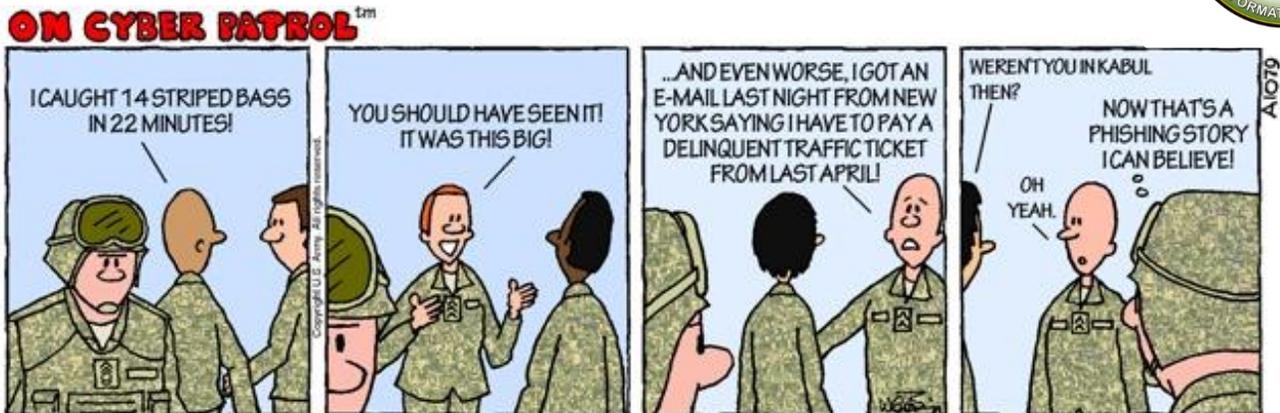


Are You Listening Out There?

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Over the years On Cyber Patrol has taken on the issue of phishing many times. We're guessing that people are really tired of hearing about it. After all, how many times does any one person need to be told to watch out for online scams, not to open attachments from unknown sources, use a spam filter and software that scan the contents of emails? There are even Army manuals like the new Social Media Handbook that talk about the dangers and the benefits of tweets and blogs. So why do we come back to the same subject time after time? Because, a few of you aren't listening. Actually, more than a few.

In the military there are a number of national security reasons for not giving up critical mission data and Personally Identifying Information (PII). When data like that is lost, operations and lives are at risk. It's not simply some annoying downtime while your computer is cleaned and any network compromise is evaluated and mitigated. The Army even makes it easy to stay safe. After all, the Army is here to help make your life easier, right? They have software, security protocols, policies and procedures and the famous CAC. Staying safe online should be an easy gig. Using a little common sense and self discipline just means that all you have to worry about is traditional soldier stuff. For example, stuff like keeping your head down because of the enemy taking pot shots at you or staying out of the way of some ticked-off NCO, been that way ever since soldiers wore sandals.

Guess what. It doesn't get better. Whether you are a short-timer or a lifer, eventually you will leave the warm protective embrace of the Army. All your digital devices will be yours and your responsibility. No more Gold Disc. No more SFC Firewall barking at you from the comics. Not only do you have to protect yourself, you have to protect your family from little Sally to old Uncle Fred. Unless they are really cyber savvy, they are constantly threatened by free online games, threats of bank account closings and the ever famous African royalty who needs help moving cash. "My kids know more about digital media than I do" is not a good approach. They know enough to bypass the rules, regulations and device security their parents have (hopefully) set up. Don't think so? Remember your childhood. Most of you were absolute angels, but a few of you (and you know who you are) did everything you could to get around the parents rules.

You learned plenty in the Army. While field stripping a 50 caliber won't come in as handy in your civilian life, what you learned about cyber security and information assurance definitely will. That is, if you have been paying attention. Until the Army experiences zero data loss, zero malware infections, zero network intrusion allowed by careless or intentional actions, the assumption is going to be that somebody still doesn't get it. Remember, you can't return fire against online threats. You can't hunt down the cyber criminals. All you can do is be vigilant. When you leave this wonderful Army, you're on your own in cyber space. So, let's review how to identify and avoid phishing attacks one more time.....