

ACTIVITY: Standing
CASE: GSAF 1993.11.00
DATE: November 1993
LOCATION: The incident took place on Arroyo Beach next to the international airport at Mogadishu, Somalia.



NAME: Unknown

DESCRIPTION: He was a Russian male from one of the teams that run civilian transport helicopters for the United Nations.

BACKGROUND

ENVIRONMENT: There was no problem with sharks when hundreds of US Marines swam in the ocean. The attacks began after a United Nations international force took command in May. Unlike other beaches in Mogadishu, the beach opposite the airport has a steep shelf very close inshore and the longshore current sweeps effluent from the harbor along the beach. It was thought that sharks were being drawn inshore by effluent discharged from ships and camel guts dumped in the sea by city butchers.

DEPTH OF WATER: Waist-deep

NARRATIVE: He was standing in the water when he was bitten by the shark.

INJURY: Fatal. He died hours later.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident was thought to involve a Zambesi shark.

NOTE: The attacks ceased after the United Nations placed anti-shark nets off the beach. Farouk Mawlawi, the UN spokesman in Mogadishu, defended the high cost of the net and set it would remain after the UN leaves "for the use of the Somalis."

SOURCE: The Times (London) November 25, 1993; Orlando Sentinel, December 1, 1993 , page A.9

Mogadishu, Somalia — October 3, 1993. An army unit on a UN relief mission was given a standing order not to swim in the water because a French woman (Case GSAF 1993.05.00.a) had been attacked and bitten in half by a large unidentified shark. Several of the soldiers disregarded the command and went swimming in a small bay that opened up into the Indian Ocean. They had been splashing around in the water for approximately an hour when one soldier (19) was suddenly pulled under. When he came back to the surface, he began yelling shark, and was then pulled under for the second time. Several of his team mates rushed to help him and beat away the shark. When they got him back to shore, the young soldier was in shock from massive blood loss. His left leg was severed from the knee down, and his right leg from the thigh down. Despite all efforts to save the young soldier, by the time he was flown to a medical facility in Germany he was pronounced dead.

After the attack, a shark net was set up across the cove where the soldier was attacked and a very large reef shark was caught in the net a few days later. A military pilot remarked, and I can't verify the truth, that the shark was half the length of a UH-1 helicopter which is 40 feet long. The pilot hovered over the shark for fifteen minutes.

From <http://www.cyberpathic.com/cybersharks/safrica.htm>

The Philadelphia Inquirer, December 12, 1993

Section: NATIONAL

Edition: FIRST

Page: C20

DANGER ON SURF, TURF ON SOMALIA COAST ON LAND, MILITARY CLASHES HAVE
KILLED HUNDREDS. IN THE WATER, HUNGRY SHARKS SHOW NO MERCY.

Aidan Hartley, REUTERS

Surfing the shark-infested waves off Somalia's capital is a run with death in what is already one of the world's most dangerous places.

The sandy white beaches off Mogadishu, where hundreds have died in clashes between U.N. troops and clan militias, are patrolled by one of the five most vicious species of sharks.

The Zambezi River shark, or *Carcharinus zambenzensis* by its scientific name, is a 6 1/2-foot, 390-pound killer that will attack anything that moves with its razor-sharp teeth.

These scavengers, drawn up the coast of Africa by the stink of camel guts dumped in the sea by city butchers, are probably as unpredictable and dangerous as the Great White shark of Jaws fame, fishermen say.

"You must be joking," says a South African, who works at Mogadishu's U.N.-controlled airport runway which hugs the rocky coastline, when asked if he has tested the waves.

Gazing longingly out at the rollers foaming in across an azure sea, the native of Africa's surfing capital, Durban, adds: "You'd be out of your mind if you even put your big toe in the water."

Life on the beach was not always like this in "The Mog," as Somalia's capital is known to thousands of U.N. peace-keepers.

Soon after thousands of U.S.-led troops hit Mogadishu's coast at the start of Operation Restore Hope to end famine and lawlessness last December, U.S. soldiers found a little chunk of California on the edge of Africa.

The beach where the first U.S. troops landed next to the airport was renamed "Arroyo Beach," after a Marine killed in a firefight with Somali gunmen.

In those days, Marines sat tanning on the porch of a beach hut made from plywood freight cases listening to rock music on their portable stereos.

Inflated truck tire inner-tubes or bits of plank served as surfboards for swimmers.

During those few months of relaxation before the storm of violence that hit Mogadishu, soldiers would sit about in the sand, telling stories and trading bits of their uniforms for smuggled alcohol or other items of barter.

Then in May, a French diplomat's secretary was savaged in the waves off Arroyo Beach and she later died of shock.

Arroyo was deserted and a shark-warning sign was erected. Weeks later, 24 Pakistani U.N. soldiers were gunned down by Somali militias in Mogadishu and the capital spiraled into a guerrilla war that confined peace-keepers to base.



Over the next four months, only the hardy visited Arroyo beach and took a swim in the waves - perhaps tired of the heat, the incoming mortar bombs and the carnage of the United Nations' fruitless search for the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid.

Last month, a Russian from one of the teams that run civilian transport helicopters for the United Nations was standing waist-deep in the waves at Arroyo when a shark bit him.

Yuri, a pilot comrade of the victim, snaps his hands together to imitate the vicious shark bite from which the swimmer died hours later.

Aid workers say that Mogadishu has seen one of the highest rates of shark attacks in the world for years.

Many blame the infestation of sharks on the construction of a foreign aid- funded abattoir in Mogadishu during the 1970s, when the offal from camels - the Somalis' favorite meat - floated freely into the ocean.

Between 1978 and 1985, about 30 people are estimated to have been killed in the waters off Mogadishu, the aid workers remember.

During the 1980s, a shark net was strung along the Lido beach, favorite spot of the expatriates who thronged Mogadishu at that time.