

**Prepared Remarks for  
LTG William B. Caldwell IV**



**AUSA Region IV Breakfast  
24 October, 2012 0700-0830**



**I thought I'd start this off with an experience that we can all relate to. How many of you have ever run into someone who's asked this?**

**[Video: [“Things People Say to Vets”](#)]**

**Less than one percent of our nation currently serves in uniform. Now, that might not seem like a lot, but let's look at the rest of America.**

**That one percent totals about three million people, if you include all the services, active and reserve component.**

**Three million people.**

**Now to put three million people in perspective, think of this. There are about three million Native Americans in our country.**

**Just under three million Muslims...**

**And just over three million Mormons.**

**I bet if I asked most Americans if they personally knew a Mormon, or a Native American, or a Muslim, they probably would not.**

**So even though...there are three million members of the US Armed Forces, there are many Americans who can honestly claim that do not know, or perhaps have never even met a US service member.**

**Never met a US service member.**

**There's a real disconnect today between the Soldier and the society they serve.**

**That means that most of America is often unaware of the work that we do, as an Army. They don't know our story...**

**And on the flip side, we often don't know our society. Our soldiers often find it alienating. When they return from combat, they often feel that society at large doesn't understand them.**

**And nowhere is that more evident than when our service members, our veterans, interact with the general public. How many of you receive questions like those in that video we just saw?**

**Although that video's a joke, those stereotypes are no laughing matter. Did you know that many of our veterans say that they experience discrimination during job interviews because employers are afraid that they might have PTSD, and that they might snap and hurt others in the office?**

**[Pause]**

**There are business men and women in our country who seriously think that...because that's what they see in the headlines.**

**News flash: Most veterans lead happy, healthy, normal, productive lives...and most veterans believe that that the military gave them skills and instilled values that have made them a better person.**

**So why do those sensational headlines stick in people's minds? Why does the American public**

**think these sorts of things of the three million men and women currently in uniform, and of over twenty million veterans living today?**

**It's because we just aren't getting out there and telling our Army story like we should. And that's what we need to change.**

**After 9/11, it became much more difficult to tell our story...not just because our troops were gone so much, but also because our bases were closed down. Some of you may remember the days when we had actual MPs outside the gates...and the only thing they checked when you came on base was the sticker on the car. And the only reason they did that was so that they could tell whether or not they had to salute an officer.**

**But after 9/11, things changed. The gates went up.**

**Fort Sam Houston was an integral part of the City of San Antonio. You couldn't tell where Fort Sam began and San Antonio ended. Residents could simply drive in and out through dozens of side streets that just flowed onto the base.**

**There wasn't just an emotional connection with the American Soldier. There was a physical connection, as well.**

**But all those gates closed.**

**Our headquarters at Fort Sam is housed in a complex that was built in 1876. We have a massive clock tower, and we even have our own petting zoo! Before 9/11, my headquarters was the second most popular tourist destination in San Antonio.**

**We had a little competition from The Alamo, about a mile or two down the road.**

**Those walls went up for a good reason. And I'm not naïve...we need to have those security checkpoints.**

**But we shut ourselves out from our neighbors when we did that.**

**So how do we change that? If we can't relate to our neighbors, whom can we relate to?**

**Well, we sought out to change that this year for our Army's birthday.**

**We opened up our post to the community. For the first time, we brought the San Antonio community on post, where they could watch our Army flag streamer ceremony...where we paid tribute to all the battles and conflicts our nation has participated in.**



**We did a fun run that morning, just like most posts did. But for the first time, we didn't run on post. We ran down to the Alamo, the other tourist destination, and cut our 237-foot long birthday cake there...right in the middle of downtown San Antonio!**

**We had banners made, and we even had some of our wounded warriors...amputees...about 3,000**

**Soldiers accompanied myself, the mayor, and the President of the Chamber of Commerce to the Alamo that morning to cut the Army's birthday cake...cut by a World War Two veteran who served as General Patton's driver.**



**There we are...look at all of us, in the middle of one of the largest cities in America, in front of the most famous landmark in all of Texas. You simply cannot beat an opportunity like that to showcase our Army's birthday. And it didn't cost us a dime...we didn't need to buy that cupcake thing they had at the Pentagon.**

**And you know what? I got an e-mail the very next day, after the Army Birthday, from a woman**

**who lived in our local area. She said that after 9/11, the fences went up...we were at war.**

**But today, with al-Qaeda still operating throughout the world, opening our bases meant something. It meant that the terrorists had not won...that we didn't have to be afraid any more. The American public feels safer when they see our Soldiers.**

