

Operational Security Guidance for Family Members

Our goal is to provide you with a greater understanding of our security concerns. The information provided is not intended to frighten you or make you suspicious that everyone you meet is a secret agent or terrorist.

As a family member of the military community, you are a vital player in our success and we could not do our job without your support. You may not know it, but you also play a crucial role in ensuring your loved ones' safety just by what you know of the military's day-to-day operations. You can protect your loved ones by protecting the information that you know. This is known in the military as "Operations Security" or OPSEC.

WHAT IS OPSEC?

OPSEC is keeping potential adversaries from discovering critical Department of Defense information. As the name suggests, it protects U.S. operations -- planned, in progress and those completed. Success depends on secrecy and surprise, so the military can accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies of freedom want this information, and they are not just after the military member to get it. They want you, the family member.

UNOFFICIAL WEB SITES

The posting of pictures and information that is pertinent to your loved ones' military unit to personal or family Web sites has the potential to jeopardize their safety and that of the entire unit. Contact any of your unit's security representatives or station Public Affairs for any OPSEC questions or clarification. Please do your part in contributing to OPSEC and keep our U.S. forces safe.

- **WHAT INFORMATION IS SENSITIVE?**

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INFORMATION: The following examples may help you in defining parameters for your communications. It is important to remember that there are many more examples than those listed below:

1. Detailed information about the mission of assigned units.
2. Details concerning locations and times of unit deployments.
3. Personnel transactions that occur in large number (e.g., pay information, power of attorney, wills or deployment information).
4. References to trends in unit morale or personnel problems.
5. Details concerning security or operational procedures.

PUZZLE PIECES: By being a military family member, you will often know some bits of critical information. These bits of information may seem insignificant. However, to a trained adversary they are small pieces of a puzzle that highlight what U.S. forces are doing and

planning. Remember, the elements of security and surprise is vital to the accomplishment of U.S. goals and collective DOD personnel protection.

Where and how you discuss this information is just as important as with whom you discuss it. An adversary's agents tasked with collecting information frequently visit some of the same stores, clubs, recreational areas or places of worship as you do. Determined individuals can easily collect data from cordless and cellular phones and even baby monitors using inexpensive receivers available from local electronics stores. If anyone, especially a foreign national, persistently seeks information, notify your military sponsor immediately.

- **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

There are many countries and organizations that would like to harm Americans and degrade U.S. influence in the world. It is possible and not unprecedented for spouses and family members of U.S. military personnel to be targeted for intelligence collection. This is true in the United States and especially true overseas! What can you do?

1. **BE ALERT**

Foreign governments and organizations can collect significant amounts of useful information by using spies. A foreign agent may use a variety of approaches to befriend someone and get sensitive information. This sensitive information can be critical to the success of a terrorist or spy, and consequently deadly to Americans.

2. **BE CAREFUL**

There may be times when your spouse cannot talk about the specifics of his or her job. It is very important to conceal and protect certain information such as flight schedules, ship movements, temporary duty locations and installation activities, just to name a few. Something as simple as a phone discussion concerning where your spouse is going on temporary duty or deploying to can be very useful to U.S. adversaries.

3. **PROTECTING CRITICAL INFORMATION**

Even though this information may not be secret, it is what the Department of Defense calls "critical information." Critical information deals with specific facts about military intentions, capabilities, operations or activities. If an adversary knew this detailed information, U.S. mission accomplishment and personnel safety could be jeopardized. It must be protected to ensure an adversary doesn't gain a significant advantage. By being a member of the military family, you will often know some bits of critical information. Do not discuss them outside of your immediate family and especially not over the telephone.