New Military Names

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WITH THE INCREASING TEMPO of the development of new weapons and vehicles by our armed forces, the problem of designations becomes more important each year. New names, especially new series of names, must be provided constantly.

A system of designating new machines or weapons by official titles or by the names used for drafting specifications and stock record books serves very well for preliminary purposes; but the user, the operator, and military logistician need short, significant names, preferably self-descriptive.

Military names in the past have followed certain patterns, probably but not certainly deriving from older principles of heraldry. The Navy shows the best examples of this system over a long period of time. The earliest ships may have borne names of persons or concepts that the designating authority wanted to honor; *Bon Homme Richard* and *Constitution*, although Oliver Wendell Holmes considered *Old Ironsides* a better title, as have many others. Later a more systematic and very useful trend developed, using the names of states for battleships (*Missouri*, *Texas*, *Nevada*, *Arizona*), names of larger cities for the cruisers (*Boston*, *Milwaukee*, *Chicago*), names of men for destroyers, and of fish for submarines. With the advent of the aircraft carrier a new system came in, the use of famous American land or sea battles (*Lexington*, *Yorktown*, *Saratoga*). With them went the seaplane tenders, which were named for lakes and bays in the United States (*Albemarle Sound*, *Duxbury Bay*). These vessels, of course, really had as a matter of record model and type identifications, such as BB for battleships, but the public rarely has occasion to hear of them. Their use is desirable for official accounting records, codes, and brief messages. During World War II, when the number of smaller craft (some not so small!) proliferated, the creative ener-

gies of the Navy apparently went into other work, and hence the increasing use of LCT, LST, LSM, LCVP, etc, which are abbreviations for descriptive identifications and models.

While the urgencies of war pressures are understandable and appreciated, from the esthetic and imaginative point of view these latter terms are to be deplored. They are not the best we can do and anything else is not good enough. The problem needs discussion and expression of varying views.

During World War II a flurry of excellent names evolved, mostly evoked by the fertile imaginations of the U. S. Soldiery. They were on-the–spot, everyday names that were well adapted to the needs of the time and the machine. The result was a dichotomy of designations that proved to be a headache for stock record clerks and supply personnel–the official name versus the user's name.

Examples of the new terms are the jeep, the booby-trab, the bouncing Betty, the bazooka, the grease-gun, the walkie-talkie, the blockbuster, the Flying Stovepipe, the Flying Bedstead, etc. These represent figures of speech frozen to become names.

Compare the names above with other military names of the period, such as the Patton Tank, radar, the 636, the SCR 191. These names represent a less admirable approach. The last is the name of the model and using agency, the preceding one only the model. *Radar* represents a new word formed by initial sounds. The *Patton Tank* and *Sherman Tank* represent a system of using names of generals, mostly from history, for designating successive models–a system comparable to that of the use of states' names for battleships.

The undesirable part about the names just pointed out is that they are not meaningful, not self-descriptive, and not imaginative. Result: They are harder for recruits to learn, and they lack the down-to-earthiness of popular appeal. Moreover, they make reporting in the press difficult, and new weapons are inevitably going to be widely discussed by journalists. An examination of these terms again shows that the first group originated among the soldiers, the second group in the ranks of officialdom.

The story of the jeep furnishes the classical example. Early in 1941 infantry regiments were issued a vehicle to be called the Weapons Carrier, One-Half Ton, 4 x 4, a sort of pick-up truck.

The details may be different in other parts of the U. S., but in Camp Bowie, Texas, the vehicle started out as a *weapons carrier* or *truck* in January and February. By March and April the term *weapons carrier* was continued by field-grade officers, but the soldiers were calling it the *jeep*, possibly because it looked like no pick-up truck they had ever seen before. Company officers varied between the two terms. By May and June the term *jeep* had invaded company officers' language and that of some field graders. Late in the year the Truck, Quarter-ton, 4 x 4, was issued to units in some quantity; and since it looked even more unconventional than the weapons carrier, the name *jeep* was transferred to the new vehicle by the beginning of 1942. Then the weapons carrier became the *weapons carrier* again.

Possibly each of the other names in the class with the jeep has a similar story, but they have not been as carefully examined.

