



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey speaks to noncommissioned officers during a town hall meeting May 11 at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Dailey spoke earlier in May against cyberbullying in the Army at the NCO Solarium 2015 at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester / NCO Journal)

SMA at Solarium 2015

Cyberbullying Is 'Out Of Control'

By Martha C. Koester - NCO Journal

Of all the topics raised for discussion during the Noncommissioned Officer Solarium 2015 at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., the one that drew the most spirited reaction was the one not on the itinerary. Many of the assembled NCOs were taken by surprise when cyberbullying was added as a discussion point at the Solarium, but after Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey, a frequent Internet target, told senior leaders that online decorum is out of control in the Army, they all agreed to do something about it.

An anti-cyberbullying policy exists, and Soldiers may be prosecuted, Dailey said. Cyberbullying includes virtual taunts, whether it is targeted at a specific person or trolling, negative comments launched against the Army.

"Because we already have the authority, we are going to go after this," the sergeant major of the Army said. "When Soldiers harass, put [damaging] things on the

Internet, they are not in keeping with the honor, tradition and the stewardship of the profession. ... If you said something that was sexually explicit in nature, that is derogatory against another Soldier, that's sexual assault – whether it's on the Internet, whether you say it verbally. My fear is that Soldiers think it's OK, but they know it's not OK at work."

Drawing a Line

Although Dailey has often found himself on the receiving end of Internet criticism, he said it only bothers him that "Soldiers see those things and that the American public knows" that Soldiers are actually the cyberbullies.

"I'm convinced that 99 percent of Soldiers wouldn't say that stuff in public," he said. "I believe American Soldiers are entitled to their own opinion, but when you put a uniform on [you represent the United States Army]."

Dailey feels so strongly about the issue that he chose not to follow former Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler onto Facebook by opening an official page.

“I specifically said we are not going to have one as the sergeant major of the Army, because I have a whole bunch of avenues for people to contact me,” he said. “From a business perspective, we are in the business of leading Soldiers by example. I just choose not to put my personal life on the Internet.”

Dailey said cyberbullying is out of control because the Army has a policy and doesn't enforce it. The sergeant major of the Army solicited recommendations from the senior NCOs at the Solarium to fix the growing problem. Dailey also, debated whether some civilian businesses' practice of asking employees to register all their social media accounts is the answer.

“Once [Soldiers are in the Army], we have to start reinforcement training from the get-go,” said Master Sgt. Cynthia Hodge, operations NCO for 426th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team. “We are the poster boards for the United States Army when we put on this uniform, and if you're going to say things that eventually are going to come back and are going to be damaging to yourself, the Army and your unit, there has to be repercussions for it. End of discussion.”

Some units are already providing training on social media, NCOs said.

“Being in Special Operations Forces, our identities require protection. Our command recently developed an identity management brief,” said Sgt. 1st Class Maria K. Williams, human intelligence senior sergeant, U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command. “Identity management briefs teach Soldiers and their families how to protect their identities. It also educates; ramifications and United States Code of Military Justice are discussed in regards to what you put online.”

A New Perspective

Some of the senior NCOs at the Solarium said they take advantage of Facebook to ease communication with their Soldiers. It is possible to successfully separate your private life from your professional one, said 1st Sgt. Robert V. Craft Sr., mechanical maintenance NCO and 1st sergeant with 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment.

“I created a page [on Facebook recently]; I only deal with Soldiers on the page,” Craft said. “The reason being is I realized that I didn't want Soldiers in my personal life. When it comes to my Soldiers, I don't see the bullying, so I wasn't aware that cyberbullying was a problem.

“When my Soldiers or my battle buddies post something that's unprofessional, I'll send them a message in their inbox. But if I saw something that violated a policy, such as cyberbullying or SHARP, then I'm obligated to report it,” he said. “I think it's a good thing for us to be on social media. Not so much to track what our Soldiers do, but to provide a presence and set a positive example.”

However, the sergeant major of the Army's thoughts on cyberbullying were enough to spur some of the senior leaders into immediate action.

“It was an eye-opener,” said 1st Sgt. Jeffrey Grothouse, infantry senior sergeant with 3rd Battalion, 81st Armor Regiment. “What's my part in this now? What am I going to do to stop this? I need to do my part to ensure that my Soldiers aren't [part of the problem].”

“It goes back to what I said is the biggest challenge in the future of the Army right now – it's getting back to the 24/7 mentality,” said Master Sgt. Keith E. Marceau, current operations NCO, United States Army Pacific. “[Soldiers think,] ‘I'm off duty; I'm just playing around on Facebook.’ That's the mentality. They're not thinking I'm representing the Army 24/7. We have to beat that mentality. They have to understand that whether we are in uniform or not, 24/7, we represent.” ■



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