

# *Logistics Quotations*

Posted by Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP)

“Because of my wartime experience, I am insistent on the point that logistics know-how must be maintained, that logistic is second to nothing in importance in warfare, that logistic training must be widespread and thorough, and that it is folly to waste time on mediocre talent.”

-- *Vice Admiral Robert B. Carney, USN*

“Logistic considerations belong not only in the highest echelons of military planning during the process of preparation for war and for specific wartime operations, but may well become the controlling element with relation to timing and successful operation.”

-- *Vice Admiral Oscar C. Badger, USN*

"I don't know what the hell this 'logistics' is that Marshall is always talking about, but I want some of it."

-- *Fleet Admiral E. J. King: To a staff officer. (1942)*

“Underway replenishment was the U.S. Navy’s secret weapon of World War II.”

-- *Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, USN*

“... the basic design and the control of the area logistic system must be in the hands of the commander who will design, shift, and control the task forces in accordance with the strategic and tactical needs of the situation.”

-- *Rear Admiral Henry C. Eccles, USN*

“... in its relationship to strategy, logistics assumes the character of a dynamic force, without which the strategic conception is simply a paper plan.”

-- *Commander C. Theo Vogelsang, USN*

“Logistics is the stuff that if you don’t have enough of, the war will not be won as soon as.”

-- *General Nathaniel Green, Quartermaster, American Revolutionary Army*

“During the last war, eighty percent of our problems were of a logistical nature.”  
-- *Field Marshall Montgomery*

“Strategy and tactics provide the scheme for the conduct of military operations, logistics the means therefore.”  
-- *Lieutenant Colonel George C. Thorpe, USMC*

“It is no great matter to change tactical plans in a hurry and to send troops off in new directions. But adjusting supply plans to the altered tactical scheme is far more difficult.”  
-- *General Walter Bedell Smith*

“Clearly, logistics is the hard part of fighting a war.”  
-- *Lieutenant General E. T. Cook, USMC, November 1990*

“The history of war proves that nine out of ten times an army has been destroyed because its supply lines have been cut off.... We shall land at Inchon, and I shall crush them.”  
-- *General Douglas MacArthur*

“Every unit that is not supported is a defeated unit.”  
-- *Maurice de Saxe, Mes Reveries, XIII, 1732*

“Gentlemen, the officer who doesn't know his communications and supply as well as his tactics is totally useless.”  
-- *General George S. Patton, USA*

“Bitter experience in war has taught the maxim that the art of war is the art of the logistically feasible.”  
-- *Admiral Hyman Rickover, USN*

“Forget logistics, you lose.”  
-- *Lieutenant General Franks, USA, 7<sup>th</sup> Corps Commander, Desert Storm*

“Amateurs think about tactics, but professionals think about logistics.”  
-- *General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Commandant of the Marine Corps) noted in 1980*

"Victory is the beautiful, bright colored flower. Transport is the stem without which it could never have blossomed."

-- *Sir Winston S. Churchill, The River War, vii (1899)*

"Sound logistics forms the foundation for the development of strategic flexibility and mobility. If such flexibility is to be exercised and exploited, military command must have adequate control of its logistic support."

-- *RADM Henry E. Eccles, Logistics in the National Defense (1959)*

"The more I see of war, the more I realize how it all depends on administration and transportation . . . It takes little skill or imagination to see where you would like your army to be and when; it takes much more knowledge and hard work to know where you can place your forces and whether you can maintain them there."

-- *General A. C. P. Wavell, quoted in Martin Van Creveld's Supply War, Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton (1977)*

"When you do battle, even if you are winning, if you continue for a long time it will dull your forces and blunt you edge...If you keep your armies out in the field for a long time, your supplies will be insufficient. Transportation of provisions itself consumes 20 times the amount transported."

-- *Sun Tzu*

"I am tempted to make a slightly exaggerated statement: that logistics is all of war-making, except shooting the guns, releasing the bombs, and firing the torpedoes."

-- *ADM Lynde D. McCormick, USN*

"Logistics is all or almost all of the field of military activities except combat. It is the province of not merely staffs, but also of Generals-in-Chief."

-- *Baron de Jomini*

"Only a commander who understand logistics can push the military machine to the limits without risking total breakdown."

-- *Julian Thompson*

"There is nothing more common than to find considerations of supply affecting the strategic lines of a campaign and a war."

-- *Carl von Clausewitz*

“The sounder theory, which accords more closely with the facts of modern warfare, is that logistics is not something distinct from strategy and tactics, but rather an integral part of both; that an understanding of the problems inherent in creating and, even more important, in maintaining naval forces in fighting condition in the theater of operations is essential to high naval command.”

