



ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1996.07.23.a](#)

DATE: Tuesday July 23, 1996

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aqaba off Marsa Bereika, north of Ras Mohamed National Park, Sinai Peninsula.

$34^{\circ}12'23.05''E$, $27^{\circ}47'14.53''N$

NAME: Martin Christopher Richardson

DESCRIPTION: He is a 29-year-old male, an American-British guest of one of the crew. He was not wearing a mask or swimfins.

BOAT: The 24-metre dive boat, *Jadran*, owned by Dani Hermon of Eilat, Israel. The boat operates in the Gulf of Aqaba and Suez and was sailing north from Ras Mohamed to Sharm el-Sheikh bay.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 46% of the Moon was illuminated.

ENVIRONMENT: The crew observed a pod of five bottlenose dolphins, one of which was a calf.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: One kilometre

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 400 metres, but the incident happened at the surface

TIME: 18h00

NARRATIVE: When the dolphins were seen, Dani stopped the boat to allow people to swim with the animals. Dani, Martin and Harry Hayward (an English dive instructor) swam with them for a while, and then Dani and Harry returned to the boat. Martin remained in the water alone and continued to swim with the dolphins until they suddenly disappeared.

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Martin saw the shark approach from the depths. He said that it bit him four times and he punched the shark in its snout. Meanwhile, the crew of the boat heard Martin scream, saw him thrown 1 to 1.5 m in the air, and realized that he was being attacked by a shark.

Harry jumped in the Zodiac and sped to Martin and, as he approached the injured man, he saw three dolphins circling him, slapping their flukes and fins on the water's surface. Harry lifted Martin into the Zodiac and returned to dive boat.

INJURY: Martin was bitten on his back shoulder and chest. He suffered a pneumothorax (collapsed lung), deep lacerations to his back and chest, and a broken rib.

FIRST AID: On board the *Jadran*, bleeding was controlled by Dani and his father, Itzik, and Gail Ashward (Dani's fiancée). At Sharm el-Sheikh, a local diving doctor, Dr. Magdi, initiated IV fluids and the patient was transported to an Egyptian army hospital in El Tor.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Doctors in the Egyptian hospital in El Tor believed that only one shark was responsible for the patient's injuries, and from the size of the bite impressions, they surmised that the shark was four to five metres in length.

REPORTED BY: O. Goffman, K. Lavalli

Briton survives attack by shark

■ A few well-placed punches and a little help from some dolphins enable a 29-year-old tourist to avoid being eaten in Egypt's Red Sea.

Reuters

CAIRO, Egypt — A group of dolphins tried to protect a British swimmer being mauled by sharks and the 29-year-old tourist said all he could think was that he did not want to die in Egypt's Red Sea.

"As the shark was biting into me, all I thought was, 'Please, God, don't let me die here'. I was just waiting for it to finish me off," Martin Richardson said

Thursday by telephone from his hospital bed in the Sinai town of al-Tur.

Richardson had gone for a swim with dolphins cavorting off Mersa Brekah near the Egyptian tourist spot of Sharm el-Sheikh when the shark struck.

"We heard him shouting and thought that he was afraid that one of the dolphins had gotten too close, but then we realized he was being eaten by the shark," said Dan Herman, the Israeli second skipper of the yacht that had set off from the Israeli town of Eilat for a cruise.

"Then one of us jumped into the dinghy and rushed to get him and saw the dolphins trying to

protect him, jumping in the water and making noises," Herman said.

Sharks occasionally prowl Egypt's Red Sea coast, one of the country's most popular tourist destinations, but they rarely attack swimmers or divers.

"I was just swimming peacefully when I felt something rip out my side I tried to run back into the boat when I saw all the blood in the water but it took a chunk out of my arm," Richardson said.

"All I could see was this greyish-blue head and I punched it. It came back three times, and I tried to hit it until they came for me," he said.

Doctors said Richardson is in stable condition.

The Reading Eagle (Reading, PA), Friday July 26, 1996, page A11

Honolulu Star-Bulletin 7-26-96 A8

Dolphins rescue swimmer from shark attack in Red Sea

Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — Martin Richardson went for a swim among dolphins but found they were much more than gentle playmates. They can be lifesavers.

Richardson, a Briton, was swimming in the Red Sea off Egypt's Sinai Peninsula when he was attacked by a shark. Companions aboard a diving boat heard him scream.

"Something took a bite of my side," Richardson, a 29-year-old diver, said Wednesday.

"I started panicking for a bit, then it took another chunk of my upper arm."

Richardson's companions then watched as three bottle-nose dolphins encircled the wounded man, flapping their fins and tails and scaring off the shark.

"This defensive behavior of

dolphins is common when mothers are protecting their calves from predators," said a statement by the Recanati Center for Maritime Studies at the University of Haifa in Israel.

The statement said the dolphins continued to circle for several minutes until Richardson's companions reached him.

The attack occurred Tuesday a half mile off Marsa Bareika at the tip of Sinai. Richardson was rushed to an Egyptian military hospital at el-Tur, 55 miles to the northwest.

