



THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH

4-5 TOYOMI-CHO, CHUO-KU, TOKYO 104-0055 JAPAN

PHONE: +81-3-3536-6521 FAX: +81-3536-6522

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SEA SHEPHERD TELLS GREENPEACE WHERE TO FIND JAPANESE FLEET

Eco-terrorist group Sea Shepherd Conservation Society telephoned Greenpeace yesterday to inform them of the position of their vessels and those of the Japanese research fleet.

ICR Director General Hiroshi Hatanaka said that while Sea Shepherd was putting a mayday call out to vessels in the area to assist with lost animal rights activists, they put in a telephone call to Greenpeace to inform them of everyone's position.

"We have increasing concerns and evidence that both groups are working together, despite claims last year that Greenpeace had nothing to do with Sea Shepherd. Now it will develop into a competition between them to see who can perform the most dangerous and illegal stunts – to see which group gets more airtime." The ICR today called on both organisations to keep their distance from the research fleet.

Animal rights activists from the Sea Shepherd pirate vessel Robert Hunter yesterday shot bottles of butyric acid onto the deck of the Nisshin Maru, as well as empty bottles, shards of glass and rubbish from their vessel. Video footage of the butyric acid being shot onto the Nisshin Maru can be viewed here: <http://www.icrwhale.org/gpandsea.htm>. The video shot from a crew member on the Nisshin Maru clearly shows Sea Shepherd members shooting acid-filled bottles onto the deck.

Dr Hatanaka said: "Our concerns over the safety of crew and scientists have increased greatly. To shoot bottles of acid, as well as shards of glass, demonstrates these people are out to hurt others and damage property. Both Sea Shepherd vessels have been stripped of their registration after the UK and Belize refused to support their eco-terrorist activity, and the fact they are continuing with their piracy suggests they just don't care about other people."

In the attack, two Japanese crew members were hit by missiles. One crew member was hit in the face by a bottle while the other had butyric acid squirted into his eyes. Butyric acid is a corrosive chemical and contact can cause burns to eyes and skin, leading to permanent damage. "One of our crewmen is having difficulty opening his eye because of the acid but the full extent of his injuries has yet to be determined. The other received a cut on his face from contact with the bottle," Dr Hatanaka said.

Despite the attack, the Nisshin Maru yesterday responded to Sea Shepherd mayday calls after two of their animal rights activists went missing after attempting to entangle the Nisshin Maru's propeller with a net.

The Institute of Cetacean Research has completed much of their research programme for this year. The research contributes to greater knowledge of whale species in the Southern Ocean and provides valuable data to improve the IWC's management scheme for sustainable commercial whaling in the area.

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For further information contact ICR spokespeople:

Glenn Inwood, +64 21 498 010

Gabriel Gomez +81 3 3536 8227