-- *Duncan S. Ballantine*

“In modern time is a poorly qualified strategist or naval commander who is not equipped by training and experience to evaluate logistic factors or to superintend logistic operations.”

-- *Duncan S. Ballantine, 1947*

“It will not suffice merely to make a specialist of the logistician, for logistics is part of the exercise of command...the record of the Second World War suggests that the naval commander must be indoctrinated in the problems of providing as well as making use of the means of warfare.”

-- *Duncan S. Ballantine*

“The war has been variously termed a war of production and a war of machines. Whatever else it is, so far as the United States is concerned, it is a war of logistics.”

-- *Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, in a 1946 report to the Secretary of the Navy*

“American logistics in World War II was big by just about any measure one can devise. There is no question that it played a dominant role in the allied victory and thereby shaped the history of the rest of the century.”

-- *Commandant of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1997*

“A sound logistics plan is the foundation upon which a war operation should be based. If the necessary minimum of logistics support cannot be given to the combatant forces involved, the operation may fail, or at best be only partially successful.”

-- *Admiral Raymond A. Spruance*

“Factors in the art of warfare are: First, calculations; second, quantities; third, logistics; fourth, the balance of power; and fifth, the possibility of victory is based on the balance of power.”

-- *Sun Tzu*

“The line between disorder and order lies in logistics...”

-- *Sun Tzu*

“And regulation entails organizational effectiveness, a chain of command, and a structure for logistical support.”

-- *Sun Tzu*

“There are five kinds of incendiary attack: The first is called setting fire to personnel; the second, to stores; the third, to transport vehicles and equipment; the fourth, to munitions; the fifth, to supply installations...In all cases an army must understand the changes induced by the five kinds of incendiary attack, and make use of logistical calculations to address them.”

-- *Sun Tzu*

**“9. Leaders win through logistics.** Vision, sure. Strategy, yes. But when you go to war, you need to have both toilet paper and bullets at the right place at the right time. In other words, you must win through superior logistics. Go back to the Gulf War. After that war ended, the media stories focused on the strategy that was devised by Colin Powell and executed by Norman Schwarzkopf. For my money, the guy who won the Gulf War was Gus Pagonis, the genius who managed all of the logistics.

It doesn't matter how brilliant your vision and strategy are if you can't get the soldiers, the weapons, the vehicles, the gasoline, the chow -- the boots, for God's sake! -- to the right people, at the right place, at the right time. ( Right now, Amazon.com and a hundred of its dotkin are learning -- or failing to learn -- the Gus Pagonis lesson. )”

-- *Tom Peters - Rule #3: Leadership Is Confusing As Hell, Fast Company, March 2001*

“Strategy is to war what the plot is to the play; Tactics is represented by the role of the players; Logistics furnishes the stage management, accessories, and maintenance. The audience, thrilled by the action of the play and the art of the performers, overlooks all of the cleverly hidden details of stage management.”

-- *Lt. Col George C. Thorpe: Pure Logistics (1917)*

“International logistic coordination must always involve some invasion of the economic rights, independence, and sovereignty of each nation of the alliance.”

-- *Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles: Logistics in the National Defense (1959)*

"In order to make assured conquests it is necessary always to proceed within the rules: to advance, to establish yourself solidly, to advance and establish yourself again, and always prepare to have within reach of your army your resources and your requirements."

-- *Frederick the Great: Instructions for His Generals, ii, (1747)*

"Logistics comprises the means and arrangements which work out the plans of strategy and tactics. Strategy decides where to act; logistics brings the troops to this point."

-- *Jomini: Precis de l' Art de la Guerre. (1838)*

"Logistics sets the campaign's operational limits. The lead time needed to arrange logistics support and resolve logistics concerns requires continuous integration of logistic considerations into the operational planning process. This is especially critical when available planning time is short. Constant coordination and cooperation between the combatant command and component staffs--and with other combatant commands--is a prerequisite for ensuring timely command awareness and oversight of deployment, readiness, and sustainment issues in the theater of war."

-- *Joint Pub 1: Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*

"Mobility is the true test of a supply system."

-- *Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart: Thoughts on War, (1944)*

"You will not find it difficult to prove that battles, campaigns, and even wars have been won or lost primarily because of logistics."

-- *Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower*

"As the link between the war front and the home front, the logistic process is at once the military element in the nation's economy and the economic element in its military operations."

-- *Duncan Ballantine*

"He conquers who endures."

-- *Aulus Persius Flaccus, 34-62 A.D.*

"There is nothing more common than to find consideration of supply affecting the strategic lines of a campaign and a war."

