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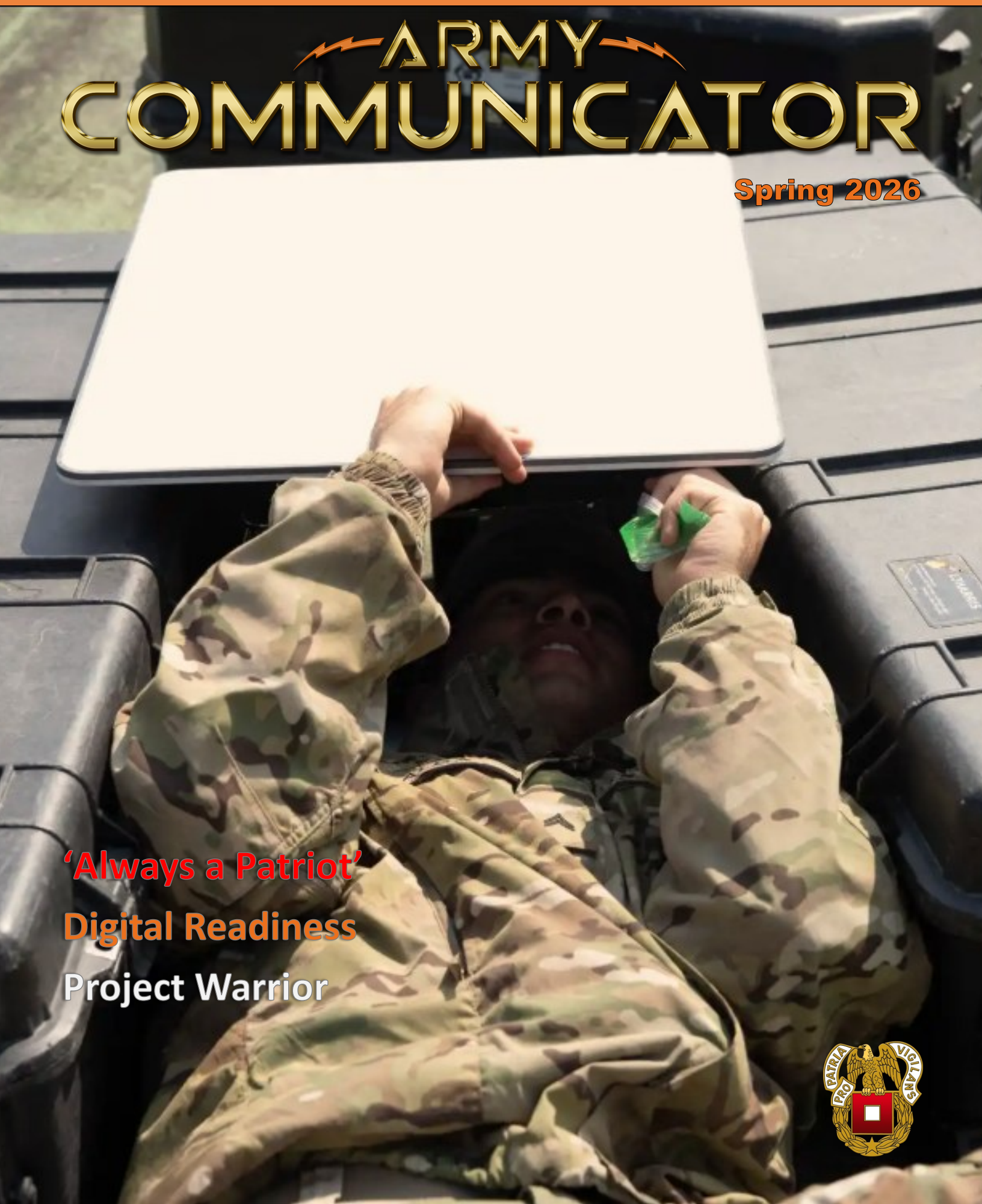

‘Always a Patriot’

Digital Readiness

Project Warrior

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In This Edition:

U.S. Army Signal Regiment Leadership

43rd Chief of Signal and U.S. Army Signal School Commandant,

Col. Julia M. Donley

26th Regimental Command Sergeant Major,
Command Sgt. Maj. Lisa M. Gandy

8th Regimental Chief Warrant Officer,
Chief Warrant Officer 5 Willie L. Newkirk

Army Communicator

Editor-in-Chief,
Laura Levering

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Send articles, photos, graphics, and story ideas for the Army Communicator to the editor-in-chief at laura.m.levering.civ@army.mil.

On the Cover:

Cpl. Jorge Alba Trevino, of 1st Signal Brigade, sets up a Starshield pLEO terminal on March 12, 2026, in support of Freedom Shield 26, a peninsula-wide exercise in the Republic of Korea. (Photo by Sgt. Marquis McCants Jr., 1st Sig. Bde.)

Building Upon a Legacy through Unprecedented Transformation

Team,

This quarter's theme, "Expectations vs. Reality," captures the challenges of today's dynamic environment. As we continue to drive the most significant transformation in the Signal Regiment's recent history, it is crucial that we candidly assess the friction between our strategic vision and the practical realities of implementation. It is in this space between expectation and reality that our most valuable learning occurs. Nowhere is this more evident than with the rollout of Next Generation Command and Control (NGC2).

I recently visited the 4th Infantry Division and saw firsthand the challenges and triumphs of putting these new capabilities into the hands of Soldiers. The "Ivy" Division is on the front lines of this transformation, and their experience provides an invaluable, real-world perspective that theories and concepts alone cannot. The lessons they are learning about integrating new equipment, adapting tactics, and training their formations are not just for them; they are paving the way for the entire Army. Their feedback is essential as we refine our approach and ensure a smoother transformation for the divisions that will follow.

The complexity of NGC2 at all echelons reinforces why we are fundamentally reshaping our approach to both home station and institutional training. We are using the new Basic Communicator Module to level-set all Signaleers graduating from Advanced Individual Training (AIT) with the foundational knowledge necessary to adapt to the complex realities of any system they encounter. Signal-Mobile Advanced Readiness Training (S-MART) will provide the unit-specific updated technical skills required in this constantly evolving environment. We are also piloting a new Signal-Digital Master Gunner Course (S-DMG), intended to empower mid-grade NCOs with both the technical skills and training management techniques needed to develop modernized training plans for their units. We are equipping leaders across the Signal Regiment not just to operate what they have today, but to understand the principles required to master what comes next.

As we navigate this change and empower the leaders of tomorrow, recognizing those who came before is more important than ever. To that end, nominations are open for the Distinguished Member of the Regiment (DMR) through April 30, 2026. I encourage you to take the time to recognize and nominate those individuals whose contributions have had a lasting impact on our Regiment. We honor the trailblazers who build the foundation upon which we stand.

The articles in this issue reflect the honest and vital work being done across our force. I want to thank each of the authors for sharing their own stories of "Expectations vs. Reality." Your willingness to share challenges and successes is what allows us to learn, adapt, and succeed together.

Thank you for everything you do to "**Get the Message Through**!"

Pro Patria Vigilans!
Watchful for the Country!

Col. Julia M. Donley,
43rd Chief of Signal and U.S. Army Signal School Commandant

Signal Professionals are at the Center of Rapid Transformation

Team Signal,

The commandant's theme for this quarter, "Expectations vs. Reality," strikes a chord that resonates at every echelon of our Noncommissioned Officer Corps. As the backbone of the Regiment, NCOs are the ones who turn strategic vision into tactical reality. We are navigating the most significant force design and training overhaul in decades, requiring us to be brutally honest about where we ***are*** and where we ***need*** to be.

The reality of the modern battlefield demands that we move faster than our legacy systems allow. To that end, we are fundamentally changing how we equip and train the force. We are aggressively divesting of outdated WIN-T systems and terminology that no longer serve the mission. We cannot expect our Soldiers to be experts if they are bogged down by the "how we've always done it" mentality. In the Signal School, we have already updated over 70% of our programs of instruction (POI), removing platform-specific training in favor of foundational core concepts, while still applying those fundamentals to hands-on training. We are training the "Why," not just the "How."

The feedback the 4th Infantry Division's series of Ivy Sting exercises, common troubleshooting failures demonstrated by Signaleers during combat training center (CTC) rotations, and pre-test data collected during S-MART (Signal-Mobile Advanced Readiness Training), the Signal-Digital Master Gunner (S-DMG) course, and PME (Professional Military Education) MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) Competency testing have all provided a harsh reality check for the Signal Regiment. It has reinforced the need for a robust Basic Communicator Module—ensuring every Advanced Individual Training graduate arrives at their unit with a baseline of technical competence. Furthermore, we are evolving our PME to meet the speed of the force. By reducing the length of the Advanced Leader Course and Senior Leader Course to five weeks while also interweaving NCO Common Core throughout the POI, we will return NCOs to their formations faster while ensuring they are assessed on true MOS competency rather than just attendance.

To bridge the gap between institutional learning and unit requirements, we are leaning heavily into S-MART and a reimagined S-DMG course. These programs are designed specifically for our mid-grade NCOs under the train-the-trainer model. We must equip our NCOs, the primary trainers, with technical expertise and intellectual curiosity to be able to master any piece of equipment placed in their hands through a foundational understanding of routing, switching, and signal flow. The new S-DMG will be the expert who empowers the commander by informing modernized, technical training plans that fit the specific needs of their unit assisting in the assessment of that training. Home station training remains a critical part of building and maintaining our expertise.

As we look toward the future, we must also honor those who set the standard for adaptability. Nominations for Distinguished Member of the Regiment are open through April 30. I encourage our leaders to look across their formations and nominate those trailblazers who have spent their careers "Getting the Message Through."

The path forward requires us to be agile, technically proficient, and unafraid to leave old systems behind. Whether it is in the Signal School or at home station, our mission remains the same: provide the commander with a network that wins.

Signal Proud! Signal Strong!

Command Sgt. Maj. Lisa M. Gandy,
26th Regimental Command Sergeant Major

Professionalism, Discipline, Leadership: The Enduring Role of Signal WOs

Bedrock of the Cohort

Professionalism and discipline remain the foundation of the Warrant Officer Cohort.

In an era where cyberspace is contested, networks are targeted, and technology evolves at a blistering speed, these traits are not optional; they are mission essential. Our Regiment faces unique challenges: resilient communications in denied environments, data-driven operations at scale, and the synchronization of tactical and strategic networks. While technical knowledge is critical, it is the professionalism and discipline of warrant officers that ensure this knowledge is applied effectively. How we carry ourselves, lead, advise, and mentor, reflects not only on the Signal Regiment but on the entire Army profession.

Quiet Professionals

The warrant officer's motto, "The Quiet Professional," is often misunderstood. Quiet does not mean silent professionals. It means that when we speak, we do so with precision, authority, and credibility. Our presence at the table is not ceremonial; it is purposeful.

Commanders expect warrant officers to be their technical conscience. They rely on us to bridge the gap between tactical requirements and technical realities, translating complexity into clarity. When we advise a commander, brief a staff, or mentor a noncommissioned officer, our words carry weight because they are backed by expertise, experience, and discipline.

In every discussion, we must add value, ensuring that decisions are informed by practical technical truth and doctrine. Our influence is earned, not assumed, and sustained only through consistent professionalism.

Presence and Bearing

Professional bearing extends beyond technical mastery. It includes the appearance, presence, and demeanor that inspire confidence before a single word is spoken. A crisp uniform, disciplined posture, and adherence to standards communicate pride in our profession and respect for those we serve alongside. These details matter. Soldiers notice, NCOs notice, and commanders notice.

Appearance is not vanity; it is a visible indicator of discipline, accountability, and commitment. When combined with competence, appearance reinforces credibility. Soldiers will follow leaders who embody the standards they demand. Commanders will trust advisors who demonstrate discipline in both execution and presence. In the Warrant Officer Cohort, discipline in action and appearance are inseparable, and together they strengthen our ability to influence, lead, and advise.