Richardson, of Colchester, England, suffered bites in the left shoulder, stomach and back, including one that slightly punctured his lung. Dr. Emad Allam said by telephone from the hospital Wednesday.

Richardson can now "walk, talk and eat normally," Allam said, but will remain hospitalized for at least a week.

IMMRAC

Israel Marine Mammal Research & Assistance Center

Shark attack in the Gulf of Aqaba at Marsa Bareka, Sharm el Sheik and rescue of the swimmer by a pod of bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*, and the crew of the Jadran.

Written by: O. Goffman, Kari Lavalli

On Tuesday, 23.7.96, at 6 p.m. in the evening, the 24 meter diving boat, Jadran, which operates in the Gulfs of Aqaba and Suez, was sailing north from Ras Muhammed to Sharm el-Sheikh bay. On the way, at Marsa Bareka (33° 18' E, 27° 48' N; depth 400 m, 1 km offshore), the crew observed a pod of 5 bottlenose dolphins. The owner, Mr. Dani Hermon, who lives in Eilat, Israel, decided to stop the boat and allow people to swim with these dolphins. He, Harry Hayward (an English dive instructor), and Martin Christopher Richardson (an American-British guest of one of the crew) swam for awhile with these dolphins.

Dani and Harry returned to the boat after a few minutes, but Martin continued swimming with the dolphins. Suddenly, the crew of the boat heard a terrible scream and Mr. Itzik Hermon and his son, Dani, rushed to the side of the boat to see Martin thrown between 1 to 1.5 m in the air. They realized that he was being attacked by one or more sharks, perhaps of the great white shark species. Harry jumped on the zodiac to rush to Martin's rescue. As he approached Martin, he saw three dolphins surrounding Martin.

These dolphins were circling around Martin, slapping their flukes and fins along the water's surface. This scared the shark off from its attack and prevented it from returning. This defensive behavior of dolphins is common when mothers are protecting their calves from predators. It has also been seen when small pods of dolphins protect themselves from attacking killer whales.

Harry managed to lift Martin onto the zodiac and saw that he was badly wounded with deep bites on the back, shoulder, and chest. The wounds were of such severity that it was clear that without the protection of the dolphins, given by their own free will, Martin would have died. Martin was taken to the Jadran where his massive bleeding was controlled with tourniquets administered by Itzik and Dani, as well as Gail Ashward (Dani's fiance). The boat sped to Sharm el-Sheikh where a local diving doctor, Dr. Magdi, gave him further first aid (plasma infusion) on route to an Egyptian army hospital in El-Tor. At this time, Amir Hermon made contact with UN's MFO force in the Sinai, the American and British embassies in Israel, and a shift officer of the British consulate in Cairo.

Martin remains at the army hospital in El-Tor. He had one broken rib, a hole in the lung (pneumothorax), and deep cuts on his back and chest. As far as is known, this is the third serious shark attack in the Gulf of Aqaba in 50 years of record-keeping. In the early 1980's, a British woman was attacked and injured along the coast of Eilat and an army diver was attacked during a rescue training maneuvers.

It was definitely a shark attack. Martin was bitten not less than four times. He is in better shape now and is awaiting a skin transplant on his back and chest area. He was able to smoke a cigarette 24 hours after the attack and hasn't stopped smoking since then! The attack took place at a depth of 400 m, quite away from shore ("in the blue")--not at a shallow depth, like one would have when swimming with a solitary dolphin or with captive dolphins. The dolphins were bottlenose dolphins--there were 5 in the pod, one of which was a calf. So it could be a female pod.

When the three people went into the water, they swam with the dolphins without fins or masks--so they were not as agile underwater as they could have been, nor as equipped as many people are when they are swimming with captive or solitary dolphins. Martin was left alone in the water (his choice). The dolphins initially disappeared on him. Martin saw the shark attack him from the depths. He said he was bitten four times. In one of the attacks, Martin said that he punched the shark on the snout.

We do not yet know the species of the shark. The doctors in the Egyptian hospital in El Tur said that it was only one shark and by the size of the bite marks, they believe it was between 4-5 meters (we are looking for someone who is a professional to help identify the species from the bite wounds).

It was the dolphins' choice to return and to help Martin. They were not close to him at the time of the attack. They probably took some risk to do this, as there was a calf in their pod. They were not fed by the boat.

From my experience, I know that solitary dolphins can become aggressive after a period of time. I was swimming with a solitary dolphin 4 years ago in Eilat and he routinely bit and pinned people down. The solitary dolphin we are currently investigating in Nuweiba is now starting to also show aggressive behavior--including biting, tail slapping, and ramming. This could be due to the increase in the number of swimmers that she encounters on a day to day basis.

Two and half years ago, there was a case of a group of divers that finished their dive, returned to their boat and then saw dolphins. They jumped back into the water to swim with these dolphins (without their gear) and the dolphins moved on about their business, leaving the site. A mako shark appeared and began to circle the swimmers. One of the swimmers freaked out and the other swimmers encircled her and swam slowly to the boat. The dolphins were within sight, but they did nothing, despite the fact that this female swimmer was very disturbed. They were not attacked by the shark.

<http://research.haifa.ac.il/~webhum/maritime/immrac/sharks.htm>