

Could a friendly beluga whale be a spy?

3rd May, 2019



A professor at a university in Norway believes a beluga whale that was found in the Arctic Ocean near Norway's northernmost point could be part of Russia's spy network. Local residents reported

that the beluga was extremely tame and enjoyed being petted. Professor Audun Rikardsen said the creature was fitted with a harness and mount for a spy camera. He said: "It is most likely that the Russian Navy in Murmansk was involved." However, news images show there is "Equipment of St. Petersburg" written on the harness in English. A local said: "The talk in this hamlet is that it could have escaped from a Russian military facility or could have swum from St. Petersburg, Florida, because of the English-language text."

There is much speculation online as to where the whale came from. Journalists are asking whether it came from whale and dolphin training facilities in St. Petersburg, Florida. The U.S. Navy is known to use dolphins to help divers on military missions. A Russian naval analyst, Mikhail Barabanov, downplayed any links the beluga might have with the Russian military. He said: "Even if there are military programs for using marine animals for navy purposes, they are unlikely to be belugas." A Russian military official agreed. He told the BBC: "If we were using this animal for spying, do you really think we'd attach a mobile phone number with the message 'please call this number?'"

Sources: cbsnews.com / yahoo.com / bbc.com

Writing

Animals should never be used to help the military. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

professor / Arctic Ocean / whale / spy / network / tame / news / images / military / speculation / journalists / divers / missions / marine / official / animal / message

True / False

- a) A professor at a Finnish university said a beluga whale could be a spy. T / F
- b) Local people said the beluga whale was totally wild. T / F
- c) The beluga whale was fitted with equipment to hold a camera. T / F
- d) The city name of St Petersburg was written on a harness in Russian. T / F
- e) Some people think the whale came from St Petersburg in Florida. T / F
- f) The US Navy does not use dolphins to help their missions. T / F
- g) A Russian official said Russia would be unlikely to use beluga whales. T / F
- h) A Russian official said Russia would not write down phone numbers. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. found | a. docile |
| 2. tame | b. village |
| 3. likely | c. reasons |
| 4. hamlet | d. conjecture |
| 5. escaped | e. probable |
| 6. speculation | f. affix |
| 7. missions | g. discovered |
| 8. purposes | h. representative |
| 9. official | i. assignments |
| 10. attach | j. broke free |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about beluga whales?
- b) What do you think of petting a beluga whale?
- c) Why do you think the whale had a camera harness?
- d) Who do you think put the harness on the whale, and why?
- e) Do you think the St Petersburg in the text is in Russia or the USA?
- f) What do you think of whales being used to spy?
- g) How can governments get animals to spy for them?
- h) Could you become a spy?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. a beluga whale that was found | a. for navy purposes |
| 2. the beluga was extremely | b. fitted with a harness |
| 3. the creature was | c. online |
| 4. It is most | d. a mobile phone number |
| 5. it could have | e. in the Arctic Ocean |
| 6. There is much speculation | f. programs |
| 7. downplayed any | g. tame |
| 8. military | h. likely |
| 9. using marine animals | i. links |
| 10. we'd attach | j. escaped |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you know about spying?
- Why don't authorities know where the whale came from?
- What is the best way to spy?
- Why do governments spy on each other?
- Would Russia put text in English on a spy whale?
- What would change if the whale was found to be a Russian spy?
- What questions would you like to ask a whale expert?

Spelling

- Norway's tnrhnoomrst point
- the beluga was terxmeley tame
- the reatucre was fitted with a harness
- Murmansk was vilonved
- upiqmenet of St. Petersburg
- it could have scapeed
- There is much peustalicon online
- dolphin training acfltiies
- A Russian naval nlaayst
- help divers on ilitamry missions
- using marine animals for navy rpopuses
- ttacah a mobile phone number

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. a	3. e	4. b	5. j
6. d	7. i	8. c	9. h	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Invisibility Cloak

You think an invisibility cloak is the best spy gadget. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gadgets. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): thought recorder, contact lens camera or password finder.

Role B – Thought Recorder

You think a thought recorder is the best spy gadget. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gadgets. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): invisibility cloak, contact lens camera or password finder.

Role C – Contact Lens Camera

You think a contact lens camera is the best spy gadget. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gadgets. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): thought recorder, invisibility cloak or password finder.

Role D – Password Finder

You think a password finder is the best spy gadget. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gadgets. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): thought recorder, contact lens camera or invisibility cloak.

Speaking – Spy gadgets

Rank these with your partner. Put the best spy gadgets at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| • fingerprint recorder | • invisibility cloak |
| • voice copier | • X-Ray glasses |
| • contact lens camera | • pen recorder |
| • password finder | • thought recorder |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.