



**U.S. ARMY CYBER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
AND FORT GORDON  
OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE  
Legal Assistance Division**



This Information Paper from the Fort Gordon Legal Assistance Division contains general legal information on a topic upon which Legal Assistance Attorneys typically advise. The information provided is general in nature and does not constitute formal, specific legal advice. If you wish to receive legal advice specific to your situation, please consult an attorney.

**Cyber Advocacy:  
SEXTORTION – Sexual Exploitation of U.S. Servicemembers**

While checking his Facebook account, a young servicemember away from home who maintains an active social media presence to stay in touch with friends and family gets a friend request from a young, attractive female. After chatting via Facebook, the two engage in sexual video chat over Skype while the female secretly hides the fact she is recording the virtual sexual interaction. Afterwards, the female sends the servicemember the video file, threatening to send it to the servicemember's chain of command and family if he doesn't send \$500 to an account in the Philippines. After the servicemember complies, the female demands more money. Another young servicemember receives explicit photographs of a seemingly overage, but young, girl leading to the alleged girl's father, or someone identified as a law enforcement officer, claiming the girl is a minor and threatening to file criminal charges unless the servicemember sends money.

The scenarios above are known as "Sextortion" or sexual extortion, identified by Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) as a cybercrime. Sextortion has become more common as communication is more virtual, particularly amidst the COVID-19 operating environment. Servicemembers, particularly junior enlisted servicemembers, are prime targets for sextortion, because they have steady and stable incomes, are held to high standards of military conduct, and possess security clearances that could lead perpetrators to sensitive military information.

Servicemembers should beware of the following – strangers approaching them online or attempting to "friend" them, even if they appear to have mutual "friends" or their "friends' lists" consist predominantly of U.S. servicemembers; online strangers' use of poor grammar and sentence structure; requests to engage in explicit video chat or exchange sexually explicit images almost immediately after initiating contact or "friending"; video calls beginning with females undressed or engaging in a sexual act; and, communications from people identifying themselves as "law enforcement officials" via text message, e-mail, or telephone. Law enforcement personnel will always provide in-person notification of any suspected involvement with criminal activity.

To protect against being a Sextortion victim, Army CID recommends the following – refrain from engaging in sexually explicit activities online; adjust social media privacy settings to limit public information; use caution when accepting "friend" requests or communicating with unknown people online; avoid advertising or discussing U.S. military and/or U.S. government affiliations; turn off electronic devices and cover webcams when not in use; safeguard your personal banking and credit card information from unknown recipients; and, update antivirus software and avoid downloading apps, files, or e-mail attachments from unverified sources. Also, trust your instincts – perpetrators are highly sophisticated and able to trick their victims into a false sense of security. If you have suspicions about the person you are communicating with, immediately cease contact with them.

If you believe you are a victim of Sextortion, the following actions are recommended: **CEASE** all communications with the perpetrator; **CONTACT** your command, your local Legal Assistance Office, and your local Army CID office (contact CID at 1-844-ARMY-CID if unable to reach local office); **REPORT** the crime to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Complaint Center at <https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx> and to the social media/e-mail/internet service provider; **FILE** a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov/#crnt&panel1-1>. **DO NOT** submit any payment. **SAVE** all messages/communications.

**Additional Information**

For additional information, the Fort Gordon Legal Assistance Division is located at 267 Heritage Park Lane, Building 35202, Fort Gordon, Georgia. You may reach the office by calling (706) 791-7812 / 7813. Please be advised you must have an appointment to consult with one of the attorneys; however, paralegals are available during hours of operation to answer general questions and notarize documents.