

**ACTIVITY:** Diving / Wading

**CASE:** GSAF 2003.09.29

**DATE:** Monday September 29, 2003

**LOCATION:** The attack occurred along the Welagi coastal reef in Taveuni\*, Fiji.

16.7°S, 179.9°W (Matei)

**NAME:** Epeli Mate

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 40-year-old male.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Waxing Crescent, 11% of the moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon, 26 September 2003.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Taveuni is the third-largest island in Fiji after Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Taveuni is about 42 km long, averages 10 to 11 km in width, and covers 435 sq km. This was a third fatality at Taveuni. According to local police, one reason why attacks seem to happen more often around Taveuni is said to be because the pig processing plant there throws waste products into the sea, thus attracting sharks.

**TIME:** Night

**NARRATIVE:** Mr. Mate and his cousin had been diving and had an aluminum dinghy. He was wading towards the shore at Drekeniwai\* where he lived when he was bitten by a shark. "When he was making his way back, the shark bit him on his belly, his intestines, his male organs and part of his trousers were ripped off," said Taveuni police officer Inspector Iowane Filipe. "He then called out to his cousin that he was bitten." Inspector Filipe said his cousin and others tried to save him but it was too late.

**INJURY:** Fatal

**SPECIES:** Not identified.

**SOURCES:** Fiji Times, October 2, 2003, page 2; Fiji TV; [www.blue-oceans.com/scuba/fiji/](http://www.blue-oceans.com/scuba/fiji/)

**\*NOTE:** There is a coastal village named Welagi on Taveuni, however, no village by the name of Drekeniwai could be found on maps of Taveuni, although there is a coastal village of that name on Vanua Levu.

**CASE INVESTIGATORS:** Margaret Keni, Paula Jones and Richard D. Weeks, GSAF

