How to Report a Civil Liberties or Privacy Violation

Civil liberties are fundamental rights and freedoms protected by the Constitution of the United States. These freedoms, which include the right to privacy, are concentrated primarily in the Bill of Rights. Other civil liberties include free speech, assembly, press, and religion. Click here for a detailed list of civil liberties and privacy protections.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is committed to the protection of the civil liberties and privacy of DoD employees, members of the military, and the public, to the greatest extent possible, consistent with its operational requirements. The Defense Privacy and Civil Liberties Office (DPCLO) has been charged with implementing DoD's Privacy and Civil Liberties programs through advice, monitoring, official reporting, and training. The information contained on this page serves to assist individuals who allege that the DoD violated their civil liberties or privacy rights.

Steps for Submitting Your Complaint Letter

To report a civil liberties or privacy violation to DPCLO, please mail (no email, fax, or phone complaints) your complaint letter to:

Defense Privacy and Civil Liberties Office
241 18th Street South, Suite 101
Arlington, VA 22202

Your letter will help DPCLO determine if your complaint raises a civil liberties or privacy concern. Your letter also will help DPCLO decide whether your complaint can be referred to a DoD component office for investigation. If your letter does not include all of the information below, DPCLO may be unable to process your complaint. The following information must be included in your letter:

Your Current Contact Information:

- Name
- Address (please indicate if this is a home or work address)
- Phone number(s) (please indicate if this is a cell, work or home number, and if DPCLO or other staff may leave a voice mail)
- Email address
- Preferred method of contact
- Preferred time of contact (between 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, M-F)
- Contact information of any other person(s) representing the complainant. For example, a lawyer or legal representative

Information about Your Complaint:

- Date and location of the alleged violation. Please state if the violation is ongoing
- Information about the person, program, policy, or procedure you are complaining about
- Please explain which civil liberty or privacy was violated.
- Whether the violation was reported to any other authorities and what action, if any, was taken
- Any other relevant information you believe will help DPCLO assist you with your complaint

Your Signature and Date

Before You Submit Your Complaint Letter:

- Maintain a copy of your submitted complaint letter for your files
- Make certain that your signed complaint letter is concise and legible
- Be prepared to answer additional questions from DPCLO and/or DoD component offices related to your complaint letter
- Recognize that DPCLO may be unable to refer certain complaint letters to DoD component offices for investigation. This includes:
    - Anonymous complaints
    - Duplicate complaints concerning the same complainant and civil liberties or privacy issue, and
    - Complaints under investigation or complaints that received a final action or decision by the appropriate DoD component office
- Understand that all investigations of civil liberties and privacy complaints are conducted by DoD component offices, not DPCLO

What Happens After You Submit Your Complaint Letter?

- DPCLO will mail you a letter acknowledging that it received your complaint letter
- DPCLO will review your complaint letter to make an initial determination if your letter raises civil liberties or privacy concerns
- After thoroughly reviewing your complaint letter, DPCLO will notify you by mail of any action taken with regard to your letter:
    - Complaint letters that contain a civil liberties or privacy concern will be forwarded to the appropriate DoD component office for investigation. DPCLO's letter will provide you with the contact information for this office
    - Complaint letters that do not contain civil liberties or privacy concerns will be returned to you

Privacy Act Statement

Authority: 10 U.S.C. 113, Secretary of Defense; 42 U.S.C. 2000ee-1, Privacy and Civil Liberties Officers.

Purpose: Information is collected to assist DPCLO in processing complaints from DoD employees, members of the military, and the public who allege that the DoD violated their civil liberties or privacy rights.

Routine Uses: Information may be disclosed for any of the DoD "Blanket Routine Uses" published at http://privacy.defense.gov/blanket_uses.shtml. DoD employees and members of the military are encouraged to contact their Component Chief Civil Liberties Officer, Component Privacy Act Officer, or local chain of command for further details. Public inquiries should be mailed to: Director, Defense Privacy and Civil Liberties Office, 241 South 18th Street, Suite 101, Arlington, VA, 22202-4512.

Disclosures: Voluntary; however, failure to provide the information may result in DPCLO's inability to process your complaint letter.