

Opinion / Editorial

I Got This Text About a Package I Never Sent For. Here Is Why You Probably Will Too.

Family & Marriage

God Birthed a Nation

By Dr. Thomas Hyslip

A Text Message That Almost Got Me I received a text message this week that looked, at first glance, completely legitimate. It read:

“USPS Package Hold Notification. Dear Customer: Your package was ready for delivery today, but our courier could not verify your location due to an address-ZIP Code conflict. We tried to get in touch with you by phone, but there was no response. Your parcel has since been moved to the USPS Operations Center and is being kept safely. To proceed with delivery, please visit our official page via the link below within 24 hours to update your address and select a new delivery time.”

The message included a link, instructions to reply “Y” to activate it, and a deadline of June 21, 2026, after which my supposed package would be returned to sender.

There is just one problem. I was not expecting any package. And the United States Postal Service does not send text

messages like this. I am sharing this one with you, word for word, because if you have a cell phone, you are going to receive a version of this exact message sooner or later. This is called smishing, and it has become one of the most common scams hitting American phones today.

Breaking Down the Scam Line by Line Let’s pick apart exactly why this message is fake, because the techniques used here show up in nearly every smishing attempt regardless of which company or agency the criminals are impersonating.

The vague, official-sounding language. Phrases like “address-ZIP Code conflict” and “USPS Operations Center” sound technical and authoritative, but they are not real terminology the Postal Service actually uses in customer communications. Scammers use official-sounding jargon specifically because it discourages questioning.

The manufactured urgency. I was given a 24-hour deadline, with the threat that my package would be returned if I did



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not act immediately. Smishers rely on psychological manipulation to bypass your defenses, generally creating a false sense of urgency or fear that pushes you to react before thinking it through.

The suspicious link. The text directed me to usps.ptmld.life, a domain that has absolutely nothing to do with the real United States Postal Service, which uses usps.com. The fake domain was built specifically to look vaguely official to someone skimming a text message on a small phone screen.

The bizarre “reply Y” instruction. This is one of the more devious tricks in the modern smishing playbook. Many mobile carriers and phones automatically disable links in text messages from unknown or unverified senders as a security measure. By instructing victims to reply “Y” first, scammers are attempting to trick the phone’s spam filtering system into treating the conversation as a legitimate back-and-forth exchange, which can cause the link to become clickable. In other words, that instruction is not a harmless formality. It is a deliberate attempt to defeat the very security feature designed to protect you.

What Smishing Actually Is Smishing, short for SMS phishing, is a cyberattack where scammers use deceptive text messages to trick victims into handing over personal information, downloading malware, or sending money. Attackers often impersonate trusted entities like banks, government agencies, or delivery services, using urgent language to manipulate targets into clicking malicious links.

The attack generally follows a predictable pattern. First comes the lure, an unexpected text containing a fake alert such as suspicious bank activity or a held package. Then comes the hook, language designed to create a false sense of urgency or fear. Then comes the trap, a call to action such as clicking a malicious link or calling a fraudulent phone number. Finally comes the compromise, where clicking the link may secretly download malware onto your phone or direct you to a fake website designed to steal your passwords, credit card numbers, or Social Security number.

Delivery scams like the one I received are extremely common right now, but they are far from the only flavor. Banking alert scams pretend to be your bank warning of unauthorized account access, directing you to a spoofed login page to verify your identity. Government impersonation scams claim to be a tax authority or law enforcement agency, often threatening legal action or fines unless you click a link to resolve the issue immediately.

How to Protect Yourself Never click links in unexpected texts. If you get an alert from a legitimate organization, log into their official website or app directly, or call a verified customer service number instead. The real USPS website is usps.com, and if you genuinely have a package issue, you can check it there directly without ever touching a link from a text message.

Do not reply, not even to opt out. Even if a scam message says reply STOP to opt out, avoid responding. Doing so merely confirms to the scammer that your phone number is active and worth targeting again. The “reply Y” instruction in the message I received is a perfect example of why this rule matters even more than usual.

Be suspicious of urgency. Legitimate companies and government agencies rarely demand immediate action or sensitive information via text message. A 24 hour deadline on a package you never ordered is a glaring red flag.

Report it. You can forward suspicious text messages to the spam reporting service 7726, which spells SPAM on your keypad, to help mobile carriers identify and block the attackers. This takes about ten seconds and helps protect the next person who receives the same message. You can also file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission at fcc.gov.