**And there's something special about a simple, physical connection with the community, and that's what we're really trying to get at between the Army Team at Fort Sam and the people of San Antonio.**

**The great thing about getting out of the bunker mentality is that it doesn't really cost anything to do it. It really didn't cost too much to run to the Alamo...but it was one of the most effective means of reaching out to our community.**

**We all have stories, we all have something interesting to say. The question is, how do we get that message out there?**

**What is the best way to do this? Send all of our generals out on speaking tours? That would help, but even more powerful are our Soldiers...because every single one of our Soldiers is a strategic communicator.**



**That's a big change from what we've taught our Soldiers in the past. We used to issue them a warning, "you're not a strategic private, don't talk to the press".**

**But you simply can't operate that way if you want to tell our Army story.**

**You have to accept that a Soldier is going to be a communicator when they stop at the supermarket on the way home each night. That**

**every time they go out in public, in uniform, they're conveying some sort of message, whether they know it or not.**

**There is no technology known to man that can replace actual face to face interaction. Now your kids may differ, as they sit at the dinner table fiddling with iPhones, but it's true.**

**The mere presence of our Soldiers in our communities says something: whether they be active duty Soldiers in San Antonio, stopping for groceries on the way home from work, or our Reserve Component Soldiers, who are woven into the fabric of our communities. I know we can all think of a time someone's engaged us while we're in uniform and thanked us for our service...but how do we teach our Soldiers to respond back? "Thanks"...or, "it's a privilege to serve, thanks for your support".**

**There's a large segment of the population that only catches a rare glimpse of our < 1%. And they're probably going to form their opinion of the US military based on that tiny bit of interaction.**

**We, as leaders, have to accept that much of this process—the day to day contact that binds our Soldiers to the rest of our society—is largely beyond our control. Some of it will be great, some of it won't be.**

**We need to help our Soldiers put their best foot forward, rather than try to control what happens. We need to let them know that they are our Ambassadors...and give them that sense of ownership over our Army story**

**They're just as much a stakeholder in our Army as we are...and they will always have a more powerful impact than any general.**

**I tell my Soldiers that they're encouraged to tell their Army story to their local papers, or to strangers they meet. I believe in empowering our Soldiers...because if they feel like they're an Ambassador for their Army, odds are...they'll act like one.**

**And acting like an Ambassador for our Army is really half the battle. You know, there's all these studies that say that a large part of our communication is non-verbal. Well, that goes for**

telling our Army story, too. We tell our story through our actions, more than our words. And by that, I mean that we tell the Army story through our values more than we do actually sitting down and telling our story.

It's our values that make us such a great institution...in a time when there's so little trust in some of our nation's most important institutions, it's the military that continues to inspire trust in the American people.

If our leaders are doing a great job instilling those Army values in our Soldiers—and believe me, they are—then we're probably going to have Soldiers telling a positive Army story. The trick is getting them out there among the American public.

At Fort Sam Houston, we've adopted nine different schools...elementary through high school...where our Soldiers put in over 4500 hours of volunteer work last year. And when I listen to the principals and teachers, they tell me how thankful they are to have such great role models...for both the students and the teachers.

**The students really appreciate talking to our Soldiers. For instance, our Environmental Command on Fort Sam Houston really wowed one of the schools around there with robotic demonstrations. You can really get kids excited about science by bringing a real-life robot into class, or having students talk to the doctors who are helping our wounded warriors get back on their feet...literally.**

**That's a physical bond between Soldiers and the community. It takes time to build those relationships and trust with the local community, but the results are amazing.**

**Our local Chamber of Commerce in San Antonio also bends over backwards to pay tribute to our Soldiers at Fort Sam ...they've organized welcome home ceremonies, and an entire week, "Celebrate America's Military", dedicated to honoring our men and women in uniform.**

**As some of you know, your local community leaders would love nothing more than to tag along and watch your Soldiers at work. You know, we often complain that people on the**

