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**Report a crime to U.S. Army
Criminal Investigation Command**

Major Cybercrime Unit

**27130 Telegraph Road
Quantico, Virginia 22134**

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MCU Web Page

CID LOOK OUT
ON POINT FOR THE ARMY

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"DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE"

Housing Rental Scams

Housing rental scams are increasing worldwide. There are millions of fake listings for apartments, duplexes, and houses listed on classified ads and reputable rental sites. Scammers advertise rentals that do not exist, are no longer available, or are up for sale.

Rental scams often target areas surrounding military installations due to competitive rental markets and service members having unique housing situations where they may not be available to view a property in person. As you consider cost and location of your next potential rental property, also consider some listings may be a scam. Fake listings often lure victims in by offering military discounts, low rent, good neighborhoods, and great amenities. Does it sound too good to be true? Then it probably is.

How? Scammers use a variety of tactics to get people's money before the victim determines the listing is fake:

Hijacked Ads

Scammers use real rental ads and photos from legitimate postings to create their own fake ads. Scammers will often use the same name as the legitimate posting and change the email address, or other contact information, to their own.

Phantom Rentals

Scammers make fake listings using photos from properties that are not for rent, for sale, or do not exist.

Watch for Warning Signs:

- They want you to sign or send money before you see the property.
- They want the security deposit or first month's rent before you sign the lease.
- They ask you to wire or send money through a payment app.
- They say they are out of town or out of the country.
- They are ready to make a deal with no background information.

Protect yourself from becoming a victim of a rental scam:

- Do not rely solely on email to contact the owner and be wary of foreign telephone numbers.
- Do online research of the rental company, property address, and the owner.
- Conduct a reverse image search of the photos to see where else the images are being used.
- Ask for additional photos. The actual owner or property manager should be able to provide additional photos.
- Compare rent amount to other rentals in the area.

- Take a tour, or have someone you know in the area tour for you, in person or by video.
- Call the company to verify before signing a lease agreement.
- Never pay a security deposit, first month's rent, or application fee with cash, wire transfers, gift cards, prepaid cards, or payment apps because once you send it, there is no way to get your money back.
- Obtain and review a copy of any contract prior to sending any money or providing any personal information.
- Do not make rush decisions. Scammers will often pressure unsuspecting victims to complete the deal quickly due to increased interest in the property, creating a false sense of urgency.

If you suspect a rental scam, or have been victimized, contact your local law enforcement agency, the [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#), or the [Federal Trade Commission](#).

Resources

[Keys to Avoiding Home Rental Scams](#) – Federal Trade Commission

[Rental Scams Involving Apartments, Houses and Vacation Properties](#) – Better Business Bureau

[Housing Scams](#) – USA.gov

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