When in doubt, delete. If you are not expecting a package, you almost certainly do not have one waiting. Delete the message and move on with your day.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” – Bible (2 Corinthians 3:17)

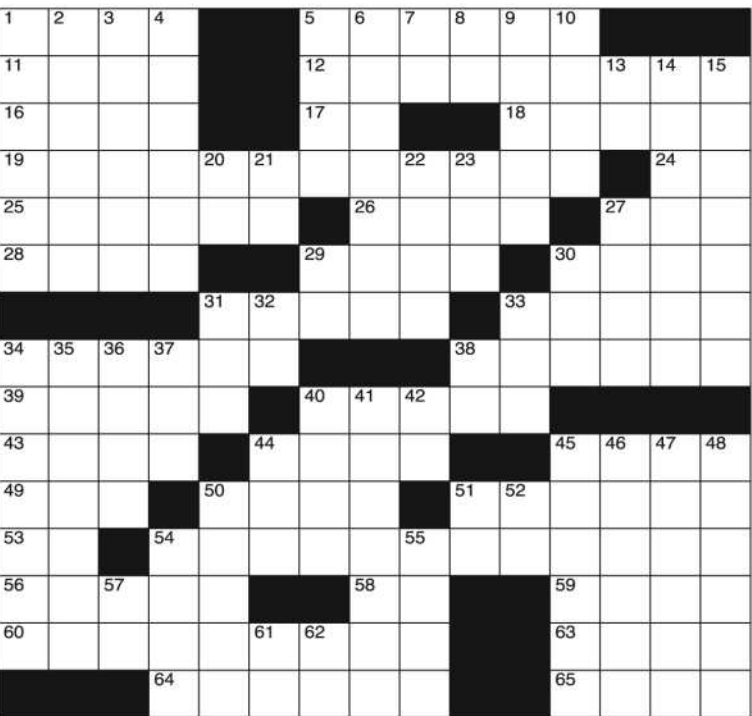
The 4 th of July, which will soon be upon us, is a time when we get together with family and friends for food, fun, fellowship, and often fireworks. Depending on where we live, how much we are willing to spend, and how enthused we are about a big celebration, we may light a few sparklers, or have a major fireworks display A few number of us remember what the 4 th of July celebration is all about. The 4th of July, celebrated as Independence Day in the United States, marks the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, signaling the birth of a nation founded on principles of liberty and self- governance. For Christians, this holiday carries profound significance, not only as a commemoration of national freedom but also as an opportunity to reflect on the spiritual dimensions of liberty, God’s providence, and the responsibilities of living as faithful citizens in a free society. From a Christian perspective, the 4th of July invites believers to consider how the principles of freedom, justice, and human dignity align with biblical truths and how they can honor God in the context of their national identity. The Founding Fathers won their

freedom and established ordered liberty through a system of limited government, federalism, and the rule of law. They were, quite literally, fathers: Fifty-four of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence married and had a total of 337 children among them – an average of six each. They, plus the other men and women of the Revolution, sacrificed their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to secure the blessings of liberty “for our posterity.” It was their children, their children’s children, and future generations that they had in mind. The key to American greatness in the first 250 years remains the key to American greatness in the next 250 years: the family. There is strong evidence today that the key to American greatness, the family, is under attack. Our families, our churches, and our friends, plus abundant social science research, confirm that every alternative to the natural family with married parents has proven across space and time to be, on average, inferior to couples, and especially for any children that arise from their union. Historically, Aristotle, an ancient philosopher and man of many talents, concluded that political order begins not in the palace or the marketplace but in the household. The family is the most natural of all associations for the supply of man’s every-day wants, the first building block from which society arises. Cicero, a Roman statesman, building on the observations of Aristotle, referred to the first society as marriage itself and the home with children as the foundation of civil government,



Roger Rollins, Family and Marriage Coalition

“the nursery, as it were, of the state.” For several thousand years the family was considered the basic building block of society. However, over the last 60 years, the percentage of married adults in this country has been on a steady decline, and a third of young Americans may never marry. Those who do decide to marry are doing so at later ages; the median age of first marriage has gone up by about eight years for women (to 28.6) and about seven years for men (to 30.5). Our forefathers knew a hard truth: that when a nation fails to preserve the family, the state soon fails to preserve itself. As we gather together with family and friends to celebrate the 4 th of July, Independence Day, let’s take time to recognize that this day of celebration comes at the cost of many lives who believed that their country, and in particular, their families were worth paying the ultimate cost, including death, to preserve the family va ues this nation stands for. Family and Marriage Coalition of Aiken (FAMCO) was created to provide resources for you to succeed in your marriage and families. Roger Rollins, Executive Director, FAMCO, 803-640- 4689. Let us know how we can help.

