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The status, Characteristics and Enlightenment of US Military Food Procurement Support

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Abstract: This paper systematically expounds the evolution of the US military food procurement support the current organizational system and its operational processes, analyzes its characteristics, and proposes Strengthening the centralized procurement support for military food, Deep integration of military and civilians to promote military food support , Standardizing the operational process of centralized procurement of military food , Accelerating the information construction of military food procurement support four inspirations based on China's national conditions. Over the years, the US military has accumulated a large amount of practical data and experience in logistics support through various military operations, and constantly summarizes and reflects on its logistics support operations in order to continuously optimize its global logistics support system. This paper takes the food purchase guarantee of the American army as the research object, expounds its development history, current organization system and operation process, analyzes its characteristics, and puts forward several enlightenments combined with the current situation of the food purchase guarantee of the American army.

Keywords: US Military; Food support; Centralized procurement.

1. The development of food procurement support for the US Army

It reduced inventory costs and streamlined the supply process, prompting the

services to use the same standard products, but the process was not yet unified.

In 1961, the then U.S. Secretary of Defense McNamara asked for the integration of the service bureaus under the unified management of these services into one bureau, so the establishment of the Defense Supply Bureau; Before World War II, in 1973, when the Defense Supply Administration introduced food, each service purchased and distributed its own food; After World War II, the Hoover Commission was requested by Congress to study the logistics management of army food and supplies, and recommended that perishable food should be centrally managed by a single organization. This prompted the establishment of the Army, Navy and Air Force Support Center, which started the general army system to manage the procurement, storage and distribution of army food, and achieved remarkable results. As a result, the Department of Defense and the Services required a common system for other consumables -- items that would be consumed in service and could not be repaired -- at a time when consumables were distributed separately and centrally managed by the services.

The mid-1950s saw a change in the procurement structure of food and consumables. The services became unified managers of various consumables, with their own responsibility for the procurement, storage and distribution of different types of supplies to the entire military, as well as forecasting demand and managing inventory. For example, the Army is responsible for supplies and clothing, while the Navy is responsible for medicine, oil and industrial components, and the Air Force is responsible for electronics. This system of unified service management, effective global support, complete global support of all supplies by 1977; With the gradual expansion of the general supplies and common service projects of the armed forces under the control of the Defense Supply Agency, the Agency provided everything from general supplies to aircraft fuel, from procurement, storage, distribution and replenishment, as well as the disposal and scrapping of discarded equipment and materials, which had far exceeded the supply scope, so it was renamed the Defense Logistics Agency in January 1977. In 1986, under the Goni Act, the Defense Logistics Agency was transformed into the Combat Support Agency, providing global logistics support to the relevant service branches, federal agencies, and foreign entities.

It can be seen that after nearly a century of training, the US army's food procurement support has experienced a development process from the decentralized system of the three services and the service responsibility system to the whole army. The U.S. Military's food security efforts are overseen by the Defense Logistics Agency, which must comply with the Buy American Act and the Bailey Amendment -- giving priority to purchases of products made, manufactured, or grown in the United States. This applies to all prime contractors and subcontractors at all levels.

2. U.S. Army food procurement support Organization system

2.1. Defense Logistics Agency

The Defense Logistics Agency is part of the Office of the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics of the Department of Defense. It is the largest operational logistics support unit of the Department of Defense. It provides global logistics support for the armed forces, related federal government agencies, and foreign countries during peacetime. The Director of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) is the purchasing executive agent (EA) for supplies, bulk oil, building materials, and medical equipment (medical equipment). Its responsibility is to provide continuous support and end-to-end supply chain support to end users as required. Through the development of coordinated processes

and effective planning, efficient support for emergency operations and the full spectrum can be achieved at any time from peacetime to emergency or operational operations.

2.2. The Defense Logistics Agency

Force Support Center formerly the Defense Philadelphia Supply Center, was renamed the Defense Logistics Agency Force Support Center in October 2010, marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Defense Logistics Agency. It is responsible for almost all of the military's supplies, clothing, and medical supplies. It includes six categories: supplies, clothing and textiles, building materials and equipment, medicine, weapons system components and military operations. In 2004, the Centre procured and supplied US $3.7 billion in food services, war rations and fresh fruits and vegetables; Since 2010, its annual purchases and management of food, clothing, medicine and equipment have reached 13.4 billion US dollars. The Force Support Center has established supply chains for four categories of supplies: supplies, clothing, building materials and equipment, and pharmaceuticals, and has used three different procurement strategies: the first is the main supplier plan. Specific targets include maintenance and repair of combat materials, metals for special operations, pharmaceuticals and supplies; Second, long-term signing plan. Specific targets include emergency fire services, heavy equipment procurement projects, information technology equipment, wood products, clothing and textiles; Third, the traditional procurement guarantee. Specific objects include rescue equipment, containers and RFID tags, light materials handling equipment.

2.3. Department of Supplies, Force Support Center, Defense Logistics Agency

The Supply Bureau consists of four rooms: Food Service Department, military provisions Department, production Department, product safety Office and supplier Management Office.

