AMERICAN CONSUMER & INVESTOR INSTITUTE

October 21, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

On behalf of the American Consumer and Investor Institute (ACII), I write to applaud your attention to the rise of transnational financial scam operations, akin to organized crime and drug cartels, as a pressing economic and national security threat. ACII is proud to support your efforts, and those of the entire Trump Administration, to hold foreign governments accountable when they allow these criminal enterprises to flourish.

As you have rightly noted, Americans are losing billions of dollars each year to increasingly sophisticated scams that originate overseas. These scams are not isolated crimes carried out by lone actors. They are the product of coordinated, industrial-scale fraud operations, many of which are housed in "scam centers" across Southeast Asia and China. From phishing emails and text message frauds to romance scams and imposter schemes, these criminal networks exploit digital platforms to target Americans, including retirees, defense personnel, and investors. One specific type of scam operation, called "pig-butchering," has fleeced Americans for more than $75 billion alone.

More troubling than the size of the threat is how these organized crime cartels operate with the tacit approval of governments in places like China and Myanmar, according to U.S. intelligence reports.[1] In some cases, the people in these fraud centers are themselves victims, having been trafficked, enslaved, and coerced into targeting Americans under threat of violence.[2]

Despite mounting evidence and increasing harm done to Americans, there has been minimal accountability. As *Reuters* reports,[3] dismantling these scam centers has proven difficult, in part because many governments fail to enforce their own anti-fraud and human trafficking laws. Some even shield these operations from scrutiny due to corruption, complicity, or diplomatic defiance.

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[1] https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/Chinas_Exploitation_of_Scam_Centers_in_Southeast_Asia.pdf
[2] https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA06/20240709/117509/HHRG-118-FA06-Wstate-TowerJ-20240709.pdf
[3] https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/what-are-southeast-asias-scam-centres-why-are-they-being-dismantled-2025-03-04/

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and commend the recently announced U.S. Treasury sanctions against individuals and entities operating scam centers in Southeast Asia.[4] This is the kind of definitive deterrent that is necessary to stop the unabated robbing of the American people.

As the Trump Administration continues its efforts to protect Americans, we urge the State Department to consider all tools at its disposal, including:

- **Elevating scam networks to the level of a foreign policy priority**, treating them as transnational criminal threats akin to drug cartels or terror financing networks.
- **Applying diplomatic pressure, including sanctions or restrictions**, against governments that knowingly harbor scam centers or turn a blind eye to their operations.
- **Working with international partners and allies** to demand the liberation and repatriation of trafficking victims and the prosecution of scam ringleaders.
- **Supporting global law enforcement coordination**, enabling the U.S. to better identify, trace, and dismantle these fraud syndicates at their source.

As a leading voice for America's consumers and investors, we share your concern about the economic and human toll these scam centers inflict on our nation. We ask you to continue using the full weight of American diplomacy to demand that foreign governments shut down these criminal operations—or face consequences for their inaction.

Sincerely,

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Chief Executive Officer
The American Consumer and Investor Institute

[4] https://www.state.gov/releases/2025/09/imposing-sanctions-on-online-scam-centers-in-southeast-asia