

KYODO SENPAKU KAISHA, LIMITED

Dutch vessel's search offer disingenuous, official information reveals

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Information obtained from Maritime New Zealand's Search and Rescue centre reveals that the Dutch vessel Steve Irwin never had any intention of assisting in the search for a missing Japanese sailor.

The sailor, Mr Hajime Shirasaki, went missing on Monday 5 January and is presumed to be lost overboard.

The New Zealand Rescue Coordination Centre sent the first mayday signal at 1218hrs New Zealand Daylight Time on Monday 5 January. This signal was repeated every half hour until 1515hrs NZDT on Monday 5 January.

The Dutch vessel waited until 0025hrs (12.25am) on Wednesday 7 January to respond to Maritime New Zealand, when it had already located the Japanese fleet. This was 36 hours after the mayday call was first made by Maritime New Zealand.

International Maritime Organization regulations require vessels to provide their current position, advise whether or not they are able to assist, and provide the Search and Rescue agency of an estimated time of arrival at the search site.

"The true intention of the Sea Shepherd crew was to locate the Japanese vessels for the TV cameras, not to locate the missing seaman. This is more theatre directed from New York," said the President of Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha, Ltd, Mr Kazuo Yamamura, in reference to the Animal Planet film crew on board the Dutch vessel.

"There was nothing genuine about Sea Shepherd's subsequent offer to help and no assistance was received. They did not deploy their boats nor their helicopter. Rather than aiding the search, the Sea Shepherd vessel hindered it by navigating dangerously close to other vessels," Mr Yamamura said. "We told them we didn't need that kind of help."

"Sea Shepherd's offer of help was disingenuous, in the circumstances, and obviously done to show the crew in a good, but false, light," Mr Yamamura said. "They exploited a mayday call for their own publicity."

"In contrast, on 9 February 2007 when the Steve Irwin put out a mayday call for two missing crew, our vessels immediately responded to their distress call, indicated we were in a position to assist and we went in search, which is how a genuine offer of assistance is conveyed," Mr Yamamura said.

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