The Outlook

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Tis the Season...to break into your vehicle

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Special to the Outlook

This year there has been an increase in Soldiers and dependents in the Vicenza and Livorno military communities who have been reported as victims of theft.

Now, as people are beginning to shop for the holidays, thieves are beginning to "shop" for vehicles that offer "gifts."

A majority of the incidents of larceny have involved the loss of government and private documents and equipment from military and civilian vehicles. Government laptops, military identification cards, gas coupons, official (red) passports, tourist (blue) passports, SETAF and civilian driver licenses, and various banking documents, to include credit and debit cards are just some of the items stolen from vehicles.

Did you know your military ID has all the information a thief needs in order to steal your identity?

Your personal documentation (military ID cards, SETAF driver's license, stateside driver's licenses, passports, social security cards, etc.) not only carry a large price when it comes to identity theft, but these items are also worth a monetary value to terrorists.

When you make it easy for a criminal to steal your ID by leaving these types of documents in plain view in your vehicle, you are making yourself a soft target for both the criminal and the terrorist. This can put you, your family, your friends and our community at risk.

There is also an increased vulnerability to the community at large with the loss of government property and result of breach of information from stolen computers and other government automation devices, should they fall into the hands of the wrong person(s). This has an affect on individual and command mission readiness and the safety of the SETAF community.

The modus operandi for this crime includes two major factors, which have resulted in the increase in the reports of thefts within the community and surrounding areas.

I am an American! Just look at my car!

The first factor is the ability to identify and target U.S. vehicles.

A picture says a thousand words, all of them about you and who you are. There is an ever growing trend in our community of cars being broken into, especially when they are located at off post quarters or downtown in unlighted areas. However, as a community we are not taking the correct operations security (OPSEC) measure to prevent these break ins.

So you own a large American car, that's okay. However, those stickers you have from Fort Bragg telling the world you are Airborne and the parking pass sticker in the center of your front window. Those are OPSEC indicators.

Are you a proud member of the Boy Scouts, Masons, or Infantry? That is fine; however telling the world through a bumper sticker may not be the best way to let everyone know. You are inadvertently telling a criminal that there is a good chance there might be something of worth in your vehicle to steal.

Secondly, private and government property is left out is plain sight and not secured properly within the vehicles. Do not EVER underestimate a criminal's desire and ability to obtain your belongings. A locked vehicle is no deterrence to the perpetrator(s), as once the vehicle is identified, the thief usually breaks a window to gain access. Once inside the vehicle, the thief usually grabs what is in plain sight or easily accessible.

The inconvenience of losing of these types of documents are too numerous to count.

In the case of a stolen passport, it could take a months replace, in the case of a stolen or lost ID card you need to visit the MP station, the ID card section and the IACS office.

Getting a replacement state side driver's license could be a totally different story depending on the state you are from! After the events of Sept. 11, 2001, many states stopped renewing and/or replacing driver's licenses through the mail. This could mean you may have to fly back to the states and renew your driver's license.

Currently, there is no Army or USAREUR Regulation, which specifically prohibits the storing or safeguarding of private or government documents or equipment in government or privately owned vehicles.

But that doesn't excuse you from your OPSEC duties. Take a good look at and in your vehicle before retiring for the night and bring inside any items that could compromise your security – and that of your military community.

1. ACU blouse. 2. Beret 3. Computer bag (even if it's empty, it will still draw the attention of a thief. 4. What's inside the compartment? Gas coupons and a passport. (Photos by Diana Bahr, USAG Vicenza Public Affairs)

(Right) WHAT was this person thinking?? NEVER leave your passport, gas coupons or other valuable items in your vehicle.

You can't help what vehicle you brought over from the states, but you can minimize drawing attention to your vehicle by removing stickers that clearly identify your vehicle as American-owned.

Safety tips for all seasons

Command Safety Office
Press Release

Staying alert and taking precautions both at home and on the road can help ensure your vacation is a safe and fun time for you and your loved ones.

√ Do not discuss your travel plans in public places; only tell those who need to know that you will be away.

√ Ensure, prior to departing, that all doors and windows are secure including the garage.

√ Leave a light, radio, etc., on to make it appear that someone is home. Use an automatic timer if possible.

√ Unplug or turn off telephone ringers if you don't have an answering machine.

√ Unplug unnecessary electrical items.

√ Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your home and remove mail, newspapers, etc.

√ Do not hide a spare key; leave one with a trusted neighbor.

√ Use civilian addresses for tickets, luggage tags, reservations and other travel documents.

√ Ensure your unit/ supervisor knows where you intend to be and how to get a hold of you.

√ Report loss or theft of your military ID or credit cards immediately.

√ Never leave keys or other valuables unattended.

√ Never leave your luggage unattended.

√ Do not display or wear military IDs, stickers or unit logos or leave items of military equipment or clothing visible in your car. Avoid using your rank as part of your name.

√ Keep a low profile, and be discreet in revealing your NATO and/or a military affiliation.

√ Do not flash large sums of money, and do not carry documents, credit cards, or large sums of money that you do not need to have on your person.

√ Dress like the natives. Don't stand out conspicuously by your dress or actions.

√ Carry out a visual inspection of your vehicle, to include the undercarriage, before entering, when it has been left unattended.

√ Avoid secluded areas, poorly lit streets and narrow alleys.

√ Stay away from known "trouble spots."

√ Be wary of pickpockets, especially in crowded areas and at major tourist attractions.

Community Mail Room December hours

Community Mail Room office
Press Release

As a reminder, when you close your mail box, SPIN the dial to ensure your box locks! The CMR has found numerous boxes open during their inspections. This leaves you vulnerable to identity theft!

Monday-Friday: 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Dec. 2, 9 and 16: 10 a.m.- 2 p.m.

Dec. 23: 3-7 p.m. *These late hours will allow CMR personnel to receive last-minute mail and put notices in mail boxes before closing time.*

Dec. 24 (Sunday): 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Dec. 25: Closed

Dec. 26-29: Regular hours

Dec. 30, 31 and Jan. 1: Closed