

MEDIA RELEASE

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Steve Irwin activists attack Japanese research vessel Yushin Maru No. 2

On January 21 the Yushin Maru No.2 (YS2) Antarctic whale research (JARPAII) vessel was subjected to attack by the Sea Shepherd (SS) ship Steve Irwin (SI). The attack lasted from around 0700 to 0800JST.

Around 0700JST Sea Shepherd activists aboard two rubber boats sent from the SI approached the YS2 and, using a high-power launcher, fired 20 glass bottles containing butyric acid and paint-containing glass bottles. In addition, activists threw by hand more than 20 bottles toward the YS2

During the attack the YS2 besides making use of its water pump as a preventive measure to make SS activists desist from further approaching, repeatedly broadcasted a message warning the activists to stop their attack. Further, in order to secure her own safety, the YS2 towed from its stern a keep-your-distance-warning buoy thus containing the rubber boats' attack. Besides that, YS2 used once an impulse water mist fire extinguisher as a warning to the rubber boats to not to come too close to the Japanese vessel.

There were no injuries to the Japanese crew from this attack although some of the butyric acid and paint projectile bottles hit the YS2.

The high-power launcher fired today by Sea Shepherd activists was similar in type to a launcher used in a butyric-acid attack two years ago which inflicted injuries to three Japanese crewmen. Days after that attack, SS activist Peter Bethune was arrested after illegally boarding the Shonan Maru No. 2 and was found guilty and sentenced by the Tokyo district court for being armed with a weapon and assault causing injury. Apparently the activists have not reflected on the Sea Shepherd's past conduct and do not mind continuing to use and fire dangerous weapons against the Japanese research crews.

The Institute of Cetacean Research strongly condemns the Sea Shepherd and its continued dangerous and violent actions perpetrated against the integrity and safety of Japan's whale research vessels and crews. Japan's research whaling in the Antarctic (JARPAII) is a perfectly legal activity carried out under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). Once again, we call on all related countries including the Netherlands which is the SI flag state and Australia which is the home port of the SS vessels to take every measure available to restrain them and deal with their criminal actions in a strict and objective manner.

NOTE: Photos to be attributed to the INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH, TOKYO JAPAN. (<http://www.icrwhale.org/gpandsea.html>)