

# 999

SECURITY AND SAFETY FOR ALL

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MARCH FORWARD  
WITH MOHAMED  
BIN ZAYED

BEWARE: DANGERS  
OF UNREGULATED  
E-PATHWAYS

**ABU DHABI  
SPOTLIGHT**  
SPRING IN  
YOUR STEP IN  
THE CAPITAL

# SP T POLICE IMPERSONATORS

CLUES TO LOOK OUT FOR TO PROTECT YOURSELF

UAE 5,000 AED  
KSA 5,000 SAR  
Kuwait 0,500 DK  
Bahrain 0,500 BD  
Oman 0,500 OR



**IN THIS ISSUE:** TOP 10 BEHAVIOURS THAT WILL LAND YOU IN TROUBLE IN THE UAE



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A LEADER WITH A DREAM AND DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED, HH SHEIKH MOHAMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN, CROWN PRINCE OF ABU DHABI AND DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE UAE ARMED FORCES, HAS CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF THE PEOPLE. THIS IS HOW A LETTER FROM HH SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM, VICE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE UAE, AND RULER OF DUBAI, TRIGGERED A TIDAL WAVE OF TRIBUTE FROM THE NATION AT THE START OF 2018

**12 FACTS & FIGURES**

Some numbers and quotations in the media that grabbed people's attention

**14 UAE NEWS BULLETIN**

Police news, people, numbers and events

**22 TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR SAFETY**

In the UAE, law enforcement will quickly come to your aid if you're in danger. But even so – because the police can't be everywhere all the time, learn to be your own first responder in a perilous situation

**41 TOP 10 BEHAVIOURS THAT WILL PUT YOU IN TROUBLE IN THE UAE**

Some things that are commonplace or merely attract disapproval in other countries can drag a person to a court of law in the UAE. Know what not to do and stay out of trouble

**48 BEWARE OF THAT VOICE**

The recent blocking of illegal VoIP services in the UAE has brought back attention on how criminals use the Internet to call victims over unregulated e-pathways. 999 looks at how VoIP works and why regulation is necessary

**55 THE AWFUL 8**

These are the most significant causes of traffic accidents in the UAE during winter. Learn about the penalties and solutions

**60 FORCED TO RESIGN: WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS IN THE UAE?**

While in some cases, the employer may have the prerogative to want an employee out, there are employment laws that stipulate what's just or not

**66 UNITED IN KNOWLEDGE**

Globally competitive and innovative – these words, perhaps, best describe what the UAE wants its learning system to be. Thanks to the leadership's vision and various measures implemented since the beginning of the Union, the country is moving fast towards this goal. 999 looks at what's going on in classrooms

**71 WORLD IN GRAPHICS**

Marmoom Reserve project: Dubai takes the lead in sustainable tourism by unveiling the UAE's first unfenced desert conservation plan

**72 TIPS AND TRIVIA**

The greatest love of all: It's Valentine's Day this month – and which is the relationship to be celebrated on February 14? We say, your most important relationship is with yourself

**75 ABU DHABI SPOTLIGHT**

Spring in your step: The Abu Dhabi Festival gets you outdoors, as do a number of other attractions for those who want to have a final burst of song and dance before summer sets in



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# CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE COP?

## COVER STORY

# 16

CRIMINALS IMPERSONATING POLICEMEN ARE ALL TOO COMMON AROUND THE WORLD – AND IT HAPPENS IN THE UAE, TOO. TO PREVENT ATTACKS SUCH AS RAPE, ROBBERY, AND KIDNAPPING, LEARN TO TELL THE IMPOSTERS AND REAL ONES APART



8

### NEWS

Mol reinforces international law enforcement cooperation with NYPD

### 79 HISTORY

Meeting the greats: The explorer Wilfred Thesiger met Sheikh Shakhbut and the late Sheikh Zayed, the two men who shaped the economic and social progress of Abu Dhabi

### 83 CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Two young burglars had the perfect plan for robbing stores. But they fell into the police net when one of them discarded caution

### 85 GADGETS

Take a peek at the latest must-have electronics

### 87 MOVIES

The hottest new international movie releases coming soon to a cinema near you

### 89 BOOKS

Connect with your own best qualities, understand the world better, and conquer the fears— by turning these pages

