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Pentagon Restricts Use of Fitness Trackers, Other Devices

Military troops and other defense personnel at sensitive bases or certain high-risk warzone areas won't be allowed to use fitness-tracker or cellphone applications that can reveal their location, according to a new Pentagon order. The memo, obtained by The Associated Press, stops short of banning the fitness trackers or other electronic devices, which are often linked to cellphone applications or smart watches and can provide the users' GPS and exercise details to social media. It says the applications on personal or government-issued devices present a "significant risk" to military personnel, so those capabilities must be turned off in certain operational areas. Under the new order, military leaders will be able to determine whether troops under their command can use the GPS function on their devices, based on the security threat in that area or on that base. "These geolocation capabilities can expose personal information, locations, routines, and numbers of DOD personnel, and potentially create unintended security consequences and increased risk to the joint force and mission," the memo said. Defense personnel who aren't in sensitive areas will be able to use the GPS applications if the commanders conclude they don't present a risk. For example, troops exercising at major military bases around the country, such as Fort Hood in Texas or Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia, would likely be able to use the location software on their phones or fitness devices. Troops on missions in more sensitive locations, such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan or parts of Africa, meanwhile, would be restricted from using the devices or be required to turn off any location function. Concerns about exercise trackers and other electronic devices came to

a head in January in the wake of revelations that an interactive, online map was pinpointing troop locations, bases and other sensitive areas around the world.