Of the second group—let us call them the artificial names—the one that commands most respect is *radar*. This name has much to recommend it. It represents a type of development that has arisen in comparatively recent years in the United States, more commonly in Germany, still more commonly in Russia. Other lands and languages show less addiction to it. The type represents a pronounceable word made up by using initial letters, if possible, and if not, then by using enough other letters to make it pronounceable. Thus from a technical description, the Ra(dio) d(irection) a(nd) r(anging) device we have a new word. It differs from the concoctions of the New Deal period (NRA, NYA, PWA, CAA, FEPC, etc.,) in that the latter are not pronounced but are read as initials, and it is doubtful that they should be called "names" (no pun intended). *Radar*, *sonar*, and *Bomarc*, rather, belong in the group of names like German *Flak*, *Bewag*, and Russian *Sovtrans*, *Amtorg*, *Detgiz*, *Kolkhoz*, etc. Yet *radar* has a distinctive air. It resembles no other English word, and yet it has the bisyllabic, paroxytonic form of a host of others. Its pronunciation does not fit into English patterns easily; with some speakers it approaches the spondee meter not common in Modern English for single words; nevertheless it well serves its purpose.

Turning now to the field of machines newly developed and yet to be developed, we have more hope. The guided missile field probably offers the best chance for aid in this problem.

The German V-2 was a miserable name, now happily only a matter of history. With the spread of rocket and jet development in the United States, several new types of guided missiles have already appeared. The first weapon of this group was the *Nike.* The name is not bad. It has a distinctive air and looks like no other English word. How the name was chosen is not public property, but two possibilities appear. It is the Greek word for *victory*, to be sure. If this were all, the originator of the name could well remain incognito and on the low level of those who gave British ships the names *Repulse* and *Renown* and the American ship that of *Enterprise* with a rare lack of imagination that is not typical of the language that has spawned so many men of vision and a vocabulary that almost doubles that of its nearest rivals. So far as I know this has been the simple explanation given for the Nike. I prefer to believe that in applying this name, the person responsible was thinking of the famed statue of the "Wingéd Victory of Samothrace," which now stands in the Louvre in a place of honor suited to the artistry of its conception, so that each visitor to that hallway stands silent and awed before its majesty and grace and leaves with swelling breast and respect for the spirit of the free men who won their struggle against the threat of Asiatic tyranny on that ancient battlefield.

The next missile in the series had at first the whimsical name of *WAC Corporal*, explained on the grounds that when the missile was released, it went wild. More prudent consideration later led to separation of the first denominative; so that now it bears the more innocuous name of *Corporal.* Presumably it is now under better guidance and control.

The anti-tank missile *Dart*, probably received its name from the title of the indoor game and the pointed, weighted instrument used therefor. Representing small size, speed, and penetration, this metaphoric designation, seems suitable.

Another guided missile, *Lacrosse*, seems to be less felicitous in its name. Until records of the development are opened, we can only wonder whether the name represents the inventor, developer, the place of its development, or the name of the game played by American Indians and characterized by a rough-and-tumble effort to guide a ball through a goal. Let us prefer the latter explanation.

Another member of the missile family, *Honest John*, presumably represents a term taken from English folklore.

Another, *Little John*, apparently invokes memory of the burly fighter on whom Robin Hood depended heavily (after changing his name from John Little.)

Another missile, *Redstone*, leaves us puzzled. A name for a man connected with the development, or a reference to the place of development?

Jupiter, an intermediate-range ballistic missile now being developed jointly by the Army and Navy, is surely not a reference to the planet but, closer to the origin, the chief of the Roman Pantheon, who looked on mortals from his high position and at times intervened with a heavy hand. His Nordic equivalent, *Thor*, is also the name of a similar type of weapon. Both individuals often appear holding thunderbolts in their hands, or else guiding them.

The *Matador*, a still newer missile-type weapon, shows an interesting field for new terms. The name "killer" would be unbecoming, unsuitable, but a translation of the word into another language makes it perfectly respectable. The special use of the name to represent the final actor in a bullfight makes the name doubly suitable—bearing as it does the connotation of a skilled eye, sharp point, and deadly accuracy. A related term, *toreador*, made famous by the opera *Carmen*, may be harder to pronounce, and in Spanish countries may remind one more of the person who worries the bull than of the one who kills it.

Still another military machine, the B-58, going now by the name of *Hustler*, has a certain appropriateness, including as it does (1) the idea of the rough treatment of an opponent, (2) an aggressive, energetic seeker after the goal in mind, and (3) in slang a prostitute ready to take on all comers.

A later development in the missile family also is the Nike B, which for some reason does not continue the resourcefulness of the other names. Moreover, the use of B now requires that the original Nike add a classifier: we would hope for it to be *A*, but no, surprise, it is I. Now the two weapons are Nike I and Nike B, leaving us unable to decide whether the I is for the Roman numeral *One* or the letter after *H*. Either would serve the purpose, though lamely. The use of a new word like *Nike* immediately brings up the problem of pronunciation. I have heard the name pronounced

to rhyme with *like* (like–Nike), also with *leak* (leak–Nike), to fit the vowel pattern of *mighty* or *Psyche* (Psyche–Nike), as well as the one that I recommend because it resembles the original language, to agree with *Knee-Kay*. The amorphous English language will admit of any of these, but certainly for purposes of identification the pronunciation should be mutually intelligible among military men at least.

