



MUSCLE MATTERS

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LABELS

Why naming storms, military ops and medical maladies matters



Waves crash over the bow of a tugboat near the Statue of Liberty as rough seas churn New York Harbor in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. Craig Ruttle, Associated Press file photo

From hurricanes to military missions, the names we assign to major events carry far more weight than mere labels.

Taylor Heyman Associated Press

U.S. hurricane season is gearing up. And from Amanda and Boris onward, tropical cyclones’ names in the Pacific region are unfolding quickly.

But why the monikers each year? Or at all? Humans have given names to the world around them for almost as long as language itself has existed, but formal naming practices for storms and other events of national and international importance are a relatively new phenomenon. Names of military operations (“Operation Epic Fury”), hurricanes (Hugo, Andrew, Katrina, etc.), diseases (COVID-19) and even companies need to serve purposes other than just differentiation. They need to tell stories.

“Look around in your home. Who or what has a name? Your family members, your pets. You may even have named certain objects of significance,” says Shannon Murphy, CEO of Nameistry, a firm that helps companies and entrepreneurs develop their brand identities. “If it’s got a name, it has meaning in some way, and it’s going to come up in conversation or other types of communication.”

The World Meteorological Organization, which manages the naming of tropical storms worldwide, says assigning a moniker is “proven to be the fastest way to communicate warnings and raise public awareness

“The best (military operation) names are clear, sober, memorable, culturally safe and politically defensible.”

Ruben Stewart, senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies

and preparedness,” as well as limit confusion when more than one cyclone is moving through. They can also help with research and record-keeping.

Tropical storms the world over are named on a set of pre-agreed alphabetical lists decided by five tropical cyclone regional bodies. Some of these are cyclical, returning to the same lists every few years, starting at “A” with the first storm of the given year; others start a new list every year. Those covering the Atlantic region skip names beginning with Q, U, X, Y and Z because examples are difficult to find.

Until 1979, the United States used only female names, but now it alternates. For example, Amanda’s successor in the Eastern North Pacific storm region is Boris, and residents of the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mex-

ico and the North Atlantic region have already seen Arthur and Bertha.

THANKS, CHURCHILL

While storm names are designed to be memorable and simple, they are not necessarily trying to elicit feelings. Neither were military operation names, which functioned to maintain secrecy and to differentiate one from another until British Prime Minister Winston Churchill changed the nomenclature to suit the broader aims of the allies in World War II.

“In the Second World War, names such as Overlord, Torch or Husky were planning code-names,” says Ruben Stewart, senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. “Churchill’s intervention in the naming of Operation Overlord,” Stewart said, referring to the Allied push that began with D-Day, “reflected a broader wartime realization that operation names mattered.”

In a 1943 memo to his wartime chief of staff discussing code words to be used during World War II, Churchill argued operation names should not imply a “boastful and overconfident sentiment” or be “frivolous.”

The prime minister added that effort should be made to identify names that “do not suggest the character of the operation or disparage it in any way and do not enable some widow or mother to say that her son was killed in an operation called ‘Bunnyhug’ or ‘Ballyhoo.’”

Subsequent conflicts morphed naming practices, with the U.S. military choosing two-word operation names and the United Kingdom sticking with one. Today, British military code names are automatically

SEE LABELS, A2

SILVER LAKE

Tight lanes and risky passes: What we saw on Victory Boulevard

Drivers are squeezing around stopped buses and crossing into oncoming traffic along the new controversial bus lane.

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A city bus stopped on Victory Boulevard as vehicles began lining up behind it. Instead of waiting, a driver crossed the solid painted lines and entered the opposite side of the roadway to pass.

As the car moved alongside it, the bus began pulling away, leaving little space between the two vehicles.

It was one of several close maneuvers observed during a recent Advance/SILive.com drive along Victory Boulevard, where new bus lanes have raised concerns about whether there is enough room for buses and cars to safely share the busy roadway.

An Advance/SILive.com reporter drove along the entire length of the Victory Boulevard bus lane, from Royal Oak Road to Bay Street, before turning around and traveling the same route back to observe traffic in both directions.

The boulevard was packed with buses

SEE BUS LANE, A2

SUNNYSIDE

Free summer meals truck runs through Sept. 4

Daily program provides breakfast and lunch at no charge for children and teens 18 and younger.

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Since the beginning of August, a big red truck has been parked along Victory Boulevard near the World War II Veterans Memorial Ice Skating Rink at 1305 Victory Blvd. Much to the surprise and delight of young passersby, the meals being distributed are completely free.

A free summer meals food truck has arrived at Clove Lakes Park, offering daily meals to Staten Island children and teens through Sept. 4.

Operated by the New York City Public Schools Office of Food and Nutrition Services, the truck is stationed adjacent to the

SEE FREE MEALS, A2

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