

The New Media and the US Military

Submitted By Jim Stanton

EPICC Board Member

It's interesting that one of America's most traditional organizations, the armed forces is one of the leaders is using the new media.

Go to a military base after-hours on any given workday, scores of young soldiers plug into a world that would have earlier generations scratching their heads.

They Tweet on Twitter.com and flit from Facebook to Flickr to YouTube. They are, as the late comedian George Carlin once put it, up-linking, downloading, cutting-edge multi-taskers who can give you a gigabyte in a nanosecond.

And they're fueling a revolution in how the Pentagon connects with troops and the public. From the front lines of Iraq, where Army Gen. Ray Odierno posts daily updates to his Facebook page, to Fort Huachuca in Sierra Vista, AZ, which posts video greetings to deployed troops, America's military is infiltrating the world of online social networking.

"With our younger soldiers, especially, once they're off the Army clock, they're attached to some form of electronic device," said Tanja Linton, a spokeswoman for Fort Huachuca, Arizona and its military intelligence school, about 75 miles southeast of Tucson.

"They've got their cell phones, their iPods, their laptops; they're texting, Tweeting, surfing -- and sometimes they are doing it all at the same time."

Odierno, the commander in charge of military efforts in Iraq, has close to 4,000 "fans" on his page at Facebook.com. His site proclaims, among other things, that the four-star general is a fan of Motown, classic rock and country music, and that his favorite films include "Animal House" and "Sleepless in Seattle."

Stories referenced on the general's site range from a report on efforts to revive Iraq's air force to an article about an overseas jazz festival that featured Iraqi and American musicians.

The U.S. Army launched its own Facebook page April 16 and has more than 17,000 fans so far.



"It puts a human face on the Army that you might not otherwise see," said Lt. Col. Kevin Arata, head of the service's new online and special media division.

The move to social media has been somewhat unsettling at the Pentagon, with its tradition of top-down authority, he said. In cyberspace, where anyone can post feedback anonymously, the musings of military supporters can appear alongside those of anti-war critics.

"This is a culture shift for us," Arata said. "When people exchange thoughts, it's not always rosy. That's something we as a culture have to get over."

There also have been technological snags. Many of the social media sites the military is embracing aren't accessible on military

computers, due to concerns about network security.



Solutions are being sought, Arata said. In some cases, staffers have had to work around the issue by having one office

computer that isn't connected to military networks.

Locally, Fort Huachuca is using Facebook, YouTube and TroopTube -- the Pentagon's version of YouTube -- for many forms of outreach.

Last Christmas, for example, the fort's public affairs office arranged for local Army families to post online video greetings to deployed soldiers.

Bonnie Sanders, 32, a mother of two, said she was grateful that the new technology allowed her to connect with her husband, Staff Sgt. Roland Sanders, a member of the fort's 11th Signal Brigade who recently returned from a 15-month stint overseas.

"It was emotional. It choked me up," she said of the experience. "It felt good knowing that he would know we were thinking of him."

Fort Huachuca also posts footage from its "Fort Report" cable TV show on YouTube and TroopTube. The video segments include informational clips on cultural and sporting events, health alerts and other aspects of Army life.

In Tucson, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base has not yet taken the plunge into new media, said 1st Lt. Mary Pekas, a base spokeswoman. Staffers there are still awaiting instructions from Air Force headquarters on how to proceed, she said.

The general public isn't flocking to Pentagon-sponsored sites yet, judging by numbers. Last year, for example, a video clip showing decrepit Army barracks at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, posted on YouTube by an outraged parent, drew nearly half-a-million viewers. The Army's official YouTube clips typically draw fewer than 5,000 viewers.



The push to social networking is a smart move on the military's part, said Sean Aday, an associate professor of media and public affairs at George Washington

University in Washington, D.C., who recently spent time in Afghanistan teaching government leaders there how to deal with the press.

Much of what the Pentagon posts online is akin to advertising that aims to create a good impression, Aday said. Viewers drawn to such sites most likely already have a positive opinion of the military, he added.

The wider public may be more inclined to take the Pentagon's pronouncements with a grain of salt and to rely more on independent news reporting for information about the military, he said.

"Who is reading the general's Twitter page? It's probably someone who is predisposed to thinking that the general is right about things. It's sort of like preaching to the choir," Aday said.

"From a public-relations standpoint, maintaining that kind of support makes a lot of sense," he said. "You want to keep the choir singing your tune."

By: Carol Ann Alaimo at calaimo@azstarnet.com.
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15 Steps to Earthquake Readiness

Involving staff is critical to making the plan work- talk to them about what needs to be done and why, as you follow these steps.

Last time we reviewed steps 1 and 2:

- 1: Brief Staff**
- 2: Emergency Supplies**

Each month we will review 2 of the 15 steps – This month we include the next two: *Assess Building Vulnerability* and *Reducing Hazards*.

3: Assess Building Vulnerability

Assess how vulnerable your building is to earthquakes. Even if you rent or lease, make inquiries. Local structural engineers or contractors may be of assistance. As well, decide what type of temporary premises you may need.

4: Reduce Hazards

Identify and reduce earthquake hazards within the premises.

Below is a checklist of potential non structural earthquake hazards.

- *Suspended Ceiling*
Look for loose tiles, ventilating grills, drop-in light fixtures that could fall if shaken.
- *Wall- Mounted and Hanging Equipment*
Look for secure mountings, loose contents and glass or mirrors that could fall and cause injury.
- *Desktop and Table Equipment*
Secure computers, cash registers, television sets and equipment that will be damaged if they fall.
- *Floor- Mounted Equipment*
Examine filing cabinets, shelving, pallet racks, storage cabinets and top-heavy machinery that could topple over. Heavy objects should be on the lowest

shelves of tall units. Cabinet doors should be latched to prevent contents from spilling out.

- *Fire/Emergency Equipment*

Check that fire equipment works, and that emergency lighting and exit signs are operating.

- *Breakables*

Replace glass containers with metal or plastic, or use padding on glass to reduce breakage.

Epicc News!

2009 Annual General Meeting



This year's AGM was held at the Sylvia Hotel on Tuesday May 26th. Although, attendance was down a bit from last year, it was still a great event and an excellent opportunity to hear about all EPICC's accomplishments

throughout the past year and also get some insight on EPICC's vision for the years to come.

We were sad to see some of our dedicated Board Members step down from the Board this year. It is a very busy time, with the Olympics nearing and we've appreciated all of their efforts. Thank you very much for all of your work and contributions to EPICC.

- **Carmen Funk**, F.A.S.T. Limited
- **Deborah Procter**, City of Richmond
- **Jackie Kloosterboer**, City of Vancouver
- **Vern Biccum**, Global Consulting

We are pleased to have a new Board member join us from F.A.S.T limited, **Veronica Madore**.

Veronica brings with her a diverse background of consulting, business management, operational management and business development. She is currently a member of the Vancouver Board of Trade and has volunteered with many other committees throughout her career. We look forward to having her as an integral part of EPICC's planning and future.

Please submit all comments or ideas for future EPICCgrams to EPICC's Administrator Lesley Carew @
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EPICC is pleased to announce our new mailing address and we would like to thank the North Shore Emergency Management Office for providing us the space and for their continued support.

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