

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL JAMES J. GALVIN, JR.,
DIRECTOR, BATTLE COMMAND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM, COMBINED ARMS CENTER VIA
TELECONFERENCE FROM FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS TIME: 12:30 P.M. EST DATE:
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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): And with
us on the line for the Blogger's Roundtable this morning is Colonel James
Galvin, who is the director of the Battle Command System -- Battle Command
Knowledge System of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth.

Colonel Galvin, good morning and thanks for joining us today.

COL. GALVIN: Good morning, Jack. I sure appreciate the opportunity to
speak with you and the group.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. And if you've got an opening statement,
then the floor is yours.

COL. GALVIN: Okay, sure. Thank you. I'm somewhat familiar with what
you all are involved in. I've looked at several of your blogs, some over
time, some, frankly, just recently. And I've noticed that there seems to be a
strong bias towards Iraq and strategy and that sort of thing. And I don't want
to disappoint, but my area is in -- perhaps in a more focused perspective on the
area called knowledge management. And it's exciting for us out here at Fort
Leavenworth, Kansas, where we're associated with the Combined Arms Center that
is and has been a real intellectual center for the Army. And so managing what
we know, sharing it, creating new knowledge is all a big part of what we do
here.

When you talk about knowledge management, often folks travel down a
path of technology. And, frankly, a lot of the practices and ideas emerged from
the technology community because it's information based and it's enabled by
computer networks and things. But what we're really about are people and
process, bringing people together in conversations, much like we're doing here
today, where you manage a conversation around a topic and you either exchange
and share or you may generate some new knowledge. And to take that even
further, you get into processes. Just this morning, I was over at an experiment
that's going on here at Fort Leavenworth where they've got a lot of operational
command posts set up and they're working on ways to improve the processes for
how people transfer information, develop it into knowledge, and then apply it to
gain understanding and then help commanders accomplish missions.

So it's -- more of what we do is about bringing people together, managing processes, and doing that all by being enabled with technology. We have a particular focus out here in that we're helping soldiers have an outlet. And you all, as bloggers, can appreciate the ability to express yourself online and have a large audience tap into that and then respond to it. And so a core competency that my particular organization has, the Battle Command Knowledge System, is to develop these online communities. And we've got them in a number of areas, like the personnel community, the non-commissioned officers get together, and they are able to bring their insights, they can ask their peers or other folks that have the same professional background for some assistance, and rapidly share what they know or find what they need.

A new development that actually just occurred yesterday here at Fort Leavenworth is that our commander, Lieutenant General Caldwell, who's himself been out blogging -- and he's encouraged myself and my contemporaries here, the directors of the different organizations, to get out and to participate. And so I look forward to being in dialogue with you then, as well, out in the virtual world. But he's created what he's calling CAC knowledge organization -- I say "CAC," Combined Arms Center knowledge. And what we're doing is combining the organization that I direct, the Battle Command Knowledge System, along with several others that are more well-known because they've been around for a while. For example, the Center for Army Lessons Learned, the doctrine developers, and the Combat Studies Institute, and then the journal Military Review. And what we see is this value stream of knowledge from the online conversations that soldiers can have and the communities we provide to the end of the spectrum being the fully distilled and well-articulated enduring principles and doctrine.

So it's exciting that we're a part of a larger, growing endeavor, and I've got the opportunity to be the interim director of that. So that's breaking news out here. It may not be on all the headlines, but for us it's exciting. So, I'll leave it at that and be happy to talk with you all about any questions you may have.

MR. HOLT: Okay, thank you. David. David, you were first online. Why don't you get us started?

Q Huh? (Laughter.) Hi, this is citizen David Axe from War is Boring and I'm befuddled. So, what? Is this -- when we talk about -- is this a wiki? What are we talking about here?

COL. GALVIN: Sure. The Army leadership recognized that the online communities -- you're probably familiar with companycommand.com. That emerged around 2000 for captains who had been together at West Point and they formulated this online community. The NCOs had actually created an online community even a couple of years before the captains. And senior leadership recognized that these communities are very powerful, but they're also potentially divulging information that could aid our adversaries. And so they wanted to capitalize on the knowledge exchange that junior leaders were really benefiting from, but also provide it in a place that was at least behind Army knowledge online password protection and in a place that we could exchange information that was more sensitive.

So that resulted in the Battle Command Knowledge System being implemented somewhat as a pilot effort here at Fort Leavenworth three years ago -- a little more than three, three-and-a-half years ago. I've been associated with this effort for about two-and-a-half years and it's been like running a startup company. And now we're transitioning to a merger. So, I foresee wiki-

type capabilities as something more in our future, especially dealing with doctrine and best practices and things, but for now we're primarily -- the Battle Command Knowledge System is just a series of online communities giving soldiers a place to go and share whatever they want to with their contemporaries.

Q Okay, sir. What we're talking about is essentially just series of password-protected websites?

COL. GALVIN: Yes.

Q So there's forums where soldiers can logon and chat?

COL. GALVIN: That's correct.

Q Okay. Okay. Do you worry that institutionalizing what is for, you know, kids these days kind of not instinctual, but something natural and easy -- do you worry that institutionalizing that kind of practice kills the innovation that's kind of incumbent in it being a natural and informal exchange?