**outside don't have a good appreciation for the hard work we do, or the years we spend perfecting our trade.**

**Well, did you take the time to show them?**

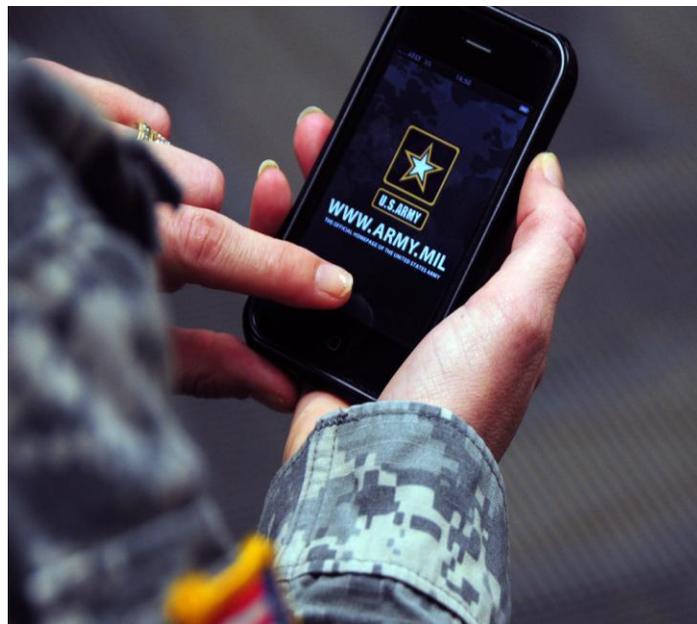


**We brought the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and a couple of VIPs from our local San Antonio community out to watch our largest training exercise of the year, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. They got to ride in a Black Hawk, observe some great disaster relief training, and even watch tactical operations centers at work..**

**(Joke) We didn't give them an MRE...but we probably should have!**

**But those are the sorts of things you can do within your local communities to help tell the Army story...to show the world the amazing things our Soldiers do each and every day. It's a great local solution, and you all have the power to make it happen.**

**Another great tool that all our Soldiers have that can help to tell your Army story is this (pull out iPhone).**



**I still haven't figured out how to use all the functions on my iPhone. I've got email, text and Facebook, but I'm told there are these things called Twitter and Instagram, and Pinterest and**

**Foursquare. I have difficulty keeping up with them, but our Soldiers know all about them.**

**These are amazing communications tools our service members can use to tell our Army story. But...we tend to be a little averse to them.**

**When I was the spokesperson during the Surge in Iraq, we had trouble getting the word out that yes, we were killing insurgents, and that yes, we were helping to get the Iraqis to stand on their own two feet, and yes, we were helping them build schools and roads, and all sorts of things that make a stable country. And it was baffling to me...why couldn't we get the word out.**

**2006 was a time when reporting on the Iraq War was at an all-time low, so we were desperately looking for a way to get out there and at least balance that out with some of the stories of our troops doing good work.**

**And that's when someone on my staff told me about Youtube.**

**And I said, "You-what?"**

**And he showed me what this whole Youtube thing is all about.**

**[Video—“[Keyboard Cat](#)”]**

**“So, it’s where people tune in to see cats playing the keyboard”?**

**Which, I guess is kind of true...that video has 26 million hits, last we checked. But if that cat can get 26 million views, think of what we can do with videos of us building a school in Afghanistan, or conducting a key leader engagement...it of course has to be interesting, but we can also leverage this medium.**

**But there was a lot of institutional resistance against these types of technologies. Our G-6 had blocked Youtube. The largest social networking sites were blocked as well. And Soldiers had to request permission each time they wanted to post an entry on their blogs.**

**Some Commanders were mortified that Soldiers might use their blogs to trash-talk their battalion commanders.**

**How many of you have that fear?**

**Well, allow me to propose a slightly different approach, an approach we took out at FTLV, at CGSC in 2007...why not encourage our Soldiers to blog and post things on their Facebook account or Twitter. Or write to their hometown newspapers about the work they're doing. But do it with some simple rules...four to be exact:**

- 1.) Only write about something you have a first-hand experience with.**
- 2.) It must be attributed to you...so be ready to stand by what you write.**
- 3.) Never use it as a forum to air any grievances; that is for your chain of command.**
- 4.) Always tell the truth.**

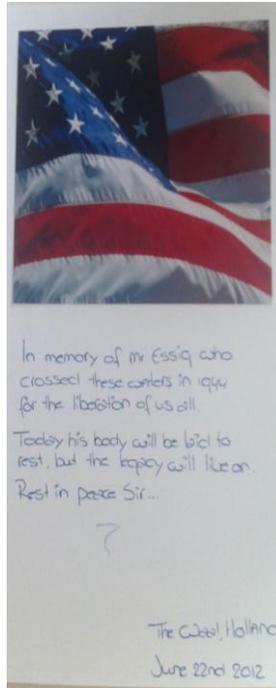
**By my second year at FLTV, we made it mandatory that you had to do 3 things to graduate:**

- 1.) Blog**
- 2.) Write an article for publication**

**3.) Conduct a media interview either on radio, TV, or print.**

**It is powerful technology. Just this past summer, one of my staff members attended a funeral for an old 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division paratrooper from WW2. This man had FOUR stars in his jump wings...Sicily, Salerno, Normandy, and Nijmegen. He was captured not long after he crossed the Waal River in Holland, which, if you've seen the movie "A Bridge too Far", was an incredible feat of heroism in which paratroopers had to paddle canvas boats across a huge river in order to capture a bridge.**

**Well, one of my staffers was chatting with a lady from Holland online, the night before the funeral. She was so moved by the story—even though she never met this paratrooper, she had certainly heard of the crossing of the Waal River.**



**She took it upon herself to drive out to Nijmegen Bridge—where the battle took place—and leave a bouquet of flowers and a thank you card for the paratrooper. She took a picture of it and sent it to my staffer, who was able to show it to the family at the funeral. And those pictures, and that act really meant a lot to the family.**

**That's the power of this new technology. It brought together two people with incredible stories to tell...people separated by thousands of miles, and six time zones. People who had**

**never met, but were moved by one another's stories.**

**This new technology was designed to bring us together...[ joke]...and to post videos of cats.**

**So we need to figure out how to empower your Soldiers to get out there and blog. To go out there and share their pictures, their videos, and their stories.**

**Now, we're accepting some risk in this...because as we've seen in a few recent cases, this same technology that has the power to bring people closer together, also has the ability to tear us apart, as we've seen with a number of controversial videos that have been posted to Youtube in the past.**

**There is risk associated with this new technology, but it's a risk we're going to have to learn to mitigate. We need to tell our Soldiers what's acceptable, what's encouraged, and what's not. And make no mistake, if Soldiers are bad-mouthing their chain of command in a public forum, commanders have every right to take action.**

**So there are some challenges with this new technology, but there's also plenty of promise. Almost every unit these days has their own Facebook page, and there are some inspiring pictures out there.**

**And our Soldiers are pretty talented at using this new medium as well...just look at this tremendous creativity!**

**[Video—“[US Army Dance Videos](#)”]**

**Some of these videos have received millions of views...almost as many as that cat video, and believe it or not, that cat's been on Stephen Colbert.**

**If our Soldiers can attract millions of followers with dance videos, think of what they can do when they put their efforts into really telling the world what it is that they do. It's a powerful tool that we're going to have to learn to live with.**

**The third way we can tell our Army story is to leverage traditional forms of media.**



**Now, sometime after Vietnam, and up until just a few years ago, we used to be very wary of traditional media and the press was as equally suspicious of us. We used to try to keep Soldiers away from reporters, because we were convinced that most reporters had an agenda and were going to take everything our Soldiers did out of context.**

**Now, there are a few reporters out there like that. But guess what, they're a small minority. And they're a risk we're just going to have to accept if we want to tell the story of our Army...ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things!**



**So what can you do?**

**How do we take that <1 % of those serving in uniform; combined with about 6% of those who have served in uniform, and “Tell the Army Story”?**

**We need to establish the physical and emotional connection...however we can.**

**We need to create “opportunities”— opportunities like events, conferences, activities with the American people to tell our Army story...do it through our actions...**

**We need to embrace the new technology...so that the next Youtube phenomenon is about our**

**men and women—and the challenges they overcome every day!**

**And finally, we need to make everyone a communicator...an Ambassador for our Army.**

**And to do this, you need to follow four simple rules:**

- **Only write/talk about first hand experiences**
- **Make it attributable to you**
- **Do not air grievances**
- **Tell the truth**

**And after the event, do the follow-through...try to get as much out of that message as you possibly can.**

**Last but not least, we need your help as well, even if you're no longer wearing a uniform. You're still a very important part of the Army Family. You have a lot of unique experiences, and you often have a perspective that many of our Soldiers simply don't have.**

**I want you all to help tell the American people about the incredible men and women who serve in uniform, their amazing commitment to our**

**nation, and the sacrifices they and their families make for all of us...**

**God bless you all, God bless our Soldiers, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.**