Navy sonar blamed for whale stranding

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Experts say U.S. Navy sonar may have caused the stranding of 200 deep-diving melon-headed whales in a Hawaiian bay in 2004, but the Navy won't take the blame.

Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration say they cannot definitely say the Navy sonar caused the stranding by confusing and frightening the sea mammals, but their extensive study showed there was no other likely cause, reports The Washington Post.

The incident occurred in Hanalei Bay in Kauai during a major U.S.-Japanese sonar training exercise at the nearby Pacific Missile Range Facility. The whales were later led back to sea.

"I think that if you look at the report, there are just so many unknown factors at work that to say sonar was a plausible if not likely cause is erroneous," Lt. Commander Christy Hagen of the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hawaii told the newspaper.

The NOAA report comes in the wake of a series of scientific reviews linking traditional mid-frequency naval sonar to whale strandings, the report said.

The Navy is planning another major sonar testing maneuver in the same area in July but the NOAA has asked for the use of expanded measures to protect the whales.