

Cargo Cults and Logical Due Diligence

Due Diligence: confirm all material facts.

Logical Due Diligence: evidence that the material facts are logically connected.

During World War II vast amounts of equipment and supplies were airdropped to troops on islands in the South Pacific. Islanders, who had never encountered advanced technology before, recovered airdrops that missed their target, and sometimes received cargo as offerings of friendship.

When the war ended the military abandoned the airbases and cargo stopped dropping from the sky. Islanders believed that the riches floating down from the heavens had come from their own ancestral spirits, mediated by the strange rituals performed by their visitors. They thought that if they replicated the conditions under which the troops had received the cargo, gifts would once again fall from the sky. Cults sprang up and began to mimic the behaviour of the soldiers, performing drills and even making headphones out of coconut husks to wear while sitting in fabricated control towers. They waved landing signals while standing on runways cut out of the jungle, and built life-sized airplane replicas, hoping to attract more airships.



The islanders who adopted these practices became known as “cargo cults.” The term today describes an attempt to recreate an outcome by replicating the circumstances associated with that outcome, even though the circumstances are insufficient to produce the outcome by themselves.

One could say that DUE DILIGENCE was achieved by the Islanders when they concluded that the activities on the ground were connected to the largess falling from the sky.

This enabled them to create a PLAN: Mimic what they observed on the ground and cargo would again fall from the sky.

However, LOGICAL DUE DILIGENCE failed: Largess from the sky was caused by the conditions of war, not the behaviours of the soldiers on the ground or the planes.