### 91 ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Campaign to bring together people from all segments of society for a common cause

### 93 HEALTH NEWS

Keep your health in check, stay updated

### 95 PUZZLES

Have some fun and see how good you are with words and numbers

### 96 HOROSCOPE

What February has in store for you



## COLUMNISTS



46

**Tim Maycock**  
Director of Maycock Training Ltd, an international consultancy firm



54

**Ali Obaid**  
Head of the News Centre at Dubai Media Incorporated



59

**Maysa Rashed**  
Former Member of the Federal National Council (FNC), and UAE writer



65

**Dr Samar Al-Shamsi**  
Internationally respected artist

# CAN YOU SPOT A FAKE COP?

CRIMINALS IMPERSONATING POLICEMEN ARE ALL TOO COMMON AROUND THE WORLD – AND IT HAPPENS IN THE UAE, TOO. TO PREVENT ATTACKS SUCH AS RAPE, ROBBERY, AND KIDNAPPING, LEARN TO TELL THE IMPOSTERS AND REAL ONES APART

BY ORLANDO WILSON



Criminals impersonating police officers is a big problem internationally and the UAE is not immune. Due to strict border controls and pro-active policing, crime rate in the country is extremely low as compared with other countries. But, some troublemakers do get slip the net and cause problems before they're caught, charged, jailed, and deported.

In December 2017, in Dubai, a man was jailed for two years for posing as a policeman, kidnapping, assaulting, and robbing an Asian worker. The man was apprehended with three accomplices by Dubai Police after a chase; before their capture, the criminals rammed into a police car and assaulted the officers. The crime had taken place in January 2014 and the police stated, before making the

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**UAE police forces have an excellent reputation, so when someone claims to be a police officer, they're respected. That's why criminals try to impersonate police officers to commit their crimes**

arrests, that four other similar incidents had been reported within a short period of time.

Also in Dubai in December, a female tourist was kidnapped and sexually assaulted by a man claiming to be a police officer. The woman was taking out the garbage at her aunt's house, when the police imposter pulled up in a car and presented a fake police ID. The police imposter accused her of committing a crime and ordered her to get inside the car. The woman was afraid, and believing that the man was a police officer, she did as she was told. Then the man took her to a secluded area where he assaulted her before letting her go. The police quickly identified the suspect and arrested him.

So, what should people do if they're approached by someone claiming to be a police officer? UAE police forces have an excellent reputation, so when someone claims to be a police officer, they're respected. The criminals know this and that's why they try to impersonate police officers to commit their crimes. Here, we'll look at the problem of police impersonators and give you some procedures to follow if you suspect that a supposed police officer is not a real cop.

First, we'll look at the problem of criminals impersonating police personnel.

999 Magazine spoke with Antonio (real name withheld), former member of an elite Mexican police tactical team, GET of Leon, Guanajuato.

We asked Antonio how big the problem of police impersonators is across the globe and his response was, "The problem is huge – it's extremely difficult to know who's a real cop and who're the members of drug cartels. When on duty, we could always check what patrols are in the area by radio, but civilians cannot do this. Many of the drug cartels have corrupted police officers and have access to radios, uniforms and weapons – to be honest, a lot of the time, they're better armed and equipped than the police.

"Especially in undercover operations, we were always extremely careful when approaching a checkpoint manned by cops we didn't know. When we got close, we could easily identify the fake cops from how they wore their uniforms, equipment, body language, and their procedures. On high-risk prisoner escorts, we always have a convoy car ahead of us, scouting the roads to ensure we don't drive into an ambush."

**Alert as many as possible**

Antonio detailed one kidnapping, committed by police officers who were from one state in Mexico, but were





# Checklist for the truth

The United Kingdom is a relatively safe country, but they still have a problem with police impersonators.

The British police are one of the oldest and most established in the world, so, **999** also spoke with Peter Wheeler, who has recently retired as a lead investigator from the British police force, having completed 30 years in service. Peter is now a security consultant and instructor, and he provided us with a checklist that can help identify if you're being stopped or contacted by a real police officer or not.



## If pulled over while driving

1. Generally, police vehicles are easy to identify. If an undercover car is used, then it should have blue flashing lights inside the grill area or magnetic types on roofs. Be more suspicious if stopped by an undercover car, as these are easier to mimic.

