

Force multiplier



Philip Dine

Reporting on the military, whether it was engaged in combat or contemplating defense acquisitions, I'd often hear the term "force multiplier"—a factor that expands the military's capacity when combined with what already exists.

For example, increasing actionable intelligence about the adversary in a conflict, or raising a fighter jet's fuel efficiency so it can carry a greater payload farther, exponentially boosts the lethality of our armed forces without adding a single soldier, sailor, airman or Marine.

I've rarely seen a better example of a force multiplier in action than what letter carriers did over the past month on the communications front.

As you know, NALC and the other postal unions held rallies opposing postal privatization throughout the country on Oct. 8—rallies that effectively got the message out to the public and their elected representatives.

This didn't happen in a vacuum. To be sure, strategic decisions about where to hold rallies, where to deploy our national officers as speakers, how to get word out ahead of time to build participation and media coverage—all that played a role.

But a specific event served as, well, a force multiplier in raising the receptivity of the public—and press—to the rallies, which included a call for lawmakers to declare prior to November's elections where they stand on supporting a public Postal Service for all Americans.

Just 12 days before the rallies, NALC held our annual National Heroes of the Year awards luncheon in the nation's capital. The Sept. 26 event garnered substantial media coverage; unsurprising, given the inspiring actions of this year's Heroes and the courage, compassion and creativity they reflected.

Jason Moss of Tampa, FL, and John Sylvain, an Army veteran from Fort Lauderdale, FL, risked their lives battling heat and smoke to save two residents apiece trapped by fires in their homes in separate incidents that were virtually mirror images. This was the first time in the event's 44 years that judges selected two National Heroes.

The crowd gave National Humanitarian of the Year Ebony Nobles a standing ovation, and how could they not? After serving in Afghanistan, in just her first weeks delivering mail in Houston this young CCA saved dozens of people from Hurricane Harvey, led a clothing drive, delivered food to shelters, and helped elderly customers on her route—sometimes working 24-hour shifts including her nighttime Army Reserve duty.

Central Region Hero Brandon Franklin of Waterford, MI, sprinted to reach a runaway Jeep whose driver had fallen un-

conscious and then dove—acrobatically—headfirst through the window to navigate the vehicle to safety as it neared a school zone.

Peter Monteleone of Westchester County, NY, a Navy Cold War veteran who comforted a young girl and her mother while intimidating an armed intruder into staying put until police arrived, was honored as Eastern Region Hero. Western Region Hero Antonio Colon of Chino, CA, responded to a 90-year-old woman's cries that she was being assaulted, then compelled the intruder to remain there until police arrived.

Naseem Elias of Sterling Heights, MI, speaks six languages, but the one that helped save a baby's life on his route was Arabic, because it allowed him to communicate with the frantic, Egyptian-born mother. He was the Special Carrier Alert recipient.

And teamwork was vital when Detroit-area CCA Dennis Denham, along with retired carriers Steven Futach and Joseph Pomante, aided an elderly resident experiencing a medical crisis. They won the Unit Citation award.

The attention the event received reminded the public, and the media, of the valor of letter carriers and the value of USPS and its universal network—creating a fertile environment for the rallies that followed. And so, when letter carriers called for support for a Postal Service that will continue to serve the nation—deploying terms like public service—the words resonated because they are credible. Residents and journalists alike know that letter carriers don't voice them when they're politically useful, they embody them every day on their routes when no one's watching.

The result: The 150 rallies were attended by residents and lawmakers—and generated about 1,000 news reports. You read that right. Merely listing them would fill this entire column and more.

When you help someone on the route, when you collect food or perform other selfless deeds, you reinforce the image people, politicians and the press have of us—and you serve as force multipliers in the efforts to get our message out.

As a result, while we may be only 280,000 strong in a nation of 320 million—less than 0.1 percent of the population—America's letter carriers will not be defeated.

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