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Commander, AF Global Strike Command**

AFCEA Speech

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General Kowalski: Thanks, Chuck, I appreciate it. We don't need too much more bio here because this isn't about the words that I have to say, this is about our young scholars out here.

I'd like to thank AFCEA and thank all of the sponsors. This is truly probably one of the largest scholarship events that I've been part of. And I remember having a conversation at an AFCEA luncheon five or six months ago with one of the companies who's a sponsor here tonight. What they told me was, and they're not a communications or an electronics company, but they joined AFCEA because AFCEA took their money and it goes direct to the scholars. That's really important. So let's give AFCEA a big round of applause.

[Applause].

I'm really honored to be here and speak to you about Strategic Deterrence, Past and Future, for the next 45 minutes. [Laughter]. What are you laughing at?

That's sort of the normal speech that I give, so I'm struggling with how do I speak to this crowd? I've got all these executives out here, and I've got these brilliant students and their parents and friends and family and what do I need to do?

My wife Julie said well, you just need to give them some inspiring words. Give them maybe the most inspiring words you can find. I thought, that's a great idea. But then I thought well, I've got a retired four star Army general sitting at my table, I've got a mayor sitting out here, a number of retired Air Force generals, their spouses, so there are plenty of smart people in this room. And then the scholars. I've read the bios on how smart the scholars are. So I thought well, I don't know that I can come up with any truly inspiring words. But I remember reading a book once and it talked about the wisdom of crowds. So I thought I know what I'll do. I'll use the internet. I'll go on the internet and I'll use this power of the crowds to find some truly inspiring words. I thought well, maybe those words will come from a religious text. Maybe they'll be words from the Bible, or maybe they'll be words from a great

philosophy, or possibly from a business leader like Jack Welch and General Electric. I was starting to get excited about this. I did my research, and the number one most inspiring line, I found it. If we could play that, please?

What is the most inspiring thing ever said to you?

Don't be an idiot. It changed my life.

Whenever I'm about to do something, I think would an idiot do that? If they would, I do not do that thing.

[Laughter and applause].

There you go. And all of the parents are going like this -- How many times have I said that? [Laughter].

But if you think about it, there is sort of a powerful lesson here because those words, how did those words get to you? How did that get communicated? And there are a number of things that we had to use. We had to use television. We had to be able to record that. We had to be able to put it someplace in a database where everybody could access it, so we had to have the internet.

And if we think about this, and really what I want to talk to you about is how much our world has changed just within our lifetimes, because for most of the last 6,000 years, the fastest that a message could get from one person to another who was far away was at the speed of a horse. That was it. The message could not really get there faster than that. Occasionally you'd have smoke signals or drums in the jungle, but really, if you wanted to send a message it went on a horse and that was as fast as messages moved. That sort of set the pace for society, set the pace for large organizations. That sort of ended in about the mid-19th Century with the invention and then the commercialization of the telegraph. But it didn't really reach all of the people, it didn't reach the common people for quite a while.

The modern world that we live in began in the early part of the 20th Century. TV was first commercially used in the '30s. Internet became publicly available in the late 1980s. YouTube, where we got that video, was 2005. So we can see all these -- It took us about 35,000 years of being Homo Sapiens before we figured out how to domesticate a horse. And then it took us about another 3500 years, 4000 years to get to the point where we could use a telegraph. From then on, it is just this incredible steep curve.

Other than the fact that this is an AFCEA dinner, why is this communication conversation important? I think it's important to you because communication moves information. My wife uses information for crossword puzzles, but some of you may actually use information to create knowledge. That knowledge then becomes what you use to make decisions. Decisions in turn that have to be communicated. Decisions in turn that then lead to more information, more knowledge, more decisions being made. It's a cycle. The faster that cycle is, the faster that organizations and individuals can make decisions and do the things that we do with our lives.

Table 8. Where is Jen? Jen has the iPhone. How many people here have iPhones? How many people have Smart Phones? How many people have Facebook accounts? How many people know how to text? How many people know how to Twitter?

How many of our young students were there with their hands up the entire time? [Laughter]. They are the digital natives. I know you've heard that term. I can't remember who made it up. But they're the ones that have grown up with this. They're the ones for whom this is all completely natural.

Most of us here are digital immigrants. We're analog people that have picked up and moved into this world and we're still trying to figure it out. And there's nothing really wrong with that on either side of those, but those scholars out there who have grown up with this, they've grown up with rapid communications, they've grown up with the video games, they've grown up with the internet, they've grown up with YouTube, they've grown up with an incredible access to information. They are very very comfortable getting that information. Their lives are unparalleled in the human experience.

Now that's generally good, and we're all aware of the downsides of this. Distraction, diffusion of focus, multi-tasking, how many times have you told your kids hey, don't text while you're driving. That's it. That's another function of the multi-tasking problem that we face.

But the important thing about this is not that the world has just changed, it's the world that continues to change. And not only does it continue to change, but the pace of that change is accelerating. How we adapt to the technology that we have is becoming a constant challenge for us. It's harder for us who are digital immigrants than it is for the digital natives, but even there, we're about to introduce iPhone-5. I don't even have 1. [Laughter]. But the ability to access information, to communicate is changing faster than even the hardware of our

lives. It's also changing faster than the wet-ware in our brains. So we are going to always be challenged by trying to keep up with this and trying to keep up with understanding what it means.

