

The internet and you – have you tried googling yourself lately?

By Glen Coomber

Just about everyone uses the internet for recreation these days, whether you're an auction junkie scouring eBay or into genealogy and researching the family tree, there's plenty to keep you amused in your spare time.

However, when using the internet at home most of us probably give little thought to the data trail we leave behind and the motives of the people we meet online.

Foreign intelligence services (usually called a 'FIS') commit considerable resources to monitoring Defence community related sites. Their intent is clear, they want to meet members of the Australian Defence community and find out as much information as they can. This really shouldn't be surprising, after all it's easier than trying to attack our computer systems directly, and far less risky for them to strike up conversation on a chat site than cultivate an agent here in Australia.

With this in mind, here are some simple guidelines to follow to ensure that you don't put the security of the nation and our service men and women at risk:

- Stay alert for people you talk to online who may have an ulterior motive. A good intelligence operator won't be obvious with their questions. They will gradually gather information about you and write it down. An intelligence operator may ask questions, either directly or indirectly, about your unit, your speciality, the specialist training course you went on the other week. It's all about piecing these elements together to help them form the bigger picture.
- Never discuss anything classified on the internet! Whether you're talking to a friend in an operational theatre via Skype or contributing to a general

military website, it's critical that you don't reveal our secrets. You should never discuss any aspect of operations – as noted above the smallest snippet of information can be helpful to an intelligence operative.

- It's also important never to confirm anything that has already been leaked into the public domain. The fact that something is published in the media does not remove your responsibility to protect sensitive information, nor give you licence to speak about it. If it's there, and you know it's true and it's classified, then don't draw further attention to it or yourself.
- If you must talk about your work then keep it general, especially if your work involves sensitive matters. The fact that you work with sensitive material, even if it is in an administrative capacity, is of great interest to a FIS. In some areas of Defence you will be instructed not to discuss certain aspects of your work, and if so, you must abide by this. If you don't know if any limitations apply then ask your Unit Security Officer for guidance.
- When going on deployment, you can tell your online friends that you may be offline for a while but don't give them details about where you are going, when you leave and when you expect to be back!
- Another tricky area is registering your CV with employment companies online. You should give potential employers a good feel for what you have worked on without providing specific detail. For instance, instead of providing a list of the Defence projects you have worked on, you can list the skills you applied in the job, with a request that employers contact you for a more detailed CV if required.

Use of the internet is growing in Australia, so it pays to be aware of the security issues and how they could affect you. One way to find out just how much information about you is available in the public domain is to try googling yourself.

Go on, give it a go and you may be surprised by how much you find!