

MSOF QUICK-GUIDE PERSONAL, FAMILY & OPERATIONAL SECURITY

SUCCESS IN PUBLIC AND ONLINE VENUES

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FAMILIES & THRIVING SECURELY

Families should know how to navigate public and online outlets with appropriate caution, comfort, and safety. Practicing good personal, family, and operational security habits helps reduce stress and enables families to thrive. Special Operations families need to pursue their interests; however, our families often delay or opt out of educational advancement, jobs, or other personal or professional opportunities because they are unsure how to navigate military life-related stress and security risks over long periods of time.

- A 2018 MSOF survey showed **54%** Special Operations family members wanted information about navigating professional or educational opportunities.
- Often families are unsure of the name they can/should use online or in official spaces.
- Families may need guidance about what should not be shared online or in public outlets.

Security and operational security are a real concerns, but every aspect of your life does not need to be secret and hidden. Individuals and families can navigate security concerns and minimize risk practicing good habits and utilizing community advice. It is important to feel safe, confident, and capable of pursuing your interests because these are essential qualities of strong families capable of thriving in the Special Operations community.

UNDERSTANDING SECURITY

Foreign entities and terror organizations search for information about military and government employees. Recent examples of threats that impacted the Special Operations community include:

- In 2015, Special Operations-connected families were identified by ISIS and added to terror lists.
- The Al Qaeda Handbook instructs terrorists to search for addresses, work units, specific routine information, children, and locations visited.

These are difficult scenarios to consider/prepare for, but knowing how to wisely navigate in public or online venues is critical.

KNOW YOUR RISKS & HOW TO AVOID THEM

Some information should never be publicly shared because it may impact operational security. Other types of information impact your personal security and influence your individual choices about information you share. Share this information with extended family and friends because their actions may impact your family.

- **Know the types of information that threatening entities look for.**

Names/Pictures of Service Members	Military or travel locations	Family Details
Specific dates and times	Military unit name	Addresses and personal information

- **Always navigate security-related issues with caution.** Consult your military unit if you have any questions.
- **Alter your legal name on personal social media accounts.** Many people opt to utilize a nickname, their middle name, an abbreviation, or otherwise altered form of their name on personal social media. Have a conversation with your service member about the name you might choose.
- **Talk to your service member about family precautions that ensure success and safety.**
- **Post family pictures online with care.** Online social media outlets or geotagging of digital pictures may expose your location. Geotagging of digital pictures can be disabled or you can practice not posting family pictures online.
- **Be aware of physical and online places that could pose threats or misinformation.** These places include restaurants, cafes, social media accounts and technology outlets, and email or phone phishing attempts. Twitter was recently flagged as a prominent outlet for disinformation.
- **Your level of concern may vary.** Per the service member's rank, job, unit, or personal preference for caution/secretcy, or goals.
- **Adapt and be flexible.** World events and technology changes impact operational, personal, or family security guidance.

Additional Resources

1. **MSOF's Quick Guide:** Navigating A Professional Presence: Success in Public and Online Venues
2. **MSOF's Quick Guide:** Navigating Professional Name-use: A Special Operations Family Tool
3. **USSOCOM Operational Security PDF:** <https://www.socom.mil/FFRP/Documents/Family%20OPSEC%20Trifold.pdf>
4. **FBI's Resource for Scams and Safety:** <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety>
5. **Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Information:** <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0272-how-keep-your-personal-information-secure>

The Military Special Operations Family Collaborative is a 501(c)3 organization founded in 2018 to enable all Special Operations families to live well. To learn more about the work of MSOF, please subscribe to our newsletter, visit our website, or find us on social media.