

Con Artists Who Targeted Elderly Detained

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A group of scam artists who earned millions of rubles conning more than 150 people out of money in the Moscow region during the past two years has been detained.

The ringleader of the group was a resident of the Kaluga region who had earlier been convicted on fraud charges; he had returned to his old tricks after serving time in prison, the TASS news agency reported Thursday.

"He found accomplices over the Internet and suggested that they operate the following well-worn scheme: personally phone up elderly people in Moscow and the Moscow region, tell them a relative has gotten into trouble and say money is needed to resolve the situation, and then two of his partners go to collect the money," TASS cited a source in the Interior Ministry as saying.

The group had been profiting off the scheme, which is a common scam used to target the elderly in Russia, for more than two years, having successfully defrauded more than 150 people, the report said. The group made an estimated total of more than 5 million rubles

(\$130,000) during that time.

Three members of the group have been detained and now face fraud charges, which carry a maximum punishment of five years in prison.

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