Leaders, Mentors, Developers

Signal warrant officers are not simply problem solvers; we are builders of the next generation.

Every interaction with a Soldier or NCO is an opportunity to transfer knowledge and instill confidence. When a warrant officer teaches a young information technology specialist (25B) how to troubleshoot a mission-critical system, guides a network communication systems specialist (25H) in managing resilient networks, or mentors a satellite communications operator-maintainer (25S) in operating satellite communications under contested conditions, we are doing more than solving problems; we are shaping the future of the Regiment.

Our greatest legacy will not be a system fielded or a network secured. It will be the Soldiers we develop – leaders who will carry forward our mission and advance our craft long after we are gone. This commitment to mentorship and technical development is what ensures the enduring relevance of the Signal Corps.

Trust as the Currency of Leadership

Trust is the currency of the profession, and discipline is the foundation of that trust. Commanders must be

confident that warrant officers provide sound judgment, technical accuracy, and advice rooted in integrity. But trust is not only vertical; it must also be horizontal. The respect we extend to one another within the cohort is just as critical as the trust we build with commanders and Soldiers. Mutual respect, candor, and professionalism strengthen cohesion within the cohort, ensuring that we can speak with one voice as trusted advisors.

When we uphold the standard with each other, we reinforce the credibility of the entire cohort. In doing so, we demonstrate that the trust commanders place in us is not individual, but collective.

Standing at the Center of Transformation

Today, the Signal Regiment is at the heart of Army modernization and transformation. We ensure resilient, data-driven, and secure communications across the Unified Network - a responsibility that underpins every Army operation, from tactical formations to strategic headquarters.

This responsibility demands that signal warrant officers remain technically agile, professionally disciplined, and unwaveringly committed to the mission. Having a seat at the table is not enough; we must continually earn the respect to remain there. Respect is earned through demonstrated expertise, the ability to mentor and develop others, and the professionalism to uphold the standards of the Army profession.

As the Army faces new domains of conflict and emerging technologies, expectations for warrant officers will only grow. Our role is not just to solve today's problems, but to prepare the force for tomorrow's fight.

Setting the Standard for the Future

The enduring role of signal warrant officers is clear: we are technical leaders, trusted advisors, and developers of future generations. In both action and appearance, we must set the standard.

When we embody professionalism, when we demonstrate discipline, and when we lead with integrity, we ensure the success of today's missions while safeguarding the future strength of the Signal Corps. Our legacy will not only be measured by the systems we deploy, but by the trust we build and the Soldiers we prepare to lead.

The Army cannot modernize, adapt, or win without disciplined, professional warrant officers guiding the way. This is our enduring responsibility and our lasting contribution to the Signal Regiment and the Army profession.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Willie L. Newkirk,
8th Regimental Chief Warrant Officer

THE QUIET PROFESSIONAL

From the Editor …

Laura M. Levering
Editor, U.S. Army Signal School

This quarter's theme, "Expectations vs. Reality," had me reflecting on my own time in service. Although I only served five years on active duty, those years encompassed some of the most impactful moments of my life. From the time I met with a recruiter to the day I received my discharge papers, most expectations I had as a Soldier ended up far different from what became reality. And looking back, I believe I am a better person for it.

Prior to enlisting, I expected I would deploy to Iraq – eventually. I did not expect the deployment would occur so quickly (after being at my first duty station for less than three months). And had my first assignment been with a public affairs unit (my expectation) instead of a military police brigade (my reality), I would not have been forced out of my comfort zone nor had the same opportunities to develop as a PA Soldier (and later NCO). I also did not expect to deploy for a second time one year later – back to the same place – that time with a public affairs unit. During that period, I learned more about the PA career field and consequently grew to love it – so much that I re-enlisted and had fully intended to make a career of the Army. Then "life happened," and more expectations ended up not matching reality. I opted to leave active duty earlier than expected, and the reality that followed has been a journey that led me to where I believe I am meant to be.

One of the greatest takeaways I have from my time in uniform is that sometimes it's best to embrace the unexpected.

Whether you opted to submit an article or not, I hope this quarter's topic prompted you to think about your own military experiences and that you will be open to sharing them with others – either in writing or through conversations. Now for a few admin notes …

Artificial intelligence can be a valuable tool for a variety of tasks when used properly. Using it to write articles to be published in the Army Communicator (and other branch journals) should not be one of the uses.

I recently attended a two-day workshop that focused on military writing and covered various topics including AI integration. One of the workshop's panelists, a senior editorial manager for a prominent nonprofit association, said a few things that will stay with me for a long time. Voicing her thoughts about AI, she said, "Have *pride* in your work; don't outsource your work to *gross mediocrity*. Don't automate your creative ability to make something that only *you* can make."

If you insist on using AI, use it for what it is intended to be: a tool. Do not allow it to do all the "work" for you. To quote another panelist from the workshop I attended, "If you didn't write it, you need to cite it."

Lastly, be sure to check out Line of Departure. I suggest bookmarking it. A product of the Harding Project, it is where all of the Army's professional journals are currently housed. The Harding Project is evolving, which means the Army Communicator is also evolving. And if you have not subscribed to the Harding Project Substack, take a moment to check it out.

Submission guidelines

Articles need to be sent in Word. Photos and graphics must be attached **separately (*not embedded*** in Word or a PDF)**.** Include a description of each photo/graphic along with the rank, full name, and unit of person who took the photo (or created graphic). Acronyms **must be spelled out** on first reference, with the abbreviation of the term acceptable on subsequent reference. Between 500 and about 2,000 words per article is ideal. This helps ensure a minimum of one page and maximum of four pages in publication layout (depending on photos, etc.). Use **APA** format when citing sources.

Summer 2026 theme: **The Enduring Signaleer: Building a Resilient Network**
Summer 2026 deadline: ***June 5***

Bridging Expectations Versus Reality

Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain (Maj.) Glen Thompson
U.S. Army Signal School

Professor John Hare of the Divinity School defines the "moral gap" as "the profound space between one's ethical ideal and one's actual living according to that ideal." This concept offers a potent analytical framework for understanding the "Expectations vs. Reality" paradigm within an ethical context. For military professionals, the institutional expectation is the embodiment of the seven Army Values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. However, the exigencies of daily operations often reveal the challenge of consistently upholding these ideals. The resulting divergence between expectation and reality constitutes not merely a source of professional frustration, but a fundamental ethical condition.

As an Ethics instructor at the U.S. Army Signal School, my goal is to equip every officer attending the Signal Basic Officer Leadership Course (SBOLC) and Signal Captain Career Course (SCCC) with the cognitive tools necessary to bridge this moral gap. Our curriculum is structured upon a three-tiered approach: diagnosing the gap, providing bridging frameworks, and fostering leadership across the gap.

Diagnosing the Moral Gap

The initial phase of instruction focuses on developing the officers' capacity for moral self-awareness and situational diagnosis. Through analysis of case studies – wherein Soldiers failed to adhere to the Army Values or the standards of the Army Profession – we illustrate how minor ethical deviations can escalate into significant institutional and leadership failures. This method cultivates a sense of professional vigilance, teaching future leaders that ethical consistency is critical regardless of other operational successes. The objective is for officers to learn to identify the moral gap in themselves, their peers, and their environment.

Providing Bridging Frameworks

Secondly, the curriculum provides practical, doctrinal, and proactive frameworks that enable officers to navigate ethical dilemmas. Instruction is grounded in established models, including Transformational Moral Leadership, the Army Leadership Requirements Model (Army Doctrine Publication 6-22), the Army Profession, and Army Ethical Standards. To translate theory into practice, we furnish two key instruments:

- Ethical Climate Assessment Survey: Officers are provided with a survey tool to assess, improve, and maintain a healthy ethical climate upon arrival at their future assignments.
- Annual Ethics Program: This resource contains a 52-topic syllabus, enabling leaders to systematically integrate ethical training into their unit's long-range calendar.

These tools are designed to facilitate proactive engagement, empowering officers to train their Soldiers for integrity-based responses *before* a crisis occurs.

Fostering Leadership Across the Gap

The final objective is to encourage officers to see their role as extending beyond personal morality to the ethical stewardship of their organization. The focus shifts to the officer's capacity to positively influence the moral gap within their subordinates. The frameworks provided are not merely for personal use but are tools for coaching, training, and mentorship. By actively and consistently addressing ethical issues, a leader reduces the collective moral gap within their platoon, section, or company. This process normalizes discourse surrounding ethics and morality, thereby fostering an environment where Soldiers are equipped with internal safeguards and are more inclined to make ethical choices in the honorable service of the nation.

In conclusion, bridging the moral gap is the fundamental work of a leader. It begins with courage to diagnose our own shortcomings and is advanced through disciplined application of ethical frameworks. But most importantly, it finds its expression in leadership that actively closes this gap for others. By normalizing conversations about ethics and empowering officers to be agents of positive moral change, we are investing in the very soul of our Army. The goal is not to create perfect leaders, but to develop resilient ones who can navigate the space between expectation and reality with integrity, building units where honorable service is the unwavering standard.

‘Once a Patriot, Always a Patriot’

An enlarged image of Sgt. Declan J. Coady is illuminated during a special “Elite Hero Workout of the Day” hosted by Company E, 551st Signal Battalion, on March 9. Coady was one of six American Soldiers killed when an unmanned aircraft struck a tactical command center at the Port of Shuaiba in Kuwait on March 1, 2026.

Article, photos by Laura Levering
U.S. Army Signal School

The message was loud, clear, and evident to all who gathered for Company E, 551st Signal Battalion’s physical training March 9: “Once a Patriot, always a Patriot.”

Proving those words are more than merely a slogan, hundreds of Soldiers honored a fallen Signaleer they never met but to whom they were connected.

Sgt. Declan J. Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa, was one of six American Soldiers killed when an unmanned aircraft struck a tactical command center at the Port of Shuaiba in Kuwait on March 1.

Coady enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve in 2023, completed basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, then went on to graduate from the Information Technology Specialist (25B) course at Fort Gordon on July 31, 2024. Upon graduation, Coady returned to his home state where he served with the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), a Reserve unit in Des Moines. He was deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

As news of the casualties spread, Signal Corps leadership discovered that one of the fallen Soldiers belonged to them for about five months – the duration of the 25B course. Despite nearly two years having passed since they had seen him, both 1st Sgt. Dustin Wenzel and Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Murray, of Company E, 551st Sig. Bn., immediately recognized Coady’s name and face. Wenzel was a noncommissioned officer-in-charge at the Signal School, and Murray a drill sergeant during Coady’s time at Fort Gordon. Although neither NCO had gotten to know Coady on a personal level, the loss is deeply personal – and they wanted to honor him – so they organized a special “Elite Hero Workout of the Day” and executed it the

following Monday morning. The intent was for Company E – mostly comprised of 25B Soldier-trainees – to come together and work as teams to complete a series of physical challenges in Coady's honor. The result was an outpouring of support from not only Company E but also from Headquarters and Alpha Company (non-initial entry training personnel), the Noncommissioned Officer Academy, and leadership from across 551st Sig. Bn., to include Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Stadler. Standing in front of a photo display of Coady, Stadler set the tone for the morning's Elite Hero Workout of the Day.

"I don't claim to know or understand why the universe does what it does, but I do understand that you have two choices that you can make," Stadler said to the Soldiers. "You could choose to be sad, you could choose to sulk, and you could choose to be scared and intimidated. That's a choice. Or you could choose to honor this warrior, train as hard as you possibly can … to be the most lethal Signaleers on the planet!" Stadler then asked, "Which one is it going to be?" to which Soldiers responded with a loud resounding, "Lethal!"

Following Stadler, Wenzel spoke about Coady, his connection to the Signal Corps, and the reasons for honoring Coady. He also echoed Stadler's sentiments about not understanding the "why" in what the universe does sometimes, then shared some reflections he had over the weekend.

