

Tritech Assists Autosub AUV



Researchers from the National Oceanographic Centre, Southampton (NOCs), recently trialled Autosub6000, a deep rated Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), to explore ocean regions approaching 6000m water depth. Autosub6000 was able to manoeuvre and avoid obstacles using Tritech's SeaKing scanning sonar. Due to the extreme conditions, a 6000m depth rated titanium SeaKing sonar was selected.

The SeaKing sonar was mounted to scan vertically to allow the AUV to fly over detected obstacles. As the obstacle avoidance sonar of choice for many of the ROV/ AUV fleets in

the world, the clear imaging and range performance features of the SeaKing sonar allowed for safe operation of Autosub6000 and permitted the NOC team's closer inspection of the seabed.

The successful trials onboard the RRS *Discovery* now mean Autosub6000 can be mobilised for trials on board the RRS *James Cook* to the Caribbean Sea, near the Cayman Islands in spring 2010. In operation with the ROV Isis, Autosub6000 will search for deep hydrothermal vents; a task that will require the range and imaging capabilities of the SeaKing sonar.

The trials took place during late September at the Iberian Abyssal Plain, North Atlantic, an area of ocean deeper than 5600m. Further tests were carried out around the steep and rugged terrain of Casablanca Seamount, between Maderia and Morocco.

Autosub6000 was designed and constructed by engineers at the Underwater Systems Laboratory, NOCS and is funded by the Natural Environment Research.

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