

Turtle with beacon causes major sea search

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HAMILTON, Bermuda (AP) -- The U.S. Coast Guard spent hours searching for a boat in distress off Bermuda's coast -- even scrambling a rescue plane from the U.S. mainland -- only to find a turtle behind it all.

The incident began when Coast Guard monitors this week picked up an emergency beacon, signaling that a boat was in trouble about 470 miles northwest of Bermuda, petty officer Tim Pike of the U.S. Coast Guard in Miami said Thursday.

The Coast Guard sent a C-130 plane from Elizabeth City, North Carolina, diverted the Norwegian tug Skandi Moegsger to the area, and alerted other boats in the area to be on the lookout.

The airplane eventually pinpointed the source and sent the Skandi Moegsger, which had been cruising from Bermuda to Spain, to investigate.

"They pulled a turtle out of the water, and found it was somehow caught up in a rope with the beacon," Pike said, adding that "I don't know what state the turtle was in."

Beacons can be triggered to start putting out a signal by a jolt, change in position or water movement, Pike said.

He said that this beacon was covered in barnacles and debris and was registered to a man who, when contacted by telephone, said he had lost it some time ago.