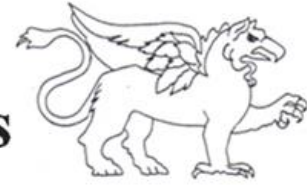




Specialised
Security Services



PROJECT: **VALENTINE'S DAY** **SCAMS**

14 February is another huge day for shoppers and many South Africans are embarking on an online spree to spoil their loved ones. Unfortunately, scammers are quick to use every opportunity to deceive and defraud unsuspecting victims.

- Fake Online Retailers:
 - Scam: Fraudulent online stores may offer attractive deals on flowers, gifts, or romantic getaways, but they may not deliver the promised items or may provide substandard products.
 - Avoidance: Stick to reputable and well-known online retailers. Check reviews and ratings before making any purchases. Ensure the website has a secure connection (<https://>) and uses secure payment methods.
- Phishing Emails or Messages:
 - Scam: You may receive emails or messages with fake Valentine's Day promotions or e-cards containing malicious links that can lead to phishing websites.
 - Avoidance: Be cautious of unsolicited emails or messages. Avoid clicking on suspicious links and verify the sender's authenticity. Check the email addresses

for legitimacy, and don't provide personal or financial information through these channels.

- Fake Dating Profiles:
 - Scam: Scammers create fake online dating profiles to establish romantic connections and eventually request money or personal information.
 - Avoidance: Be cautious when interacting with strangers online. Avoid sharing sensitive information and be sceptical of requests for money or financial assistance from someone you've just met online.
 - Romance Scams:
 - Scam: Fraudsters build online relationships with victims, expressing love and affection before requesting money for various reasons.
 - Avoidance: Be sceptical of individuals you meet online who quickly profess their love. Never send money to someone you haven't met in person. Verify their identity and be cautious of red flags, such as inconsistent stories or requests for financial assistance.
 - Fake Charities:
 - Scam: Scammers may use fake charities or heartbreaking stories to solicit donations in the name of love on Valentine's Day.
 - Avoidance: Donate only to well-known and reputable charities. Verify the legitimacy of the organization through official websites or contact them directly before making any contributions.
 - Gift Card Scams:
 - Scam: Fraudsters may request payment through gift cards for supposed Valentine's Day purchases or emergencies.
 - Avoidance: Legitimate businesses and services do not request payment via gift cards. Be sceptical of any request for payment in this form and verify such requests through other channels before proceeding.
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EXAMPLES:

- Beware of scammers who will take advantage of Valentine's Day to run a variant of a common holiday shopping scam.
- They will pose as legitimate flower shops, offering beautiful bouquets, but they are nothing but fraudsters who will leave you disappointed and broken-hearted.
- Be warned that these scammers go to great lengths to appear legitimate by setting up websites, placing ads on social media, and the like.

- In some scenarios, they may deliver your flowers, but they will likely be late, damaged, or look nothing like the picture you saw.
- In other cases, they will take your payment, but your flowers will never arrive.
- It has even been reported that after payment, you may be contacted by the florist shop and forced to upgrade your purchase, paying extra for something you didn't want in the first place.
- Remember, these scammers will sell anything and everything associated with Valentine's Day, including luxury brand handbags, clothing, shoes, jewellery, and even motor vehicles.
- So, be vigilant and only purchase from reputable vendors to avoid becoming a victim of these fraudulent activities.

SAFETY MEASURES:

- Research is everything here.
 - If possible, only buy from florists/retailers you know and trust.
 - If that's not possible, do some research on a flower seller to see if other people have experienced issues.
 - You can check when the website was created.
 - A site that was just set up recently is not necessarily phoney but has a higher risk factor.
 - Do some reverse imaging and see whether what you are buying is not just an existing image that scammers have copied as their own.
 - In addition, always pay with a credit card or another payment method that allows you to dispute charges if you are dissatisfied.
 - Lastly, remember that all of this advice also applies to other types of romantic gifts, so be sure to vet your chocolatiers and jewellers as carefully as your florists!
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PHISHING EMAILS:

- Phishing emails are a constant and serious cyber threat.
- They can lead to various undesirable outcomes, such as stealing personal information or credit card details by luring victims to malicious websites.
- In some cases, the scam is less direct, and a phishing email is only the first step in getting a person to engage in phone or email correspondence with a scammer, but the end result is always fraud.