Some of you may have seen this little video we're about to show. I may or may not show the whole thing, but if you would roll that for me.

[Video shown].

The facts in that are sort of gripping, and it's not just about information and the pace of change, it's about how it's affecting cultures. It's about how it's affecting globalization. It's about how it's affecting how we're all living our lives. Even that video, which is about two years old at this point, is already out of date. Because since that video was made there are now 400 more million people in China. China is now the number one English-speaking country in the world. That said, one of eight couples who were married, met on-line, it's now one of six couples have met on-line. They had a line in there about MySpace. What happened to MySpace? It's already gone. It's down to about 50 million users. Facebook now has 500 million users and if it was a country it would be the third largest country in the world. Twelve trillion searches on Google last year. Twelve trillion. An unbelievable number.

What does it mean? Religious changes, economic changes, cultural shifts. What's important, I think, and this is where I'm going to try to speak to the scholars here, is that you have the tools to deal with it. Because although we think we're keeping up with all of this, the wet-ware that we have, our brains, have not evolved to keep up with the kind of things that we're facing right now. We still have 20, 15 thousand year old brains. The kind of world that they have evolved to deal with is very different than the world that we're living in now. We're social creatures. We evolved to grow up around communities. And the world that we're dealing with, I hate to use clichés, but it is what it is. We're not going to change it. We're just going to have to ride that tiger.

So what I want to do is I want to give you three tools, put some tools in your tool kit, that might help you as you go forward and deal with this change.

The first is character. The strength of your character is what's going to allow you to deal with this change and the rapid pace of how your world as you grow up are going to change. Character is not something that you have or don't have.

Character is something that you build. You build it every day. You build it with every small decision you make. It is the decision that leads to the actions that develop the behaviors, that form your character, that then become your reputation. And all of you are the architects of your own character. It's the confidence in your character, it's the confidence in your own values, it's your ability to look at yourself in the mirror every day and know that you have tried to do your best the day before and that you're going to try to do your best that day. That is what is going to give you the discipline to deal with this kind of change.

It's about having the character to be compassionate. Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon has a great story about it's harder to be kind than clever. And all of the student scholars in here are truly clever, but you also need to work on making sure that you're kind.

So at the end of this, let your integrity coat your ambition and make sure that you continue to think about and work on your character.

The second tool I'm going to give is think for yourselves. This pace of change that we have means that we are all in new territory. There is so much new information out there. So many new words in the language. So many new jobs and businesses and industries that are being developed as part of this rapid pace of change. And there are plenty of experts out there who are willing to tell you how to live your life, and I don't miss the irony of me being up here telling you how to deal with change.

But go ahead and use those experts, but don't turn off your own brain. Experts often provide an illusion of certainty and they have done some experiments where they would use the MRI scans and they would have people go into the MRI machine and they were monitoring their brain while these individuals were listening to experts speak on different subjects. The part of your brain that does independent thinking for these people shut off once the experts started talking. That's what happens. Oh, I don't need to think any more. I've got somebody here to give me the answer. Don't do that. Go ahead and take their information, but don't shut off your own brains as you live your life. That includes me.

So own your decisions. You're the one at the end of the day who is accountable for the results.

The third tool in your tool kit is the lead, because leadership is about change. If the world didn't change everybody

could just worry about being good managers because all you're doing is running a process. We can go to McDonalds Institute, figure out how that hamburger line worked, and apply that to everything that we did because nothing ever changed. But that's not the world that you've got. You've got a world that is going to be constantly changing. Changing because of internal forces, changing because of external forces. The job of a leader is to dispel doubt and to instill confidence.

For the scholars in here, some of you have already been in leadership positions. Some of you are already learning those lessons. But it doesn't matter whether you are a formal leader or an informal leader, the same concepts of leadership apply. And all of us, everybody in this room is an informal leader. Informal leaders lead by example. They lead by their strong character, they lead by their ability to think for themselves, they lead because they're the person that they want to go to work with. They're the person that they want to go to school with. They're the person that they want living in their neighborhood.

By having those qualities of leadership informally you set the stage for your success as a formal leader.

As we think about this and about leadership in the formal arena, think about some of the companies that we've seen. Think about MySpace, quickly overtaken by Facebook. Think about the Yellow Pages. Some of our digital natives don't remember the Yellow Pages, but the Yellow Pages was actually where you went to get information at one point in our lives. We don't anymore. So how did the Yellow Pages disappear? Why didn't the Yellow Pages become Google? Why didn't they think of that? Why didn't Encyclopedia Britannica become Wikipedia? It's the same mission. Where was the leadership to take them to that next level? That's part of what you're going to have to do when you get into formal leadership positions. You have to recognize that pace of change and you have to understand how to take your team, your organization, your people to that next level.

So in closing, I'm going to give you these three tools. Build your character, own your decisions, be a leader, and at the end of the day don't be an idiot. [Laughter and applause].

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