COL. GALVIN: Yeah, that's a valid concern. That hasn't been our experience, though.

What we're trying to do is leverage this, you know -- the practices that, frankly, you know, the digital natives, the younger folks naturally are amenable to, and provide them that outlet to get together. The key thing that we find is that if you just have a wide open forum without any sort of structure that it just goes of into, you know, conversations that may not be relevant to our military mission.

So what we do -- one of the key aspects of what we provide here is we call them facilitators. They are professionals, generally retired officers or NCOs who emerged from those communities. For instance, LOGNet initially had a retired warrant officer and then we've had a retired sergeant first class who was the facilitator. And these guys are really innovative. They understand the lexicon and they have a great network of associates. And they know the career paths, et cetera, so they're able to structure the community and serve as gatekeepers, traffic cops, librarians, coaches, mentors. They assume these multiple roles.

Another key element of the communities is really to have some champion at the senior level, like the general officer or sergeant major level. And most of our communities have that, as well. It's an element that makes them successful. For instance, the non-commissioned officers have NCO Net, and our facilitator works out of the sergeant major's academy at Fort Bliss. And the sergeant major of the Army has been an advocate of this and sort of advertises it, talks about it. And we've got senior NCOs that will participate in the discussions, very candidly exchanging views and perspectives. There are parts of it that are less open, where, for instance, the sergeant majors have a place just for sergeant majors so that they can have candid discussions among themselves. But for the most part, they are open to large communities of practitioners.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Richard.

Q Yes. Hi, good morning. Colonel Richard Miller from Talk Radio News.

Colonel, I'd like to put on my historian's hat for a minute and sort of ask you an ontological question about how all of this information will ultimately be processed to the benefit of not simply current consumers, but consumers who may have to tap into an archive. And I'll shorten my exposition here. As you certainly know, in the aftermath of the second world war, before there were online anything, how the Army or the military came to know what it knew about that war ultimately came -- was formed by the official histories, which were written by, in many cases, Army, sometimes contracted out to private historians who produced probably the greatest body of lessons learned from any warfare in history.

My question to you is this and it's one intellectual difficult I've always had, and I'm curious how you've responded. Online communities are ephemeral and the experiences exchanged can be very useful to those who have eyes-on at that particular moment. For soldiers in a year or two years or ten years, they may become less useful unless somebody is in a position essentially to create or distill that information in a manual, online or hard copy, which is useful to others down the road. So other than managing these intranets, which have got to be tremendously constructive for your people, is there any thought to what you're going to do for those people who may not yet exist but who would stand to benefit in five, ten, twenty or later years from the kinds of information being elicited and constructed by you guys?

COL. GALVIN: Okay. Yes, I wouldn't that's been a huge amount of thought, but it's been a part of, you know, what guides us forward. The value stream for knowledge that we're setting up is really what this CAC knowledge is about, and that will ultimately result in the codified documents that you were referring to that would be relevant for historical purposes. But much of that is happening today. The Center for Army Lessons Learned creates a lot of product and document and puts that in repository.

The Combat Studies Institute, which is also part of the Combined Arms Center here, is a -- it's part of the Center for Army History, and their mission is to quickly capture a lot of this historically valuable insights and then put them into documents. And they've created a number of publications. For instance, the On Point document was one of the things, and they're working on On Point 2 as a matter of fact, as well. And then ultimately it gets distilled into doctrine, and we've got the doctrine development and writers here, as well.

So those responsibilities are here, and then we are essentially -- we've put a new front-end on that with these online communities so that the notion of innovative ideas that are out in the force that David had just asked about can be brought to bear by members of these communities just sharing -- here's an operating procedure that we used, here's some insights from our experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, et cetera. So all of those come together.

And then another component that's on the other end, on the output end, besides just putting it into codified documents, we also are working with the gaming community and want to get things into those sorts of media, as well. So you've got, for example, the Stryker Center out at Fort Lewis, not directly part of the Combined Arms Center, but we work closely with them. They've got a great video library of interviews of commanders. For instance, if you're a company commander, talk about a significant operation in Iraq and then get the perspective of the battalion commander, the first sergeant, and the platoon leaders, almost like a documentary-level product. And so there's going to be a huge amount of media that will be available historically.

Q Right. So essentially you're creating oral histories aside from written reports, after action reports, and the rest of it?

COL. GALVIN: Yes. As a matter of fact, some of our facilitators have done interviews, almost like we're doing here today, with wounded warriors who have been through IEDs. And you start to get into some of the real, I mean, you know, deep insights about -- that are very compelling because, you know, you hear a guy that's lost his eyesight talk about how important it is to build trust among your soldiers and trust in your team through practice and through working together and staying together. And those sorts of nuggets are coming out just through these online communities.

Q I wonder, consistent with OPSET, do you guys plan to make any of this stuff available to the public?

COL. GALVIN: Partly the communities are behind AKO, so the members are comprised of those in uniform, civilians in DOD, and also contractors. And then you get retirees and family members have various levels of access, as well. So, no, there's no immediate opening to the general public because we put "for official use only"- type information in these communities and try to keep it at that level of discussion.

