

Underwater Crime Scene Investigations (UCSI), a New Paradigm

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Abstract

A new paradigm in forensic investigation was recently launched in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University in Panama City. Driven by the USS Cole terrorist attack and all events surrounding 9/11, a team of specialists from multiple disciplines such as underwater archeology, ocean engineering, mechanical engineering, marine biology, forensic science, and criminology was assembled to change underwater criminal investigation from a "snatch and grab mentality" to the rigors of a scientific study. The mission of this research "Alpha" Team was to identify and/or develop underwater criminal investigative protocols that follow national and international law. The Alpha Team was to evaluate, adapt and develop technology to quickly identify the suspects for a quick response. Once the protocols were developed, the Alpha Team members were to replicate themselves within a second or Beta Team structure. Funded by the Department of Defense and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency in support of a FEMA exercise, the Alpha Team instructors will ultimately create training modules for military and civilian law enforcement agencies, which will then carry the distinction of a Beta Team certification.