



Inaugural session panel : CNS (centre) delivered the Opening Address



Admiral and Mrs Lanba leaving after the seminar

Social Media and the Armed Forces



Chairman COSC & Chief of the Naval Staff at the dais



Director CENJOWS delivering the welcome address



Theme address by Lt Gen Khandare, the DG DIA

Social Media has had a profound effect on life in all spheres; pervading both personal and professional spaces, to an extent, which has created dynamics with far reaching consequences. Israel declared war in the Gaza strip on Social Media and had also created a Social Media War Room, manned by 30 bright university students. Social networking sites can be used to reach critical masses instantly and provide them points of view both own and contra. Cell phones and other electronic devices have become the means of communication and provide instant connectivity. Aided by social networking sites and continually developing Apps, connectivity has reached new heights. All Social Media sites whether it be Facebook, LinkedIn, You Tube, Twitter or Instagram have myriad and continually growing communities of followers. Militaries the world over have thus to be live to the omnipotent reality of Social Media.

In its continued efforts to engage

various stake holders on issues involved with Social Media regards the Armed Forces and to generate discussion for better understanding of the subject as also suggest the Way Forward, DEFSTRAT conducted the third edition of the symposium on "Social Media and the Armed Forces" on 29 Aug 2017 in the DRDO auditorium. The first such symposium was held in Feb 2015 in a small hall with only forty odd attendees. The attendance at this year's seminar exceeded more than 250 and included representatives of the three services, the CAPF and the Industry. Many ladies also graced the occasion. We were honoured to have amongst us Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, Chairman COSC and the CNS, besides many other distinguished speakers. It was both heartening and encouraging for us to learn that many of the issues that had come up during the previous seminars have acted as beacons providing direction in the field of Social Media for the Armed Forces.



Delegates in rapt attention



A veteran asking a question

Inaugural Session

Welcome Address. The address was delivered by Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, PVSM, AVSM, SM (Retd) Director CENJOWS. He went on to state that Social Media is all encompassing. Statistics about the time devoted to various activities related to Social Media, notwithstanding, what needs to be of both interest and concern to us is the humungous influence that Social Media exercises. Recently the Chinese waged Information Warfare by using Social Media platforms extensively during the Doklam crisis. India was relatively restrained in its response. There are lessons that both the approaches threw up. Going forward, we need to evolve cogent policies for the use of Social Media aiming to exploit the many positives that it offers and obviate the negatives thereof.

Address by Chairman COSC by CNS. The Admiral said that this is a topic of contemporary and increasing relevance and complimented CENJOWS and DEFSTRAT for organising the symposium. He went on to state that there have been rapid and far reaching changes in communications, which have manifested themselves by way of internet and Social Media platforms. The rapid

information exchange between people, without limitations of territorial boundaries, may also impact the concept of a Nation State. Social Media can be used to spread misinformation, wage psychological warfare, help terrorists as also for financial frauds. The Armed Forces are very much a part of society and hence must adapt to changes like the ones being brought about by Social Media. Security concerns that are thrown up on this account must be addressed by adopting suitable regulations and training of personnel. The CNS also gave directions on a few issues that he would like to be examined/implemented. These are given in the takeaways below.

Key Note Address. Lt Gen Satish Dua, UYSM, SM, VSM, the Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff delivered the Key Note Address. He stressed that the Social Media is a vehicle that shapes perceptions due to its instantaneous and vast reach. The mobile telephone has become a social necessity because of its increasing utility in day to day activities. We in the Armed Forces, have to keep pace with the times and leverage the Social Media to our advantage. The confidential nature of our job does restrain us to some extent but we should not let this hamper us, we should train our personnel to create better



The CISC delivered the Keynote Address



Vikram Tiwathia emphasises a point



ADG PI presented Indian Army's SM strategy



Mahima Kaul, Twitter India



Pavan Duggal, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court



Lt Col Simon de Labilliere, British Army



Puneet Bhambri, Innefu



Rajat Arora, Facebook India

consciousness and try and be as transparent as possible. The speed to Social Media dictates that our response systems cannot follow hierarchical trajectory of our organisations.