"We are American Soldiers, we are warriors and members of a team," Wenzel said. "The grit that we have and everything we put forward – this is what makes us the most lethal force the world has ever seen."

Murray read Coady's biography then went over rules for the workout and thanked everyone for "showing up" for a Soldier they did not know but whose life mattered.

"We honor him by putting in some blood, sweat and tears into this workout, and by giving it everything that we can," Murray said.

For the workout, Soldiers had 30 minutes to complete a total of 500 air squats, 400 push-ups, 300 sit-ups, 200 flutter kicks, 100 burpees, two multiple laps around the barracks. As one Soldier executed an exercise, teammates either planked, held a kettlebell/plate over their head, or remained in a front-leaning rest position. Once the 30 minutes were up, Stadler called for the troops to gather around him and offered some parting words.

"You matter. You are a part of something," Stadler said. "When you leave here and you go to your duty station, this is how we do it. This is what you do when things like this happen. You come together … and you sweat, you bleed, and you honor them. Once a Patriot, always a Patriot!"

For the family

Although present leadership at Fort Gordon may not have known Coady on a personal level, but his life mattered to them. Murray said he wants to assure Coady's family that Coady wasn't "just another trainee."

"He was a part of our family, he was a member of our team, and we will always honor those that were a part of our team," Murray explained. "He will always hold a special place in 551's heart, in 551's history; his sacrifice means everything, and we are just so appreciative of him and his family … and we send them all the love, prayers and support."

"I know it will never replace [Coady] and it will never account for the memories they could have had, but I hope [his family] can see the passion behind what we did this morning and what he did for his country," Wenzel added. "We will always remember our fallen Soldiers because we are a team, we are a family."

Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Murray, of Company E, 551st Signal Battalion, reads the biography of Sgt. Declan J. Coady.

My TWI Fellowship: Signal Officer's Perspective

From idea to reality

Capt. Joshua A. Rash
U.S. Space Command

There I was: a key developmental (KD) complete captain looking at my options for the highly anticipated broadening opportunity, or the "fun job." As I scanned the different emails from branch and the Broadening Opportunities Program catalog in Germany, my eyes passed over the big names everyone knows: Downing Scholarship, Congressional Fellowship, and Bradley Fellowship. Then I landed on a program called Training with Industry (TWI).

It caught my attention because my career had been very tactical up to that point, and I was looking for an experience that would give me a broader, strategic perspective. If you've never heard of it, you're not alone. It's one of those opportunities easily lost in the noise, but it provides a unique experience that's different for every person.

As I looked at my choices, life happened, as it does. I was forced to make a decision. Luckily, a conversation with my brigade commander changed everything. He had seen a previous signal officer go through the program and offered insight a catalog never could. He demystified TWI and convinced me of its value. I decided to apply for it – a choice that catapulted me into one of the best assignments of my career.

What I Thought I Was Getting Into

My commander's advice prompted me to look deeper. Research started where it always does: the regulations. Straight from Army Regulation 621-1 page 23, it reads, "The purpose of TWI is to provide selected Army personnel the opportunity to gain career-broadening experience while working in an industry environment. It also provides the participant's organization the means to acquire needed skills or expertise to accomplish its mission."

If you're like me, that description does not actually answer the question of what it is. Fortunately, advice from my brigade commander helped. He explained that there are usually a few different partner organizations each year and that the proponent – in my case, the Signal Branch – provides fellows with key areas of interest to focus on. This was enough information to have a productive conversation with my career manager. Most importantly, it helped me ask pointed questions about partner locations – a key factor due to my family's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) status. That conversation was the final piece of the puzzle. My career manager confirmed a fellowship with Verizon Wireless was available in Maryland, a location that met my family's needs. With the location confirmed, I was accepted into the program, transforming TWI from an idea into a reality.

Armed with official regulation and some inside baseball, I built a picture in my head of how the year would go. In my mind, it was straightforward. I pictured myself arriving in Maryland, getting a firm handshake from a Verizon rep, and immediately being put to work on a technically challenging project. After one year, I would complete the program, relocate to my next unit, and go on to do great things. While some of that held true, part of it was way off the mark.

A Year on the Outside

For those unaware, you aren't truly assigned to a unit in the area where you conduct your TWI Fellowship. On paper, you may be assigned to an ROTC battalion like I was. Or you might be in some other unit in the geographic area. All other administrative functions are taken care of by the student detachment, which is physically located in South Carolina.

You are truly alone, and while you may not admit it, you are afraid or at least a bit nervous. Gone is the constant backdrop of an organized Army unit. You must ensure that you are deployable, that your physical fitness is maintained, and that all other ancillary things taken for granted are done when it comes to your career. It is a giant culture shock that is truly a year on the outside.

So, how did my vision hold up against reality? My first point about receiving a welcome was partially right, although less formal than I had envisioned. My second point about being put to work immediately was correct. My third point – an expectation that the work would be purely technical – met a surprising reality. And my fourth point about going on to do great things is currently an ongoing journey.

On my first day, our Verizon TWI champion had set the stage. "TWI is a pick your own adventure." I was attached to the System Performance and Radio Frequency Engineering teams, where I expected a technical deep dive that would strain my abilities. That technical dive did occur; however, I also spent the initial phase shadowing their directors, observing

them negotiate with each other and with outside entities to reach a common goal.

The real learning happened when I was tasked with leading and briefing my own projects. One of the higher stakes projects was providing network support for the presidential inauguration. Another was more personal. Using my understanding of (and access to) the military, I collected data and presented recommendations that would improve the cellular network for service members and their families on military installations across the region.

While technical experience was present in both cases, the real test was not the data itself. It was getting buy-in from executives to turn recommendations into action. That is when the lesson hit home. Success did not come from being the best engineer or from being right. Success came from those who negotiated better and who communicated more clearly. It wasn't just an observation.

I started to see opportunities where my own background could be useful. I was surrounded by deeply technical, intelligent people who struggled to explain their work in simple terms. I found myself falling back on a skill I took for granted in the Army: the ability to "Barney style" a complex topic. In the end, I had written 13 distinct technical "how to" guides for Verizon's teams, turning complex processes into simple, repeatable steps for others to follow. The Army was not just taking from Verizon; I was providing a "needed skill" in return.

What I Walked Away With

As my TWI fellowship came to an end, I realized my initial expectations were far from the reality of the experience. Looking back my original assumptions did not hold up. The biggest lesson I learned was not technical at all. Success in that corporate environment was measured by negotiation, communication, and influence; not by how smart or technical you were. These are competencies that we overlook sometimes as Signaleers. These skills are essential. At Verizon, I had watched teams negotiate project priorities. In my first few months on a combatant command staff, I was living it. We were tasked with "operationalizing" a new section, which meant getting our J3, J6, and several special staff to agree on a single plan. Getting buy-in was no longer a textbook term, it was the primary tool for making progress.

I remember the challenge of briefing non-technical executives. Almost immediately at the command, I was briefing our network status to the commanding general. That Verizon lesson hit home. The goal wasn't to prove my technical knowledge; it was to give a leader the exact information they needed to decisions. This ability to translate complexity into clear information is a critical leadership skill.

So what is the strategic leap for the Army? It is realizing that the lessons I learned from Verizon were not some secret corporate sauce. They were a real-world application of Army leadership doctrine we already have. Think about the Army Leadership Requirements Model.

We all know the competencies: leads, develops, and achieves. The real gem of TWI isn't another cert for your "I love me" book; it is a full year of reps and sets in the most challenging parts of the "leads" competency like "extends influence" (Department of the Army, 2025, incl c2) and "communicates" (Department of the Army, 2025, incl c2).

I had no authority at Verizon, and I had to persuade. On a large joint staff, where your rank is one of many, the exact same rule applies. For the Signal Corps, this is critical. It develops officers who can walk into any room and translate complex technical requirements into operational necessities that commanders understand. It builds leaders who can negotiate for resources and drive modernization, not just manage systems.

Ultimately, broadening opportunities like TWI create officers who are prepared for the modern military environment. It forces you to rely on influence and collaboration over authority. You return to the Army not just with new knowledge, but with a proven ability to lead in environments where you are not in charge.

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Have Military Standards Dropped?

Capt. Ellie Horn grips the corner of an American flag during her promotion ceremony from first lieutenant to captain in May 2024. Horn was assigned to the U.S. Army Signal School, Fort Gordon, Georgia, at the time of her promotion. She has since relocated to Fort Hood, Texas, where she serves as a company commander in 11th Signal Brigade. (Photo by Laura Levering, U.S. Army Signal School)

Master Sgt. Stephen Tackett
U.S. Army Signal School

Customs and courtesies are fundamental components of military culture that embody the values and traditions of the armed forces. They serve as a means of fostering discipline, respect, and cohesion among service members.

I am constantly asked by retired service members, young Soldiers, and Department of Army Civilians if our military standards have dropped. My answer to them is always, "Yes." Does this have to do with the changing culture or leaders not being as engaged as they used to be? What happened to individuals saying, "Good morning" or "Good afternoon?" Why is it rare to see Soldiers give the greeting of the day to leaders in passing?

As a young Soldier at Fort Stewart, Georgia, I would see vehicles stop and its occupants get out to render salute during Reveille and Retreat. This was a normal thing to see for many Soldiers and veterans. These actions are becoming less practiced throughout our military.

As a young private, I was taught that you start your day by saluting the flag before conducting physical training, and you end your day with saluting the flag. These small actions that became habits created structure for many of us. In today's world, we are so focused on the big things that we forget about the small things. Remembering the small things of saluting the flag or giving the greeting of the day creates the discipline needed for us as Soldiers and enhances the pride of serving in something bigger than ourselves.

What has changed in the military to create this big shift? Is it because of the mass deployments Soldiers endured during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts? Is it because we no longer starch and iron our uniforms or shine our boots? I believe it is a mix of everything.

As the United States military, we are here for one reason: to fight and win America's wars. But within this reason, we have forgotten how to be Soldiers in garrison environments. We need to always train for the next conflict, but we also need to remember that we have an obligation to look like—and carry ourselves—as professional Soldiers. We must stand straighter than the average person, hold our head higher than the average person, and speak in a courteous and professional way when out and about.

A big shift occurred when we stopped starching and ironing our uniforms and shining our boots. There was a level of pride on Monday mornings when you came to formation trying to look "crispier" than the individual next to you. This created an environment of pride and competition that improved the discipline, respect, and cohesion of an organization while providing leaders an opportunity to inspect their Soldiers' appearances and military knowledge. What about field exercises or deployments?

The answer to that question can be answered by countless retirees. You had your formation boots and your working boots. We have also continuously changed our uniforms to match the conflicts we are currently in. There is nothing wrong with this, but back home in garrison, we should maintain a proud, professional appearance.

We continuously say, "Get back to the basics," but we don't know which basics to get back to. There are many different worlds within our military: deployments, garrison, overseas, special operations, and many others. Many of the operational basics are different in these environments, but the basics of professionalism are the same, and that is one basic that should not change. The military's reputation is closely tied to its adherence to customs and courtesies. A decline in these standards may affect public perception of the armed forces, as society often looks to the military as a model of discipline and professionalism. Maintaining high standards of conduct is essential for preserving the trust and support of the American public.

The question of whether standards have dropped in the military is a complex issue. While there are indications that practices have become less strictly enforced, the military must find a balance between adapting to societal changes and maintaining core values that have defined the armed forces for generations.

Customs and courtesies are not merely traditions; they are the foundation of military culture that uphold discipline, respect, and cohesion. The military must remain committed to reinforcing these standards to ensure operational effectiveness and preserve the integrity of the institution.

