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## Marine For Life Info



Nationwide  
transition  
assistance for  
Marines



## Marines reminded to practice security at the source

Submitted by: 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing  
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Story by Sgt. Nathan K. Laforte

**AL ASAD, Iraq (Jan. 29, 2005) --**  
"Knowledge is power."

This quote has been stated and restated since being written into public domain by Sir Francis Bacon, an English author, in

his book "Religious Meditations, of Heresies," published in 1597.

The knowledge, as it pertains to Iraq, empowers those who can use the information against us in the Global War on Terrorism. Signs and reminders about operational security, or OPSEC, are posted at key locations inside buildings reminding service members throughout the country to keep important information safe.

All these "ads" are aimed at keeping information safe from prying eyes and ears, said Cpl. Christopher Goldsmith, intelligence analyst, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

"We don't want to put any information out there that could possibly be detrimental (to military forces) should somebody get a hold of it to try and plan an attack," said the 23-year-old from Highland, Calif.

The consequences of letting information slip are very costly, said Sgt. Shawn M. Martin, anti-terrorism/force protection chief, MAG-16.

There are different levels of information that service members should think about before they discuss it with people. Classified information is designated at a particular level and is usually not a problem for service members to keep secure.

"Classified information (is secured) and that just goes without saying," Goldsmith explained. "Because of its nature, people handle it very differently."

The most common information that is leaked is sensitive in nature but not classified. Sensitive information can be described as any information that is not classified but can provide an enemy with a general idea of capabilities and future plans. Although it may seem harmless, it can eventually become very dangerous in the wrong hands.

"Operational security specifically targets sensitive information, or stuff you shouldn't be talking about. Sensitive information is still damaging and can lead to any number of things happening," Goldsmith described. "It's sensitive for a reason. It's another piece of the puzzle the enemy can put together. Terrorist 'A' talks to terrorist 'B,' who talks to terrorist 'C.' They can take pieces of information, write them down and compile those notes to get a bigger picture of what's going on."

Sensitive information doesn't cover any one specific area, but a variety of different information that can affect the mission. With Marine Forces due to rotate within the coming months, OPSEC may be more important than ever.

"Troop movements, exact dates of departure and embarkation information are things we shouldn't be discussing publicly," Goldsmith said. "You don't want anyone to have an idea of where everything is flowing through."

There are many different forms of communication that terrorists will try to tap into to get the "bigger picture," he added.

"Telephones, e-mail and word of mouth are communication methods that can be compromised fairly easily. Word of mouth is probably the easiest of all of those," he detailed. "Anything you write down, you want to police it. Marines sometimes carry notebooks, or 'little green books of knowledge,' which are a goldmine for information on what you do day-to-day. You need to keep that stuff safe."

Most slips of sensitive information initially seem harmless enough, Martin explained.

“(Service members) just start talking to people back home and they want to ease (them) with information. The Marines will forget about the main objective, which is to keep information secret, and they let things slip,” he continued. “The families need to understand there’s a lot of stuff you just can’t talk about. Let them know you’re all right and everything, but when it comes to the military, the bare minimum is all they need to know.”

Letting more information out than is necessary could give terrorists the upper hand they might not have had on their own.

“We have Coke and they have Diet Coke when it comes to talking about us and the terrorists and our weapons,” said Martin, a 27-year-old from Burlington, Iowa. “The only way (terrorists) can get an upper hand on us is to know our movements, where we’re going to be and other things like that so they can plan ahead and catch us by surprise.”

For military members getting ready to punch the clock on their tours and return home, vigilance needs to be maintained.

“I think everybody tends to get a little lax right about the time they are leaving, just because they’re going to be home (in a short period of time). They start giving away specific information,” Goldsmith noted.

Preparation for families of deploying service members is also crucial for the coming months.

“You need to plan ahead and put your loved ones in the mindset that there will be things you won’t be able to talk about. They have to understand that there is a limit of what they can get out of you,” He said.

When all is said and done simple steps will either cause death or save lives. If information is protected, knowledge and power will be kept from enemy hands.

“OPSEC costs Marines their lives. Even the most minor violation somewhere could cost somebody’s life,” Martin said. “You may not know the person (who dies) and you may not care, but someone cares. The whole reason we’re over here is to take care of everybody and make sure that we all go back.”

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**Photos included with story:**



Operational security is being emphasized during the beginning of the second year U.S. troops have been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The next few months in Iraq are expected to be turbulent for service members as the Iraqi elections draw near, as well as another scheduled rotation of troops. During these events, troops are reminded by their commanders that keeping valuable information out of enemy hands will save lives in the long run. Photo by: Sgt. Nathan K. Laforte

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