

Japanese whalers, protesters clash off Antarctica

February 3 2014, by Kristen Gelineau



In this Feb. 2, 2014 photo provided by the Institute of Cetacean Research, Japanese whaling vessel Yuhsin Maru No. 3, left, and Sea Shepherd's the Bob Barker' collide in the remote, icy seas off Antarctica. No one was injured, though both ships received minor damage in the Sunday's collision - the latest drama in an annual battle between the conservationists and the whalers. Both sides are blaming each other for the crash. (AP Photo/The Institute of Cetacean Research)

A Japanese whaling ship and an anti-whaling protest boat collided in the remote, icy seas off Antarctica, with both sides on Monday blaming each

other for the crash.

No one was injured, though both ships received minor damage in Sunday's collision—the latest drama in an annual battle between the conservationists and the whalers.

Sea Shepherd, which each year tries to harass the whaling fleet into ending its hunt, said they were the victims of a lengthy attack by the whalers. The protest group said the whaling vessels spent hours dragging steel cables across the bows of the Sea Shepherd's ships in a bid to damage the rudders and propellers. Japan's Yushin Maru No. 3 then struck Sea Shepherd's Bob Barker when it crossed too closely in front of the protest ship, damaging its bow and anchor, said Peter Hammarstedt, captain of the Bob Barker.

"It was an unprovoked attack and they did so ruthlessly," Hammarstedt told The Associated Press by satellite phone from the Bob Barker, named after the famous "The Price is Right" game show host who donated millions of dollars to the group.

Japan, meanwhile, says Sea Shepherd is to blame. The Tokyo-based Institute of Cetacean Research, which sponsors the annual whale hunt, said in a statement that protesters on board two inflatable boats from the Bob Barker dropped ropes in front of the bow of the Yushin Maru, which became entangled in the ship's propeller. The Bob Barker then drew too close to the Yushin Maru No. 3, colliding with its stern and damaging the whaling ship's hull and railing, the institute said.



In this Feb. 2, 2014 photo released by Sea Shepherd, Japanese vessel Yushin Maru No. 2, center, sails alongside Sea Shepherds' The Bob Barker, left, in the Southern Ocean off Antarctica. A Japanese whaling ship Yushin Maru No. 3, and the anti-whaling protest boat the Bob Barker collided Sunday, Feb. 2, in the remote, icy seas off Antarctica, with both sides on Monday, Feb. 3, blaming each other for the crash. No one was injured, though both ships received minor damage in the the collision - the latest drama in an annual battle between the conservationists and the whalers. (AP Photo/Sea Shepherd Australia, Eliza Muirhead)

"Our research whaling is a legitimate activity allowed under the international treaty. Sea Shepherd's violent sabotage against it, which is threatening the lives of the Japanese crewmembers and causing damage to our ships and equipment, cannot be tolerated," Japan's Fisheries Agency said in a statement.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, Japan's top government

spokesman, said Japan has urged the Netherlands, where the activists' [ships](#) are registered, to take "effective" measures to prevent a recurrence.

Australia's Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt on Monday ordered an investigation into the collision.

Japan, which plans to kill about 1,000 [whales](#) this year, is allowed to hunt the animals for scientific purposes under an exception to a 1986 ban on whaling. Critics say the program is a cover for [commercial whaling](#), because whale meat not used for study is sold as food.

Last year, Australia went to the United Nations' highest court in a bid to outlaw Japan's annual whale hunt. The International Court of Justice is expected to issue its decision later this year.

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