



● ● Paul Mehney, Public Communications Director, US Army Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications-Tactical



● ● Sgt. Jennifer Smith, Signal Support System Specialist

‘What’s Your Warrior?’ campaign ● ●

The US Army’s newest recruitment effort, the ‘What’s Your Warrior?’ campaign, aims to engage younger recruits from a generation becoming increasingly disaffected by the military. Sgt. Jennifer Smith, Signal Support System Specialist, and Paul Mehney, Public Communications Director, US Army Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications-Tactical, outline the new strategy and discuss how the US Army has changed in recent years.

Laurence Russell, News and Social Media Editor, Global Military Communications

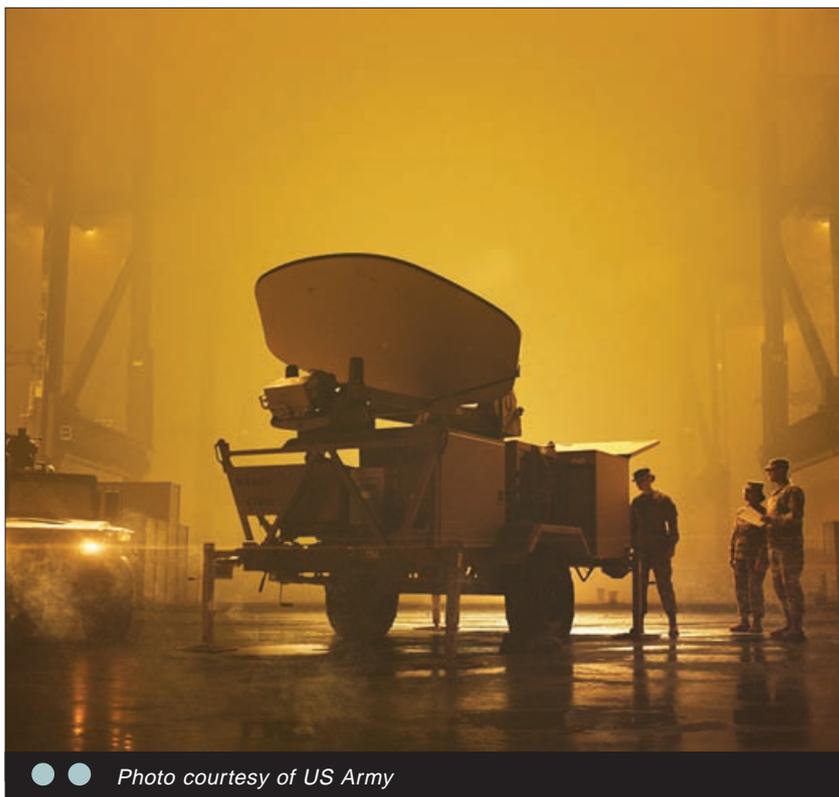
GMC: First world recruitment has steadily dropped over recent years. Why do you feel this is the case?

Sgt. Jennifer Smith: I feel that there’s several factors that can influence recruiting at any time. The biggest thing I think is the absence of the draft, which ensured a more military culture by virtue of there being a serviceman in most families. My grandfather for instance was drafted.

With the volunteer army we now possess, the military feels like more of an external, unfamiliar thing. A lot of civilians, especially in the younger generations, have a low awareness and frame of reference. Research has shown that roughly 50 percent of young people know little or nothing about military service and I feel like that’s why it feels like a less relevant career. That can lead to a lot of misperceptions about the army service.

The ‘What’s Your Warrior Campaign?’ was created so that the US Army can make sure that Gen Z is aware of the opportunities that are available. This is a digital-native generation, technology interfacing is second nature to them, and this online campaign aims to inform them where they’re most comfortable absorbing information.

GMC: The new ‘What’s Your Warrior?’ campaign aims to educate Gen Z about career opportunities with the US Army by highlighting diverse opportunities



● ● Photo courtesy of US Army

GMC Q&A



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and aspirational identities. Could you expand on that?

Sgt. Jennifer Smith: The What's Your Warrior Campaign showcases the depth of career opportunities for today's recruits. It highlights twelve unique career specialties in the US Army covering everything from medicine, to intelligence, to cyber, along with aviation and even culinary arts.