Theme Address. The address on Managing Perceptions: Exploiting Capabilities of Social Media was given by Lt Gen VG Khandare, PVSM, AVSM, SM, DG DIA. Salient aspects of the address were that Social Media has brought about a revolution

which is further evolving. This revolution is impacting nations in more ways than one. Social Media which is highly penetrative is an immensely effective tool of perception management. We in the Armed Forces, have to make an attitudinal shift; balancing confidentiality with what can be revealed and empowering people involved in Social Media responses. It is also time to move a step forward from discussions and seminars and formulate policies.

Address by DDG CAOI. The last speaker during the Inaugural session was Vikram Tiwathia, DDG, CAOI. He spoke about the impact of Social Media and Internet. He emphasised on the need for the Armed Forces to have the requisite infrastructure and enabling policies in place, so that technologies can be gainfully harnessed and exploited to their full potential. He brought out that 5G would be available by 2020 or thereabouts and the Armed Forces should be prepared for the same. The industry made certain recommendations, these are covered in the takeaways below.

Session1: Social Media Strategy: a Reality Check.

The session was chaired by Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd) and included very informative and interesting talks by various speakers besides a panel discussion.

Salient Aspects are as under:

- Maj Gen Ashok Narula, AVSM, the ADGPI, gave out the impact of Social Media on the Army and the several measures being taken to sensitise the environment about the negatives and positives thereof. He also explained the concept of SIEO i.e. Shaping of the Information Environment- which is the current holistic concept of the US Armed Forces and is most relevant in our context too. A case in point is where the bravery of a housekeeper Naik Rishi was showcased to obfuscate the information about the fidayeen attack on an army unit.
- Ms Mahima Kaul of Twitter referred to Twitter as a digital lifeline which is an invaluable resource for broadcasting valuable information that can be used to coordinate multi agency efforts during crisis and how the vast and instantaneous reach of Twitter can be used to quell rumours and prevent misinformation from spreading.
- Lt Col Simon de Labilliere, MA, British High Commission, gave an outline of the steps being taken in the British Military to exploit Social Media so that it can be used as a source to provide appropriate information and influence target audiences. The British Military have been seized of the challenges and the opportunities that Social Media has brought about. A Directorate of Defence Communication has been set up recently, to provide Strategic Direction. 77 Brigade has the tactical tasks of delivering information and to influence target audiences in consonance with military objectives.
- Mr Rajat Arora of Facebook spoke of the initiatives being

taken by Facebook to help small entrepreneurs by advertising about them. He said that this initiative could also be taken up for veterans and families of soldiers.

- Mr Pradeep Bhat of IBM suggested that integration of formal and semi formal networks of the forces and the industry be considered.
- During the panel discussion on Broadband Access and Understanding potential of Social Media for Armed Forces, the panelists brought out the pros and cons of Social Media. Industry representatives on the panel emphasized the need for proper connectivity especially in remote areas so that the forces can derive full benefits of all communication channels.

Session 2: Harnessing Social Media for Effective Communications

The session was chaired by Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia PVSM, AVSM, SM (Retd). It comprised talks on varied subjects and a panel discussion.

Key aspects that emerged are as under: -

- Mr Puneet Kumar of Ineffu spoke on Big Data Analytics. He stated that there is a variety of data available in huge volumes. Agencies therefore need to have data analytics deeply embedded into their systems as making sense of diverse data sets especially unstructured data and gathering insights from them is a big challenge. The need of the hour is to have Scalable Big Data Analytics platforms based on artificial intelligence and machine learning available to get actionable insights from the plethora of information that is available.
- Mr Pavan Duggal, Senior Supreme Court Advocate pointed out that privacy was getting centre stage these days due to the recent Supreme Court ruling thereon. He stated that eighty percent of global cybercrime comes from highly organized and ultra-sophisticated criminal gangs. In so far as various acts on Social Media that violate rules and norms of civilized behavior are concerned, the IPC has adequate provisions to cover the same. The IT Act, 2000 is based upon Personal liability for offences and penalties rather than Corporate liability. Therefore, individuals must be very careful for all their activities concerning computers and cyberspace even in their workspace. The law on transmission of Adult Jokes also holds the administrator liable for the misconduct, hence due care needs to be exercised by all concerned.
- Gouri Seetharaman, Press Officer of the US Embassy said that the philosophy of the US Military was to encourage use of Social Media by soldiers as well as families in a responsible manner rather than by putting curbs. The rules of engagement must aim at education, trust and training. The Army, Airforce and the Marines are being trained at the same facility so that they are all on the same page as far as use of Social Media is concerned. Social Media properly used has immense potential for being a force multiplier.