Author

A native of Charleston, South Carolina, Master Sgt. Stephen Tackett enlisted in August 2003 as a radio and communication security repairer (35E). He currently serves at Fort Gordon, Georgia, as the Operations NCO for the U.S. Army Signal School. Tackett has held numerous key positions including first sergeant, inspector general NCO, electronic maintenance control supervisor, and senior course management NCO. His operational service includes deployments to Iraq.

Write it Down, Execute

Practical advice

Lt. Col. John Geracitano
U.S. Army Student Detachment,
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

As Austin Kleon says, "All advice is autobiographical." What follows is a principle that has worked for me. Since you are reading this, we likely share some of the same doubts and high expectations at the beginning of our Army careers.

My initial expectations shifted fast. Early on in my career, I declined a Ranger School slot I had earned in the Armor Basic Officer Leader Course; an opportunity I had coveted for years. I did it because my forthcoming commander told me it was the right move. It was a hard decision, but the correct one. This was my first real lesson in heeding a senior leader's advice and putting the unit's needs over personal priorities. My left shoulder is still bare today, but I have no regrets. The experience I had leading Soldiers and cutting my teeth in the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment could never be replicated by any course.

During my first week as a platoon leader, I attended Fort Hood, Texas's end-of-week officer call. The III Corps commander would open with remarks, and then we'd spend the next few hours roasting each other. The commander at that time, (Retired) Lt. Gen. Ricky Lynch, offered career advice that has stayed with me ever since. He told us, "Write down everything your boss tells you to do, then do it." So simple. From that moment forward, every time I'd forget to action a task, his words came back to haunt me. "Why didn't I just write it down?" I would ask myself.

Reality will never align with your expectations, professionally or personally. As you begin your career, I offer the same advice branched into two perspectives – and both involve a pen.

First, write down everything that your boss tells you to do.

"A short pencil is better than a long memory." When you are in receive mode, write everything down as fast as you can. This is not about optics. It is about execution. I carry a full-size three-subject notebook instead of a smaller pocket variant. It enables me to write at length, connect ideas across pages, and the notebook lasts for months. Every entry starts with a topic or meeting title, the date, and the key people present. When a question surfaces weeks later about what was decided in the leader huddle, the answer is right there. You need something that you can write on at any time. The easy part is writing it down.

Next, you must execute. Inherent in this is understanding how to prioritize tasks based on the needs of the unit and other factors (e.g., time).

Second write down everything that you think (or know) you should do. This is the harder discipline. No one assigns it. No one follows up on it. It lives entirely in your head until you put it on paper. This category is broader than a task list. It encompasses your fitness goals, self-development, the relationship you've been meaning to invest in, and the idea that surfaced during a run and disappeared by the time you reached the motor pool. If you don't capture these things immediately, vanish.

To accomplish this, each Sunday I complete a single sheet of paper divided into categories covering the week ahead: Personal tasks, Fitness, Work tasks, Daily Streaks, and a Miscellaneous column for overflow. I review the calendar, carry over unfinished tasks, and set my intentions. The sheet gets messy by Friday. That's fine. The point is to always know what needs to get done across every area of your life, so you're never left wondering what to work on next. More importantly, nothing is neglected for too long without being addressed. Lastly, at the end of each day, I map the next day's schedule on an index card and prioritize the top tasks. It fits inside my pocket and keeps me focused. No app required.

Am I perfect at this? No. Do I complete this one-page sheet religiously on Sundays? No. And that is fine with me. I have built the habit and consistency to develop this into a process and adapt to whatever workflow is needed for that time. Try whatever system, tools, and timeline works for you. But most importantly, just start.

The years melt away. Orders for your next assignment will arrive before you know it, and your next chapter will begin whether you plan for it or not. The leaders who thrive are not the ones who had it all figured out on day one. They are the ones who tracked what their boss needed and who held themselves accountable to what they knew they should be doing: personally, professionally, and everything in between.

Lt. Col. John Geracitano is a signal officer and LTG (R) Dubik Writing Fellow who is currently serving as a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Closing the Digital Readiness Gap: A Case for an Integrated Signal Training Ecosystem

Sgt. Tyler Davis assembles a Tactical Radio Integration Kit as part of the Signal Digital Master Gunner course at Fort Gordon, March 18. Davis is a network communication systems specialist (25H) assigned to 442nd Signal Battalion, 15th Signal Brigade. (Photo by Laura Levering, U.S. Army Signal School)

Dr. David Verret and Col. Benjamin Schneller
U.S. Army Signal School

As the Army pivots from a counterinsurgency (COIN) footing to readiness for large-scale combat operations (LSCO), it faces a critical digital training readiness gap.

Recent trend reports from combat training centers (CTC) indicate that signal Soldiers, while technically proficient in specific systems, often lack the adaptive, high-level expertise required for complex, contested environments. This article argues that the current "one-time" institutional training model is insufficient.

The solution is not to invent new programs but to fully resource and strategically integrate existing structures into a holistic training ecosystem. We propose a two-pronged approach. First, transform Regional Signal Training Sites (RSTS) into a "Signal Foundry" modeled after the successful Intelligence Foundry program. Second, empower the Signal Digital Master Gunner (S-DMG) as the master trainer and commander's advisor for network readiness. By bridging institutional and operational training domains, this integrated system will build and sustain the digital expertise necessary for victory on future battlefields.

Introduction: A Crisis in Digital Readiness

The modern command post is a nexus of information where commanders must synthesize data from myriad sources to make time-sensitive decisions. Still, the most advanced technology is rendered useless if the network supporting it fails and the personnel responsible for it lack the training to restore it under pressure. This scenario represents not merely a technical failure but a critical failure in training readiness.

Recent reports from the Army's CTCs offer a stark warning, noting that the force is at risk of producing "expert technicians who are novice warfighters."[2] This critique highlights a fundamental problem: Soldiers may be trained on the procedural "button-ology" of specific systems but lack the deep, adaptive knowledge to troubleshoot and integrate capabilities in a contested operational environment. This reality violates the Army's foundational training principle that a single, all-encompassing standard must apply in both peacetime and wartime.[3] A single course at the beginning of a career is insufficient to maintain expertise throughout. To remedy this, the Army must bridge the gap between institutional instruction and operational training needs through a system of continuous development.

The Shifting Operational Landscape: From COIN to LSCO

The Army's strategic transformation from a COIN focus to a readiness posture for LSCO has profound implications for the Signal Corps. The COIN era was characterized by relatively stable network environments, system-specific procedures for Programs of Record like the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T), and a heavy reliance on field service representatives for advanced troubleshooting and maintenance.

The LSCO environment, in contrast, demands that signal Soldiers be more than technicians. They must be adaptive problem solvers capable of integrating new technologies, defending the network against peer adversaries, and operating effectively at the tactical edge with limited external support. Possessing cutting-edge technology is not enough. Without "the right digital skills to optimize, adapt, and fully apply the technology through innovation,"[6] operational units will remain at a disadvantage.

While the U.S. Army Signal School has begun updating its Programs of Instruction (POI), institutional training alone cannot solve this readiness problem. The solution must extend to the home station, empowering units to build and sustain digital proficiency.

A Holistic Solution: Signal Foundry and Master Gunner

To close the digital readiness gap, the Signal Corps can implement a nested, multi-echelon training ecosystem built on two key initiatives that are already in motion but require full resourcing and strategic integration.

1. Signal Foundry: Resourcing Home-Station Training

The Intelligence community provides an excellent model for resourced, continuous home-station training with its Foundry program. As outlined in Army Regulation 350-32, the Foundry platform provides expert-level training on advanced systems at the local level.

We propose remodeling the existing RSTS to align with this resourcing model, creating a "Signal Foundry." This mechanism would leverage centralized resourcing to disseminate best practices and lessons learned across the force while empowering local commanders to tailor training to their unit's specific mission and equipment. A Signal Foundry would provide the dedicated environment for NCOs and Soldiers to move beyond basic proficiency and achieve true mastery of next-generation digital systems.

2. S-DMG: The Tactical Expert and Trainer

The second, and most critical, component is the redesign of the S-DMG course. Modeled on the venerable M1 Abrams Master Gunner course, the new S-DMG curriculum correctly treats the network as a weapon platform, and the electromagnetic spectrum as its operational terrain. The goal of this course is to produce NCOs with advanced technical expertise who can serve as primary trainers within their formation and act as the commander's most trusted advisor on the unit's network and communication systems' readiness. The S-DMG is the linchpin of the entire

Staff Sgt. James Travis and Sgt. Tyler Davis assemble a Tactical Radio Integration Kit as part of the S-DMG course at Fort Gordon. Travis, a satellite communication systems operator-maintainer (25S), is assigned to 369th Signal Battalion; Davis is a network communication systems specialist (25H) with 442nd Signal Battalion. (Photo by Laura Levering, U.S. Army Signal School)

ecosystem – the tactical-level expert who can leverage the Signal Foundry to build and sustain the formation's digital warfighting capability. This aligns directly with the mandate in AR 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development, to develop leaders who can "operate and succeed in the complex and uncertain operational environments of the 21st century."[5]

Way Forward: A Call to Integrate and Empower

This is not a proposal to create new, costly programs from scratch. It is a call to fully resource and strategically integrate initiatives the Signal School is already developing. The path forward is clear: If the Army is serious about fixing its digital training readiness, it must invest in a robust digital training ecosystem.

The recommendations are straightforward. Fully resource the modernization of all relevant POIs, with special emphasis on the S-DMG course, to develop the master trainers required at the tactical edge. Transform the existing RSTS program into a Signal Foundry, providing dedicated resources for continuous, integrated training that closes the gap between the institutional schoolhouse and the operational force.

The CTCs have identified the problem, and the Signal School is actively building the multi-layered solution. By emulating the success of the Intelligence Foundry and empowering the S-DMG as the central figure in unit training, the Army can ensure its digital dominance on the battlefields of tomorrow.

Authors

Dr. David Verret has over 35 years of Department of Defense service. He currently serves as chief of the Regional Signal Training Sites and Signal Mobile Advanced Readiness Training. His career includes multiple combat-era deployments to Kuwait and Afghanistan in key G-6 and S-6 leadership roles. Dr. Verret holds a Doctor of Science in Information Systems and Communications from Robert Morris University, complemented by advanced degrees in Information Technology Management and Electronic Systems Technologies.

Col. Benjamin Schneller is the assistant commandant of the U.S. Army Signal School. He has served in a variety command and staff positions and across multiple deployments. Schneller recently completed a U.S. Army War College Fellowship at the Syracuse University Institute for Security Policy and Law.

Endnotes

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A Story of Strength and Service

More than a uniform

1st Lt. Su M. Nandar
307th Expeditionary Signal Battalion-Enhanced

As the first Asian female immigrant Soldier in my family, my journey in the U.S. Army has been one of growth, resilience, and self-discovery.

When I first enlisted, my primary motivation was to financially provide for my family. Little did I know that the Army would become an integral part of my identity and personal development, shaping me in ways I never anticipated. The decision to join the military wasn't easy. Coming from an immigrant background, there were cultural expectations and family traditions to consider. As a woman, I faced additional scrutiny and doubt from my community. However, the promise of a stable income and opportunities for advancement ultimately led me to take the leap.

I remember the day I told my parents about my decision. The look on their faces was a mix of pride, concern, and confusion. They understood the gravity of my choice but also recognized its potential for our family's future.

The early days of my military career were challenging. Basic training pushed me to my limits, instilling a sense of discipline and perseverance that would serve me well. As I progressed through training, I realized that the Army offered more than just a paycheck; it provided valuable skills that would shape my character and career trajectory. However, my journey was not without obstacles.

As an Asian American female in the military, I soon faced discrimination due to my gender and ethnicity. The challenges were both overt and subtle – ranging from blatant racist or sexist remarks to being passed over for opportunities despite my qualifications. These experiences were disheartening and often left me questioning my place in the military. There were moments when I considered giving up, wondering if I had made a mistake in joining an institution where I felt like an outsider. But something within me refused to let these setbacks define my journey.

