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## **U.S. WHALING COMMISSIONER DENOUNCES SEA SHEPHERD'S CLASH WITH JAPANESE WHALERS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Bill Hogarth issued the following statement on the reported attack of a Japanese research whaling vessel by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society yesterday in the Southern Ocean. The apparent confrontation on the high seas injured two Japanese crew members and damaged the Sea Shepherd inflatable with a crew of two, who drifted lost and powerless for eight hours before being found. Hogarth also is the current chairman of the IWC and the director of NOAA's Fisheries Service, the agency charged with researching and protecting whale species in U.S. waters.

"I'm disappointed Sea Shepherd took an action that risked lives," said U.S. IWC Commissioner Bill Hogarth. "We passed a resolution last year to discourage this type of rogue activity. The United States is extremely concerned that encounters like this could escalate into more violent interactions between the vessels. We still oppose Japan's research whale hunts, but the way to resolve this is through the IWC process. These dangerous confrontations in the Southern Ocean must stop before someone gets seriously hurt or killed."

"The safety of vessels and life at sea is the highest priority for the United States and the nations that respect the rule of law on the high seas," said Hogarth. "I ask all parties to respect the Commission's wishes and immediately refrain from any acts that risk human life or safety at sea."

In June 2006, IWC member nations adopted by consensus a resolution regarding the safety of vessels engaged in whaling and whale research-related activities. The resolution disapproves actions that risk human life and property and supports navigational safety regulations.

Background: In 1986 the IWC placed a moratorium on commercial hunting to allow species of whales to recover from decades of over harvest. The United States has long opposed Japan's lethal research whaling as undermining the commercial whaling moratorium. Whales experience a wide range of threats including the unintended interaction with fisheries, noise pollution, ship strikes, pollution, plastic debris and habitat loss.

NOAA, an earth sciences arm of the Commerce Department, is the research and whale management agency within the United States government, and as such is the lead federal agency at International Whaling Commission meetings. NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events, and providing environmental stewardship of America's coastal and marine resources.

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