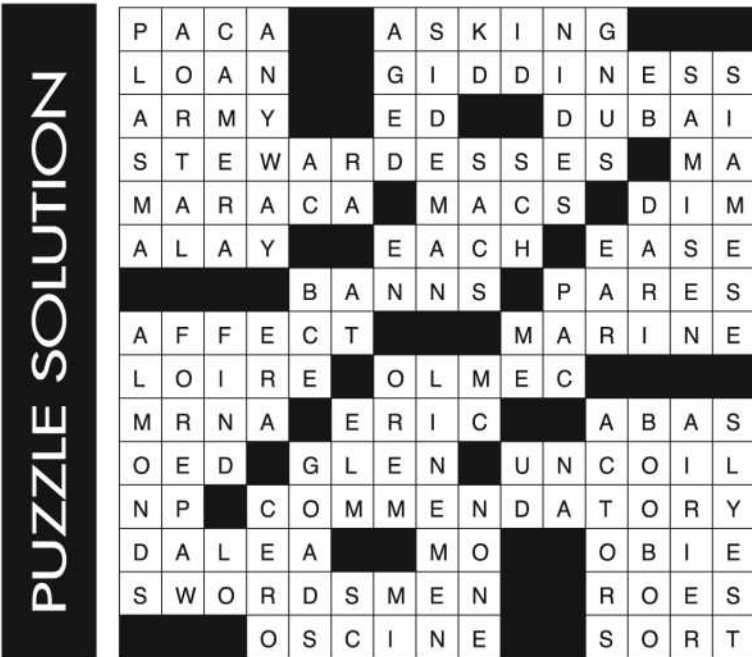


CLUES ACROSS

1. Nocturnal S. American rodent
5. Requesting
11. Give temporarily
12. Excitedness
16. Armed Forces branch
17. Actor Harris
18. Middle Eastern capital
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to “Pa”
25. Percussion instrument
26. Popular computers
27. Reduce light
28. Asian mountain range
29. Every one of two or more
30. Absence of difficulty
31. A public announcement of a proposed marriage
33. Whittles
34. Impact
38. Serviceman
39. A French river
40. Prehistoric people
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. ___ Clapton, musician
45. Ancient Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. Singer Hansard
51. A way to disentangle
53. Atomic #93
54. Manifesting approval
56. Indigo bush
58. Former AL MVP Vaughn
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Small Eurasian deer (pl.)
64. Relating to passerine birds
65. Arrange systematically

CLUES DOWN

1. Colorless fluid
2. Of a main artery
3. Photographer’s tool
4. Blues Traveler hit “But ___”
5. Grew older
6. Not the leader
7. ___ Lang (country singer)
8. A driver’s license is one
9. Nests of pheasants
10. Wildebeests
13. Equal to one quintillion bytes
14. Japanese three-stringed lute
15. Type of cat
20. It cools your home
21. The ancient Egyptian sun god
22. Pouches
23. German trigraph
27. Form of Persian
29. Measurement unit
30. Body part
31. Bridge building degree
32. Indicates position
33. Political action committee
34. Snack food
35. Front part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. ___, myself and I
40. City in Utah
41. They play in the trenches
42. “Can’t Touch This” rapper ___ Hammer
44. Type of tree
45. Performers
46. Slang for mistake
47. More open
48. Most slick
50. Needles
51. University of Dayton
52. Atomic #11
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not any
57. ___ and behold
61. Popular sports highlight show (abbr.)
62. “The Great Lakes State”



I receive cybersecurity scam attempts constantly given my background, and this one was crafted well enough that I wanted to walk you through it carefully. If a message like this lands in your phone this week, you will now know exactly what you are looking at.

Stay safe out there, and I will see you next week!

References

Proofpoint. “What Is Smishing?” <https://www.proofpoint.com/us/threat-reference/smishing>
Federal Communications Commission. “Avoid the Temptation of Smishing Scams.” <https://www.fcc.gov/avoid-temptation-smishing-scams>
UIC Office of Technology Solutions. “Security Alert: SMS Phishing Attempt (Smishing).” <https://it.uic.edu/news-stories/security-alert-sms-phishing-attempt-smishing/>
Adaptive Security. “Smishing: SMS Phishing in Cybersecurity.” <https://www.adaptivesecurity.com/blog/smishing-sms-phishing-cybersecurity>
Feeling lost in the digital world? Dr. Tom is here to help!
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From practical cybersecurity tips to insightful breakdowns of current threats, Dr. Tom’s column empowers you to stay informed and protect yourself online. So, dive in and get savvy with the web – with Dr. Tom as your guide!

SUDOKU

	1							
		5	6			9		
					8	1	7	2
		7	1					
			8	6				3
3				5		2		
1	3							
6	9			2	7		8	

Level: Intermediate

Here’s How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

1	8	5	7	2	4	3	6	9
6	2	9	1	6	3	8	7	5
7	6	3	9	8	6	2	3	1
8	1	2	6	5	7	9	4	3
4	3	4	2	7	2	9	8	5
9	5	6	3	4	1	7	8	2
2	7	1	8	8	6	9	5	3
4	3	6	1	8	9	3	5	7
5	6	3	4	7	2	6	1	8

ANSWER: