

Military and social media a new partnership

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August 21, 2009 -- Admiral Michael Mullen is reading New York Times journalist Dexter Filkins' book, *The Forever War*. According to his *tweet* on twitter.com, Mullen called it a "gripping account of tough fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, is asking for your questions...through youtube.com. Both Gates and Mullen will host virtual town halls through the internet and asked viewers to submit questions via youtube during the month of August.

General Ray Odierno, Commanding General of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, recently met with students of the Counter Insurgency Academy in Taji, Iraq, said his Facebook fan page. According to the page, he also enjoys listening to classic rock acts like Lynyrd Skynyrd and Aerosmith and watching the television show *24*.

Everywhere on the internet, from Facebook to Flickr or from Twitter to youtube, military leaders are taking advantage of technology and communicating globally at the push of a button.

In June, after years of blocked websites on Army posts, the Army opened up social media access to sites like Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter. The decision, sent out via e-mail, encouraged Soldiers to 'tell the Army story' and to facilitate the dissemination of strategic, unclassified information.

This past January, Army headquarters took an early lead and started the Online and Social Media Division through Army Public Affairs at the Pentagon. The goal was not only to communicate internally with Soldiers and families but to also take the Army to the American public, many of whom are tech savvy, said Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Phillips, Deputy Chief of Army Public Affairs.

Pete Geren, former Secretary of the Army, shared in the forward thinking.

"The future of our Army depends on how we communicate with our audience in between the ages 15 to 25," he said when discussing the new social media division.

Senior military leaders have continued to highlight the need for social media and the need for higher-ranking officers to embrace it. For example Mullen said leaders need to develop awareness about the technologies that have become almost second nature to the service members they lead.

"I think communicating that way and moving information around that way -- whether it's administrative information or information in warfare -- is absolutely critical," he said.

The Secretary of Defense called the freedom of communication, including social media, a huge strategic asset to the United States. Information warfare, leaders have noted, is a top priority. An example could be by increasing the capability of a deployed Soldier in Afghanistan to tell their story; they may be able to decrease the credibility of the Taliban story on the same event.

Army Regulation 25-2 states that social networking sites provide an excellent opportunity to collaborate and share

information. But also warns that these sites could expose Army networks to malicious software and security concerns. The regulation also places commanders in charge of enforcing standards.

The Army and the Department of Defense are embracing a new partnership with social media and exploring its possibilities. It can connect to a younger generation that would make worthy recruits, disseminate information to fellow Soldiers and families, get the right information out faster than the enemy, and connect a four-star general with a private first class with a simple click.

The U.S. Army War College, is doing the same. On Facebook, find videos, photos, and more shared by students, families, and alumni, and friends of the Army War College. On Twitter, get real-time news alerts and updates as events are taking place.

Become part of the USAWC Facebook community, and become a follower on Twitter.

Army War College on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Carlisle-PA/US-Army-War-College/113116603681>

Army War College on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/ArmyWarCollege>

Gen. Odierno on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/RayOdierno?ref=search&sid=10802208.2586524397..1#/RayOdierno?v=wall&viewas=10802208>

Admiral Mullen on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/thejointstaff>

Secretary of Defense on Social Media

http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2009/0709_socialmedia/