August 2003

Geneva Diary: Report From the GICHD

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The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine action programs and operators, conducts research, and provides support to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

by Ian Mansfield
Operations Director, GICH

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICH) has recently published a study titled "The Role of Marine Mammals in Underwater Mine Detection." The study explores the capabilities of marine mammals in detecting and clearing underwater threats, highlighting their unique abilities.

**Why Use Marine Mammals?**

Study of marine mammals has shown that dolphins and sea lions are highly reliable, adaptable, and trainable marine animals that can be conditioned to search for, detects and mark the location of underwater obstacles.

The main benefits of using these animals to assist the Navy are their diving abilities and their biosafety. When diving, humans are subject to decompression sickness, commonly referred to as "the bends." Dolphins, however, do not face these problems, and they can dive deeper, faster and more frequently than human divers. They are especially useful in shallow waters, where hardware systems often fail.

**Dolphin's Natural Capabilities**

Dolphins are capable of using their natural biological sonar to detect objects in the water. They use this sound to create a 3D image of their surroundings, allowing them to navigate and avoid obstacles.

**Conclusion**

Dolphins' natural capabilities have proven incredibly useful in finding underwater obstacles and clearing minefields. Their unique abilities make them invaluable allies in mine clearing operations.

**Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Ms. Tom LaPurza for helping me put together this article.

**References**


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The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine action programs and operators, conducts research, and provides support to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Full details of the study are available on the GICH's website or contact the Centre for more information.

Other News

In the last issue of the Journal, the GICH provided an update on the current negotiations in the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) process dealing with the issue of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). The GICH has observer status at the meeting and is also called upon to provide technical advice. In this latter context, the Centre released two new publications to support the current negotiations. The first, ERW Information Requirements of the Clearance Community, was based on a survey of the operational mine action community and explains that information plays a significant role in facilitating the clearance of ERW and enabling effective, targeted MRE. The second report, ERW, Warnings and Risk Education, discusses the main issues and challenges concerning warnings and risk education programmes. It presents examples from the field and illustrates how careful planning and ongoing learning are essential for operational experience.

Finally, the GICH undertakes an active role in the work with providing practical applications to assist mine-affected countries. As an example, an earlier study, Communication in Mine Awareness Programming, has been followed up with a field handbook. Also, the Centre has recently conducted training workshops in Colombia, which have led to changes in the mine action sector.

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