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PRESS RELEASE

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LONG DISTANT RELATIONSHIPS JUST DON'T WORK, ESPECIALLY FROM NIGERIA

District Attorney Mike Ramsey issued a warning today about an internet fraud which has been seen locally. The scam targets dating sites like Match.com, Perfectmatch.com, Yahoo personals, etc. and social sites like MySpace to lure unsuspecting singles into an online relationship leading to marriage. However the end result is not a marriage, but heartbreak and financial ruin.

Ramsey said a local Oroville woman fell for the scheme in which her intended beau pretended to be a wealthy businessman with homes in London and Nigeria. As is usual with this scam, he met his victim on an internet dating site and after an exchange of e-mails, he sent "photos" of himself and developed a communications link of instant messages and phone conversations by long distant calling cards paid with stolen cards.

He also involved the woman in "business deals" allegedly in the United States by having her send him money because, although wealthy, his money was temporarily "tied up because of some customs' issues." As their long distance relationship grew, the couple began planning a marriage. She began sending various sums of money to her intended to help him begin the preparation for the marriage, including \$3000 for airline tickets and several thousand dollars for his and her SUV's to be purchased at a Sacramento auto dealership. He promised that when he arrived he would of course pay her back.

Ramsey said despite friends' and family warnings, the woman was convinced her "fiancée" was due in at the Sacramento Airport any day for their planned wedding, until a DA Economic Crime Investigator met with the woman to show her it was a scam. Ramsey said it was an emotionally wrenching

time for the woman, as wedding invitations had been sent and a hall reserved. However, the investigator was finally able to convince her it was a scam when he asked her to call the man and ask him for his flight information so she could pick him up. She did, but he couldn't give her the information. Ramsey said the full extent of the fraud is yet to be determined until the victim is emotionally ready to do a full accounting.

Ramsey said the local case demonstrates the cold blooded nature of the internet predators. He pointed out that women are not the only victims of this type of fraud, but men have been the victims in other jurisdictions. He strongly suggested anyone currently in an online dating relationship to be cautious and check out everything he or she can about their online partner. One quick and easy way to see if the partner is "real" is to ask them to hook up a webcam and communicate that way so one can see who you are talking to in real time. This does not, however, solve other credibility issues like jobs, existing relationships, etc. Ramsey said it was also a good idea to scrutinize any package received from someone online to make sure the package has not been ordered with stolen credit cards.

As always; "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is," Ramsey stated.