



## Dispelling a myth of dangerous Navy dolphins

'Countdown' investigates report of marine mammals armed, on the loose

### STORY

MSNBC

Updated: 5:20 p.m. ET Sept. 27, 2005

Everyone knows the cliché about life imitating art. Well, here we go again. Because of Hurricane Katrina, we have learned of a reported factual parallel to one of the most over-the-top ideas ever in one of the most over-the-top movie spoofs ever.<sup>1</sup>

In "Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery," one of Mike Myers' many characters, Dr. Evil, asks his people to provide him with "Sharks with fricking laser beams attached to their heads."

Now, do we have a case of fiction becoming reality?

On Monday, the British newspaper "The Observer" quoted an accident investigator who claimed that three dozen U.S. military dolphins, supposedly trained in secret near Lake Pontchartrain, had been washed away by Hurricane Katrina.

These animals were supposedly capable of identify underwater spies and were carrying a special harness which permitted them to fire toxic darts at anybody trying to sabotage a ship.

Presumably, the actual firing would be done by remote control, rather than by the dolphins, who may be really smart, but who do not have hands with which to press the firing button for the "fricking darts," nor, for that matter, any "fricking laser beams attached to their heads."

Well, it sounds ludicrous, except that the Navy has long admitted experimenting to see if dolphins could be used militarily. The idea of them as last lines of defense against underwater terrorists was broached very seriously in the months and years immediately after 9/11.

On Monday evening, however, the Pentagon actually issued a statement saying all of its dolphins have been accounted for. Moreover, the DOD says its dolphins aren't trained to attack, just to look for "objects" with their diver companions. Plus, they have no dolphin units in Louisiana, only in San Diego.

So, could there be 36 trained dolphins out there somewhere carrying toxic darts on their backs, ready to shoot surfers or divers or Lloyd Bridges or Patrick Duffy from "Manimal"?

Moby Solangi, the president of Marine Life Oceanarium in Gulfport, Miss., which rescued several of its dolphins in the Gulf of Mexico after Hurricane Katrina, appeared on "Countdown" Monday to discuss the possibility.

To read an excerpt of his conversation with Keith Olbermann, continue to the text below. To watch the video, click on the "Launch" button to the right.

**KEITH OLBERMANN:** Well, I'm confused. Are there such dolphins? Were they in the New Orleans area? Could they be missing? And, if so, should we assume they are armed and dangerous?

**MOBY SOLANGI, PRESIDENT, MARINE LIFE OCEANARIUM:** Well, boy, I will tell you, that

sounds like something from "X-Files." If I'd known, we probably would be running away from our own dolphins!

**OLBERMANN:** Make sure I'm right on this one point here, that dolphins could not actually fire poison dart guns, even if they are wearing them, even if they are loose, because they don't have hands. Am I right about this so far?

**SOLANGI:** No, I think that's science fiction. And these animals are trained. It's common knowledge, to look for underwater mines and divers. But I think darts and all that is a little bit too far.

**OLBERMANN:** The story in the British paper suggested the one thing, the one kernel of supposed truth off of which they hung this entire story was that, when your dolphins were located out in the Gulf and met up with their handlers and were eventually rescued, that the Navy wanted to inspect the dolphins first. Is there any truth to that?

**SOLANGI:** No, not at all. As a matter of fact, we didn't have any Navy folks. Now, they have helped us, provided us these temporary tanks in which we're holding these animals until they recover, so they can be transported. But, no, the Navy has absolutely no involvement in the rescue of these animals, other than providing us with temporary pools.

**OLBERMANN:** And nobody saw any other dolphins in the neighborhood wearing big darts. How are your dolphins, by the way? We need to follow up on that.

**SOLANGI:** Oh, they're doing wonderfully well. They're getting healthy. We moved all eight of them to the SeaBee base in Gulfport, Mississippi. And, after they recover, we should move them into other aquariums around the country.

**OLBERMANN:** All right, last question. If I see one of these dolphins wearing a harness with a poison dart gun on its back in my neighborhood, should I call Homeland Security or George C. Scott or Dr. Evil? Or who should I call?

**SOLANGI:** I think you should swim fast!

[\*Watch 'Countdown' each weeknight at 8 p.m. ET\*](#)

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