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UNCLASSIFIED

# SOCIAL MEDIA ROMANCE SCAMS: MILITARY IMPERSONATORS

## Overview

Be vigilant and do not fall prey to these scams.

The West Virginia Intelligence / Fusion Center is providing this information to bring awareness to a prevalent internet romance cyber scam involving persons impersonating U.S. Soldiers for monetary gains.

Impersonators claim to be U.S. Soldiers, often deployed overseas, who are in need of financial assistance. The perpetrators have gained access to photos of real U.S. Soldiers to seem creditable; however, most impersonators are from other countries preying on unsuspecting victims to fund criminal and/or terroristic activities.

The West Virginia Intelligence / Fusion Center urges citizens utilizing social media to be aware of personal information publicly viewable on the internet. Please do not send money or personal information to people that you do not know, or accounts with which you are not familiar.

## Victims and Common Characteristics of Scammers

Many victims have been identified in West Virginia. Though anyone can fall victim to these cyber criminals, their targets tend to be:

- Women
- 30-55 Years of Age
- Active on Social Media and/or Dating Websites

Victims believe they are romantically involved with a soldier. The impersonator gains the trust and sympathy of the victim and requests financial assistance. Many of these criminals will attempt to gain the sympathy of the victims by telling them that they are a widow or a single parent.

## Social Media Profiles Impersonating Soldiers and Red Flags Associated with Tactics



Below is a list of **Red Flags** commonly associated with these scams:

- ❗ Quickly suggest using an instant messaging application to communicate.
- ❗ Social media profile, where contact was first established, will be deleted.
- ❗ Claims that meeting is destiny or fate.
- ❗ Immediately ask for photo and offer photos of themselves, which have been fraudulently obtained.
- ❗ Quickly ask for an address to send gifts, such as flowers or candy.
- ❗ Within 48 hours perpetrators will often claim to love you.

## Real Soldiers Do Not Need

The following list contains items recently solicited by individuals claiming to be soldiers deployed overseas:

- A satellite phone, calling card, or permission to call.
- Access to your bank account.
- Money shipped via Western Union or Money Gram.
- Permission from a “fiancé” to go on leave or retire.
- An “agent” to ship a box.
- Anyone to pay for medical expenses (self or family)
- Money for food
- Anyone to pay for a plane ticket to go home or on leave.

**SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING**