

manufacturers led by Toshiba Corporation (Tokyo; President and CEO: Taizo Nishimuro). Smart Media is designed to be removed from a camera and inserted directly into various computer interfaces, enabling image transfer. Exif is an image file format developed and promoted by Fujifilm and Eastman Kodak Company (Rochester, New York, U.S.A.; CEO: George Fisher).

Fujifilm: <http://home.fujifilm.com/index2.html>
Olympus: <http://www.olympus.co.jp/indexE.html>
Konica: http://www.konica.co.jp/english/e_menu.html
Eastman Kodak (parent company): <http://www.kodak.com>

Top of News Page

News **Japanese Police Investigate Internet-Based Chain Letter Business**

By Lauren Colias

The Fukuoka prefectural police are investigating ten or more people in the city of Kitakyushu, for possible violation of the "Anti-Infinite-Chain-Structure Business Law," which went into effect here in 1979. The focus of the investigation is a Web site called "Pentagono," which is, very simply, a slick chain letter -- made available to a global pool of the criminally naive by the Internet.

The Japan Consumer Information Center (JCIC; Tokyo; President: Shogo Oikawa) has reportedly received 196 inquiries and complaints regarding Pentagono, 45 of which were from "members" of the site.

Pentagono is the work of a company in Modena, Italy called Future Strategies Srl. The site disingenuously proclaims that the company's "enrollment at the Chamber of Commerce & Industry...makes the system completely legal." Pentagono's stated purpose for being in business is to "preserve the cultural assets of Italy."

You'll appreciate just how much easier scams like this have become in the electronic age:

A new member makes an initial investment of 13,200 yen (US\$107). This consists of

- 4,400 yen (US\$36) paid to Future Strategies for the "membership certificate," which contains the name and bank account information of seven members;
- 4,400 yen to the top name on the list, which can be paid by bank transfer, because the certificate contains bank information; and
- 4,400 yen to Future Strategies, presumably for the preservation of the cultural assets of Italy.

After the member fills in his own data on the certificate (not forgetting his bank account data), he mails it to Future Strategies. In return, he receives three more certificates, on which he is listed as the seventh member. He then sells these certificates to three other people for 4,400 yen each, thereby recovering his initial investment, and continuing the chain.

Each time a new generation of members is created down the line from those original three certificates, the member's name moves up one spot on

the list. Theoretically, in no time at all, the member receives 4,400 yen from 2178 people (3 to the power of 7), or a total of 9,620,000 yen (US\$77,706).

You don't need me to spell it out, do you? I gotta go; I got a date with the Easter Bunny.

Pentagono: <http://www.future.it/>

JCIC:

http://www.kokusen.go.jp/jcic3/jcic_index_e.html

[Top of News Page](#)

Please note: all yen-to-dollar conversions were computed at a rate of 123.8 yen to the dollar, the five-day average for the week in which the column was written.

| [Home](#) | [News](#) | [About ASCII](#) | [Business Units](#) | [Partnership Opportunities](#) |
| [Technical Help](#) | [Contact ASCII](#) |

Copyright(C)1997 ASCII
CORPORATION. All rights reserved.