hospitality industry of a present scam targeting property owners.

"The Board was recently notified of a possible scam by a property owner in the Territory that specifically targeted our accommodations sector." said Ward. "After being notified we contacted the Territory's Financial Investigations Agency (FIA) who were very helpful in identifying the scam which falls into the category of Advance Fee Frauds, also known as 419 scams."

Explaining the particular scam identified, Director of FIA, Errol George said, "These scams are ran by criminals who mainly operate out of West Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, and, more recently, from North America, Western Europe and Australia. The scams are variations of a similar scam involving cars and other big ticket items sold in classified ads. The criminal poses as someone interested in renting an apartment or house for an extended period of time. Then sends a large cashier's cheque as a down payment. The fake cheque is normally larger than the amount for the rent or deposit. The landlord or property owner is then asked to cash the check and wire the extra amount to the criminal or third party. The cheque is fake and the landlord, if unaware will wire his/her own money from their bank account if he/she falls for the scam."

Ward is encouraging property owners to be watchful of such requests. "If a potential guests is trying to give you more money than is owed in advance of your services, chances are it might be a dishonest scheme that will harm you



and your business. We are strongly encouraging any property owner receiving such requests to forward the request to the FIA that has the knowledge and know how to detect and confirm such fraudulent activity.”

George warns that such scams are becoming more sophisticated as the one reported by the Board offered to make payment using a credit card. He added that these particular frauds are attempted on a large scale usually with hundreds of thousands of emails being circulated using the web.

Property owners may forward any questions or inquiries to the Financial Investigations Agency through email address fia@bvifia.org.

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