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MEDIA RELEASE

6 February 2009

SEA SHEPHERD COMMITS FURTHER CRIMINAL ACTS AT SEA

Sea Shepherd crew aboard the Dutch vessel Steve Irwin have committed further illegal acts at sea yesterday and attempted to entangle the propellers of Japanese research vessels in the Southern Ocean.

This is the second attempt at fouling the propellers of the Japanese vessels in as many days, the Director-General of the Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo, Japan, Mr Minoru Morimoto, said today.

Sea Shepherd crew members used specially-designed propeller entangling devices to disable the vessels. The protesters also threw bottles of acid at the Japanese vessel, Nisshin Maru, although all of the bottles fell only into the sea.

Mr Morimoto said that immediately following the unsuccessful criminal attack on the Nisshin Maru, the Dutch vessel's crew members turned their sights to the Japanese sampling vessel, the Yushin Maru, and several bottles of acid were thrown onto the deck.

The Sea Shepherd members then deployed two propeller entangling devices against the Yushin Maru, although both attempts failed. One of the devices was recovered from the ocean by the Japanese crew. The attack from the Dutch vessel began at 1000hours Japan time (1200hrs AEST; 1400hrs NZDT) yesterday.

The Dutch vessel also launched a projectile attack firing repeatedly what seemed to be signal flares towards the Yushin Maru and the Yushin Maru No. 2. Also, the Sea Shepherd vessel launched another attack aiming to disable the Nisshin Maru's propeller by dragging a hawser (mooring rope) with buoys.

Mr Morimoto said: "I call on all member nations of the IWC to condemn these acts of violence by Sea Shepherd and for countries to close their ports to the Dutch vessel."

This is the second attempt this season by Sea Shepherd to foul the propellers of the Japanese vessels. The first attempt, made on 2 February, was also unsuccessful and the device used by Sea Shepherd was recovered by the Japanese crew members. Photos of the rope can be seen here: <http://www.icrwhale.org/gpandsea-img.htm>

Captain John Carroll, the federal master of the Company of Master Mariners of Australia, said Sea Shepherd's stated aim of dragging a hawser under the Japanese ship to disable its propellers could rip the drive shafts from the ship and leave a gaping hole under its waterline. "There is always a weak point built into a ship's drive shafts for safety reasons and you can actually pull the propeller shaft, or shafts, right off," Captain Carroll said. "If that happened, it is probable the ship would sink." (The Australian newspaper, 11 January 2006)

Article VIII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), explicitly provides that member countries may issue permits for scientific research. Research on Antarctic whale resources is important because the ICRW requires that the IWC's regulations must be based on scientific findings.

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