Now, what we see with creating this value stream of knowledge is that as these discussions glean useful information that can be packaged into lessons learned manuals, best practice manuals, and ultimately doctrine or historical studies or military review articles, then essentially it becomes public knowledge that way.

Q All right. One bad idea I have for you, by the way, is you may want to consider some of the insights on a confidential basis, of course, reporters who have been embedded with units because what I've discovered during my three stints over is that those who are not in uniform have generally lots of bad ideas, but occasionally some good ones in terms of operations, surprising as it may sound to you as a professional. Something you may want to consider.

COL. GALVIN: No, I appreciate that. That is a great insight. And what we do occasionally with these communities is we do try to bring in an outside expert to have a dialogue with the community or perhaps talk about a book that someone wrote. You know, for instance, Sean Naylor wrote "Not a Good Day to Die," you know, as an embedded reporter. And so that sort of thing would be very relevant. But, yeah, I appreciate that tip and I'll look in to that. There may be some activities with the Center for Lessons Learned maybe looking into that, as well, getting insights from reporters with combat experience.

Q All right. That does it for me. That's good work.

MR. HOLT: All right, David, you need anything else?

Q Yeah, yeah, yeah. (Laughing.)

) I have to admit this whole interview is sort of irritating me because this strikes me as -- this online -- these online tools for exchanging information, this strikes me as something that terrorists and insurgents and, you know, informal extremist groups will always do better than superpowers with lots of money and lots of crystallized systems just because they are willing to take chances and, you know, because they don't have this huge burden of

expectation and prior experience when it comes to, you know, the way that organizations are set up and what's classified information and what's not. It just strikes me that we cannot do this as well as the bad guys can. What do you think about that?

COL. GALVIN: That is probably a fair statement. I mean, you could make an argument that they have a niche advantage, I suspect. You know, I haven't looked into that dimension as much as I would like to because we are interested in what our adversaries are doing. Nevertheless, we need to get at this, and a philosophy that's guiding where we're going with this is to bring together both hierarchy and network. I think, David, you were getting at, you know, they're really masters at networking. And what we see is that if you've got a hierarchy you get direction and, you know, command and control, but if you bring in the networking, then you get some direction, and maybe more towards command and collaboration. And our leaders are getting comfortable working in that environment. And so that's where we see this allowing soldiers to network horizontally across boundaries helps them to accomplish their mission better.

Q So we're getting their slowly?

COL. GALVIN: I'm sorry?

Q That we're getting there is what you're saying? -- (inaudible.)

COL. GALVIN: Yeah, well, there's examples from recent combat experience of people using these things effectively. You know, we attribute leaders like General Chiarelli, when he was first over as the 1st Cav. Division commander, where he introduced the CAVNET as a tool he said to give his patrols the competitive advantage over the adversary. Every patrol that went out had to come back and render a report on this online community for the 1st Cavalry Division. And then those who would follow would go there, get insights, and be better prepared when it was their turn to go out. And that enabled us to learn faster than our adversaries.

At the higher level, General Chiarelli also introduced the notion of virtual teaming through the command post of the future, which now is a pretty prevalent system that's used over there, where he was able to bring all his subordinate leaders into a common operating picture and do the Johnny Madden whiteboarding and talk about the next day's mission and not have to have everybody drive to a common location.

Over in Afghanistan, there was a commander, colonel (promotable) now, Mick Nicholson, who started his unit from scratch up at the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, and used a lot of the sorts of practices to recognize the importance of developing and exchanging knowledge informally where he as the commander, hierarchically, would put his S2 and his brigade intelligence battalion commander in charge hierarchically of seeing the enemy first.

But then he brought together pieces of his organization, like the calvary scouts, and the intelligence surveillance reconnaissance folks dealing with UAVs, and the intelligence fusion folks who had access to systems, and all the -- (inaudible) -- the intelligence officers, the S2s, from around the brigade. He brought them together as a network and had them mature, first starting with table talk, and then going to command post exercises, and then combat training center exercises, and then ultimately in theater in Afghanistan, where they constantly improved what they did. So we just see that these sorts

of online communities and this practice of managing knowledge creates this learning organization that's better than the enemy.

Q Okay. Thanks.

MR. HOLT: All right. Anything else? All right, sir.

Well, Colonel Galvin, thank you very much for joining us. Any final thoughts or comments for us this morning?

COL. GALVIN: Again, thank you for taking the time to ask these questions. And I appreciate being challenged because, you know, fundamentally if this stuff isn't correct and right then we need to get it right quickly. So, I appreciate, David, your insights and concerns about the adversary being able to do this stuff better than us, and then, Richard, your historical perspective, and also bringing the insights from reporters who are great observers. My wife's a journalist, so I appreciate the nature of the work that you all do.

Q Thanks.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Thank you very much. Colonel James Galvin with us for Blogger's Roundtable. He's the director of the Battle Command Knowledge System at U.S. Army Combined -- U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth. Thank you very much, sir, and hopefully we can speak again. COL. GALVIN: Great. Look forward to it.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, sir.

END.