Future weapons will have to bear some such names simply because official titles are too long to be used readily. The people who develop the weapons will have the original opportunity to dub each weapon adequately. If they fail, then the men who actually use it will reject the name in favor of one of their own choosing. The latter names, as in the case of the *WAC Corporal*, may need some modification before being acceptable to higher officials or to the reading public.

Some of the charateristics to be sought are obvious. The name should be reasonably short, that is, not over four syllables, whether as one word or two. It should bear a certain resemblance to some phase of the weapon's appearance or function, yet not too openly so, and one which the soldier can easily grasp with a modicum of explanation. If too long, the name will be replaced in popular parlance. The name should have a certain amount of dignity because it will appear before the public inevitably and will lead to conjecture as to its origin and meaning. The name should have no element of defeatism or whimsy. It should be a name with which a soldier will be proud to have it known that he associates. *WAC Corporal* fails on all of these scores except brevity. Moreover, with the development in these times of "world words," *i. e.* words which fit reasonably well into other languages, we need names that are easy to pronounce and which either require no translation or require little modification to fit into other languages. Internationality is definitely an element to take into consideration. No gender seems to have been settled upon, but in the missiles so far all have borne masculine or neuter names (exept ex-*WAC Corporal*!). Nor does the use of the definite article seem fixed.Tactical as well as technical writings vary widely between the use and omission of the definite article.

The source for such names may be old names or newly-created ones. Old names have a better chance, but new creations

deserve a look. We know how the name *Kodak* was created from nothing, because its originator (Eastman) has told the story. It fitted English word patterns—it was like nothing else, and it had a pleasant sound. No use looking for an etymology. *Radar*, again, is a new word but not a new creation in the same sense. It is a combination of elements that already existed to refer to the thing named. It followed a pattern. Both terms have been successful, but true creative ability is needed to think up another word from nothing, that will do as well. Besides, the word *kodak* is not suitable for a series because it is not self-descriptive or self-identifying. *Radar* has this same deficiency, although it immediately takes on a more reasonable look when the component parts are explained. James Joyce tried making up new words for what he meant when he wrote the novel *Ulysses*, and literary people have ever since puzzled over what he meant by some of them. New creation is too tricky to offer a fertile field here.

It is much safer to stick to old names. Again, for a series of weapons a system should be used. The plan of naming cruisers for American cities is a good one. It is easy to learn, and it leaves the way open for development of personal feelings and traditions as well as for new cruisers.

What then? States for battleships, cities for cruisers, battles for aircraft carriers, generals for tanks. Presidents for guided missiles? Or rivers? Or the counties in Nebraska? Or the names of the scientists who worked on the original atomic bomb? Of these the names of the presidents make some sense, provided they are taken in order, but not enough. Such a series has no element descriptive of the appearance or function of such a weapon. One traditional element of American naming technique that definitely should be guarded jealously: in using names of persons for such purposes, refer only to persons no longer living.

Still better to start with some of the concepts that have wider spread than American rivers, which so often duplicate states, cities, and counties, and which in other languages have little meaning. The choice is not just an Army matter; it has an international aspect. The names already in use which I have enumerated give us a good start.

For ground-to-air missiles, that is, anti-aircraft missiles, we may well invoke figures from the ancient and mythological past. We

want names with the characteristics already listed, but moreover, we want the feeling of speed, of the air, of coming to grips. The first idea would be the birds of prey, the hawk, the eagle, the falcon. But we find that aircraft designers have anticipated us there. One escape would be to take those same names in another language, preferably an American Indian language. The name *Hawk*, for example, has the suitable feeling for such a missile.We might use the Cherokee name for Hawk for the first model, the Algonkin name for the next model of the same weapon, the Iroquois name for the third, the Navajo name for the fourth. Such a system has its faults, but fewer than the monotony of Hawk I, Hawk II, and Hawk III. As a source for distinctive names the mythology of the American Indian has barely been touched. Such a source has the advantage not only of being purely American, but its use reduces the possible confusion caused by having a name like *Hawk* translated into other languages by ambitious journalists.

