

# Defend Your Financial Well-Being, Too

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Despite 373 years of service throughout the United States, the dual responsibility of the National Guard to protect life and property here at home and to defend our country worldwide is not fully understood by many of those they safeguard.

One group who may be very aware of your unit's mobilization, however, is the con artist. The stress inflicted when you were selling cars, installing heat pumps or sitting at your desk one day and lacing up army boots the next, can contribute to your vulnerability to investment scams. Unbeknownst by most, con men have trained their sights on military personnel.

Whether heading to flood ravaged American soil or an overseas war zone, your life changes instantly when duty calls. The pressure of leaving your family (even if it's just your dog and big screen TV), can short-circuit your normal common sense. Thoughts of pending projects left at the office, bills to be paid in your absence and uncertainty about what lies ahead can easily cloud your sound financial judgment as that plane launches you out of your routine and you sit back to glance at the mail you snagged on the way to the airport. That "Act Now" offer of high returns for a risk free investment sounds may sound tempting, but be assured, it's a scam.

If you are leaving a family behind, they also become more vulnerable. Despicable as it is, these con men can appear to be caring shoulders to lean on for financial advice, providing plausible explanations for fishy deals and using previously duped members of the military community as examples of their "successful" customers.

Other reasons scammers may see you as an easier target are:

1. You are legally accountable under the UCMJ to meet your debt requirements;
2. Your unique security clearance requirements subject you to financial background checks, making preservation of your credit history critical;
3. You receive a reliable paycheck; and,
4. You are receptive to affinity marketing, which will be discussed in a later issue.

So how can you protect yourself? The North Carolina Secretary of State Securities Division wants to help you avoid losing your retirement fund, children's college money and all forms of savings to scam artists. Almost everyone who either sells securities or is paid for investment advice in North Carolina must be licensed and registered with the Securities Division. In addition, almost all securities must be licensed and registered as well. Investors should call the Securities Division at (919) 733-3924, or toll-free at (800) 688-4507, to check the registration status of sellers, advisers and the product itself *before* investing. Complaint histories are also on file to help you determine whether this is a person with whom you truly want to form a business relationship. Even if your broker or investment adviser is located in another state, you can still call the Securities Division for help in checking them out.

In the next issue of National Guard magazine, learn the red flags that should warn you of probable investment scams. Meanwhile, feel free to visit our website at [www.sosnc.com](http://www.sosnc.com). Click the yellow box marked "Investment Securities" and browse through the wealth of information available online, which can be downloaded, printed or ordered.

