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The Attorney General of The Federation (Nigeria)

OPENBAAR MINISTERIE

National Public Prosecutor's Office for serious
fraud (The Netherlands)



Staatsanwaltschaft Traunstein (Germany)

Strike against international scam with anticovid masks

In mid-March 2020, as several countries were going into lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, German health authorities contracted a German businessman to procure EUR 15 million worth of face masks. With a global shortage on medical supplies complicating usual business channels, the businessman followed new leads in the hopes of securing the masks.

The businessman was asked to pay 1.5 million EUR in advance to an Irish account. After having done that, the businessman went to the Netherlands with 52 lorries in order to take the delivery. At arrival he was told that the money allegedly did not arrive in Ireland and he had to pay another 880.000 EUR to a Dutch account. Even though he also wired this further amount, the masks were not delivered.

When he attempted to contact the alleged seller of the masks, he discovered that he was the victim of a scam.

The special unit against transnational crimes of the Public Prosecutor's office in Traunstein was informed and took over the investigations in Germany. With the help of Eurojust (the Office for cooperation between Public Prosecutor's offices of the EU), Interpol and the Bavarian, Dutch and Irish police more than 2.1 million EUR could be recovered. Colleague prosecutors in Nigeria and the Netherlands started own proceedings and cooperated at the best level possible.

Now, after months of intensive investigations, the office of the Attorney General of The Federation (Nigeria), the National Public Prosecutor's office for serious fraud of the Netherlands and the Public Prosecutor's office of Traunstein (Germany) were able to identify the men behind the scam. Two male suspects of Netherlands' nationality were arrested in the Netherlands in April 2020 and sentenced in July 2020 by the court of Zwolle to 24 months imprisonment for money laundering. The National Crime Bureau of Nigeria identified and arrested the two alleged main suspects and organizers of the crime in August 2020.

These investigations show that in a modern world, where globalization enables criminals to strike in other countries, a good cooperation of the law enforcement agencies in the countries involved based on mutual trust and respect can counter criminal groups effectively.