KP Bhat, IBM



Gouri Seetharam, Press Officer, US Embassy



Lt Gen PS Mehta, giving the Valedictory Address



- The panel discussion focused on The Extended Army Family and Social Media Dynamics. The points brought out emphasized the importance of Social Media and the need for individuals, institutions including the Military (the term includes both military personnel and their families; both are being considered inseparable due to the nature of the work and constraints created thereby) to recognize the importance of the medium.

Valedictory Address

The address given by Lt Gen P S Mehta, AVSM, VSM the DCIDS(DOT) reiterated the aspect of positive use of Social Media by the Armed Forces and the need for formulation of policies so that we are adequately prepared for the types of wars, which are now becoming the norm viz asymmetric and those in the cyber space.

Key Takeaways

Impact of Social Media. Social Media has impacted society at large and the Armed Forces cannot remain divorced from this aspect. The forces must harness its strengths and exploit it as a force multiplier - to be able to do this- we need to remove protocols of time and space barriers. At the same time, the forces must also remain live to the many challenges it poses and accordingly be prepared to negate the same.



Directions of Chairman COSC and CNS. The following directions were given by the Chairman COSC and CNS.

- The Armed Forces must exploit the Social Media to their advantage.
- We must examine in entirety the changes that need to be made in systems/protocols etc. to allay misgivings created by rumours and disinformation.
- In concert with the Industry we must examine the kind of regulation that is acceptable to them in terms of technical feasibility and user acceptability.
- There must be suitable regulatory mechanisms in place instead of trying to curb the use of Social Media.

Policy and Regulation. It is of the essence that policies and regulation that facilitate the use of social media in the Armed Forces are put in place. Our Armed Forces have been taking steps in this regard and there is a definite forward movement but we certainly need to do more to exploit the full potential of the medium in a meaningful manner. We must move away from the concept of centralised response and disaggregate so that responses are rapid. Social Media is horizontal and not hierarchical therefore time is at a

premium and immediacy of response is required. To be able to do this we need to empower the response teams.

Appropriate Training and Skills. The forces must impart necessary skills and technical wherewithal to monitor and analyse Social Media and react to all negative inputs with alacrity. It is imperative that the personnel dealing with Social Media aspects have the skills required to do so. They must be trained to understand the influence of Social Media as also have relevant language skills and the requisite cultural knowledge. And last but not the least people staffing Social Media cells must be tech savvy.

Perception Management. This can best be done by generating meaningful and result oriented messages. For this, it is necessary to adopt best practices such as a thorough knowledge of the target audiences with regard to demographics and platforms. A broad approach must be followed by engaging multiple stake holders. The content must be localized with regard to the language and relevance to the audience. Positive narratives like that was done in the case of Naik Rishi must be created.

Industry Perspective. Policies and regulations as at present are posing some challenges. These must be so tailored that the industry can provide best possible services. Enhancement of broadband connectivity in defence areas with deployment of telecom infrastructure and implementation of Gazette of India RoW Rules dated Sep 2016 in the MoD policy are the need of the hour. The Armed Forces must incorporate Big Data analytics tools for better utilisation of available data on Social Media platforms. Industry is willing to conduct Workshops for veterans and families of soldiers on the utilisation of Facebook for Self Help Groups and small businesses. They are also willing to organise visits of service officers to the Airtel Experience Centers at Manesar, Gurgaon, and Vodafone NOC at Pune, to give broader insights into the working of the service providers. Workshop on utilisation of LinkedIn to assist in reemployment of service officers can also be conducted by them, if required by the forces.

Legal Aspects. Most of misdemeanors on Social Media attract provisions of IPC which are far harsher. Though Section 66 A has been dropped from the IT Act provisions of IPC can be invoked to punish wrong doings on Social Media.

Miscellaneous. The forces must consider introduction of suitable Apps which can help in harnessing available technology to further their cause especially in the field of psychological warfare and perception management. [SA](#)