Instead of allowing discrimination to break me, I let it fuel the fire within. I began standing up for myself, addressing discriminatory behavior head-on when I encountered it. I educated myself on my rights and focused on excelling in my duties, determined to prove my worth through actions. This journey taught me valuable lessons about resilience. Each challenge was an opportunity to develop my character and strengthen my resolve. I discovered strength and inner abilities that began to radiate through my military service. Throughout this journey, I was fortunate to have mentors who believed in me and guided me through difficult times – leaders who saw potential in me that I had not yet recognized in myself. When others might have dismissed me based on appearance or background, these officers took time to understand my capabilities. The mentorship they provided helped me shift my mindset, enabling me to look beyond immediate challenges and focus on long-term goals.

My newfound confidence led me to pursue the Green to Gold Active Duty Option program, which offered the opportunity to earn a master's degree while earning a commission. The rigorous application process tested not only my academic potential but my ability to lead and commit to the Army Values. The Green to Gold program was transformative; it allowed me to serve while pursuing education and leadership skills. It challenged me to excel academically and as a future officer.

I have relied on support from my mentors and resilience I developed over the years. Successfully completing the program and commissioning in the Signal Corps was not just a professional advancement; it was a testament to my determination. It proved that with the right mindset, I could overcome any obstacle. My successful transition demonstrated that abilities, character, and dedication matter, not ethnicity or gender.

As an officer, I found myself in a position to affect change within my unit. I make it my mission to create an inclusive environment where every Soldier feels valued regardless of their ethnicity or background. By sharing my experiences with both superiors and subordinates, I aim to raise awareness about discrimination's impact and foster a culture of respect. The most profound lesson I've learned is the importance of respect. In the Army, we come from diverse backgrounds but are all part of one family. Treating each other with respect is crucial for unit cohesion and personal growth.

Respect is a two-way street. You must show respect

before you can expect it in return. This principle has guided my interactions with fellow Soldiers, superiors, and civilians. By approaching every interaction with respect and openness, I have built strong relationships within my unit.

The Army has taught me that diversity is not just about representation – it is about leveraging unique perspectives and experiences. As a female Asian American Soldier, I've contributed insights that have proven valuable during missions abroad. My time in the military has also opened my eyes to diversity's strategic importance within our armed forces. As the U.S. focuses on global challenges, in the Asia-Pacific region, the inclusion of Asian Americans is not just a matter of equality but a strategic advantage. Our cultural knowledge is invaluable when navigating complex geopolitical landscapes.

To my fellow service members, especially those from minority backgrounds, I emphasize the importance of resilience while focusing on your goals. The path may not always be easy. However, each challenge you overcome makes you stronger.

For anyone facing discrimination or feeling out of place: stand up for yourself and use military support systems designed for addressing discrimination while promoting inclusivity. Don't hesitate to advocate for positive change within your units. Build strong support networks by connecting with other minority service members, join affinity groups, and find mentors who understand your unique perspective. Doing this can provide the community support you need to help get through challenging times.

Reflecting on my journey fills me with pride and gratitude for opportunities the Army provided. What began as a means of supporting my family has transformed into a fulfilling career path filled with personal growth beyond imagination.

To truly embody the spirit of the Army, we must look beyond our differences and recognize our shared purpose. By working together and respecting each other, we strengthen our military while setting an example for society.

My journey as an Asian immigrant in the Army has been transformative through challenges. I have learned resilience's value, respect's power, and diversity's strength. To those facing similar challenges: stay focused on your goals. Your unique perspective is an asset to the military. The path may not be easy, however, overcoming challenges helps us grow stronger both as individuals and as a collective unit.

By fostering positive relationships and finding purpose, we can build the resilience needed to overcome future obstacles. As we continue serving our nation together, let's do so with pride in our heritage, confidence in our abilities, and respect for diversity that makes our military and our country truly great!

Author

Born in Myanmar, 1st Lt. Su M. Nandar immigrated to the United States in 2013. She enlisted in the Army in 2014, progressing from private first class to sergeant. A Green to Gold cadet, Nandar earned a Master of Business Administration and commissioned as a Signal Corps officer in 2023. She currently serves as an executive officer in the 307th Expeditionary Signal Battalion-Enhanced

Reasons Signal Officers Should Apply to SAMS

'Unparalleled opportunity'

Maj. Ady J. Audain
U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies

The U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) develops operational planners capable of addressing the complexity of modern warfare.

SAMS comprises three programs, of which the most well-known is the Advanced Military Studies Program (AMSP). Through rigorous study of military history, theory, and doctrine, AMSP prepares field-grade officers to think critically and operate effectively at the operational level of war. Graduates serve as key planners at division, corps, and Army service component command headquarters, helping commanders understand complex problems and design operational approaches to achieve strategic objectives.

SAMS strengthens signal officers' abilities to lead and communicate complex technical challenges, applies critical thinking to operational problems, and integrates communications capabilities into operational planning and warfighting. These competencies enhance both their effectiveness as signal leaders and their contributions to operational planning across the Army.

SAMS significantly strengthens an officer's ability to lead operational planning teams and communicate complex ideas clearly and concisely. The AMSP curriculum provides numerous opportunities to lead teams in solving complex problems. SAMS emphasizes effective communication through frequent writing assignments, briefings, practical exercises, graphical visualization exercises, and a 10,000-word monograph. Students must convey complex concepts under strict constraints, such as in short written papers or brief presentations with minimal slides and limited time. These requirements force students to refine their thinking and communicate ideas with precision – skills particularly important for signal officers because they prepare them to lead technically complex systems that support operations across the force and translate technical issues into clear operational implications for commanders and staff. Strong communication enables them to explain operational risk and advocate for resources critical to command and control (C2) and mission success.

AMSP also develops officers' critical thinking and problem-solving skills by introducing students to multiple theories and methods of analysis/historical campaigns. Students learn how to visualize situations through the lens of design and systems thinking.

Officers analyze historical campaigns and evaluate doctrinal concepts while engaging in planning exercises that challenge them to address unfamiliar, complex problems. In doing so, they gain deeper understanding of the evolution of operational art and recognize its significance in both campaign and operational planning. This intellectual rigor strengthens an officer's ability to frame problems, evaluate multiple perspectives, and develop effective solutions. For signal officers, these skills are crucial. The Signal Corps frequently confronts both technical and organizational challenges, particularly as the Army modernizes and transitions toward large-scale combat operations and multidomain operations. Addressing these challenges requires leaders who can analyze complex environments and design solutions that integrate C2 capabilities with broader operational objectives.

SAMS also sharpens students' understanding of the Army and joint doctrine, which enables signal officers to develop plans that integrate capabilities across domains and advise commanders on communications considerations. Building upon the doctrinal foundation developed at the Command and General Staff College, the AMSP curriculum allows officers to analyze the evolution of doctrine and apply it to emerging threats and operational environments. Students study not only foundational publications such as FM 3-0, but also the broader body of doctrine that guides operations across echelons and warfighting functions.

Ultimately, AMSP provides signal officers with an unparalleled opportunity to develop as operational thinkers and leaders. The program strengthens leadership and communication skills, sharpens critical thinking, and deepens doctrinal understanding, all of which are essential qualities for officers serving in complex operational environments. These capabilities allow them to not only lead within their technical branch but also contribute meaningfully to operational planning.

As warfare grows in complexity and interconnectedness across domains, the Army requires leaders who can integrate specialized expertise into broader operational solutions. For signal officers seeking to maximize their impact on the force, attending SAMS represents a critical step in preparing to meet the challenges of future conflicts.

Maj. Ady J. Audain is a student at the School of Advanced Military Studies, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He commissioned as a signal officer from the ROTC program at Florida International University in 2013. Throughout his career, Audain has held key leadership and staff positions at multiple echelons. Upon completing the Advanced Military Studies Program, Audain will serve as a division planner with 25th Infantry Division.

Building Stronger Signal Soldiers

Expert Soldier Badge

Capt. Kwabena Antwi
11th Corps Signal Brigade

Signal Soldiers spend much of their time keeping units connected. They build networks, fix systems, and help commanders stay informed so they can make decisions. This work matters in every operation. At the same time, the Army expects every Soldier to stay ready to fight, move under pressure, and perform basic combat tasks when conditions demand it.

The Expert Soldier Badge (ESB) event hosted by the 11th Corps Signal Brigade at Fort Hood in March shows why technical skills and combat readiness must grow together. It also illustrates the importance of mastering these basic tasks.

The ESB gives Soldiers outside of infantry and medical fields a chance to prove their ability in core warrior tasks. Candidates train and test on physical fitness, land navigation, weapons, and other individual skills every Soldier should master. The process is demanding and forces participants to push past comfort and routine. For many signal Soldiers, it is a chance to reconnect with the basics of soldiering while building confidence in their own abilities.

The ESB has drawn participation from across the installation, with ranks ranging from private all the way to lieutenant colonel competing for the badge. This wide range highlights a shared commitment to readiness and understanding that standards apply at every level.

Signal units often operate in tough environments. Teams establish communication nodes on remote terrain, support maneuver formations in the field, and work long hours to keep systems running. When conditions change or threats emerge, those same Soldiers must be ready to react and continue the mission. Training for the Expert Soldier Badge helps reinforce these expectations. It reminds signal Soldiers that technical knowledge alone does not carry them through every challenge they may face in ever-changing operating environments.

The experience can be both rewarding and stressful. Cpl. Robert Young, network communication systems specialist (25H) assigned to 11th Corps Signal Brigade (CSB), described what it feels like to compete.

"The ESB has been tough but fun. The days are long and training makes you mentally drained at the end of the day," Young said. "I'm nervous about the medical lane as we go into test week. You have to focus on the small things and make sure to take your time, while still being able to complete the task in the allotted time given."

Sgt. Robert Young, 11th CSB, fills out a 9-line MEDEVAC request while participating in an ESB event hosted by 11th CSB. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Stepan, 11th CSB)

His words reflect the pressure many candidates feel as they prepare to meet the standard.

For some Soldiers, the motivation comes from personal growth and a desire to lead. Pfc. Gannon Turner, an intelligence analyst (35F) assigned to 11th CSB, shared his reason for stepping forward.

"I decided to compete to challenge myself and live up to the Soldier's Creed," Turner said. "Everything we have been training on will come in handy in real life situations and will allow me to act instantly if something ever happens. It's great information I will be able to take back to my unit and train other Soldiers on."

Turner's perspective shows how the event builds confidence in junior Soldiers. Behind the scenes, leaders play a key role in making the event successful. Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Stepan, a 25H who helped plan the event and serves as the tactical operations center noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC), reflected

on the experience.

"It's been a solid and great experience working as one of the NCOICs for the Expert Soldier Badge," Stepan said. "I've enjoyed watching Soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers push past their limits, making sure the standard stays the standard."

Stepan's observation captures the pride leaders take in developing others and maintaining discipline throughout the process.

Preparing for the ESB produces lasting benefits. Candidates spend weeks improving fitness and sharpening skills they may not use daily. They learn to manage fatigue, stay focused under stress, and maintain discipline when conditions are uncomfortable. These habits carry into field exercises, deployments, and everyday duties. The Soldiers return to their units with greater confidence and a stronger sense of pride.

Sgt. Robert Young, 11th CSB, evaluates a casualty as part of an ESB event hosted by 11th CSB. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Stepan, 11th CSB)

The ESB event reinforces a clear truth: Technical expertise remains critical for signal Soldiers, yet physical readiness and combat proficiency hold equal importance. Encouraging Soldiers to compete invests in complete readiness. In the end, the Expert Soldier Badge represents more than a test. It reflects a standard of readiness that strengthens both the Soldier and the formation.