2. If you're pulled over, consider moving to or keeping in a busy well-lit area, where members of the public are in view and can see what's going on.

3. Real police officers completing stops and checks will be in police uniform or



**The basic rule is: check the police officers' ID; if they're real, they will show you their ID card. If you're still suspicious, verify the reason the officer is stopping you**



**PETER WHEELER**  
Retired lead investigator  
from the British police force

will be wearing clearly identifiable police labelled clothing.

4. Officers will be in possession of their identity card, which contains a photograph of the officer. It's your right to ask to be shown their ID cards clearly and to check them.

5. During initial contact, keep all doors locked and lower your window just enough to communicate; always remain calm and be polite. This will also allow documents to be exchanged, if required.

6. If you decide not to stop, contact the police as a matter of urgency to outline your concerns and seek guidance on how to proceed.



## If you get a call from someone claiming to be a police officer

1. Ask for the officer's identification number and the phone number of the police station you can call them back on. Check the police station telephone number against online listings before calling back and do not accept mobile numbers for verification call backs.

2. Consider checking the incoming call number and recording it, make notes of the caller's voice, any background noise, and content.

3. If told to put the landline receiver down and call straight back, do so on a separate line. It's not unknown for callers to keep the line open at their end, thus tricking you into thinking you've completed a security check.

4. Make an appointment to visit the officer at the police station to discuss the matter they called you about in person.

5. If a home visit is requested, agree to an appointment, and ask a friendly neighbour or family member to be present.

6. Do not give out personal details, in particular bank account / PIN numbers. State that you intend to contact the bank directly to discuss the issue.

7. Resist being put under pressure to

respond immediately. A few simple checks won't take long to complete, and a real police officer will understand your concerns.



## If a police officer turns up at your house

1. A fake police officer wanting to gain access to your house may claim that you have been the victim of a crime or is likely to be in the near future, to put you under pressure to act quickly with little time to think.

2. Always ensure all doors are locked and attempt to visually check the visitor prior to answering the door.

3. Fit a door chain – and use it.

4. If unsure, do not answer the door.

5. Call the police and enquire the reason for the visit. If the visit is legitimate, they'll know and will tell you how to proceed.

6. Always ask for the officers' ID cards and check them; consider cross-referencing some of the details on the card with the officer.

7. Consider telling the officer to come back at a future time, so you can arrange for a friend / family member to be present. This will also give you time to verify with the police station that the police officer is real.

8. Be suspicious of items asked to be removed. Ensure the officer has paperwork authorising such and ensure a receipt is provided. Consider taking photographs of both the items and officers responsible.

9. Officers will not request that they take items for 'safekeeping'.

10. Remember it is your home, so don't be embarrassed, do not let in anyone you're suspicious of, and always verify their IDs and check with the police station that the visit is legitimate.

The basic rule is: check the police officers' ID; if they're real, they will show you their ID card. If you're still suspicious, verify the reason the officer is stopping you or visiting you with their station.

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**People should have a plan in place for all potential hazards they could encounter**



**ANDREW CHATZKELOWITZ**  
Security consultant/ expert

working on a case in Guanajuato. “These two detectives were in Leon, following up on a case from Tamaulipas. They kidnapped a 16-year-old kid from a middle-class family. The kidnap was easy, as they showed the kid their badges and faked an arrest. The kid was terrified and complied, as he thought he was in trouble. The first we knew of the kidnapping was when the family came to the police with a video of the victim naked, bruised and being beaten,” he said.

“Luckily for the kid and the family, we were able to identify the kidnappers as the police officers,” he continued. “We were able to do this because one of our people recognised the shoes in the video as being the same as what one of the cops was wearing. These cops-turned-kidnappers were put under surveillance, we got a positive ID on the shoes, we did a close reconnaissance on the villa where they were staying, and it was clear something was not right about the place. We raided the place and we found the kid alive but badly beaten. The two cops were arrested.”

When asked what the outcome would’ve been for the kid if he wasn’t rescued, Antonio said, “He would’ve been killed – even if the ransom was paid, those cops wouldn’t have risked releasing him, as he could identify them.” When asked what the teenager could’ve done when confronted by the cops, Antonio said, “You know if you’ve committed a crime or not. If you know you’re innocent, then complain



and call the police station. If nothing else, let others know you’re being arrested and ask them to report what’s happening. If you have a cell phone, use it, alert as many people as possible. This isn’t a game; it’s life.”

