

Commentary: Be a bandwidth nibbler, not a Kobayashi

By LTG Peter Cuiello

Given two options for eating hot dogs at lunch, we can take the refined route and nibble on them one bite at a time. Or, we can emulate Japanese professional speed-eater Takeru “The Tsunami” Kobayashi, who crammed 50 hot dogs down his throat in 12 minutes at a competitive-eating contest last July at New York’s Coney Island.

Kobayashi’s maneuver clearly repels us. And yet, when it comes to stuffing huge amounts of data into the e-mails we send, we’re imitating Kobayashi’s feat — except that the 113-pound self-proclaimed “Tsunami” kept his meal down. Our huge e-mail attachments so upset the flow of available bandwidth, that our computer networks swiftly regurgitate them back at us as undeliverable.

Bandwidth, of course, is just a fancy way of describing how fast information can be carried through a phone line, cable line, satellite feed, and so on. When we choke our bandwidth with the file equivalent of 50 hot dogs, we clog, and in some cases, obstruct, our systems. In contrast, we can easily swallow a bite of one hot dog better than we can 50 barely chewed ones at the same time.

This is no idle consideration. Soldiers deploying today need every bit of bandwidth for their network-centric operations.

The old method of attaching large files to an e-mail and broadcasting it via sequential chain-mail to entire garrisons, major commands or the Army-wide work force requires huge chunks of bandwidth and brings networks and in-boxes to a crawl. Unless we do our part to preserve the smooth operation of the Army’s bandwidth, we will be putting our warfighters’ security and success at risk.

Fortunately, there’s an easy fix, simply by restricting what we send out as attachments to e-mail.

Instead of e-mailing large files, such as slide charts,

announcement flyers and video clips, among others, we should simply upload them to a collaboration area on Army Knowledge Online, the Army Portal located at www.us.army.mil.

Once posted on AKO, we can send out to all concerned a brief AKO message that contains a link to the item. This way, instead of sending millions of bytes of data, only a few thousand are sent.

This AKO method minimizes the burden on bandwidth, networks and in-boxes, and allows us to use limited bandwidth for those essential operational-mission requirements. It also eliminates the need for thousands of people to resend and/or store the same large files on their computers’ hard drives or file servers all over the Army.

That’s because AKO’s Knowledge Collaboration Center, or KCC, essentially is now your hard drive, accessible to the whole Army, and with just one copy on one server.

The KCC areas can also be limited to just a few persons that you select yourself. AKO has a full set of self-teaching tutorials, and we’ve backed it up with round-the-clock help-desk support.

The Army has invested heavily in the AKO portal and portal technology. We believe the KCC offers everyone a smarter and better way to achieve the same end results, while enabling all to be good stewards of limited bandwidth resources.

So, do your part. Stop sending large enclosures via e-mail and start using the AKO portal to the maximum. Be a bandwidth nibbler, not a Kobayashi.

LTG Peter Cuiello is the Army’s Chief Information Officer/G-6. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science from Canisius College and his Master’s in Business Administration (Operations Research and Systems Analysis) from the Florida Institute of Technology.