# OPSEC AWARENESS EDUCATION

## Guidance and Recommendations for Implementing an Effective Awareness Education Effort

There is a good argument for saying that a good OPSEC awareness program is the key to successful OPSEC. AFI 10-701, OPSEC, states "*all personnel (military, DAF Civilians, and DoD Contractors) require a general knowledge of threats, vulnerabilities, countermeasures and their responsibilities associated with protecting critical information.*" But how best to accomplish this mandate? What are the most successful ways to raise awareness to levels that spur positive and direct action within your organization? Anyone can "*provide an overview of the OPSEC process, the definition of OPSEC, its purpose, what is critical information, the individual's role in protecting critical information and the general adversary threat to the AF's critical information.*" However, truly effective OPSEC Signature Managers (OSMs) can raise awareness to levels that inspire application and operationalization of the most essential tenets of OPSEC across their organization. Note: This product addresses **OPSEC education** mandated in AFI 10-701; it does not address formal **OPSEC training** requirements for designated OPSEC practitioners (i.e., OSM, etc.).

## Required OPSEC Awareness Education as Defined by AFI 10-701

### Mission Oriented

Mission oriented awareness focuses on how your unique OPSEC efforts directly support your unique organization executing your unique missions and/or events. Focus your education efforts on educating all personnel on understanding:

- Your unit's unique OPSEC threats
- Your unit's unique critical information
- Your unit's unique, job specific OPSEC indicators
- Your unit's unique directed OPSEC countermeasures

Tailoring your mission oriented OPSEC awareness education to your unique requirements ensures meaningful application and safeguarding of your information. Providing generic or cookie cutter OPSEC materials has repeatedly proven to be ineffective. While it may meet basic compliance mandates, it does not contribute to successful, effective OPSEC. Note: Note the emphasis on uniqueness.

### Pre-Deployment

Saying; "*don't talk about the deployment*" simply doesn't work. Each deployment is unique requiring unique OPSEC awareness education to protect its unique requirements. Three distinct aspects of pre-deployment education include:

- What do unit members need to know **before** they deploy? Consider: What aspect of this deployment is sensitive (dates, unit, size, destination, etc.)? Has the deployment been announced by Public Affairs?
- What do unit members need to protect while **enroute** to their destination? Consider: How will personnel deploy (civilian flights, military airlift, etc.)? Is there a stop-over point while enroute?
- What do unit members need to know (and do) upon **arrival** at their destination? Consider: Is information about the destination available from the deployment location's OPSEC POC? Upon arrival, does need to protect any aspect of mission change? Are there new threats at new location?

Don't forget, your successful pre-deployment training relies on a close working relationship between the OSM and Unit Deployment Managers.

### Family Awareness

Adversaries see military family members as a soft target and an easy source of useful information. Family members who recognize and understand "what to protect", "how to protect it" and "why it needs protection" become engaged and proactive in safeguarding your organizations critical information and indicators. Please reference our Family OPSEC Smart Card for tips and ideas on effectively educating family members within your unit.

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## Awareness Education Options

### Is a Great OPSEC Presentation Enough?

OPM's and OSM's are directly responsible for developing OPSEC education to mitigate the risk to their missions.  Are the briefings mentioned on the front of the smart card enough?  Can a single briefing convey all that is needed for retention, application and operationalization of OPSEC?  While a strong awareness education presentation can have a positive effect your unit member's understanding and actions, <u>continuous</u> OPSEC messaging will reinforce your message long after everyone has left the briefing room.  While mission oriented and pre-deployment awareness education is mandatory for all personnel there are many options available which can be used to maintain awareness and reiterate your OPSEC message.  While the "must-do" items address minimum compliance requirements other "nice-to-do" actions can be used to maximize, reinforce and greatly amplify OPSEC across your mission sets.

### Selling Your OPSEC Message

How do you convince unit members that practicing good OPSEC is crucial to the successful execution of your unit's mission?  How do you convince them that if OPSEC fails, there can be an adverse outcome?  That missions can fail, that people can die… that we're not invincible.

Consider benchmarking a proven concept; product advertising.

**Advertising:**

- *Informs* people about your product (OPSEC)
- *Convinces* people your product (OPSEC) is best
- *Enhances* the image of the product (OPSEC)
- *Reveals* new uses for your product (OPSEC)
- *Announces* new (OPSEC) products
- *Draws* customers to the product (OPSEC)
- *Holds* existing (OPSEC) customers

Successfully "advertising" OPSEC will raise awareness and knowledge within the organization which will drive unit members to actually prefer using OPSEC by giving them the conviction of the value of OPSEC when applied to their mission.  While considering your options always keep in mind that the mission-oriented and pre-deployment presentations are where your strongest message should be delivered.

### Additional Awareness Ideas

Awareness products are a great way to spread your OPSEC message but should be tailored and relevant to your specific, base unit and mission.

- Newsletters (printed or electronic).  Perhaps in partnership with other security disciplines?
- Articles in base or unit publications, web pages, or official social media.
- Posters.  Great everyday reminders but need to be moved or replaced periodically.
- E-mail.  Short, specific OPSEC messages
- Handouts. Tri-folds, guides, and other formats.
- Additional Briefings beyond your mission oriented briefings; i.e., family OPSEC, OPSEC in cyber space, contract officials, etc.
- Informal briefing sessions such as office meetings, working groups, conferences, etc.
- Promotional items such as:
  - Lanyards with your OPSEC message
  - Laminated cards that hang next to your access badge and/or CAC; possibly including directed countermeasures
  - Pens, pencils, stress balls, coasters, coffee mugs, playing cards, hand sanitizer, Post-Its, koozies, stress balls, backpacks, etc.

Note: Speak with your leadership and finance POC for guidance on purchasing any OPSEC items.

### Special Note on OPSEC Awareness Information for Personnel Supporting Your OPSEC Efforts

Remember your need to provide additional OPSEC information to OPSEC Coordinators (if appointed) and your partner program POCs such as Public Affairs, contracting, various traditional security programs, FOIA, and your OPSEC Working Group, etc.  These POCs require more robust OPSEC information than general unit members and they are not normally allowed to attend the AF OPSEC Course.