-- *Carl Von Clausewitz*

"If your sword is too short, take one step forward."

-- *Admiral Togo Heihachiro, Commander of the Japanese Fleet at the Battle of Tsushima, 27-28 May 1905*

"Modern war is a death grapple between peoples and economic systems, rather than a conflict of armies alone."

-- *Bernard M. Baruch, 1870-1965*

"Logistics is the 'practical art of moving armies.'"

-- *General Antoine Henri Jomini*

"To wage war, you need first of all money; second, you need money, and third, you also need money."

-- *Prince Montecuccoli*

Logistics..."embraces not merely the traditional functions of supply and transportation in the field, but also war finance, ship construction, munitions manufacture and other aspects of war economy."

-- *Lt Col George C. Thorpe, Pure Logistics, 1917*

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-- *General Antoine Henri Jomini, Precis de l'Art de la Guerre (The Art of War), 1838*

"Experience has taught me that manufacturers are now as necessary to our independence as to our comfort."

-- *Thomas Jefferson*

"A little neglect may breed mischief: for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost."

-- *Benjamin Franklin*

“Seldom will all logistics principles exert equal influence; usually one or two will dominate in any given situation. Identifying those principles that have priority in a specific situation is essential to establishing effective support.”

-- *Joint Pub 4-0, Doctrine for Logistics Support of Joint Operations, Sep 25, 1992*

“You realize when shoeing the horse that the shoe may be thrown--possibly causing the horse to run, so you have a mule on standby to get the rider to the war.”

-- *Capt John P. Laverdure, Scott Air Force Base, HQ Air Mobility Command, 1996*

“Logistics Planning - The wisdom to realize when working on plan A, you'll run into conflicts in executing plan B and being properly prepared, and successfully executing plan E.”

-- *Capt John P. Laverdure, Scott Air Force Base, HQ Air Mobility Command, 1996*

“Behind every great leader there was an even greater logistician.”

-- *M. Cox*

“The programs of training and exercises form the final test of logistics readiness. Since the majority of junior officers and enlisted men in the logistics services are specialized in a technical field, sound technical training is their fundamental preparation for war. In addition, however, specific attention must be paid to the development of fundamental discipline, leadership, and personal versatility which are so vital to efficient logistics service under wartime conditions.”

-- *RADM Henry E. Eccles, USN, Ret, Logistics in the National Defense, 1959*

“Logistics...in the broadest sense, the three big M's of warfare--material, movement, and maintenance. If international politics is 'the art of the possible,' and war is its instrument, logistics is the art of defining and extending the possible. It provides the substance that physically permits an army to live and move and have its being.”

-- *James A. Huston, The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953, 1966*

“Logistics...as vital to military success as daily food is to daily work.”

-- *Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, Armaments and Arbitration, 1912*

“The ideal for all military forces is to reduce their logistical requirements to necessities only.”

-- *Air Force Manual 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, Essay T, March 1992*

“Logistics sets the campaign's operational limits.”

-- *Joint Pub 1, Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces, November 1991*

“The essence of flexibility is in the mind of the commander; the substance of flexibility is in logistics.”

-- *Rear Admiral Henry Eccles, U.S. Navy*

“Logistics must be simple--everyone thinks they're an expert.”

-- *Anonymous*

“My logisticians are a humorless lot...they know if my campaign fails, they are the first ones I will slay.”

-- *Alexander*

“Logistics: The Profession - As a business professional with a vested career interest in the field of logistics, you are a part of a highly dynamic profession: current global developments and technological innovations are impacting logistics today as never before. While the logistics function's contributions to a firm's competitive strength have often been "invisible" in the past, many factors have coalesced to heighten its importance and visibility in the 1990s and beyond.”

-- [CLM-National What It's All About](#)

“Throughout the struggle, it was in his logistic inability to maintain his armies in the field that the enemy's fatal weakness lay. Courage his forces had in full measure, but courage was not enough. Reinforcements failed to arrive, weapons, ammunition and food alike ran short, and the dearth of fuel caused their powers of tactical mobility to dwindle to the vanishing point. In the last stages of the campaign they could do little more than wait for the Allied advance to sweep over them.”

-- *Dwight D. Eisenhower, British Army Doctrine Publication, Volume 3, Logistics (June 1996) p. 1-2*

“As we select our forces and plan our operations,...(w)e must understand how logistics can impact on our concepts of operation...Commanders must base all their concepts of operations on what they know they can do logistically.”