Food service Department. The original warehouse inventory distribution system, now add electronic order and receiving system, build the main supplier system. The use of electronic data interaction (EDI) enables suppliers to receive and transmit orders within minutes, lowering regional inventory standards. At the same time, EDI technology also improves the timeliness and accuracy of orders and improves product quality, thus reducing inventory and related indirect costs. The fastest turnaround time (from order to product delivery) is targeted at 48 hours. There are now about 50 major suppliers providing food supply and management in all regions of the world. Commissary. It provides logistical management of food supplies for the troops, including individual rations, group rations, survival rations, ultra-high temperature milk, emergency drinking water disinfection, humanitarian aid rations and field cooking equipment. While ready-to-eat meals (Mres) are the military's core individual combat rations, the Service also takes into account the special dietary needs of soldiers (e.g., vegetarians, Jews). There are 24 types of ready-to-eat meals, which provide an average of 1,250 calories, including 13 percent protein, 36 percent fat and 51 percent carbohydrates. The center does not provide rations to individuals, but only to federal agencies and military units.

The production department. The branch mainly provides fresh fruits and vegetables for the troops, and the support units include the Military Services Department, the National Defense Commodity Administration, the military business network, the employment guidance center, the military management hospital, the federal prison, the military school, the Indian reservation and other units and institutions. The Department of Defense Fresh Program works closely with the USDA Food Service Nutrition Service and uses USDA federal commodity authorization funds to purchase and distribute a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to schools.

3. The US Army food procurement process

The food purchasing activities of the US army include the following six links:

3.1. Requirement generation

Users -- mainly including various military departments, Defense commodity Bureau, military business network, employment guidance center, veterans management hospital, federal prison, garrison school, Indian reservation and other units and institutions -- when receiving the food catalog and list introduction provided by the main supplier, put forward the product demand according to their organizational requirements; Data is collected by the Force Support Centre of the Defence Logistics Agency and a formal procurement programme is prepared to meet the requirements.

3.2. Prepare the offer

At the same time, the supply center professionals prepare a formal procurement tender document that incorporates the information obtained, applies federal regulations and guidelines related to supply procurement, and meets the best value principles of federal procurement. To extensively invite potential suppliers to participate, fully understand the requirements, to answer the procurement doubts.

3.3. Issue invitation to bid and announcement within about 50 days.

At the same time during this period, hold a preliminary proposal meeting, so that the list of suppliers to the relevant professional staff questions, suggestions, on the various factors of the bidding issues to discuss and study; According to the feedback of suppliers, the content of the bidding document can be adjusted and modified to further control the possible costs of invitation, but after the change must inform all suppliers in the letter list.

3.4. Bid evaluation. In the evaluation phase.

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the technical solutions provided by each supplier. The evaluation was conducted by the industry experts of the bid evaluation team and measured the supplier's technical proposals against the demand indicators presented in the tender and against the "best value" selection criteria, which took into account distribution and delivery systems, location, track record of performance, company experience, electronic data interaction capabilities, and socio-economic benefits. This evaluation phase may last more than 50 days under federal Procurement regulations regarding "negotiated contract procurement."

3.5. The contract is signed.

With the results of the evaluation, the award of the contract can be made on the spot and the winning bidder can be announced, which usually takes effect 30 to 60 days after

publication. Within two weeks of the announcement, DOD regional directors held a post-award meeting with the winning supplier companies, including Philadelphia Supply Center professionals and suppliers, to discuss contract structure and implementation.

3.6. Enter the food supply list into the Department of Defense cataloging system

Following the conclusion of the meeting, base (demand side), supplier and supply centre professionals worked together to develop a supplier product inventory to ensure that all food items requested by troop users were included in the inventory system.

4. The main characteristics of food procurement support for American army logistics

First, the system is complete. The US army has a complete legal system of food procurement guarantee, a clear management level and a smooth command process. The rule of law is the inevitable requirement and important guarantee of modernization. Vertically, the U.S. military logistics legal system is composed of the national level, the Ministry of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff level, the logistics organization directly under the Ministry of Defense level, the service level and the theater level. For example, at the level of policy management of food procurement, there are federal procurement regulations and supplementary regulations of the Department of Defense, which guide the basic operation order of the procurement work of the whole country and the entire army, and effectively support American agricultural production enterprises. On the operational level, there are regulations and guidelines related to food procurement. Horizontally, the regulations not only take into account the provisions of peacetime and domestic provisions, but also specify detailed contents in overseas and combat conditions. The U.S. military logistics regulations are integrated into the whole legal system and have their own relatively independent system. The U.S. Army Troop Support Center adopts the supply chain management model, in which each kind of material is a supply chain. From upstream raw material suppliers to downstream end users, the whole process of product visual management can be realized to ensure food quality and safety.

Second, the organization is centralized. Food procurement in the United States is under the control of the headquarters. The military, general food and staple food needed by all services and arms are all procured by the unified organization of the headquarters, which forms a strong purchasing power, greatly improves the security of food procurement and the military's right to speak in the transaction, and helps to improve the military's continuous combat ability. At the same time, since food is not a high-tech intensive industry, its procurement activities must comply with the Buy American Act and the Bailey Amendment, which is conducive to supporting the country's small and medium-sized enterprises and to a certain extent, feeding the national economy. In addition, the procurement of lunch food for primary and secondary schools in the United States is also centralized by the military, which is conducive to food safety management, makes the chain of responsibility clearer, and enables the collection of data related to food procurement to include the whole food through the whole-life traceability of food.