**Have a plan in place**

These days, nearly everyone has a mobile phone, and we were interested in seeing if there were any applications or programs that could help someone identify if they were being stopped by a fake or real cop.

Andrew Chatzkelowitz is a very experienced security consultant, instructor and project manager who has worked in hostile environments throughout Africa. He is now based in Johannesburg, South Africa. It’s a beautiful country but just like any other place in the world, there’s violent crime – and criminals impersonating police officers is common.

Chatzkelowitz again clarified the basics of what someone should do if they

suspect they’re stopped by a fake cop. He said, “Most of the criminals here that impersonate police tend to operate on the more remote and quiet stretches of the road. They target women and those they see as potentially easy prey. If someone is being stopped while driving, we tell them to go to a busy area, such as a gas station or a mall, especially if it’s a lone female. They should keep their doors locked and not get out of the car until the police officer has been positively identified.

“If anyone tries to break into the car, they need to drive to the nearest police station or a safe area as quickly and safely as they can. One situation where people are vulnerable is when their cars break down in a remote or not the best area. They need to summon help as soon as possible, keep their doors locked and not get out of the vehicle. People should have a plan in place for all potential hazards they could encounter.”

The security expert informed us that the South African police had developed a free mobile phone app called Namola (<https://namola.com/>), which alerts the emergency services that you have a potential problem or are being the victim of a crime. Chatzkelowitz said, “Namola gives you a direct line to the emergency services – when you hit the panic button, they’ll call you back immediately to see what your problem is, assess your situation,

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**Let others know you’re being arrested and ask them to report what’s happening**





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**When trying to describe a person, remember their height, if fat or skinny, their colour and accent. Also, anything distinguishing such as scars, tattoos, jewellery, how they smell, and their shoes**

and give you advice. If it's the case of a fake cop, they'll be able to clarify this immediately and send real police units to your assistance. They know your location because the app works with the GPS on your phone. There are other features to the app but the panic button alone can be a life saver.”

If the answers to the above questions are negative, then chances are that you're dealing with a fake cop. You need to remain calm and polite and try to summon help. If you have your phone, dial a trusted friend or the police so at least they can hear what's going on, even if you can't talk directly to them. Try to detail the situation, that you need help and your location, keep repeating this.

If the situation becomes violent and it's clear that the man is not a police officer and is attempting to kidnap you, then resist – fight, shout and scream and do everything you can to alert people that

you're being attacked!

As soon as you possibly can, after being approached by someone suspicious or being attacked, contact the police and let them know your location and what happened. If possible, try to get photos or video of the criminal with your mobile's camera. If you can't, try to remember as much as you can about them. Take note of the make and model of their car, if the car had any dents or anything distinguishing. When trying to describe a person, remember their height, if fat or skinny, their colour and accent. Also, anything distinguishing such as scars, tattoos, jewellery, how they smell, and their shoes... Very few people wear the same shoes... and this can be a good identification point.

Hopefully, you'll never need to use the information in the article, but we hope this has made you think, and educated you on what to do if approached by a suspicious person claiming to be a police officer within the UAE and while travelling. As we all know, the UAE is one of the safest places in the world. The police and government agencies tasked with keeping it that way are working 24/7 to do so.



**About the writer:** Orlando Wilson has worked in the security industry internationally for over 28 years. He is the chief consultant for Risks Inc. and based in Miami but spends much of his time travelling and providing a wide range of kidnapping prevention and tactical training services to private and government clients.



## Verify

So, we've spoken with experts from three different countries and three very different environments. Their basic response to what you should do if approached by a suspicious person claiming to be a police officer are virtually the same: check their IDs and call the police to verify their identifications and reason for stopping you.

To summarise what we've discussed in the article, if you're stopped or approached by a police officer, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

1. What crime have you committed? If none, then why are they stopping you?
2. Does the officer's car look like a police car?
3. Does the officer look like a police officer? Does he have the right uniform or identification visible?
4. What is his body language saying – is he nervous or calm and professional?
5. Can he provide you with and let you check his ID card that will have his photo and personal details on it?
6. Will he allow you to call the police station to verify his identity or allow a friend to be present while he questions you?