

## **Commander, Combined Arms Center Addresses Students at Defense Information School, Stresses Mission Impact of Public Affairs**

### **Defense Information School Public Affairs Leadership Department**

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. -- Students received a senior operator's perspective on the importance of Public Affairs in supporting mission commanders' objectives, a perspective gained as former spokesman for Multi-National Force Iraq.

Addressing students in both the Joint Senior Public Affairs Course and the Public Affairs Qualification Course, and respective faculty members, Army Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell explained that his understanding of Public Affairs as an essential mission element changed during his tour as spokesman for MNFI.

Describing his tour as MNFI spokesman as a "life changing event," Caldwell explained how his perception of both military public affairs and independent media changed. In his current position, which includes responsibilities as Commanding General, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Commandant, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, he passes along key lessons to Army leaders, emphasizing being open and honest, responsive, proactive and relevant in "sharing your story."

During his morning session with more than 75 students and faculty, Caldwell encouraged soon-to-be Public Affairs officers to "challenge assumptions, choose to engage, confront constraints, and consider consequences." A staunch advocate for creating opportunities, Caldwell believes

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“everybody has to get out and share” what we do in the military services.

Asked by Army Staff Sgt. Stephanie Carl, a Defense Information School instructor and student in the Public Affairs Qualification Course, about integrating his approach in to the basic training curricula for officer and enlisted Soldiers, Caldwell said it is part of the approach he is advocating from the top down.

Caldwell explained that through his tour as MNFI spokesman he saw that Public Affairs is a vital mission element working behind the scenes to create opportunities for engagement, training personnel to speak with a variety of media, and most importantly following-up once an engagement has occurred. He compared Public Affairs follow-up to the follow-through in a golf swing: “hitting the ball is the media engagement, the follow-up you do determines where the ball will go,” how the engagement will turn out.

Summarizing his perspective on sharing information, Caldwell said he had heard the phrase strategic corporal in years past, but now strategic private is more appropriate. He encourages Soldiers to share their story, “If not you, then who?”

For more information on Combined Arms Center, go to <http://www.leavenworth.army.mil/>

For more information on Multi-National Force Iraq, go to <http://www.mnf-iraq.com/>

For more information on the Defense Information School, go to <http://www.dinfos.osd.mil/>