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MEDIA RELEASE

ANIMAL PLANET COLLABORATED WITH ECOTERRORISTS

Washington, DC, 29 October 2008 The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), a Japanese scientific body that studies whales, today accused the United States television broadcast channel Animal Planet of involvement in ecoterrorism, following criminal attacks against its research ships in the Antarctic Ocean. (See footage at <http://www.icrwhale.org/eng-index.htm>).

Animal Planet, which is owned by Discovery Communications, contracted with Tennessee-based RIVR Productions to produce a new series called “Whale Wars”, scheduled for broadcast in the United States in the coming weeks. RIVR joined the crew of one of the ships owned and operated by the militant animal rights group, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, as it launched a series of criminal attacks on the high seas in January, February and March 2008 against vessels operated by ICR. In August 2008, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department issued arrest warrants for three of the Sea Shepherd militants for violating the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (the SUA Convention of the International Maritime Organization).

Unlike land-based ecoterrorist groups, Sea Shepherd’s modus operandi is to sabotage fishing operations by attacking vessels at sea beyond national boundaries, thereby avoiding prosecution. In March 2008, as the attacks on the ICR’s vessels were taking place, a former Sea Shepherd and Earth Liberation Front (ELF) operative was given a one-year federal jail sentence in California for teaching people how to make a destructive device that could commit arson. A guidebook on eco-guerilla activity written by the head of Sea Shepherd, Paul Watson, contains a chapter on how to use fire against an “enemy”.

Increased criminal violence against the Institute’s research vessels coincided with the presence and filming by Animal Planet on the Sea Shepherd attack vessel. Animal Planet has itself admitted that the campaign “was particularly eventful” (Animal Planet press release, 10 July 2008). The violence included the deployment of propeller fouling devices constructed from steel cables, throwing acid, smoke bombs and bottles onto the decks of the ICR vessels and attempted collisions. Sea Shepherd has also welded a seven-foot steel blade to its ships to open the hulls of the vessels it attacks.

Animal Planet established no internal systems or safeguards to prevent its executive team, the production company and the ecoterrorists from colluding to carry out unlawful acts for the television cameras in order to produce sensational footage.

In addition to Animal Planet's involvement with violent attacks against its ships and seafarers, ICR is concerned that broadcasting the series will serve to glamorize ecoterrorism and make future violent attacks more likely.

Mr. Minoru Morimoto, Director General of the Institute of Cetacean Research, said: "It is difficult to understand why a mainstream network would stoop so low as to produce a series that glamorizes and thereby gives support to ecoterrorism. Sea Shepherd's criminal actions last year in the Antarctic were encouraged directly through the presence of the Animal Planet film team. Animal Planet is responsible for inciting this increased violence and aiding and abetting an international criminal organization."