Each career has been assigned an aspirational identity to make it more understandable and relatable. In my case, I represent 'The Wavelength.' I represent the many career opportunities available in signals, including my own, as I serve as a Signal Support System Specialist. My job is to capture and send critical communications between units across the army and the globe.

There are many other important roles under 'The Wavelength' supporting communications and connectivity. There are over 200 career opportunities within the US Army that all require unique people with specific skills. Anyone can contribute.

GMC: From your experience working with military communications in the field, what are the key things you look for in technology that support effective service?

Paul Mehney: Program managers carefully balance technical maturity, operational relevance for military use and affordability of the system. A major focus of our network modernization efforts is to procure network and data systems that are not complex for the average soldier to use in an operational unit.

We are carefully balancing the need to field highly capable systems, with ease of use in the field. Soldier provided feedback during prototype experimentation and demonstration is key to informing program developers and industry how complex systems are.

GMC: Developers also are keen to highlight that today's cutting-edge consumer electronics and applications are sometimes more advanced than their military equivalents. Would you agree with that, and if so, should defence**procurement strategies shift to better address the speed at which modern technology evolves?**

Paul Mehney: The Army has shifted from relying primarily on long development efforts for network systems and is now taking full advantage of commercial IT development. As part of the Army's network modernization strategy, we have shifted resources and created budget lines to enable us to quickly procure commercial capability and modify it for military use.

We are fielding new network capability in two-year increments called capability sets. These capability sets allow the Army to take the latest commercial technology that meets our needs and provide prototypes to soldiers who give feedback (much like commercial industry does with consumer pilot programs) on operational use.

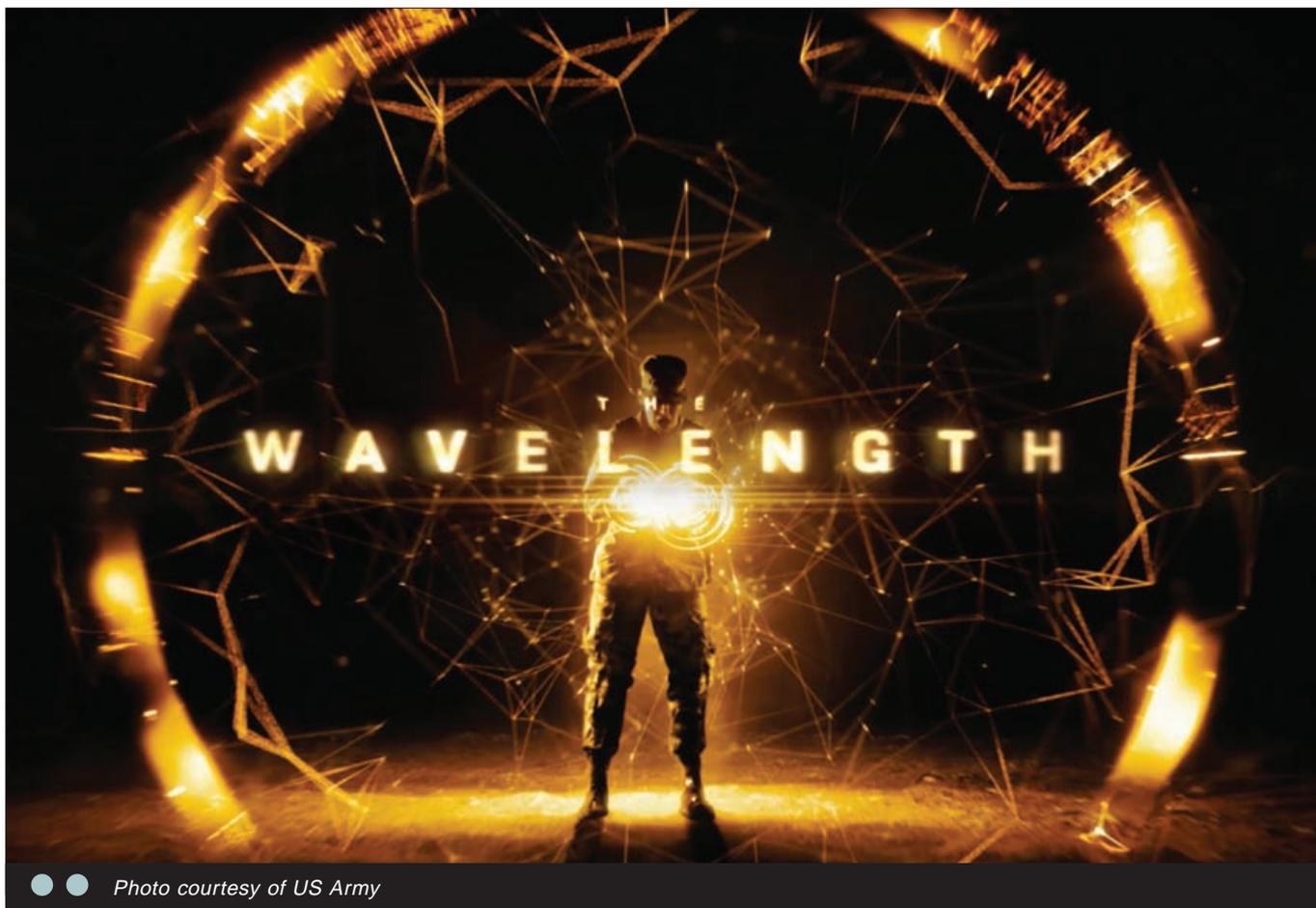
Program developers then work with industry to improve the system for military use. Recent examples include data radios, software that allows us to build military applications for soldiers to use to manage the battle or their operations, cybersecurity and monitoring tools and satellite terminals and connectivity services.

