

US Supreme Court rejects bid by anti-whaling group

February 14 2013



Members of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society look at the group's multihull named after French screen legend and animal rights activist Brigitte Bardot, on May 25, 2011 in La Ciotat, south eastern France. The US Supreme Court has denied a plea from anti-whaling group Sea Shepherd to end restrictions on its movement as Japan's whalers accused the activists of violating orders to stay away.

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the activists of violating orders to stay away.

[Sea Shepherd](#), which disrupts Japan's controversial whaling missions in the Southern Ocean, last week asked the Supreme Court to end a lower court's injunction to stay at least 500 yards (meters) away from the vessels.

Justice Anthony Kennedy on Wednesday rejected the application, a [Supreme Court](#) document showed. As is customary for such denials, Kennedy did not offer commentary.

Japan's whalers earlier this week filed a motion with the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit accusing Sea Shepherd of violating the injunction when its ship, the Brigitte Bardot, approached whaling vessels on January 29.

Japan's whaling organizations, the government-backed Institute for Cetacean Research and the company Kyodo Senpaku, sought to find Sea Shepherd in contempt of court—which would carry potentially serious legal penalties.

Sea Shepherd has not denied that the Brigitte Bardot, a former ocean racer named after the French actress and animal rights activist, trailed the whalers. The group has claimed success by preventing the Japanese from killing [whales](#) this season.

But the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, based in Oregon, said its vessel was sailing under an Australian flag and operated by the group's Australian sister organization, meaning it is not subject to the US court order.

Australia and New Zealand voice outrage over Japan's annual whaling expeditions in the Southern Ocean, which the International Whaling

Commission considers a sanctuary for the ocean giants.

Japan uses a loophole in a 1986 global moratorium on [commercial whaling](#) that allows "lethal research" on whales and sets out to kill hundreds each year.

Japan makes no secret that the meat ends up on dinner plates and has pushed for a resumption of full-fledged commercial whaling, accusing Western nations of insensitivity to its cultural traditions.

The Ninth Circuit court issued the injunction on Sea Shepherd on December 17, citing safety concerns as it reviews a lawsuit from the [whalers](#).

Sea Shepherd has argued that the US court has no jurisdiction over activities halfway across the world.

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