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MEDIA RELEASE

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JAPAN RESUMES WHALE RESEARCH

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), which carries out Japan's research whaling in the Antarctic, said today it has resumed its JARPA II whaling research despite harassment and illegal actions by environmental groups Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace.

Ignoring repeated warnings and requests to move away, on December 21 Greenpeace activists harassed the Nisshin-Maru and other research vessels putting in danger the lives of our crews and theirs by approaching the boats, clinging to wires connecting harpooned whales to the research vessels and other acts.

"While unlikely to go unheeded, we warn these groups again to keep their distance from our research vessels and to refrain from any impulsive and reckless stunts," the ICR Director General, Dr Hiroshi Hatanaka, said.

"To protect their safety and that of our crews we will continue to use the water cannons as a deterrent and a safety measure," he said.

During the research operations, the captains of the research vessels are broadcasting the following caution notice: "This is a warning! Stop your obstructive actions immediately! Keep away from our ship! Or we will have to hose you to fend you off!"

"We repeat our warning to Greenpeace that if any accident happens as a result of their illegal disturbance, they will be to blame. It is Greenpeace that is creating this risky situation. The same warning applies to Sea Shepherd," Dr Hatanaka said.

Note to Editors: Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace's movements are being monitored by the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence Civil Maritime Analysis Department's worldwide piracy report, which provides information on threat to and criminal action against merchant shipping worldwide. http://pollux.nss.nima.mil/onit/onit_j_main.html

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Visit also: www.icrwhale.org

NOTE TO EDITORS:

JARPA II - JAPAN'S NEW RESEARCH PROGRAM IN THE ANTARCTIC

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) in Japan is now conducting its new research program in the Antarctic.

The program, called JARPA II and authorized by the Government of Japan under Article VIII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, will focus on the Antarctic minke whale and the larger species, humpback and fin whales and is based on the results of its 18-year research program in the Antarctic completed last year.

The main objectives of JARPA II are:

- 1) Monitoring of the Antarctic ecosystem,
- 2) Modelling competition among whale species and developing future management objectives,
- 3) Elucidation of temporal and spatial changes in stock structure, and
- 4) Improving the management procedure for the Antarctic minke whale stocks.

“Long-term monitoring and research is essential for understanding changes of whale populations in the Antarctic ecosystem following their recovery from historic over-exploitation,” said Dr Hiroshi Hatanaka, the Director General of the ICR, today.

“Science must continue to be the basis for decisions on how resources are managed. The IWC Scientific Committee has agreed that our research, which uses both lethal and non-lethal techniques, is providing this information.”

Japan's research program is often mis-characterized by Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd and other anti-whaling organizations as commercial whaling in disguise since the meat and other by-products are sold on the market in Japan.

However, the Convention requires that the products be processed to the greatest extent possible. Dr. Hatanaka said that the IWC's “moratorium” and its “Southern Ocean Sanctuary” specifically did not apply to the catching of whales for research purposes.

The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling stipulates that whale resource management should be based on scientific findings. It also states that any contracting government may grant to any of its nationals a special permit to kill, take, and treat whales (Article VIII), notwithstanding the Moratorium on commercial whaling. Therefore, Japan's research program is not restricted by any regulations on commercial whaling, such as the Moratorium and the Southern Ocean Sanctuary.

Ultimately the results of the research will be used to improve management of Antarctic whale stocks when commercial whaling resumes in the future.

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