The Army is fielding its first capability set, called Capability Set 21, this year to four priority Infantry brigades, we are also fielding other modernized network systems to more than 150 other units across the Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

GMC: To what extent do you see the US military's technology, culture, and ideology evolve at pace with the expectations of younger generations?

Sgt. Jennifer Smith: As with many organizations around the world, the US Army is continually evolving and growing. One of the reasons why I think the 'What's Your Warrior?' campaign is so important is that it helps the myths associated with the military.

Research tells us that young people want to be a part of something larger. That is exactly what I see from Gen Z, they are very culturally aware, and they make the changes they want



● ● Photo courtesy of US Army

to see in the world. The sense of purpose they're striving for is exactly what the US Army offers. Military service carries goals and a purpose that you can actually achieve.

I feel like a lot of that is shown through my story and especially through the entire 'What's Your Warrior?' campaign. Every soldier comes from a different walk of life. The military encompasses diverse ethnicities, cultures.

I'm proud to be one of the 180,000 women serving in the US Army. In my Battalion, I was the second female to attend the Army Mountain Warfare School (AMWS), which was a huge accomplishment for me. I now serve as just as much a combat asset as any of my comrades. That goes to prove that we're able to be respected equals just as capable of putting our lives on the line, and I won't stop fighting to prove that's the case for women like me.

GMC: What breakthroughs do you anticipate seeing in military communications technology in the next ten years?

Paul Mehney: The art and science of military command and control is about quick decision making, rapid development of data into information, and the future expectation that network technology can dramatically increase force effectiveness. The ability of lower-level tactical units to react and manoeuvre quickly in a high-intensity conflict with changing circumstances through the use of meshed networks that can operate in a degraded electronic warfare environment is the cornerstone to network development over the next several years. In addition to fielding less complex network systems, the modernization approach will enable a network that is redundant, resilient and reliable in all spectrums of warfare.

It is expected that both peer and near-peer threats will utilize Electronic Warfare (EW) and cyber in a conflict, employing a range of techniques (i.e., wideband and narrowband) that are tailored to the environment, mission objective, and commander's preference. For the network to overcome this dynamic battlespace, it is imperative not to provide defences for one solution, but to employ a wide range of solutions - a number of different tools in the toolbox that are optimal for each scenario.

A major pillar is to provide assured network transport and harden the network to make it more resilient. The Army will offer units and commanders multiple network communication

pathways including leveraging both military and commercial satellite services (using commercial Low and Medium Earth Orbit satellite constellations), increasing bandwidth and range through military and commercial satellite and terrestrial networks and waveforms, incorporating more secure modems, updating gateway architecture, integrating secure waveforms, and ensuring our network is expeditionary and easier to use with using smaller and less complex commercial radios, terminals, applications and servers.

To inform our capability set network design we are partnered with the Army test and R&D communities conducting test and Soldier driven assessments in threat environments that mimic most Electronic Warfare and cyber environments. Through cooperative agreements, industry can access government labs and experimentation venues to test and evaluate systems in electronic and cyber threat environments.

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