

Operations Security

Operations Security is governed by AFI 10-1101. According to the AFI, “OPSEC is the process of identifying critical friendly information and analyzing friendly actions related to operations, acquisition, and other activities to identify those actions that can be observed by potential adversaries and determine indicators that could be collected and synthesized to derive critical information in time to be useful to an adversary and eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly information to adversary exploitation. OPSEC is not a collection of specific rules and instructions. Rather, it is a methodology applicable to any operational activity.”

What does this mean, in English?

The success of military operations, the lives of servicemen and women in harm's way and the lives of your children and yourself may be jeopardized by seemingly small bits of unclassified information from telephone conversations, e-mails and small talk.

Picture a large jigsaw puzzle with many pieces. Sometimes two pieces fit together and sometimes they don't. Pieces that don't fit are set aside until a match shows up.

In operations security, every bit of information is a puzzle piece. When alone, some information might seem unimportant. But, when matched with others, the entire picture is complete. The enemy can analyze these bits of information to put together the big picture of military action in any operational environment.

Our growing reliance on electronic communications has become the singular greatest threat to OPSEC. It has had an alarming by-product with what we are comfortable discussing in open, unprotected areas - the local barber shop, restaurants, sporting events, etc.

Bottom line? We must balance our fundamental right to freedom of speech with our responsibility to deny critical information to our adversaries. Jealously guard information you possess, including unit participation, troop movements and locations, deployment/return dates, equipment locations, operational status of equipment, mission taskings and leadership movement. "If in doubt, leave it out" of your conversations. It is an old cliché but, "loose lips do sink ships." A little effort will make it much harder for our adversaries to gain valuable information regarding Air Force military operations.

If you'd like more information on operations security, communications security, or the kinds of things you and your family shouldn't be talking about “in public”, contact the Operations Security Office on any military installation.

