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MEDIA RELEASE

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Dutch vessel attacks again Japanese ship Shonan Maru No. 2

The Japanese Antarctic whale research vessel Shonan Maru No. 2 was subject to new attack today by the Dutch anti-whaling vessel Steve Irwin. The attack started at about 1100 JST and lasted about two hours.

The Shonan Maru No. 2 has been monitoring the Steve Irwin movements in the Antarctic. At past 1100JST, the Steve Irwin crew started to deploy a rope from the ship's stern. When the Japanese ship approached to closely monitor these activities, the Steve Irwin activists started to irradiate green laser pointers toward the Shonan Maru No. 2 crew. The Steve Irwin made then a steep turn approaching abnormally the Japanese vessel and started to shoot its water cannon while the activists threw butyric-acid containing bottles.

After broadcasting a warning message through a long range acoustic device (LRAD), the Shonan Maru No. 2 started its water cannons and proceeded to dodge the activists' attack.

The Steve Irwin then continued to tow a rope with buoys aimed at the propeller and rudder of the Shonan Maru No. 2, while the activists repeatedly irradiated hand-held green laser devices toward the Japanese crew and hurled bottles containing butyric acid. Five or six of these bottles hit the Japanese vessel's deck. Neither injuries to the Japanese crew nor damage to the Shonan Maru No. 2 resulted from the Steve Irwin attack.

High-power laser devices (laser pointers) are known to be extremely dangerous as they can produce blindness if irradiated to the naked eye. Their manufacture and sale is subject to regulations not only in Japan but also in the Netherlands, the Steve Irwin's flag state, and Australia, its virtual home port country. Aiming a laser at a craft where vision and situational awareness are critical for safety may be considered criminal behavior.

Butyric acid too can provoke loss of vision if spilled into the eyes. It is a hazardous chemical which can cause skin burns. The World Health Organization's International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSC), state that, besides being hazardous to the human body and thus recommending avoiding all contact, categorically state that "The substance is harmful to aquatic organisms" and that "Do NOT let this chemical enter the environment".

The Institute of Cetacean Research strongly condemns the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society dangerous and violent actions against Japan's whale research vessels in the Antarctic in repeated disregard of the IWC consensus criticism and demand for self-restraint. In addition, we call on all related nations including Netherlands, the Steve Irwin's flag state, and Australia, its virtual home port, to take every means available to restraint the violent actions by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and strongly request that they deal with their criminal actions in a strict and objective manner.

Photographs and video of the incidents in the Antarctic can be seen at:
<http://www.icrwhale.org/gpandsea-img.htm>

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