Author

Capt. Kwabena Antwi, a Boston native, commissioned in 2020 after graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He currently serves as the future operations officer in charge (OIC) for 11th Corps Signal Brigade at Fort Hood, Texas, where he is also the lead planner and OIC for the Expert Soldier Badge.

Junior Signal Soldiers Spearhead Special Project

From concept to combat-ready

Article, photo by Capt. Jay T. Yang
728th Military Police Battalion

In an environment that demands constant innovation, the traditional roles of signal Soldiers are expanding at a rapid pace. At Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, signal professionals are no longer just managing networks; they are building the very sensors that feed them.

Within 728th Military Police (MP) Battalion, a new initiative called "Warfighter Labs" is being driven by signal Soldiers who have become the designers, manufacturers, and field support experts for a new fleet of reconnaissance drones.

The project was born from an operational gap. The battalion needed a tailored, low-cost small unmanned aerial system (sUAS) for its unique reconnaissance missions. Rather than wait for a slow acquisition process, the unit's leadership turned inward. They empowered the S6 section, under the direction of Capt. Jay T. Yang, the battalion S6 and director of Warfighter Labs, to develop a solution. This decision placed the battalion's communicators at the center of a groundbreaking hardware development project.

With an initial investment of just $15,000, the lab was established. The core technical team consisted of two S6 Soldiers: then-Pfc. Matthew Rodriguez (now a specialist) and Pfc. Luna Robles. Under the leadership of Yang, Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Antonio Gonzalez, and Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment Sgt. 1st Class Justin Gelletich, detachment sergeant (along with mentorship from 25th Infantry Division's Lightning Labs), these two junior Soldiers became the engine of Warfighter Labs. Rodriguez and Robles rapidly mastered a complex set of new skills, including 3D printing, soldering, systems programming, and flight testing. The impact was both immediate and profound. In just 26 days, Rodriguez and Robles were instrumental in taking the first six first-person view (FPV) drones from a concept to combat-ready assets. Putting in long hours, they often worked late to troubleshoot code or perfect a new 3D-printed part. The result of their technical skill and dedication was a new fleet of reconnaissance drones, immediately deployed and validated during a rotation at the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC).

The capabilities these signal Soldiers unlocked provide a massive force multiplier for their commander. Warfighter Labs can now organically produce a mission-ready reconnaissance drone for just $657 – a fraction of the cost of commercial systems, which can exceed $10,000. More importantly, the S6 section has established a model of operator self-sufficiency. Since the communicators control the entire production pipeline – from printing the airframe to programming the flight controller – they have become the battalion's resident experts. They can build, repair, and adapt the drones on the fly. This was proven at JPMRC, where Staff Sgt. Cameron Caratti, another signal Soldier, successfully maintained the drone fleet in the field, ensuring continuous operational availability. The S6 shop is no longer just a support element; it is a self-contained innovation hub.

The key lesson from the success of Warfighter Labs is a critical need to invest in and empower our signal professionals. The 728th MP Bn. is fortunate to have Rodriguez and Robles, who demonstrated that even the most junior members of the U.S. Army Signal Corps possess the aptitude to lead technical innovation. Moving forward, the S6 team will form the sustainable core of Warfighter Labs and ensure the program's future by expanding its capabilities.

The Warfighter Labs initiative serves as a powerful blueprint for the rest of the force. It proves that with the right leadership and a small amount of seed funding, a battalion S6 shop can transform into a high-tech manufacturing lab. It showcases the modern signal Soldier as a multi-talented problem solver, capable of building tactical tools that will ensure our Army's dominance on the battlefields of today and tomorrow.

Sgt. 1st Class Justin Gelletich, 728th MP Bn., conducts a test flight with a 3D-printed sUAS as Staff Sgt. Jeremiah O'brien, also 728th MP Bn., observes through goggles.

Transforming Cyber Threat Intelligence via 25D

A pivotal role

Sgt. 1st Class Trestan Savoy
U.S. Army Network Enterprise Technology Command

In an increasingly complex cyber domain, the U.S. Army must remain agile and innovative to maintain its advantage. This imperative is at the forefront of the chief of staff of the Army's (CSA) strategic focus, which prioritizes modernizing our forces and enhancing our ability to compete and win against peer and near-peer adversaries.

The Intelligence Support Element (ISE), with its forward-thinking approach to cyber defense, has found a unique force multiplier in the technical expertise of the cyber network defender (25D). By bridging the gap between traditional intelligence analysis and highly specialized cyber investigations, the 25D is transforming the Army's approach to threat intelligence.

Since its inception in September 2022, the ISE has conducted more than 100 successful investigations that have resulted in the development of new detection rules and improved defenses for the Department of War Information Network-Army (DOWIN-A). This success is directly attributable to the seamless integration of traditional intelligence investigations, led by the all source intelligence technician (350F) and intelligence analyst (35F), with the technical depth of the 25D. These collaborative efforts have spurred actionable changes across multiple theaters and refined the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) of our cyber security service provider-defensive (CSSP-D) teams, cyber mission forces, and network engineers.

The ISE routinely conducts in-depth investigations into incidents and alerts on DOWIN-A devices, providing direct, actionable findings to regional cyber center (RCC) directors. The 25D plays a pivotal role in this process as the subject matter expert in cybersecurity, network architecture, and threat actor methodologies. Their extensive training and hands-on experience allow them to use powerful tools like Microsoft Defender for Endpoint, Elastic/Unified-Security Information and Event Management (SIEM), and the Gabriel Nimbus suite to effectively break down cyber incidents. At the same time, the 35F focuses on the "who" and "why" of an attack, while the 25D provides the "how." This includes detailed technical insights essential for understanding while ensuring that every piece of a digital puzzle – from a suspicious log entry to an obscure vulnerability – is properly analyzed.

Concerns from senior 25Ds about defenders working in an intelligence directorate have been addressed by defining a unique role for the 25D within the ISE. This role focuses strictly on cybersecurity investigations, without bleeding into traditional intelligence functions.

Defenders use a specific toolset, including Microsoft Defender for Endpoint, to improve their skills in a cloud environment and develop advanced Kusto Query Language queries. They also hone their SIEM analysis skills by creating dashboards based on alerts, crafting queries to investigate events of interest, and identifying network anomalies specific to their theater of operations. This focused process leverages tools like the Gabriel Nimbus suite, which is used by cybersecurity personnel at the RCCs to respond to, investigate, and report incidents on the DOWIN-A.

The ISE continues to drive innovation by defining a process that develops a defender's skills in the cybersecurity realm. Beyond their role as technical experts, 25Ds within the ISE have significant opportunities for project leadership. As subject matter experts, they are empowered to identify and develop innovative tools and processes that enhance the entire investigation workflow.

If a 25D has an idea for a new capability, they are encouraged to dedicate time to research, develop a use case, and integrate it into the unit's standard operating procedures. This proactive approach to innovation allows defenders to lead from the front, continuously improving the enterprise's defensive posture. A recent use case highlights this value.

A suspected security device compromise on a government network was identified, but there wasn't enough evidence to confirm or deny the breach. The device was taken offline as a precaution. Without the 25D's specialized technical insight, the intelligence investigation would have stalled with an unconfirmed alert, and the device would have remained offline indefinitely. Instead, a 25D with the ISE researched the device model and application version, quickly identifying related vulnerabilities and potential

exploit chains. This clarity provided the precise starting point for a focused investigation: Was that specific vulnerability exploited, what indicators can be linked to the action, and how far can we trace the threat actors' path? This technical clarity informed the intelligence investigation, which in turn yielded a more complete picture.

Results included new indicators for creating detection rules, information on similar malicious actions in other theaters, and an assessment of the overall severity of the incident.

The 25D is more than merely a network defender; they are a key force multiplier in today's cyber environment. By offering technical expertise and practical perspectives, they enable the ISE to move beyond simple alert responses and deliver truly actionable intelligence that safeguards our networks. This unique integration of technical "how" and intelligence "who/why" gives our commanders a critical edge.

As the Army continues to modernize and face increasingly sophisticated threats, leveraging the 25D's unique skills will be crucial for maintaining our readiness to compete and succeed in an ever-changing battlefield. To sustain and grow this vital capability, the RCC ISEs need to expand its ranks.

We call out to the 25D community to preference U.S. Army Network Enterprise Technology Command G2 in their enlisted marketplace to join the ISE team.

Author

Sgt. 1st Class Trestan Savoy is a Washington D.C. native and graduate of the Cyber Network Defender Course (Class 009-22). He currently serves as the senior cyber network defense analyst for the Regional Cyber Center-Pacific Intelligence Support Element. Savoy holds a Bachelor of Science in computer networks and cybersecurity along with a Master of Science in cyber operations.

Project Warrior Officers Provide Valuable ROI

Talent management

Maj. Andy Chisholm
704th Military Intelligence

Today's battlefield is unlike any seen in history. The accelerating pace of technological advancement, emergence of highly capable asymmetric threats, and the prevalence of adversarial cyberspace threats demand exceptional preparation of our Regiment to achieve and maintain competitive communication advantages. The Project Warrior fellowship is one vital component to ensuring the regiment's preparedness for current and future challenges.

Project Warrior is a 36-month program intended for high-performing, post-key developmental company grade officers that pair time spent at a combat training center with time as an instructor at the U.S. Army Signal School.

The fellowship's mission is to produce officers who provide the regiment with three invaluable assets: a deep understanding of doctrine, unparalleled combat support experience, and exceptional instructors. While each is equally vital, doctrine is fundamental to everything we do, and Project Warrior is no exception to where it builds its foundation.

Upon arrival at one of the Army's three CTCs, Project Warrior officers are immediately assigned to the Observer, Coach, & Trainer (OC/T) Academy. This development course provides rigorous instruction to the doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures that are vital to CTC mission success. Officers are immersed in the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) as well as cornerstone Army doctrine (ADRP 3-0, 5-0, 6-0, 7-0, etc.).

Additionally, OC/T senior leaders provide insight on understanding and employing Army leadership (ADRP 6-22). This exposure to leadership is vital for signal officers since they are often the sole communicator on their respective OC/T team, will be the communications subject matter expert and coach to Signaleers executing their training rotation. Building upon the foundation of the OC/T Academy, OC/T teams have additional development programs to ensure the Project Warrior officer is prepared to serve as a signal advisor in their respective formation – be it an infantry, armor, artillery, logistics or other organization. While doctrine is undoubtedly a crucial element to success as an OC/T and development of the Project Warrior officer, that understanding must be tested and tempered in the crucible of experience.

Forging combat ready formations and expertly-trained Soldiers is the goal of Army CTCs. Pushing organizations to the limit and obtaining hard-earned experience is often the difference maker in mission success or failure. For Project Warrior officers, this intense focus is a perfect opportunity to hone the emergent doctrinal understanding to a highly effective edge. Signal officers in the fellowship execute anywhere from 10 to 15 training rotations during their time at their respective CTC.

Intense unit training tempos combined with the convergence of premier Army information technology and communications systems provide unapparelled experience to Project Warrior signal cohorts.

Challenges that range from managing multiple communication methods over 30-40 kilometers of rugged terrain, to planning and implementing beyond line-of-sight communications and participating in complex planning events, provide opportunities for signal OC/Ts to observe and learn. As the training rotation progresses, Project Warrior fellows have a responsibility to apply those lessons and help coach training organizations through challenges. No other environment provides the convergence of rigor, stress, and preparation that CTs can provide. The experience gained for both training organizations and the Project Warrior officers is vital to achieving competitive advantages over our adversaries and producing tested, proven leaders who meet future signal challenges. Following the doctrinal development and training rotation experience, Project Warrior fellows transition to a different role in which to ply their tools – the role of instructor.

