

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - April 17, 2002

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Man Charged In Latin Lotto Scam In San Antonio

(Austin, April 17) - - Less than a month after Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Linda Cloud launched a statewide public awareness campaign about the Latin Lotto Scam, a 46-year-old man has been arrested in San Antonio and charged in connection with the crime.

A 74-year old unidentified male victim reportedly told San Antonio police detectives he was "involved in a lottery scam" yesterday afternoon when two suspects on the west side of San Antonio told him, "they had just won the lottery and needed to cash a \$1 million prize."

The victim said he was approached at Merida and South Zarzamora by two men with South American accents who claimed they needed "two witnesses to show lottery officials \$5,000 as financial responsibility" because they were not U.S. citizens. The fraud victim said he offered to help the alleged Lotto winners in return for a portion of the prize, and was driven to Security Services Federal Credit Union, located at 7382 Barlite in San Antonio, where he withdrew the money.



Clodoveo Martinez

A short time later, after the money exchanged hands, the man said he realized he was "being scammed" and wrestled his money away from the suspects and ran inside the Credit Union to call the police.

San Antonio Police officers later arrested Clodoveo Martinez whose driver's license indicated he was from Florida. At the time of the arrest, Martinez was driving a black Mitsubishi Montero SUV that was apparently rented in Florida from the "Dollar Rent-A-Car" agency.

A second suspect is still at large.

News of the arrest surfaced as Cloud returned to Austin today after holding a Latin Lotto Scam news conference in Lubbock with Assistant Chief Randy Ward and officer Anita Barbosa. Within the past month, two 73-year old Lubbock men fell victim of the scam after one man lost \$10,000 in the con, and the scam artists robbed the other man of \$1,000.

The con artists lure their victims by offering them what appears to be a winning Cash 5 ticket or Lotto Texas ticket.

The lottery's statewide public service campaign was launched March 18 in Houston to warn elderly Hispanics about a scam that uses promises of a winning lottery ticket to steal their money.

"We're always grateful to law enforcement officials for the work they do to capture these unscrupulous characters and to get the word out in the Hispanic community and to all of our players not to fall for these scams," said Cloud. "We need to show these con artists that Texas is no longer a place where they can run this scam. When we catch you, your bogus ticket will win you a trip to jail."

Cloud emphasized that the procedure for claiming a winning ticket is simple, without the "requirements" alleged by the thieves.

"The Texas Lottery never requires any money in order to have a ticket claimed," she said. "And a claim is not denied because a claimant is from another country and may be in the U. S. without proper documentation."

Cloud said the lottery is trying to warn all senior citizens to be wary of anyone asking for money in exchange for what appears to be a winning Lottery ticket.

During the last three years, Lottery officials have heard about cases reported to law enforcement in San Antonio, Dallas, Houston, Hempstead, Navasota, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Laredo, San Marcos, Lufkin, Amarillo, New Braunfels and Austin. In the Harris County area more than 200 cases have been reported, and it is estimated Texas victims have lost more than \$3 million dollars in this scam, which is also occurring nationwide.

Cloud said Lottery security personnel have assisted law enforcement agencies around the state in the past to capture criminals running this same kind of scam.