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Dolphins and Sea Lions Report for Active Military Duty

By Christina Miralla Oct 03, 2011

It appears Flipper's offspring are aiding the U.S. in its counter-terrorism quest. As the nation heightens security measures across land, air and sea; any proposed tactic in the effort to ward off hostiles is being employed – including an elite team of 75 bottlenose dolphins and 35 California sea lions trained to defend the nation.



Dolphins and sea lions are secret weapons in the U.S. Navy. Dolphins armed with unique biosonar abilities and sea lions with their keen underwater vision were the natural candidates for underwater military service. The details of their missions have been classified, but [CNN got an exclusive look](#) at one of the training

techniques dolphins go through to detect underwater threats. In the training exercise, the dolphin bumps into the reporter with a marker identifying him as an unauthorized swimmer for naval crew.

The dolphins are trained by the [Navy Marine Mammal Program](#), based in San Diego, Calif.

The dolphins can be deployed anywhere on the globe within 72 hours via aircraft and were most recently used to detect mines in the Iraq War. The report doesn't really go into detail regarding the training tactics used or even the number of missions these animals have been on, not to mention the level of attack these animals are trained to perform. Unfortunately, very few are granted that level of military clearance.

The [Navy Marine Mammal Program](#) was established during the Cold War in 1960 for two reasons – studying underwater sonar capabilities and researching underwater animal speed. Not only were these animals being trained by U.S. militia, but various countries were doing the same. Since those initial days of research, the program has evolved beyond research and now these

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marine animals are actively used to prevent the U.S. from attack.

The military has long [employed dogs \(for their acute sense of smell\) in combat](#), so deploying marine animals into warfare is just another step in the heightened security direction.

Of course when it comes to animals, there are activist organizations and animal protection groups that have mixed feelings about animal military service. The [ASPCA](#) "recognizes the value of incorporating animals in the military," but adds "they should not be unnecessarily put at risk or sacrificed in the service of our country." The [ASPCA](#) wants animals to be properly trained by humans and looked after beyond their active duty.

Understandably, there is cause for concern when deploying animals in warfare along with advantages. Perhaps the next time Veterans Day rolls around the nation should also honor the aquatic mammals working alongside the two-legged folks who help keep this country safe.

A bout the Author

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Fri, Oct 7, 2011 **Concerned Scientist**

We are putting marine mammals at risk by these actions. If any dolphin or sea lion might be a military tool, it is open season on them by anyone or any military who "suspects" that the animal might be a spy or soldier.


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