

OPSEC

Don't give 'bad guys' information through loose talk

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RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — John Wayne used to say, "Talk low. Talk slow. Don't say too much."

That is good advice in today's military environment as we conduct Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. It is smart to limit what we say and who we say it to. It is good OPSEC, or operations security.

OPSEC is a process of denying information to our enemies — that is, any information, positive or negative, classified or unclassified. It includes casual chitchat with the cashier at the department store, conversations at restaurants and clubs, or news clippings sent to friends and family via mail or e-mail.

Since the tragedies of Sept. 11, 2001, I'm sure your friends and relatives have phoned or e-mailed you, like mine have contacted me. One college friend who knows I go to the Pentagon on occasion sent me an e-mail to tell me things he'd wanted to say to me for 30 years. He was that scared for my fragile existence.

I would bet some of your relatives and friends called to

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ask you what you thought about what happened and, knowing that you work for the military, what you think the military ought to do.

Here is where OPSEC enters the picture.

The first thing to think about is who is listening to you other than the person you are talking to. Landline phone calls can be monitored, and cell phone and portable phone conversations are even easier to monitor. E-mail messages can be intercepted, as well. When you are in public, there are other customers around you at the store and other people who can hear what you're saying at a restaurant or club.

Who are these people? What are their intentions? Those are questions you can't answer, and that is why you need to practice OPSEC. It is the fine line between freedom of speech and our responsibility as members of the United States Department of Defense.

Let me tell you about an

incident that once happened to me at a hotel bar in Addison, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. Four men were sitting next to me. All four said things that made it obvious to me they were commercial airline pilots. I tuned in to their conversation.

One man was a reservist who was talking about the combat capabilities he had observed while flying the C-130J Hercules. I sat next to them, feigning disinterest. I finally identified myself, and you should have seen the looks on their faces. A little old lady not only knew what a C-130J is, but also could tell them they should not be discussing the combat capabilities of an Air Force weapons system in a bar.

In another example, an Air Force member sent some friends, via his home e-mail, an article that appeared on Yahoo entitled, "Report: U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan." He made the subject of the e-mail message, "So much for keeping a secret." From his home, he sent the

message to two friends and a copy to himself at work. At work, he forwarded the e-mail to his branch.

That was a violation of OPSEC. This person had attached credibility to the article's contents, whether or not the article's assertion was true, that U.S. special forces were indeed on the ground in Afghanistan. The subject line he put on the e-mail also implied credibility.

This could have alerted the "bad guys" that this was classified and true information. The fact that this person is an Air Force NCO could also have indicated to our foes that the information was credible.

In this war of information, we must be ever mindful that what we say could be our undoing. What we say to our friends, relatives, acquaintances or to the store clerk who asks what we know or think about the current situation could reach enemy ears.

The general public looks to the Air Force to defend their country. Let us not lose this war to loose talk or careless paper handling.

Editor's note: Throughout the ORI, it is imperative all Arctic Warriors watch what they say and do to protect vital information.



STAFF SGT. SUE NUCKOLLS

Dealing with the media

Master Sgt. Christopher Brown, paralegal NCO assigned to the Base Legal Office, talks to "reporters" during a recent Operational Readiness Exercise. Telling the 3rd Wing story to a global audience helps build public trust and support for a deployment. Arctic Warriors are reminded to refer all media queries to the 3rd Wing Public Affairs Office at 552-8151 or 552-4443. Never discuss specific troop movements for the safety and security of personnel and the integrity of the mission.

TIME: Now's the time to showcase Elmendorf's best

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If we all have the same information as the IG, we can perform as senior NCOs and officers in the daily discussions with the IG team.

If they have more information than we do, we are immediately on the defensive and will constantly be trying to catch up. Effective communication is key to mission success.

Attention to Detail:

Combat involves a great deal of stress, and can make even simple tasks difficult to execute. We all know this because we have been executing combat operations for the past 14 years. The correct attention to detail includes following technical orders, work cards, procedures and policies. Attention to detail does not have to be painful, it takes less energy to do things correctly than it does to miss something the first time and have to repeat the entire work card. If we have solid

attention to detail, safe operations will result. Safety is an outcome of a good plan. A plan that is well thought-out, thoroughly briefed, and precisely executed is inherently safe. Part of every plan is mutual support with our teammates. Look out for your fellow Arctic Warriors by ensuring they're adhering to rest cycles, staying hydrated, and wearing proper protective gear and reflective belts during low light hours.

If we have the right amount

of attention to detail, communication up and down the chain of command and a positive attitude, we will each have the game face of a serious combat professional. Peak your efforts on these areas during the ORI to prove to the IG how remarkable our people really are when we are under pressure.

The PACAF Inspector General will put us to the test, and we are ready. Show them what you are made of!!!