

Information Awareness Extends Beyond the Uniform

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ON CYBER PATROL



The national awareness in our wartime footing is nothing like what our parents and grandparents experienced during prior conflicts. Government posters rallying support or warning of foreign agents do not cover every free bit of wall space. Our current national wartime knowledge is driven by news bites from competing and often opposing viewpoints. Our news consumption is provided by mass media and the internet. Technology gives us all the information we could possibly want – often more than we can process. Our hunger for immediate knowledge, and gratification, is supported by our great resources. It could also become our greatest weakness long after the conventional weapons go silent.

The ability for “bad guys,” foreign or domestic to do us harm has never been greater. The greatest threat does not lie in the Mumbai or 9/11 style of attack, but in the laptops, PDAs, cell phones and internet ready devices that have become part of our daily lives. Now this is hardly news. However, it is a fact that is easily and often ignored if such an attack has never been personally experienced (or discovered). For all the dire warnings and news of viruses and other malware that fly across our screens, we as a nation are still vulnerable. Other than the relatively small group of private and government policy gurus that are fully aware of the threat and how to combat it, there is really only one other large and growing group of knowledgeable cyber security and information awareness personnel. That group is our military veterans.

The military is acutely aware of the threat and has been battling it from day one. While there have been victories and setbacks, one thing is certain. Cyber warfare, large and small, is a fight that will never end and one in which the military cannot always protect our citizens. This is because the most effective defense lies within each individual's actions. Yet, our military is perhaps still our greatest hope for safety. Within every military member who retires or leaves active duty is knowledge on the basics of how to combat internet and digital threats. This is knowledge that needs to be passed along to family, friends, co-workers and anyone else who will listen.

Military cyber security and information awareness training is far better than anything most people will ever receive. Passing along your knowledge on how to protect Personally Identifying Information, avoid malware, recognize phishing and other scams and stay safe in social network environments is critical to our national defense. Does this mean every member of the military is the poster child for IA? Hardly. But, they have been trained and indoctrinated in cyber security policies and procedures. That is a resource we cannot afford to squander.

This is a call for all military personnel who are currently out of uniform. As you work to readjust to a non-military lifestyle, as you look for jobs, find a spouse, or raise a family, there is one last duty to perform for your country. Help protect those around you from the dangers of the internet. Help them use its power and resources without falling prey to cyber criminals and foreign agents. Keep that cyber uniform on a little longer and the nation's appreciation will be that much deeper.