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MEDIA RELEASE

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DECISION MADE ON NISSHIN MARU

The Institute of Cetacean Research, in conjunction with Kyodo Senpaku and the Government of Japan, said today the Antarctic whale research program for the 2006/2007 austral summer season will be cut short as a result of a fire aboard the research mother vessel, the Nisshin Maru.

ICR Director General, Dr Hiroshi Hatanaka said that after completing a thorough assessment of the Nisshin Maru following the 15 February fire, it was concluded that some of research equipment could not be recovered, and hence the ICR could not responsibly pursue the research activities as originally planned.

“Far from an embarrassment, the situation in the Antarctic was an unfortunate event that no-one could have predicted. Our thanks go out to the crew who are very able seamen and responded in a professional and responsible manner to the fire and subsequent repairs to the vessel. Their skills and experience must be applauded,” Dr Hatanaka said.

“However, after discussions this week regarding the condition of the vessel, we have decided to call them home.”

“While full power was restored, a more detailed inspection over the last few days shows that the Nisshin Maru is unable to be fully repaired at sea for the scientific research to continue. The repository, where much of the equipment and tools used for biological research are stored, was heavily damaged, which will not allow for the program to continue in the Antarctic for this summer.”

Upon returning to Japan, the Nisshin Maru will undergo inspection to investigate the cause of the fire, after which it will enter dock for a thorough refurbishment and preparation for Japan’s Research Program in the western North Pacific (JARPN II), this year.

Japan’s Program in the Antarctic (JARPA II) is a long-term research program and will resume again in December this year.

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