-- *Lt Gen Alfred M. Gray, Jr., Marine Corps Gazette (July 1987)*

“Logistics comprises the means and arrangements which work out the plans of strategy and tactics. Strategy decides where to act; logistics brings the troops to this point. “

-- *General Antoine Henri Jomini, Summary of the Art of War*

“Logistics is the ball and chain of armoured warfare.”

-- *Guderian*

“Above all, petrol governed every movement.”

-- *Winston Churchill, on Allied operations during World War II*

“It was a war begun as a fight for oil and ended by the lack of it.”

-- *Asahi Shimbun, regarding World War II*

“In the long drawn out campaigns in Western Asia, with long marches and operations in barren desert or mountain, the generals had to re-learn the logistical lessons that Alexander had learned from his father fourteen centuries before the Crusades: plan properly, or die.”

-- *Julian Thompson, Lifblood of War, p. 26.*

“...any commander with three months to prepare before he is besieged, who lays in only six days stocks of ammunition deserves to be censured in the strongest terms.”

-- *Julian Thompson, Lifblood of War, concerning the French debacle at Dien Bien Phu*

“All comments and lessons from the logistics of campaigns should be leavened with the fact that this must be one of the few campaigns fought by a regular force since the internal combustion engine became generally available, where the widespread use of wheeled transport was not possible. This, combined with the speed with which it was necessary to put the whole act together, and the enemy’s efforts to disrupt the act, makes it arguable that we were fortunate to have any logistics at all!”

-- *I. Gardiner, British rifle company commander, Falklands Campaign*

“He who owns the oil will own the world, for he will rule the sea by means of the heavy oils, the air by means of the ultra-refined oils, and the land by means of gasoline and the illuminating oils.”

-- *Henri Berenger, French diplomat, 1921*

“To fight, we must have oil for our machine.”

-- *Adolph Hitler*

“The war was decided by engines and octane.”

-- *Joseph Stalin, referring to the outcome of World War II*

“No matter how well fed, equipped, or officered, without oil and gasoline the modern army is a hopeless monster, mire and marked for destruction.”

-- *T.H. Vail Motter, U.S. Army Historian*

“The primary cause of our failure was a shortage of fuel.”

-- *General Paul von Kleist,  
Commander, Panzer Forces, Army Group A in Russia*

“Our ships sailed on water, but they moved on oil, and the demand never ceased.”

-- *Rear Admiral W.R. Carter, U.S.N.  
Beans, Bullets and Black Oil*

“The raids of the Allied air fleets on the German fuel supply installations were the most important of the combined factors which brought about the collapse of Germany.”

-- *General Adolf Galland  
Commander, German Fighter Force*

“A plentiful and reliable supply of petroleum products was probably the single most vital factor in establishing Allied logistical superiority over the German Army.”

-- *The Quartermaster Corps*

“It was a war begun as a fight for oil and ended by the lack of it.”

-- *Asahi Shimbun, on the Allied victory in the Pacific in World War II*

“God was on the side of the nation that had the oil.”

-- *Professor Wakimura, Tokyo Imperial University*

## **The Logistician**

Logisticians are a sad and embittered race of men who are very much in demand in war, and who sink resentfully into obscurity in peace. They deal only in facts, but must work for men who merchant in theories. They emerge during war because war is very much a fact. They disappear in peace because peace is mostly theory. The people who merchant in theories, and who employ logisticians in war and ignore them in peace, are admirals.

Admirals are a happy blessed race who radiate confidence and power. They feed only on ambrosia and drink only nectar. In peace, they stride confidently and can invade a world simply by sweeping their hands grandly over a chart, point their fingers decisively up strategic chokepoints, and blocking defiles and obstacles with the sides of their hands. In war, they must stride more slowly because each admiral has a logistician riding on his back and he knows that, at any moment, the logistician may lean forward and whisper: "No, you can't do that." Admirals fear logisticians in war and, in peace, admirals try to forget logisticians.

Romping along beside admirals are strategists and tacticians. Logisticians despise strategists and tacticians. Strategists and tacticians do not know about logisticians until they grow up to be admirals--which they usually do.

Sometimes a logistician becomes an admiral. If he does, he must associate with admirals whom he hates; he has a retinue of strategists and tacticians whom he despises; and, on his back, is a logistician whom he fears. This is why logisticians who become admirals always have ulcers and cannot eat their ambrosia.

-- *Unknown Author*

And then there's always a dissenting opinion...

“... shoveling coal and combat loading do not belong with the study of the principles of war.”

-- *Anonymous, Naval War College, Circa 1926*

...well, not everyone recognized the importance of Logistics the first time around!