



Summons to Federal District Court



A Servicemember (SM) that has been cited for a traffic offense or Driving Under the Influence (DUI) on Fort Benning may have to appear in Federal District Court. Other crimes committed by SMs are generally dealt with through their chain-of-command. All civilians who commit crimes on post, such as DUI, reckless driving, or shoplifting, will be prosecuted through the federal criminal justice system.

Q. Why do I have to go to federal court?

A. Fort Benning is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. Federal authorities, including federal courts, have jurisdiction over offenses committed onpost.

Q. Where do I go?

A. The federal district court is located at 120 12th St. Columbus, GA 31901. There is a post office on the first floor. The courthouse is located on the third floor.

Q. What should I expect when I arrive?

A. You should expect to go through security. Do not bring weapons of any kind. You will be expected to present identification. Additionally, cell phones are not allowed in the courtroom.

Q. I made it to the courtroom. Now what?

A. Take a seat and wait for the court to be called in session. You should expect to be somewhere on a list of people who are there to make their first appearance. Wait until the judge calls your name and then proceed to the podium in front of the judge.

The judge will explain both the charge(s) you are facing and your rights. The judge will also ask if you are represented by an attorney.

If you are represented by an attorney, typically you will also be arraigned at this stage. This means that the judge will make sure that your attorney has a copy of the information (the charge sheet) and that you have been verbally informed of the charge in open court. The arraignment is complete when you have entered in a plea of Guilty, Not Guilty, or Nolo Contendere.

Q. What if I do not have an attorney?

A. If you are not represented by an attorney, the judge will give you a reasonable time to retain one. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may qualify for a court-appointed attorney. An arraignment date will generally be scheduled a couple weeks after your first appearance so that you have time to consult with an attorney.

You are not required to consult with an attorney, but you will be advised of your rights to do so. If you do not wish to retain an attorney, the judge may ask if you are ready to enter a plea.

Q. I know I want to plead guilty, I don't want to hire an attorney. Can I talk to the prosecutor?

Yes, you may approach the prosecutor to talk about your guilty plea. If you plan to plead not guilty, you should not speak with the prosecutor and we strongly recommend that you proceed with an attorney rather than attempt to represent yourself at trial.

Q. How long does it take?

A. On average, your first appearance (and arraignment, if applicable) takes only a few minutes. You are allowed to leave after the judge dismisses you.

Q. Are there 'customs and courtesies' for the courtroom?

A. Yes. You should stand up anytime the judge enters or exits the courtroom. Judges are typically referred to as 'Your Honor'. It is impolite to stand with your hands in your pockets when speaking to the judge.

Q. What if I have more questions?

A. If you are unsure whether you have a valid defense, or have any confusion as to your rights, you should consider retaining an attorney to represent you in court.



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