

Captain May – September 25, 2003 – unpublished essay:

“A pessimistic analysis of the tactical situation in Iraq”

Beneath the big issues of the global war on terror are the devilish details of the Army in Iraq. These are hard to come by, because they're the nit and the grit behind the more interesting stories. I'll define and analyze four important areas of our current tactical situation that concern me, as a former intelligence officer and Desert Storm volunteer. They are logistics, maintenance, morale and the threat situation.

Logistics means supplies, the three B's of beans, band-aids and bullets. *Beans* means food and fuel; *band-aids* means medical stuff to fix people and parts to fix machines; *bullets* just means weapons to destroy targets. The problem with getting these vital supplies to Iraq is that they have to start their trip from as far away as Iowa. Once they've reached the Iraqi border, they still have to cross a hostile desert, under escort because of threat of attack. This accounts for why US troops complain of lack of basic amenities like toiletries, or mail from home.

Maintenance means the medical units for fixing people and the motor pools for fixing machines. The bottom line here is that the desert is tough for humans and sheer hell on machines. Recent media reports cite rate of tread wear several times the norm for our armored vehicles in Iraq. It all comes down to the war of sand against metal. As the German *Afrika Korps* discovered in World War II, everything mechanical breaks down in the desert, and the higher the level of technology, the worse the level of breakdown.

Morale is what sustains the fighting spirit of the Army. The chief job of public affairs officers (as I used to be) is to keep the American public convinced that morale of the American Army is high. Morale in Iraq is not high, though. The soldiers expected to be home by now, and have received widely conflicting reports from their officers as to *when* they'll be coming home. They're probably grumbling that they don't even know *if* they'll be coming home. Before the Defense Department clamped the lid down, soldiers were openly calling for the replacement of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The threat situation is an assessment of enemy abilities, and a prediction of enemy intentions. We must admit that the enemy has been more tenacious than we had hoped, and that much of Iraq's fighting force receded into the sand only to return. In my on-line research I came across *Iraqi Resistance*

Report IV (dated April 6), which put forth an Iraqi plan to take the war into a guerilla phase. Sometimes you find the truth in enemy publications – that’s why they teach military intelligence officers to read them.

Some Iraqis may still remember American liberation, but most are thinking now of American occupation, and the numbers of our opponents will swell. Now we are arming former foes against their own countrymen as a new Iraqi Army. History says that if the guerilla movement becomes strong enough, at least some of that new army will turn into our enemies, too.

It’s this independent analyst’s view that we have rougher times ahead than we’ve been told about so far. The combat power of our Army has been substantially reduced by extended, unplanned use of its personnel and equipment. The enemy is escalating his attacks in both intensity and sophistication. The situation is not stable. We have gone from blitz to stall and are inviting attack.

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