

What Should We Call It?

A terrible tale of Force Design

by LtCol John D. Kuntz, USMC (Ret)

The year is 2042. The place is conference room Delta 1010-1775 in the second sub-basement of the Pentagon. Assembled in the room, are three bright young staffers, Army Major Moe Betta, from the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Mr. Larry Lawrence, Special Assistant to the Assistant Undersecretary, Department of State; and Air Force Major Ken Kirley, from the Office of the Air Force Chief of Staff. All three are fresh from their internal Service schools and eager to make a name for themselves as policy wizards. The three friends like to think of themselves as the “Three Musketeers,” but, among their peers, they are known simply as, “Moe, Larry, and Curly.”

“Okay gentlemen,” Moe begins, “let’s get this started. I don’t want to spill over into our lunchtime.”

“Why did we have to meet in person?” complains Larry.

“Probably, so we would leave our phones outside and not be interrupted,” explains Curly.

“We have a simple task today,” continues Moe. “All we have to do is pick a name for a new mobile force.”

“That’s it?” says Larry.

“That’s it. Then, we can get out of here.”

“Well, what about, ‘N.M.F.’?” suggests Curly with a smile. “We’re done.”

“New Mobile Force. Clever,” says Moe. “Larry, take us through the history.”

>LtCol Kuntz retired from the Marine Corps after more than 25 years of active and reserve duty. On of his first Gazette articles, “Are Your Ready to Disobey?” was included in the anthology, *On The Corps: USMC Wisdom*.

“Back in 2022,” Larry begins, speaking in his official staff officer monotone, reciting what they all already know. “Russia invaded Ukraine. The United States realized that the line of defense guarding the Fulda Gap needed to be extended north and south. Today, the new, lengthened Fulda Gap I line runs all the way from Finland to Greece. The extended line of defense has worked perfectly. The Russians have never come through the Fulda Gap I line.”

“We lost Ukraine, Belarus, and some of those other small countries,” injects Curly.

“True,” agrees Larry. “But the important point is the Fulda Gap I line has never been broken.”

“The Pacific line,” prompts Moe.

“Yes, then the defensive line, Fulda Gap II, was established in the Pacific, running from Alaska to Australia. All of it focused on Taiwan. Just like the Fulda Gap I line, the Fulda Gap II line has never been broken.”

“China has purchased ports and airfields, and they have coerced countries on both sides of Fulda Gap II,” Curly adds.

“True,” says Larry wearily. “But the important point is Taiwan has never been attacked.”

“That’s an enormous distance for Fulda Gap II,” says Curly.

“Yes it is,” says Moe. “Even with the ADF and our allies, we can barely cover all the outposts.”

“The ‘ADF’?” asks Larry and Curly, at the same time.

“You know, they took what used to be the Marines, stripped them of their air, artillery, tanks, and most of their big battalions. Then, they stuck them on remote island outposts along the Fulda Gap II line. Since they were no longer a Corps anymore, they renamed them ADF, Auxiliary Detachment Force,” concludes Moe.

“Why did the Marines use to be so famous?” asks Curly.

“I don’t really know,” says Moe. “All that ‘band of brothers’ stuff.”

“Band of losers,” quips Larry.

“Well, it’s all old history now,” continues Moe. “The Marines are forgotten. The good news is there is a very exciting new initiative. All of us are probably going to work on this new project our whole careers. And we get to name it today.”

This is cutting-edge stuff. This is the future!” says Larry.

“That’s right,” continues Moe. “Despite the success of the static outposts making up the Fulda Gap I line in Europe and the Fulda Gap II line in the Pacific, static outposts cannot solve everything,” Moe goes on. “We have not fought nose-to-nose with the Russians along the line of Fulda Gap I. And we have not fought nose-to-nose with the Chinese along the line of Fulda Gap II. That is good, but, still, there are other problems.”

“So many problems,” agrees Larry.

“Enormous problems,” adds Curly.

“Yes,” continues Moe. “There are proxy wars, non-state actors, internal coups, and all kinds of political brush fires constantly breaking out all over the world.”

“And humanitarian disasters of every type,” adds Curly.

“We have no solution to these unexpected small wars. When we call 9-1-1, there is no answer. We need a 9-1-1 force. So, what we have to find a name for today is the very latest brainchild from our bosses,” explains Moe.

“Actually, it’s our bosses’ bosses. This is big stuff,” adds Larry.

“They are going to fund a flexible, mobile, 9-1-1 force, and ...” begins Moe.

“And put it on planes?” interrupts Curly. “Planes, constantly circling the globe?”

“No, that would never work,” says Larry shaking his head.

“And station it all on ships,” continues Moe.

“It will be always on patrol, just a short, steaming time from any crisis,” adds Larry.

“This force—that we have to find a name for—is going to have everything,” Moe continues. “It will be a mobile, light infantry force, complete with its

own air, armor, artillery, and logistics. It will be scalable from small to medium to large. From over the horizon, it will be able to break through or go around defenses, and land on the shore, or go over the shore and strike inland. It will be able to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy through fire, maneuver, and close combat.”

“And it can handle any humanitarian crisis,” adds Curly.

Larry jumps in, “It will be first on-call, first to arrive, first to fight, first to help, and first to win.”

This is a flexible, mobile, force.

“This force is very different from all the forces tied down in outposts along Fulda Gap I and Fulda Gap II,” continues Larry excitedly.

Moe adds, “This force will have the big squads, the big battalions, the weapon’s companies—everything needed to wage the fight, sustain the fight, and win.”

“Right,” says Larry. “This is a flexible, mobile, force. It is light enough to get there and heavy enough to stay. It is extremely capable. It can fight force on force in a way that special operators cannot. And it is not tied down to just one place. It will be constantly on patrol, constantly seeking out the immediate trouble, and providing immediate solutions. This is revolutionary!”

“Also, no basing issues,” adds Moe. “Getting permission from host countries has become such a problem all along our Fulda Gap outposts. This new mobile force has no basing issues. It needs only freedom of navigation.”

“So,” concludes Moe. “What should we call a flexible, mobile, multi-mission, 9-1-1 force, with its own air, armor, artillery, and logistics? All of it embarked

on ships, patrolling around the globe, and prepared for every kind of disaster, war, and crisis? What is a good name?”

“How big will the force be?” asks Curly.

“Three full divisions plus aviation and logistics,” answers Moe.

“And it will be seabased,” adds Larry

There was silence in the room. The three staffers look at each other. Then, they look at the walls.

The year is 2042. The place is conference room Delta 1010–1775 in the second sub-basement of the Pentagon. Assembled in the room, are three bright young staffers, Moe, Larry, and Curly. This is their job, to come up with good ideas.

“What should we call this flexible, mobile, powerful 9-1-1 force embarked on ships around the globe?” prompts Moe.

The seconds ticked by. Then, the minutes.

Finally, Curly speaks in a timid voice, “We could call it: the United States Marine Corps.”

“The United States Marine Corps,” says Moe.

“The United States Marine Corps,” echoes Larry.

Moe looks satisfied, “The perfect name from the past.”

“And, the perfect name for the future,” adds Larry.

Moe smiles, “Let’s go to lunch.”