Following 18 months of honing their skill and experiences, Project Warrior officers transfer to the Signal Captains Career Course for the next 18 months, where they work to shape course curriculum around the latest lessons from the field. Once integrated with course staff, Project Warrior instructors bring the culmination of their doctrinal grounding and combat support experience to enhance course curriculum and education. Lessons centered around the MDMP, Army doctrine, and Army/Signal Corps leadership are among key beneficiaries of CTC-tested skills and competencies. Additionally, Project Warrior officers collaborate with Signal School leadership and course developers to help best posture the curriculum for future academic success.

Lastly, the ability to engage with students early in their careers is a unique opportunity to help mold and shape their thoughts and perspectives in ways that can

profoundly impact the students and Project Warrior. Time spent as an instructor is an incredible privilege.

There are very few assignments in the Army where you can shape multiple generations of future leaders. Through deep understanding of doctrine, application of hard-earned experience, and opportunities to teach lessons learned, Project Warrior officers provide a truly incalculable return-on-investment for the Signal Regiment. The fellowship's value is profound because of the generational impact Project Warrior officers can have on the Signal Regiment's future leaders.

The most current Army posture statement makes it clear the impetus for investment programs like Project Warrior: "The Army is transforming to meet the needs of this rapidly changing environment. We will deliver ready combat formations with advanced capabilities to defend our nation and its interests."

The Project Warrior Fellowship will ensure the Signal Regiment develops and delivers the signal talent our Army and Nation demand.

Author

Maj. Andrew (Andy) Chisholm currently serves as deputy chief of Engagement for the Department of War at Fort Meade, Maryland. He commissioned in 2010 after graduating from Texas Christian University. He has held key leadership roles in the 509th Strategic Signal Battalion, National Training Center Operations Group (Panther Team), 1st Cavalry Division, and 36th Engineer Brigade, with deployments to Afghanistan and Kuwait.

Strengthen Relationships through Community

Army readiness, family

Col. Eva M. Millare
11th Corps Signal Brigade

Army readiness extends beyond training schedules and maintaining equipment — it is rooted in strong families and resilient communities. Maintaining healthy relationships within Army families requires intentional effort, and units that prioritize community events, volunteering and partnerships that create an environment where Soldiers and families can thrive together.

Community events play a vital role in strengthening the bonds between Soldiers, families and units. Family days, holiday celebrations, youth activities and informal gatherings provide opportunities for connection outside the demands of daily operations. These events help families feel included and valued, reinforcing the idea that they are an essential part of the Army team. When families know one another and feel connected to the unit, they build trust and mutual support that carries through deployments, field exercises and periods of high operational tempo.

Volunteering is another powerful way Army families maintain strong relationships while, reinforcing shared values of service. Family-friendly volunteer opportunities, such as food drives, school support programs and community clean-up events, allow Soldiers, spouses and children to serve together. These activities strengthen family bonds, promote resilience and help families integrate into local communities. Volunteering also teaches younger family members the importance of service and empathy, reinforcing Army values at home.

Unit partnerships further enhance family support by expanding resources and connections. Additionally, collaborations with installation agencies, schools, local organizations and nonprofit groups provide meaningful assistance during both routine operations and challenging times. These partnerships create a broader support network that families can rely on, particularly during deployments or transitions. Strong partnerships ensure that families are not navigating challenges alone but are supported by a community invested in their wellbeing.

Leadership plays a critical role in sustaining these efforts. When leaders actively support family-focused initiatives and participate alongside their own families, they set a powerful example. Open communication, thoughtful scheduling and visible engagement signal that family relationships matter. This culture of care directly contributes to morale, retention and mission readiness.

Ultimately, Army families remain strong when units foster connection, encourage service and build lasting partnerships. By investing in families through community events, volunteering and collaboration, the Army strengthens not only relationships at home, but also the foundation of readiness and resilience across the force.

Author

Col. Eva M. Millare is the commander of 11th Corps Signal Brigade. Commissioned in 2002 through Saint Mary's University ROTC, Millare earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Information Systems Management. She also holds a master's degree from the U.S. Army War College. Millare has held key leadership and staff positions across multiple echelons, including chief of staff, 311th Signal Command (Theater); G6, 1st Cavalry Division; and branch chief, United States Africa Command J6. Her operational service includes deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa.

Cold War Era TTPs for Reducing EM Signature

Retiree's response

Barrett F. Lowe
U.S. Special Operations Command

This article was written in response to Nick Baker's article, "Less is More: Communications, Mission Command, and Survivability in the Future Operating Environment," featured in the Harding Project Substack.

The Soviet military had robust radio direction finding (RDF) and electronic warfare (EW) units fielded down to division and regimental levels. Our light infantry commo tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) assumed that our electromagnetic (EM) signature, if not carefully managed, would bring down a battery six of BM-21 Katyushas on our grid square.

The TTPs outlined below were all based on using the PRC-77 and PRC-68 single-channel very high frequency and frequency modulation (VHF/FM) radios and the KY-57 secure device. Light infantry companies did not have frequency-hopping or satellite communications (SATCOM) radio capabilities in the 1980s.

Technique No. 1: The use of codewords and operations schedule (OPSKEDS), checkpoints during movement and keeping radio transmissions brief was standard operation procedure (SOP) during daytime. Any station broadcasting for more than 30 seconds at a time received a "nasty-gram" radio call from the net control station battalion tactical operations center (TOC) or the battalion commander.

Technique No. 2: Since we mostly moved on foot once inserted into the operational area, we were continually aware of the topography and cognizant to use terrain masking as much as possible.

Technique No. 3: In the defense, all units went to radio listening silence until contact was made with the enemy. The battalion commo platoon placed WD-1 commo wire from the battalion TOC to the company command posts (CPs) and battalion mortars. If time and resources permitted, they laid wire to the direct support (DS) artillery battalion fire direction center (FDC). The commo platoon had Kawasaki KL-250 motorcycles with reels on the back to speed up placing wire. Each company was responsible for laying wire from the company CP to the platoon CPs, the company mortars, squad leader positions and observation posts (OPs) forward for the defense.

We used the TA-312 telephone at the company CP; rifle platoons and company mortars used the TA-1. The commo wire was considered an expendable item, so if we had to move quickly without picking up, it was not going to generate a report of survey (today it is a Financial Liability Investigation of Property Loss, or FLIPL). Of course, in training, we did pick up the wire! Also, our battalion commander (3rd Battalion, 327th Infantry, Fort Campbell, Kentucky) reassigned two commo platoon motorcycles to each rifle company to use as another means to communicate without using radios.

Perhaps with today's modern equipment, using fiber optic cable instead of WD-1 commo wire might be worthy to think about to bring back the use of hand-held telephones, which would reduce EM signature.

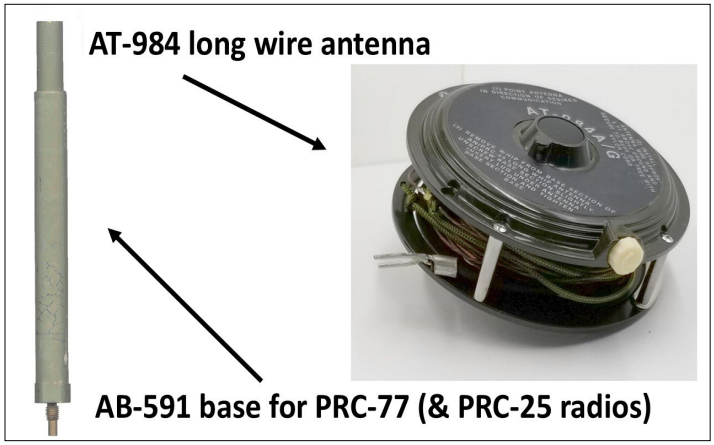
Technique No. 4: The other item of equipment we used was the AT-984 directional antenna for the PRC-77 radio. Each company had two of these antennas on its Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE). We set up this antenna for the battalion command net radio and the battalion Administrative/Logistics (A/L) net radio to reduce EM signature once contact was made. We aimed these antennas in the direction of the battalion TOC and the battalion trains; they reduced our EM signature by only transmitting 15 degrees left or right of the azimuth and did not send any EM signal in the enemy's direction.

Question: *Can anyone tell me if this technique will work with today's modern radios at rifle battalion level and below? I have asked several signal officers over the past couple years but have not received a conclusive answer.*

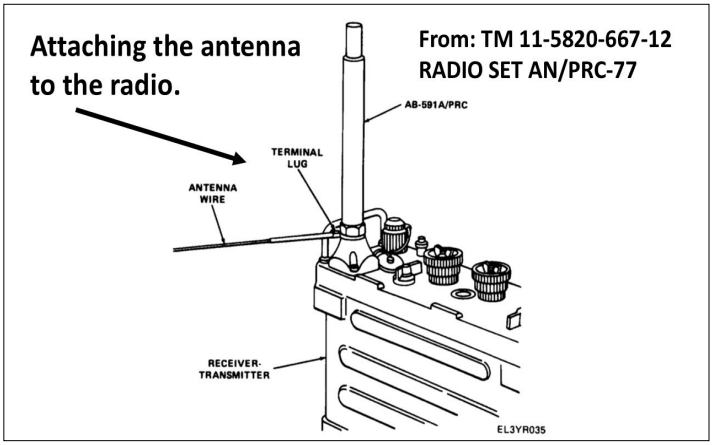
(*Refer to illustrations on next page*)

Technique No. 5: This night and limited visibility infiltration attack TTP was based on operating in restrictive terrain like heavy woods, jungle, swamp, etc. Today, with ubiquitous enemy small unmanned aerial system (sUAS) and intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance (ISR) coverage, this may not be as effective but might offer some mitigation from observation in heavily wooded or jungle areas.

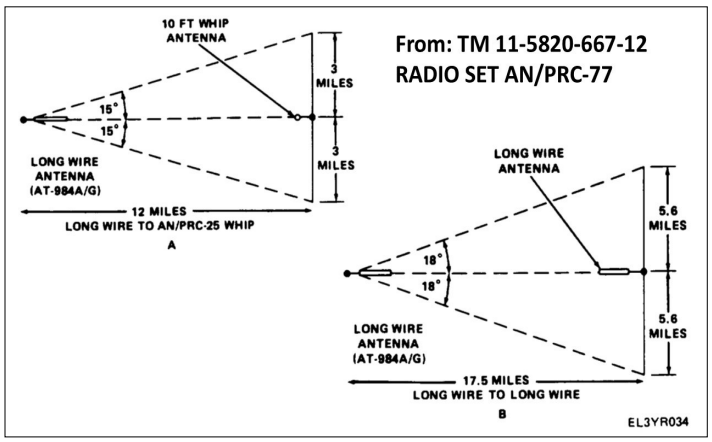
Back then, light infantry companies had limited night vision capability compared to today. Each rifle platoon only had two PVS-5A night vision goggles



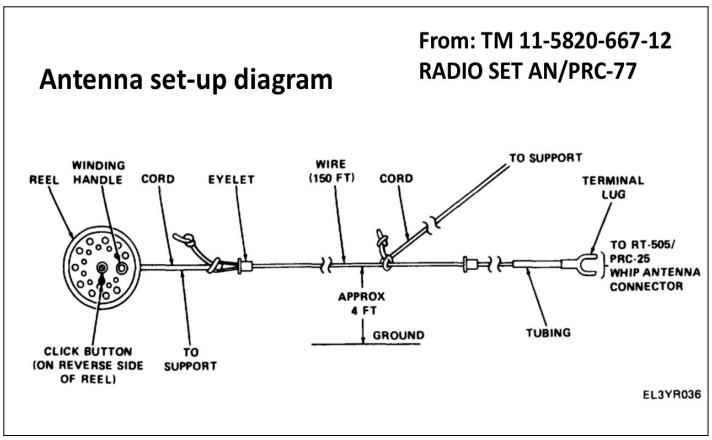
*(**Figure 1**: AT-984 long wire antenna with AB-591 base for PRC-77.)*



*(**Figure 3**: Diagram of attaching the antenna to the radio.)*



*(**Figure 2**: Transmission propagation diagram, 15 degrees left or right off azimuth.)*



*(**Figure 4**: Diagram of setting up the antenna.)*

(NVGs) and PVS-4 night sights for each of the two M60 machine guns and one per rifle squad. The battalion scouts had two PVS-5A NVGs per scout squad.

