

MEDIA RELEASE

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SEA SHEPHERD DISRUPTS VESSELS ENGAGED IN MISSING SAILOR SEARCH

KYODO SENPAKU KAISHA, LIMITED /
THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH

The Dutch vessel Steve Irwin has not left the Antarctic and used the distress signal sent from Maritime NZ to locate the Japanese research vessels.

According to Maritime NZ, the Dutch vessel did not respond to the call put out by Maritime NZ, but instead headed to the search area to harass the Japanese vessels.

The Japanese research ships are currently engaged in the search for the missing 30-year-old oiler, Mr Hajime Shirasaki.

The Japanese vessels reported that at 2000hrs (Japan time), Tuesday, 6 January 2009, a darkened and unlit vessel appeared in the search area and was immediately identified as the Dutch vessel, Steve Irwin. The Steve Irwin approached, darkened and only switched on minimum regulation lighting once it was identified.

The Steve Irwin called the Japanese vessels stating: "We have come to help in the search for the missing crewman".

The Japanese vessels responded: "We will not accept any help nor cooperation from the Sea Shepherd who has been harassing our research vessels".

Steve Irwin responded: "We will restart harassing the whaling vessels once the search is over".

However, the Dutch vessel began to harass and disrupt navigation of the Japanese vessels, even approaching abnormally (to zero point two miles) to the sighting vessel Kyoshin Maru No. 2, which was engaged in the search.

The President of Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha, Mr Kazuo Yamamura, said: "Despite our loss and that we are in the midst of a search, the Dutch vessel has begun to disrupt the navigation of our vessels in the search."

Mr Yamamura said: "There is a distinctly uncaring nature about Sea Shepherd people in that they are prepared to disrupt the search for a missing seaman for their own ends."

The Director-General of the Institute of Cetacean Research, Mr Minoru Morimoto, said: "Clearly the Netherland's vessel made use of the distress call and came to disturb our search. This kind of behavior should be condemned for its lack of humanity, and all concerned countries should take the strongest measures against Sea Shepherd, in line with the IWC resolution on safety at sea by taking decisive actions to protect the security of our crews."

Mr Morimoto said research on Antarctic whale resources is important because the ICRW requires that the IWC's regulations must be based on scientific findings.

Also visit: <http://www.icrwhale.org/gpandsea-img.htm>

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