

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 2016.04.18

DATE: Monday April 18, 2016

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at one of the passes of Makemo Atoll, French Polynesia.

16°35'55"S, 143°39'41"W

NAME: Teva Tokoragi

DESCRIPTION: A 26-year-old male

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 90% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, April 21, 2016.

ENVIRONMENT: Makemo (also known as Rangikemo or Te Paritua) is one of the larger of the Tuamotu atolls in French Polynesia. The atoll measures 69 km in length and 16.5 km in width, giving it a land area of 56 km². It is the fourth largest atoll of the Tuamotu Archipelago in terms of lagoon surface, with a lagoon of 603 km² in area. Despite its size, Makemo's lagoon has only two navigable passes.



NARRATIVE: Teva Tokoragi and his cousin, Hoatua lotua, were spearfishing when a grey reef shark attempted to snatch a fish that had been speared by lotua. In an attempt to scare away the shark, Tokoragi pierced the shark's fin with his spear. While the men were attempting to retrieve their spearguns, the shark retaliated, grabbing Tokoragi's arm. He held onto the boat with one hand, the other arm in the shark's mouth as lotua hit the shark's head repeatedly and prised open its mouth until it released his cousin. Tokoragi managed to climb into the boat.

"I started to get into the boat, but (the shark) grabbed my knee so I fell into the sea and I had another fight with the shark," said lotua. "I grabbed (the shark's head) it so it didn't tear my knee." Meanwhile, Tokoragi, weak from loss of blood, attempted to cut the shark's tail as lotua pushed the shark's head down and quickly jumped into the boat.

INJURIES: Tokoragi sustained severe lacerations to his right hand and forearm, and right calf. lotua may have sustained an injury to his leg.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: The two men returned to their village, where first aid was provided by nurses at the clinic. Tokoragi sustained serious injuries and was evacuated to Taaone Hospital in Papeete, Tahiti, where he underwent surgery on Tuesday morning.

SPECIES: A grey reef shark, *Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*, two metres in length. Grey reef sharks are often found in the passes and on the outer slopes of the reef. They are territorial

and frequently travel in packs. Individuals may reach a length of 2.5 metres. Shark behaviorist Eric Clua plans to visit Tokoragi in the hospital to learn more about this case. Clua notes that, contrary to popular belief, it is not blood but the thrashing of a speared fish which attracts this species. The critical moment occurs when the fisherman removes the fish he has just shot when triggers in the sharks a frantic competition for access to food in which the fisherman may be a collateral victim.

SOURCES: Jean-Pierre Viatge, Tahiti Infos, Tuesday April 19, 2015

http://www.tahiti-infos.com/Morsures-de-requin-a-Makemo-Une-bataille-a-mains-nues-entre-les-pecheurs-et-l-animal_a147604.html

NDTV [World Agence France-Presse], April 20, 2016

<http://www.ndtv.com/world-news-two-fishermen-fight-off-shark-in-french-polynesia-1397637>

Wikipedia