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## Canada police bust fraud ring targeting U.S. seniors

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MONTREAL (Reuters) - Canadian police said on Tuesday they had dismantled a telemarketing fraud ring that bilked 500 victims a week, mainly in the United States, for three years.

The ring grossed C\$8 million to C\$13 million (\$7 million to \$11.3 million) a year since 2003 running two alleged fraud schemes, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said.

Police said they arrested 33 people in the Montreal area, where suspects ran "boiler rooms" from where they made misleading phone calls to victims, most of them senior citizens.

Victims targeted in the schemes had been asked to send funds by certified check or money order.

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Telemarketers would contact prospective victims under the guise that the individuals had won a large sum of money. To claim the prizes, the victims were asked to send payments ranging from C\$1,500 (\$1,300) to C\$65,000 to cover what telemarketers said were customs charges, taxes and insurance.

Corporal Sylvain L'Heureux, a spokesman for the Mounties, said some of the victims were asked to send additional funds to pay for winnings allegedly blocked at the Canada-U.S. border.

"The victims were mainly not in Canada, but the criminals were," L'Heureux said.

Some victims were even told they had been defrauded and would be reimbursed, but they would have to send more money to recoup their funds, he told reporters.

In the other scheme, the telemarketers told individuals they were eligible to receive a C\$7,000 grant, but would have to send money to obtain the funds. Some were sold health care kits that cost C\$300 but contained little of value.

(\$1=\$1.15 Canadian)

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