Twenty-four hours prior to the attack, battalion scouts conducted route reconnaissance from the assembly areas to the platoon assault positions (last covered and concealed position prior to commencing the assault). The scout platoon provided guides to the infantry units to move into position. When rifle companies left the line of departure, the company commander's assistant radio-telephone operator (RTO) connected to a TA-1 handheld telephone and had a donut roll on his back, reeling out single strand commo wire, which we called "assault wire" (not double strand like the standard WD-1 commo wire) that went to the battalion commander's RTO.

The company commander's primary RTO carried the PRC-77 in radio listening silence mode until contact was made with the enemy. At the platoon release point, the platoon leader's RTO had the same type of wire donut roll to maintain connection back to the company commander. When I was a platoon leader during these missions, I carried the radio. This technique allowed the main elements of the battalion to stay in contact and move into the assault position without an EM signature.

Mitigating Effects of Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP) from a Tactical Nuclear Weapon

The last technique I'll discuss was our SOP for ensuring that at company-level, we would have at least one PRC-77 radio survive Soviet use of a tactical nuclear weapon. Back then, the PRC-68 squad and team leader radios were so horrible that they were virtually useless unless conditions were perfect. We were lucky to get them to work at 500 meters, much less at their advertised 3-kilometer range.

Also, a rifle company only had 13 PRC-77 radios. The basis of issue was two- per-rifle platoon, two-per-company mortars, two for the company commander (company and battalion net), one for the executive officer (XO), one for the first sergeant and one spare.

The spare radio – with its associated KY-57 secure device – was placed inside an empty 20mm ammo can to make a field expedient Faraday cage. The radio was turned off, and the battery was not inserted, ensuring one radio survived for the company commander to be able to communicate to the battalion commander after a detonation that affected the battalion area.

I hope that you found this article of interest. I realize the severity of enemy EW and UAS threats are much greater today than back when I was a company-grade officer training to fight against the Soviet army. The Army is developing better capabilities to deal with those threats. I challenge you to think broadly about how you and your unit will develop your own TTPs to increase survivability on the modern battlefield.

Author

Barrett F. Lowe retired as a colonel in 2011 and currently works at U.S. Army Special Operations Command Headquarters in the G3 Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction and Counter-Threat Integration Division. During the Cold War, he served as a lieutenant in 1st Battalion, 509th Airborne Battalion Combat Team, in Vicenza, Italy, from 1982-1985; and as a captain in the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regt; and 3rd Bn., 327th Inf. Regt., 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, from 1985-1989.

Students Bring *Hello Girls* to Life

Students from Greenbrier High School in Evans, Georgia, perform The Hello Girls, a musical, at their high school auditorium on Jan. 27, 2026.

Article, photos by Laura Levering
U.S. Army Signal School

When the nation called, the "Hello Girls" answered in a way that nobody foresaw having such a profound impact. And after more than a century later, many are learning about them for the first time.

Students from Greenbrier High School (GHS) in Evans, Georgia, performed several renditions of "The Hello Girls" musical in recent months. Full-length performances occurred at the high school, while a special abridged version was performed at Fort Gordon, home of the U.S. Army Signal School. GHS theater and choir director, Elizabeth Haas, told the Fort Gordon audience that the students were honored to perform in front of Soldiers, Department of Army civilians, and retirees, adding that the musical has been "such an incredible blessing."

Unsung Heroes

Recruited in 1917 and activated in 1918, the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit was formed during World War I, at the request of Gen. John J. Pershing, in response to a critical need for skilled telephone operators who could connect calls quickly. Thousands applied, but only 223 were selected to join what became the U.S. Army Signal Corps' first female, bilingual (English and French) telephone operators to serve in a combat zone.

Dubbed the "Hello Girls," these women connected an estimated 26 million calls between frontline trenches and headquarters near the frontlines in France during the war. Chosen for her high level of expertise and fluency in French, Grace Banker served as chief telephone operator, leading the first group of Hello Girls, which helped set high standards for the groundbreaking unit.

"Under Grace Banker's leadership, the women sharpened their skills and demonstrate just how vital their work is," Haas said as she narrated the students' performance at Fort Gordon. "What looks like a simple switchboard becomes the lifeline of the Army."

By the end of World War I, 223 Hello Girls had served in France, "connecting thousands of urgent calls that helped coordinate American forces," Haas said. "Yet when they returned home, they were denied veteran status and recognition for decades."

Preserving Legacy

Despite having served honorably, the Hello Girls did not receive formal recognition until decades later, after Congress passed the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977, signed by President Jimmy Carter. This legislation granted the Hello Girls veteran status, providing them with veterans' benefits – something they had not received prior. By that time, only 18 of the original World War I Hello Girls were still alive; sadly, Banker was not one of them. She died in 1960, but her legacy remains – and in some ways, is growing.

More than one century post-World War I, stories of the Hello Girls are still coming to light – both through performances like the one put on by GHS and by others held across the nation.

The 43rd Chief of Signal and U.S. Army Signal School Commandant, Col. Julia Donley, attended several high school performances, as well as one in Sonoma, California. She has also honored several of the Hello Girls by visiting their gravesites and meeting with some of their descendants.

"The musical is a remarkable telling of this powerful story," Donley said. "We stand on the shoulders of giants and should take the time to honor their sacrifices and learn from their hard-learned lessons."

Donley has made it a part of her personal mission to help share the Hello Girls' stories, emphasizing that many are still unaware of their role in U.S. history. Until recently, Renee Ginn was one of those who did not know about the Hello Girls. Ginn's husband and father are both retired signal officers, yet she had not heard of the Hello Girls until her daughter joined the GHS cast as one of the Hello Girls. From that point on, Ginn became deeply involved with the musical, serving in multiple capacities as a parent-volunteer, even connecting the cast to one of the Hello Girls' descendants.

"Like so many others, I didn't know this story before we began working on the show," Ginn said. "The deeper I got into it, the more invested I've become in making sure these women are recognized."

Ginn's involvement helped connect her with the granddaughter of Banker, who Ginn said took time speak with the cast, which left quite an impression on them.

"Right before we performed for 'One Act,' Grace Banker's granddaughter called and wished the kids good luck, and then we set up a call with all of the descendants, and we had a two-hour call with the kids where the kids got to ask questions," Haas said. "The feeling of excitement from the kids was powerful."

"Through those connections, we've … worked to connect organizations that can help recognize these women properly," Ginn added. "Just like the original Hello Girls made critical 'connections' during the war, we're hoping to make meaningful connections now — so that their legacy finally receives the recognition it deserves."

Student Impact

Learning about the Hello Girls through studying and taking on individual roles has made a lasting impact on student-cast members. Following Fort Gordon's performance, cast members introduced themselves then shared with the audience what they learned through the process of the Hello Girls production.

Their responses:

"Something I've learned is definitely more about the impact of the Hello Girls. I never knew of them before this show, and I think it really shows how overshadowed they were in history."
(Luke Romagnoli)

"One thing I learned is what it takes to play a character that actually exists in real life. It takes a lot of research to really play them."
(Lily Romagnoli)

The "Hello Girls" of Greenbrier High School perform an abridged version of the musical at Fort Gordon Feb. 17, 2026.

"Something I learned is that you can break any barrier, you can go beyond any distance no matter who are you are, what you are, where you are." (Nathan Campbell)

"One thing I learned is what it takes to play a character that actually exists in real life. It takes a lot of research to really play them." (Lily Romagnoli)

"One thing I've learned is how the Hello Girls back then pushed all women forward … so many people having roles today, that's really inspiring to me to put myself forward and be bigger and be what I want to be." (Emma Ginn)

"I also learned about the Hello Girls doing this show, and it just inspires me to keep fighting for what I believe in. these women worked so hard and their descendants are still working hard and that shows me that I truly can accomplish whatever I put my mind to, especially with the support of my friends and my team, my teachers." (Sutton Van Lenten)

"Something I learned is that one of the first black women to work in the Army was actually a part of the Hello Girls because she had light enough skin to pass off as being white, but just learning that … is like, 'wow.'" (Laila Diaz)

"One thing I learned is that you can't always sit around and wait for change. You have to make it come to you, because these girls – they could've sat – but they made the change." (Hope Burcaw)

"I learned really how important it is to tell stories that are not usually told because you can learn so many things from them." (Aiden Rolle)

"I guess it just surprised me how many people are in the military who have never heard of the Hello Girls … that it just goes to show how much we don't know about them." (Jake Wetherell)

"I've never really understood the importance of our people who serve us – and our military service. They do so much for us … and a lot of us were struggling to get through scenes of war and battle because we've never experienced anything that dramatic, and so I got to really try and attempt to put my feet in their shoes, and I just learned about the importance of the commitment to serve." (Carson Hall)

Why Hello Girls?

Fairly new to the school, Haas was looking for shows with smaller casts because she didn't know how many students would have. Someone on a social media page for theatre teachers recommended she do "Hello Girls," prompting Haas to research it. After listening to the production's music, she was sold.

"I thought, 'Oh my gosh – the kids will love this music,' because even though it's set in World War I, the music is very modern … and I thought, 'They'll really love the modern music, but I really love the story that it has to tell,'" she said.

Haas announced the selection at the end of previous school year's awards ceremony, at which time she made a surprise connection. One of the student's parents, Ivan Zasimczuk, works at Fort Gordon and has an extensive background in Signal Corps history. Zasimczuk invited Haas and cast to Fort Gordon where they got a glimpse into some of the Hello Girls' lives.

"I read through our portion of what we had on the Hello Girls and also spent a few days reading the book, The Hello Girls," Zasimczuk said. "I allowed the documents to tell the story of these courageous women, and everyone involved made a connection with these people on a new level based on their letters, and diaries."

From that point, everything began to fall into place.

"Getting to see the kids learn about the history and watch them just devour all of that information and take it and get more and more excited about the show – it's just been an incredible experience," Haas said. "Their courage paved the way for generations of women who followed."

Cyber Center of Excellence and Fort Gordon Deputy Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Mark Miles, shares a moment with Renee Ginn, and her daughter following the Hello Girls show at Fort Gordon.

Photos that did not make the cover but we believe are cover-worthy!

(TOP) Soldiers assigned to 1st Signal Brigade conduct tower climbing training in preparation for upcoming antenna decommissioning and safety inspection missions at Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea, March 4, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Shin Haegyeom, 1st Sig. Bde.)

Got what it takes to make the cover?

Photos should be ***at minimum*** 1MB (higher is better) and feature at least one Soldier. Include Soldier's **rank, full name**, and **unit** along with brief **description** of photo. Due to the publication's format, vertical shots have a greater chance (over horizontal) of being considered for the cover.

Send to: Laura.M.Levering.civ@army.mil

(RIGHT) Company C, 86th Expeditionary Signal Battalion (ESB-E) executed a Platoon Situational Training Exercise focused on validating signal teams' proficiency in establishing and maintaining a multi-pathway communication in day and night operations. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Sy J. Sttarr, 86th ESB-E.)

Submission guidelines *at a glance*:

- Word document, between 500 and about 2,000 words.
- Use **APA** format when citing sources.
- Photos/graphics must be **separate attachments** (not embedded in Word)**.** Each needs a **brief description** along with the **rank, full name**, and **unit** of person who took photo (created graphic).
    - Acceptable formats: **.jpg** or .**png**
- **Spell out acronyms** on **first** reference followed by acronym in parenthesis; use acronym on subsequent reference.
- Include **short bio** and **photo** if possible (see other published articles for example).
- ***Still have questions***? Reach out: laura.m.levering.civ@army.mil

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