

Are You on the List?

How 2nd- and 3rd-Tier Defense Industrial Base (DIB) Manufacturers Are Legitimate Targets for Foreign Grey-Zone Attack



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If a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and you are part of the defense supply chain... do you know what constitutes a targetable link for the DIB?

Many 2nd- and 3rd-tier DIB manufacturers have not internalized the significance of their role in sustaining American military capability—or how those wishing to impede national military resilience may prefer bloodless targeting of the DIB and the ability to arm our military personnel rather than face us in open combat.

If the concern is America's ability to project force, the target becomes that which sustains military production: the DIB.

Considering the DIB, *it is the 2nd- and 3rd-tier manufacturers that may make the most practical targets with the greatest potential return on targeting investment.*

For the manufacturer, the consequence may look remarkably ordinary: a missed shipment, an unavailable material, an equipment failure, a supplier problem, a corrupted file, or a production delay. The strategic significance may not be ordinary at all.

What Makes Your Company a Valuable Target?

Are you a target? Consider:

1. **How many customers depend on you?**
2. **What critical resources do you depend on?**
3. **What happens downstream if you stop producing?**
4. **How much disruption is necessary to affect your customer?**
5. ***Would you recognize deliberate interference if it looked like an ordinary business problem?***

What to consider when seeking to maximize impact		
1		How many customers depend on you?
2		What critical resources do you depend on?
3		What happens downstream if you stop producing?
4		How much disruption is necessary to affect your customer?
5		<i>Would you recognize deliberate interference if it looked like an ordinary business problem?</i>

Targeters bracket intentionally: business leaders have not, traditionally, needed to think in terms of defense against military targeting attacks.

How Would One Delay, Disrupt, Degrade, or Limit the Production of American Missiles?

Attacking military supply directly is counterproductive: the action is overt, the intent clear, and the attack likely attributable—and, as such, more likely to induce an unwanted response.

Attacking the prime contractor also offers a less-than-ideal return on investment: most prime contractors have significant resources to invest in security, and they are highly focused on maintaining contract performance and standing. **They would fight ferociously using any means available to maintain their standing. And they're expecting it.**

To delay, disrupt, degrade, or limit just requires the right target in the right supply chain.

How Can an Opponent Extend Their Window?

While there are more ways to impede military response, this short article looks solely at extending the window. A targeter asks: What specific vulnerable points can be impacted to impede the restocking timeline and give my planners a larger window?

Your time to recover is their window of opportunity.

OPTION 1: Can We Control the Export or Trading of a Required Mineral?

If prices climb exponentially and reserves become depleted, can a manufacturer absorb a significant increase in input costs under a contract whose price is already committed? **Does the manufacturer absorb the margin loss, delay delivery, seek an alternate material, or fail to perform?**



This is a driving factor behind EO 14415, published 20 July 2026.

OPTION 2: Can We Disrupt Production at the Manufacturer Level?



Not all manufacturers need to be hit—just the right ones. Just the one(s) that are a chokepoint in the chain. Just the one(s) that create, refine, or process that single component.

The fewer companies that do a particular "thing," the more that "thing" – and those companies – become supply-chain chokepoints.

If your customer cannot readily replace what you do, your small size does not make you insignificant. It makes you consequential.

This is the vulnerable link in the supply chain.

All of these small impacts at key points can *delay* the production and distribution of critical military materiel. This extends the action window.

Conclusion

You already know your supply chain. Ferndon's question is whether you know who else is looking at it—and which seemingly insignificant dependency they would recognize as consequential before you realize its importance.

Are you on the list?

Contact [Ferndon](mailto:team@ferndon.com) (team@ferndon.com) to learn more. Our team provides in-depth supply chain analysis, mapping, and intelligence support. We integrate geopolitical, weather, financial, technical, and other specialized intelligence to identify dependencies and emerging risks—giving decision makers better information for resource allocation and supply chain resilience.



HOW THEY CAN IMPACT A SMALL OR MEDIUM MANUFACTURER

Attackers look for easy access, high impact, and low risk to themselves.

1

USE YOUR CERTIFICATIONS AGAINST YOU

Small and disadvantaged businesses are easier targets because they have fewer resources, fewer experts, and limited budgets to detect and respond.



2

USE YOUR LOCATION AGAINST YOU

Rural or economically vulnerable areas may rely on older Operational Technology. Adversaries can disrupt power, water, sewage, or other utilities to damage, halt, or degrade operations.



3

SABOTAGE YOUR SUPPLY THROUGH PAYMENTS OR REPUTATION

Remotely trigger payment issues or false unreliability reports. Reputations sour fast—and finances are extremely sensitive.



4

COMPROMISE YOUR PROGRAMS AND PRODUCTION GUIDANCE

Gain access to systems and change small details in guidance or code to sabotage overtly or create trigger-able sabotage (like Stuxnet or exploding pagers). If found, production stops for investigation and rework.



5

USE WEATHER TO DISGUISE AND AMPLIFY IMPACT

Align attacks with severe weather—storms, snow, ice, or heat—to hide actions and overwhelm response efforts.



6

GAIN INSIDER ACCESS

Insiders provide access, sabotage, and timing advantages—motivated by money, coercion, grievance, or personal circumstances.



**NOT ALL NEED TO BE HIT—
JUST THE RIGHT ONES.**

 Hit the chokepoints →  Delay production →  Extend the restock window →  Gain strategic advantage