- Some phishing emails are also used to get the target to download malware or click on a link that will take them to a malicious download site.
- During Valentine's Day, phishing email pretexts can vary from malicious e-greeting cards sent by a "secret admirer" to more familiar holiday threats such as package delivery scams, customer service scams, and phoney deals and sales.

SAFETY MEASURES:

- "How to avoid phishing scams" is a vast topic, but if we were to simplify our advice into a single sentence, it would be: "Do not trust unsolicited emails and always research independently."
- If you receive an e-valentine from a supposed "secret admirer," do not open it.
- If you get a coupon or a special offer in your inbox, do not click on the link.
- Instead, go to the vendor's website on your own and look for the sale there.
- If you receive a call or message from someone who claims to be a customer service representative, an account support specialist, or a courier company, and they tell you that there's an issue with the flowers or gift that you ordered, avoid talking to them.
- It is best to investigate the issue yourself by logging into your account or calling the customer service line that you find online.
- By taking this step, you will be able to find and resolve any problems that you may have.
- If you do not find any issues, you have just avoided a possible scam!

Always be vigilant, trust your instincts, and take the time to verify the authenticity of any offers or requests, especially during special occasions like Valentine's Day.

Specialised Security Services invites the public to the Mike Bolhuis Daily Projects WhatsApp Group.

This group is important in delivering insights into the latest crime trends, awareness, warnings and the exposure of criminals.

HOW TO JOIN THE MIKE BOLHUIS DAILY PROJECTS WHATSAPP GROUP:

- Simply follow the link to our dedicated WhatsApp group:
 - <https://chat.whatsapp.com/Dys4JLOFTXCBgXBdXeEvzU>
- "JOIN" to ensure you never miss our daily updates.
- You will receive automatic notifications as soon as a new project is placed.
- Please share this with family, friends and colleagues.

Visit our Facebook page and our website for other current projects:

- <https://www.facebook.com/MikeBolhuisOfficial>
- <http://www.mikebolhuis.co.za>

ALL INFORMATION RECEIVED WITH REGARD TO THE PROJECTS WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY AND EVERY IDENTITY WILL BE PROTECTED.

You may forward this document.

Regards,

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EXTREMELY IMPORTANT: All potential clients need to be aware that owing to the nature of our work as specialist investigators there are people who have been caught on the wrong side of the law - who are trying to discredit me - Mike Bolhuis and my organisation Specialised Security Services - to get themselves off the hook.

This retaliation happens on social media and creates doubt about our integrity and ability. Doubt created on social media platforms is both unwarranted and untrue.

We strongly recommend that you make up your minds concerning me and our organisation only after considering all the factual information - to the exclusion of hearsay and assumptions.

Furthermore, you are welcome to address your concerns directly with me should you still be unsatisfied with your conclusions. While the internet provides a lot of valuable information, it is also a platform that distributes a lot of false information. The distribution of false information, fake news, slander and hate speech constitutes a crime that can be prosecuted by law. Your own research discretion and discernment are imperative when choosing what and what not to believe.

STANDARD RULES APPLY: Upon appointment, we require a formal mandate with detailed instructions. Please take note that should you not make use of our services – you may not under any circumstance use my name or the name of my organisation as a means to achieve whatever end.

POPI ACT 4 of 2013 South Africa: Mike Bolhuis' "Specialised Security Services" falls under Section 6 of the act. Read more here: <https://mikebolhuis.co.za/popi-act-4-of-2013-section-6-mike-bolhuis/>

SSS TASK TEAM:

<https://mikebh.link/sss-task-team>

SSS CYBERCRIME UNIT:

<https://mikebh.link/sss-cyber-team>



Specialised
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