

Navy's Pacific Training Could Injure Hundreds of Dolphins, Threaten Recovery of Endangered Hawaiian Monk Seals

Explosions, Sonar, Ship Strikes Will Menace Marine Life Near Hawaii, Southern California

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Global Research, June 26, 2018

[Center for Biological Diversity](#) 25 June 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

The U.S. Navy has proposed training and testing exercises in the Pacific Ocean that could injure or kill thousands of marine mammals, including endangered whales and seals. The proposal would allow the Navy to harm marine mammals approximately 15 million times over five years.

That take, which the [Navy today asked](#) the National Marine Fisheries Service to authorize, could include seriously injuring 83 California long-beaked dolphins, three endangered blue whales and three [Hawaiian monk seals](#), an endangered monk-seal population that has only recently begun to recover after heading toward extinction.

“The Navy doesn’t need to blow up dolphins or blast whales with sonar to keep us safe. Sonar can injure and deafen whales who depend on hearing for their survival,” said Miyoko Sakashita, oceans program director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “Hawaiian monk seals will pay a big price for the Navy’s war games in its habitat.”

The latest analysis shows the Navy exercises would cause approximately 15 million harmful incidents. Long-beaked common dolphins could be harmed more than 1.1 million times and blue whales 9,245 times over five years. Hawaiian monk seals could be harmed 916 times. The exercises could also seriously injure 18 humpback whales, 444 short-beaked common dolphins and 478 California sea lions.

Ocean mammals depend on hearing for navigation, feeding and reproduction. Scientists have linked military sonar and live-fire activities to mass whale beaching, exploded eardrums and even death. In 2004, during war games near Hawaii, the Navy’s sonar was implicated in a mass stranding of up to 200 melon-headed whales in Hanalei Bay, Kauai.

The Navy and Fisheries Service estimate that, over the current plan’s five-year period, training and testing activities will result in thousands of animals suffering permanent hearing loss, lung injuries or death. Millions of animals will be exposed to temporary injuries and disturbances, with many subjected to multiple harmful exposures.

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