

# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SEMINAR ON

### “SOCIAL MEDIA & THE ARMED FORCES”

BY

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1. The seminar on Social Media and the Armed Forces could not have been conducted at a more opportune time when the social media space is changing rapidly and having a huge impact on all aspects of functioning of the Indian Armed forces. The key recommendations that emerged from the seminar are appended below:-

(a) **Organization and Structure**. The present structure and organization and structure of the Indian Armed forces to deal with social media is neither optimal nor adequate due to the vast scope of social media. There is a requirement to assess the organizational structure for effectively leveraging all aspects of social media.

(b) **Dissemination of Policy Guidelines**. The policy guidelines on usage of social media should be simple and easily implementable by the defence personnel. The United States social media policies are available on the internet for all to see. Accordingly, the social media guidelines for our defence forces should be hosted on the internet which will ensure wide dissemination of policy guidelines leading to more effective policy implementation. This will go a long way towards 'education and regulation'.

(c) **Hiring Professionals for Social Media & Information Warfare**. The ever-evolving field of information warfare requires in depth technical knowledge of using and leveraging various platforms. While the core group should remain with the defence personnel, specialized tasks should be carried out by hiring information warfare experts from the industry.

(d) **Uniform Policy for Installation of Mobile Towers**. Access to mobile connectivity in the cantonments has improved. There should also be a standard uniform policy for establishment of cell phone towers and it should not be building specific. At the national level, a call needs to be taken to permit establishment of cell phone towers inside school and hospital premises also as also the period for which a building is made available for establishment of cell phone towers.

(e) **Creation of Core Groups for Campaigns**. The running of successful campaigns need content generation by experts and specialists. There is a requirement of creating core groups for campaign management. The core group should have full knowledge of the requirement of leaders at the apex level which will accordingly be manifested in the campaigns. This task entails continuity.

(f) **Policies , Procedures & Regulatory Framework**. The use of social media is one of threats and opportunities, however there is a need to effectively operate in this space. There is thus a requirement of detailed policy guidelines on the usage of social media by the members of the Indian Armed forces personnel with effective oversight mechanisms in place. These should not be restrictive but enabling in nature.

(g) **Assuaging & Leveraging the Veteran Community**. The Indian Armed forces have a huge veteran community who can be leveraged for successful conduct of social media campaigns. This community has however since the last few years felt aggrieved and alienated. The defence forces need to reach out to the veterans so that their aspirations are understood, solutions provided and a correct message is spread to the masses. This will go a long way in defeating the false propaganda of the anti-national elements. The veteran community should be an intrinsic part of our social media warriors.

(h) **Training**. Meaningful and effective training needs to be carried out for all ranks educating them to use and be aware of the risks of social media. As majority of our veterans are below officer rank, it automatically implies that training has to start from the training centers to the highest level. Training also needs to be imparted to the families

of the armed forces personnel to make them aware of the risks and opportunities of social media.

(j) **Specialized Training & Longer Tenures for Sensitive Appointments**. Social media brings with it a host of vulnerabilities especially for persons who are tenanted sensitive appointments. Data mining by the adversary has detrimental effects on the smooth functioning of the armed forces. Accordingly, specialized training needs to be organized for such personnel on a regular basis for effectively using social media platforms without being susceptible to inimical designs of the enemy. Personnel tenanted such appointments need continuity and must be provided longer tenures and assured career progression by the Army.

(k) **Hosting Armed Forces Unit pages on Facebook**. The Indian armed forces should consider hosting of unit pages on the Facebook. These endeavors will go a long way in bringing to fore the rich history, traditions and accomplishments of our defence forces. Such actions will only bring more pride to the armed forces and raise the morale of the defence personnel. Such initiatives will also increase collaboration with our veteran community towards common goals.

(l) **Coherent Social Media Campaigns**. For running successful social media campaigns, the campaigns have to be run at all levels of our hierarchy in not only all the three armed forces, but also in the related departments in the GoI. The complete organization including the veterans have to be incorporated in the campaign to achieve victory in this space.

