

Strategies of the War on Access **The Simple Principles Needed for Motorized Recreation to Win**

By Del Albright, Recreation Advocate

Let there be no doubt: We are at war over our access to public lands and waterways. Further, we are at war over our basic freedoms like gun ownership, political views, consumer monitoring, and vehicle ownership. The list goes on, but more importantly, there are strategies we can employ to preserve our freedoms, keep our access, and protect our way of life. Here I offer those strategies to win the war on our freedoms; the war on our access.

War is a strong word, yes, but by definition it means any active hostility, contention, struggle or conflict (Webster's New World Dictionary). We are in a constant struggle by folks who are hostile to our way of life. To me, this is war. We must fight back or suffer the consequences of losing what we love to do.

A fundamental principle of war is never to remain completely passiveⁱ, but rather to attack back, at the front and at the flanks, even while under attack. To motorized recreation, that means for us to not stand by and complain while Rome burns, but rather to fight back. The best defense is a good offense, right? RIGHT!

You can no longer wonder why those who oppose our way of life go after those places we really love – like Moab, Utah, the Rubicon Trail, Glamis (Imperial Sand Dunes), or other awesome OHV sites. It is one of the strategies of war – to take away the things your enemy loves. And our enemies are totally after our favorite places.

So how do we stop them?

Sun Tzu (in about 500 B.C.) talked about five essentials for victoryⁱⁱ. I share two of them with you here:

“He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.”

“He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all ranks.”

There are a couple strong messages for motorized recreation here. “When to fight” is where the saying comes from about “know thy enemy.” Sun Tzu pointed out that if you know the enemy and know yourself, you'll figure out when to fight, and you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. Eventually victory can be gained when you keep the essentials in mind and keep your army united and fighting with purpose, and of course, pick your battles.

In simple terms, this means trusting those organizations fighting for us and being part of their management and decision-making. It means helping them figure out when to fight and when not to fight (and waste our money). It also means being united (same spirit) in our fight and standing together; not pulling each other down, doing unthinkable things in someone else's boots, or "eating our young." It means continuing to build an Access Army that knows when and how to fight, led by folks who understand the strategies of this war on access.

Do not be confused about my loyalties as a recreation advocate; I believe the Access Army starts with all of us being members of the BlueRibbon Coalition (www.sharetrails.org) for sure, and for me my state association, the California Association of 4Wheel Drive Clubs (www.cal4wheel.com). We all need to be part of our regional and state associations – whether they are perfect or not is irrelevant. Joining is the very first step in this war. Together we can make them better; but without them we might as well scrap our rigs.

In summary, the strategies of winning this war on access are the things you've read about before: join up; advocate for your sport; get in the game; get some training; fight back; be united; trust in those fighting for and with you; and find that "same spirit" to help us unite our Army and win this war.

ⁱ Principles of War, by General Carl Von Clausewitz; The Stackpole Company.

ⁱⁱ The Art of War, by Sun Tzu; The Military Service Publishing Company.