



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

# defence NEWS

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## **DIVERS TRAIN IN THE SOUTH WEST TO TAG SHARKS**

A tri-Service and civilian team of divers is heading a daring scientific expedition to electronically tag the Hammerhead Shark off the volcanic Cocos Island, off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

The sailors, soldiers and airmen are preparing for their environmental challenge by training at the MoD sub-aqua diving centre, Fort Bovisand near Plymouth.

The expedition is led by Major Andy Reid (Army), who said: "An expedition such as this is all about experiencing controlled exposure to risk with the aim of developing the kind of leadership, teamwork, courage and co-operation that is vital to military operational capability. Beyond that Exercise Jurassic Shark forms part of an important conservation project, which exploits the skills of a Joint Services team to best effect. Sharks are in dramatic decline around the world and this is our chance to make a difference by establishing those parts of the shark's habitat that most need protection."

The sharks will be tagged with radio transmitters while the shark is swimming freely by divers using spear guns. The sharks are known to enter a trance-like state whilst being cleaned by smaller fish at 'cleaning stations' along the reef, enabling the divers to get close enough to place a tag through their dorsal fin. The tags will send signals to receivers and therefore, track the movements of the sharks. This research will help determine migratory routes. The information is needed to better protect the Cocos Island National Park and inform the scientific basis for the Eastern Pacific Tropical Seascape Initiative, which seeks to extend the protection given to this part of the Pacific.

[more/..](#)

The Cocos Island National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the work is of international environmental importance value, underlining the value placed on the quality of military training and of the experience of personnel. The Armed Forces are dedicated to both adventurous training as a developmental activity and to stewardship of the environment.

The fieldwork expedition is carried out under the direction of the Shark Research Institute (which works to correct misconceptions about sharks and to stop the slaughter of 100 million annually) and is approved and supported by the Royal Geographical Society.

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

You are invited to send representatives to Fort Bovisand, the MoD diver training centre, near Plymouth, on Saturday (June 10). Reporters will be offered the chance to interview members of the team and to film on small dive boats as divers train.

To indicate an intention to attend please contact Guy Boswell at the MoD South West Regional Press Office on 01752 554 558, or 07789 500 412.