(m) **Mobile Applications for Veterans**. Though the armed forces have launched few apps for use by serving personnel, yet the veteran community feels left out. The Armed Forces could consider launching mobile apps to engage with the retired fraternity also. These apps would be an easy way to spread the right message and dispel any false propaganda by anti-national elements.

(n) **Big Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence**. When a pattern is established, a lot of intelligence can be found using Big Data Analytics. Data Analytics aims at scale & speed in real time; persistently produce tactical insight. The solution should thus have flexibility, while being stable, support numerous integrations, be mission specific, provide cognitive insight, security and anonymity. Social Media platforms are a rich source of information which can be used by the defence forces in furtherance of their operational objectives. Important information can be mined using big data

analytics and prediction analysis carried out using artificial intelligence. The armed forces need to train defence personnel on priority in these two domains to fully exploit the power of social media.

(o) **Use of Roman Hindi & Regional Languages.** Just like print media, social media is very active at large number of regional forums in various languages. Hence to restrict our campaigns in English or Hindi only would be ceding space to anti national elements on the regional forums. Hence exploitation of all regional forums is essential in the Indian context. ADGPI may consider using Roman Hindi & Regional Languages also for running social media campaigns.

(p) **Speedy Response; Delegation to Units?**. The present centralized structure for responding on social media cedes space to anti national elements to spread false propaganda. The speed of social media is too fast for handling by our structures and hence the need of the hour is to balance our structures and have a critical look at our procedure of approvals for social media. Delegating the same to the IW Cell at formation HQs and to CO's/ Cdrs may be the need of the hour because all action takes place at unit level.

(q) **Strategy for Social Media.** The Armed Forces need to work out a detailed strategy for leveraging the social media domain encompassing all aspects of organizational structure, training, human resource, oversight mechanism and its integration with the operational domain.

(r) **Conceptualizing Social Media Campaigns.** Conceptualizing and running successful social media campaigns requires detail planning and content generation. To generate content and to populate, the social media space requires the assistance of experts who have in depth knowledge of that subject of which the content is being generated. Personnel following up such campaigns need continuity and must be provided longer tenures.

(s) **Specialization Training for Social Media.** The rapid changes and advancements in technology has huge spin offs in the defense domain. There is a need to undertake specialization training for social media to examine all the means by which social media can be leveraged as an important domain of information warfare.

(t) **Industry Collaboration to Leverage Social Media for Armed Forces.** Close collaboration with industry will pave the way forward to successfully leveraging the social media domain. Some of the aspects in which the industry can help out are:-

(i) Glorifying our heroes using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter to run positive social media campaigns in support of the defence forces. The “Crime Patrol” series has been successful in revamping the image of the police. A similar series needs to be run for the Armed Forces. There are many more challenging tales of valour and adventure in the Armed Forces and these needs to be told to the environment. Making ‘Follow our Heroes Campaigns’ in example of one such campaign. More such initiatives must be supported like Comics, Apparel wear etc.

(ii) Running campaigns highlighting the Samaritan work by the defence forces in support of the common man as part of ‘Winning the Hearts and Minds of the People’. Initiatives such as ‘Op Sadbhavna’ being implemented by the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir, need to be brought to the knowledge of the population of not only J&K, but to the complete world, by collaborating with the industry. Such campaigns will go a long way in changing the perception of the armed forces especially in the Kashmir valley and across the whole nation.

(iii) Collaborating with the industry for launching campaigns and advertisements on all social media platforms which will help in recruitment of suitable candidates. The prospective candidate is a spin off from the present generation and is affected by the society he lives in. Thus he is looking for a vocation besides looking for a profession. Such campaigns thus must focus on the benefits that the prospective candidate is likely to get rather than focusing only on the adventure and hardship.

(iv) Employment of Veterans by the Industry for running social media campaigns for the Indian Defence forces. Such initiatives will also increase collaboration with our veteran community towards common goals and give them employment. The veterans have got in depth knowledge of the functioning and requirement of the armed forces which can be leveraged by both the industry and the defence establishment.