Third, global orientation and operational support. The logistics theory of the US army is developed from actual combat, which has a strong reference significance for our army who has not fought for a long time. War is essentially a competition of comprehensive national strength. In peacetime, logistics should consider how to efficiently convert financial resources into combat effectiveness, and in wartime, it should become an important driver to ensure the improvement of combat effectiveness. Food procurement security is an important part of wartime rations. The U.S. military has made detailed classification of wartime rations under various conditions, considering not only the security within the establishment, but also how to guarantee outside the establishment. It is not only how to guarantee joint operations of multiple arms, but also how to guarantee joint operations of multinational forces.

Fourth, the main supplier guarantee is adopted. The main supply Provider program is designed to cope with the army's large quota. After years of using government warehouses to store food and ships to transport food for the military, feeding experts began to notice after the first Gulf War how commercial food rationing, transportation, and storage took place throughout the United States. This eliminates the need for suppliers to ship food to warehouses, instead shipping it directly to the people who need it. The United States has had a rations master supplier program since 1994, which has saved the country and the military a lot of money by eliminating wastage in storage and warehouses.

5. Several Enlightenments

5.1. Strengthen the centralized procurement of military food

Food support is an important part of the logistics task. The Defense Logistics Agency of the US military set up a food support bureau to take charge of food related business management. Although there is also a supply bureau under the Logistics and Energy Bureau of the Logistics Support Department, logistics has always been in a weak position in the military establishment system of our army. It seems that logistics has no say in exercise or peacetime training. In fact, in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, American soldiers complained that they could not drink ice water. Some soldiers even used industrial ice for drinking water to cause diarrhea, which seriously affected the combat effectiveness of the army. For this reason, the US army added the "water" in the category of rations, and revised and improved the regulations. In theory, the food security of our army should be paid more attention at all levels than that of foreign armies, because we are used to hot drinking culture, and our dietary needs are quite different, which can easily cause all kinds of problems. In terms of improving the combat effectiveness of troops, from this aspect, it is a higher way to improve the marginal income of combat effectiveness.

5.2. We will promote the deeply integrated development of military and civilian food security

The U.S. Military Supply Service's Production Branch oversees the Defense Department's fresh food program, works closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Service Nutrition Service, and uses USDA federal commodity authorization funds to purchase and deliver a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to U.S. schools. It is a model of the

organic combination of the powerful procurement support system of the army and the advanced logistics distribution system of local commerce. Most of the food is typical general military and civilian materials, which is very conducive to the deep integration of military and civilian development; From the perspective of suppliers, the demand for food is stable and common in a certain period of time, and suppliers are willing to cooperate with the army. The military-civilian integrated development of food security can not only learn from the support system of the US army, but also explore a path more suitable for the Chinese army in combination with the national conditions of the strong and weak Chinese army, which has great research and development potential.

5.3. Standardize the operation process of centralized procurement of military food

First of all, there should be clear laws and regulations, and a perfect legal system of supply procurement is the key to effective and efficient implementation. The U.S. Army has written highly targeted professional laws and regulations for supply procurement, and carries out procurement activities in strict reference to the laws and regulations, so that the procurement activities have legal basis, clear process, high efficiency and standard. On the one hand, our army needs to perfect and supplement the laws and regulations in the fields not involved to solve the problem of being unable to rely on. On the other hand, it needs to refine the existing laws and regulations to enhance the operability of the laws. Secondly, there is usually no suggestion meeting in the early stage in the procurement process of our army. Starting from this process, we can compare the specific differences between the procurement process of our army and the American army in terms of supplies, whether there is none or the forms are different, and whose process is more scientific and efficient. We will further understand the benefits and convenience brought by this link to the food procurement of the US army, and try to get inspiration from it.

5.4. Accelerating the information-based construction of military food procurement support

Pay attention to the procurement industry, procurement team information construction. The US military is good at applying the latest information technologies to procurement. Emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things, big data, e-commerce and blockchain are all helping to promote procurement informatization reform in the "Internet Plus" environment. According to my research in Zhengcaiyun Government Procurement Company, the informatization level of local government procurement has been ahead of the army. In the government procurement work with Zhejiang Province as a pilot, all the participating parties of government procurement, such as demand-side, agent, supplier and supervision and management department, are centralized in one platform, which greatly improves the efficiency and transparency of government procurement. It also forms a whole set of security system to prevent data theft and exploitation by criminals, and also facilitates the collection of big data, so as to further optimize the prediction of demand and preference and feed back to users and suppliers. Earlier, the army also had a corresponding platform, but because of various problems have not been promoted in the whole army, can only simply meet the needs of some office supplies procurement, far from meeting the needs of the army, and the success of Zheng Caiyun can set a model for us to further think about how to apply advanced information technology to military procurement.

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