

ARMY LOGISTICIAN

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A soldier in camouflage uniform is working with large tires in a desert environment. The soldier is leaning over a large pile of tires, possibly inspecting or organizing them. In the background, there are more tires and some military equipment, including a yellow vehicle and a green vehicle. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Supply Support Activities in Iraq

Unit Deactivation Logistics

Is It Time to Reconsider Training for PBUSE?

Graduate-Level Education for Logisticians

Weakening the Enemy From Within

BY NOEL D. MATCHETT

Editor's note: The author wrote this article as he imagines it would appear if it were a translation of a recently found and previously unknown chapter in The Art of War, the influential treatise by the 6th century B.C. Chinese general Sun Tzu.

Skillful generals will avoid lengthy campaigns because countries rarely benefit from extended war. Leaders unable to understand all the dangers and opportunities in deploying their armies will not correctly assess the long-term consequences of military action.

Therefore, wise leaders always seek means to identify who their enemies are and who they might be in the future.

When enemies have been identified, but before conflict has begun, wise leaders and knowledgeable generals should identify the key resources and elements that the enemy's army depends on.

For example, if the enemy depends on horses and chariots, then we should identify the supply sources of grain for feed; metal for horseshoes, nails, chariots, and armor; and the blacksmiths who service the enemy's forces. If the enemy depends on special means of communication, such as homing pigeons or very fast horses for couriers, they should be identified. If the enemy is concentrated in fortified cities, the mechanisms of controlling the gates, supplying food and water, and constructing fortifications should be determined.

After identifying these key items by agents and spies, every effort should be made to secretly weaken the enemy's defenses and ability to wage war.

For example, if you can subvert a blacksmith or substitute your agent, he can, unknown to the enemy, introduce defective material into the enemy's items of war. Poor quality metal will break under the stress of a campaign, weak wheels will cause the attack chariots to be disabled, and poorly made armor will fail to protect the troops. If you can supply stonemasons to build fortifications with unknown weak points and secret means of access or engineers to provide the enemy with defective designs, you can achieve long-term advantages. It is much better if this can be done without the enemy's knowledge. However, even if after time, the enemy realizes the problem but cannot identify which items are defective and which are sound, his willingness to do battle will be weakened. In addition, the feudal lords and 100 surnames will have spent their gold for inferior goods and will be slow to pay for additional expenses.

If, by offering products an enemy needs at a low price or of apparent excellent quality, the enemy buys items from one of our allies or—even better—from one of our own lords, this is a situation of golden opportunity. This may be created by appealing to the greed, arrogance, or ignorance of the enemy or by bribes or payments to leaders and lords and generals of the enemy, though the latter should be done if at all possible through intermediaries and agents.

A golden opportunity usually arises if actual conflict may occur far in the future. In this case, the enemy's leaders often are unsure and argue among themselves as to who their enemies are. After careful evaluation that these conditions are all favorable to our cause, all of our resources should be brought to bear to supply directly or indirectly the vital elements of the enemy's means of waging war. Exploiting a golden opportunity requires the greatest of diplomatic, military, and commercial skill but, if achieved, can create great weakness within the enemy forces, some known with time, some unknown until the stress of battle, and some never discovered. One means by which this can be achieved is by becoming the primary source of supply of a critical item that can suddenly be made unavailable to the enemy. Also, you can ensure that certain critical items have defects or are of poor quality so that they will fail in battle. Or, you can create an excuse for increasing the price five- or tenfold and use the profit to better equip your armies while weakening those of your enemy.

Wise generals should always remember that the ultimate objective is to conquer the enemy without waging war. Do this by weakening the enemy's resolve and resources and the will of his leaders, lords, and generals so that, although actual conflict is avoided, you accomplish your objective.

Therefore, a general who understands this and is successful in creating and exploiting golden opportunities will be able to defeat the enemy's armies without fighting and reach the highest state of military achievement.

ALOG

NOEL D. MATCHETT IS THE PRESIDENT AND PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT OF INFORMATION SECURITY INCORPORATED. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE SENIOR CRYPTOGRAPHIC EXECUTIVE SERVICE AT THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY. HE HOLDS A B.A. DEGREE FROM HAVERFORD COLLEGE AND AN M.S. DEGREE IN MATHEMATICS FROM RUTGERS UNIVERSITY.