Another approach for the ground-to-air missile is the use of ready-made names from other sources, primarily the old stand-by of classical mythology. A start has already been made with the *Atlas* and the *Titan*. *Pegasus* from Greek mythology, is a name to begin with, though somewhat hackneyed. Bellerophon, who rode Pegasus to victory over the Chimera, also belongs here. The *Flying Black Horse* from the *Arabian Nights* (the 417th Night) is another likely term, as is *Kamar*, its rider and exploiter. Other swift steeds of the past are also suitable for use here, such as *Arion* (ridden by Hercules), *Arundel* (by Sir Bevis of Southampton), *Babieca* (by the Cid in his Moorish campaigns), *Bajardo* (ridden by Amadis of Gaul), *Alborak* (by Mohammed), *Brigliadoro* (by Sir Guyon, also by Roland), *Bucephalus* (by Alexander the Great), *Bayard* (by the sons of Aymon), *Bevis* (by Marmion), *Fadda* (a mule ridden by Mohammed), *Grani* (a horse ridden by Siegfried), *Marocco* (by Banks, a performing horse with silver shoes. It once climbed the steeple at St. Paul's), *Rabicano* (ridden by Argalia and by Astolpho. The child of Fire and wind, it ate unearthly food!), *Reksh* (by Rustam), or *Sleipnir* (Odin's horse, which could travel over land or sea). But not *Black Bess* (ridden by highwayman Dick Turpin), *Rosinante* (by Don Quixote), nor *Xanthus* (which warned its owner, Achilles, of his approaching death)! Possibly the Chinese *Flying Dragon* deserves mention here.

For the air-to-air missile, where speed and accuracy are so important, a likely line to follow is that of famous weapons of the past. Swords make a good grouping: *Arondight* (the sword wielded by Sir Launcelot), *Balisarda* (wielded by Rogero the Saracen), *Balmung* (by Siegfried), *Colada* (by the Cid), *Courtain* and *Sauvigine* (by Ogier the Dane), *Curtana* (by Edward the Confessor), *Durandal* (by Roland–recently used to name a French aircraft type), *Excalibur* (by King Arthur), *Flamberge* (by Charlemagne), *Morglay* (by Sir Bevis), *Philippen* (by Anthony), *Tizona* (by King Bucar), and *Zuflagar* (by Ali, the heir of Mohammed). Other names than swords: *Alasnam* (the prince in the *Arabian Nights* who possessed eight valuable statues but set out to seek a ninth), *Nimrod*, (The Biblical Hunter), and *Alastor* (a spirit which haunts a family).

For the ground-to-ground missile, which must perform the macabre task of grinding land, man, and his works to bits, destroying the cherished works that for ages man has built up to make his brief stay on earth amenable, we need names in keeping with the unhappy destiny of the missile itself. Samples: *Pluto*, *Cerberus*, *Saracen*, *Spartan*, the *Ogre*, *Surtar* (a giant destined to set fire to the universe), *Mictlan* (one of the Aztec underworlds), as well as each of the three Furies: *Alecto*, *Magaero*, and *Tisiphone*. More neutral feelings: Theseus, Ogier (the Dane, an avenger and rescuer). Here again the wide field of American Indian mythology can be drawn upon to furnish a long list of names and places and objects with dismal connotations, some of which may fit well. Let us not depend too heavily upon the Greeks and Romans, useful though that field may be.

Efforts may be afoot to establish a satellite platform far above the earth's surface for use in national defense as well as participation in interplanetary travel. For this platform the name might well be *Alfheim* (one of the heavenly mansions in Scandinavian mythology). For the outer space missile: *Astalphia.*

For smaller equipment, such as radios and aids in the use of weapons, a more immediate field can furnish names of a different tone. The walkie-talkie is an example of this. Whimsical and affectionate connotations are in place here: the Aladdin's Lamp, the Handy-Andy, the goon, the shmoo, and other comic characters which are becoming part of American folklore. These items do

not need high-level decisions. GI's will work them out for themselves. Where they are needed, the example of *Honest John* and *Little John* furnish good patterns taken from a vast field of English folklore and legendary history. Alliterative combinations have an appeal that is typical of the English language (Simple Sam, Handy-Andy) as well as assonance—compare the vowel sounds of *Honest John* with those of *Worthy John.* The name should roll easily off the tongue.

For errands and rescue, since the use of the classifier *operation* seems to have come to stay, we need significant names like *Orpheus*, *Eurydice*, and *Persephone.*

For cultural missions we have ready-made names in the nine muses: *Calliope*, *Clio*, *Erato*, *Euterpe*, *Melpomene*, *Polyhymnia*, *Terpsichore*, *Thalia*, and *Urania.*

For the operation to negotiate for terms of peace I recommend what seems to me to be phonetically and euphonically the most beautiful word in any language—*Tacloban.*

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Preuss Range. — There is a Preuss Range in Southeastern Idaho, which divides the waters of the Bear River from the sources of the Blackfoot River. I have always assumed that it was named in honor of Charles Preuss without ever actually investigating how and when the name was first applied.

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