

Season's first dolphins killed in Japan, say activists

September 16 2014



A placard reading 'Stop! Dolphin hunt' is displayed during a protest in central Tokyo on August 31, 2014 against an annual dolphin hunt in Taiji

The first dolphins of the season were slaughtered on Tuesday in the small Japanese town of Taiji, campaigners said, commencing an annual cull repeatedly condemned by animal rights groups.

Activists from the environmentalist group Sea Shepherd have been

monitoring a bay in Taiji, southwestern Japan, since the six-month dolphin hunting [season](#) began earlier this month.

"First pod of 2014-2015 being driven into cove now," the activists from Sea Shepherd, who call themselves "Cove Guardians", tweeted at 10:33 am (0133 GMT).

About an hour later, @CoveGuardians said: "First dolphin murder of the drive hunt season is complete as dead bodies are dragged to Taiji butcherhouse."

There were no details on the number of kills.

The local fishermen's association said they could not immediately confirm the report.

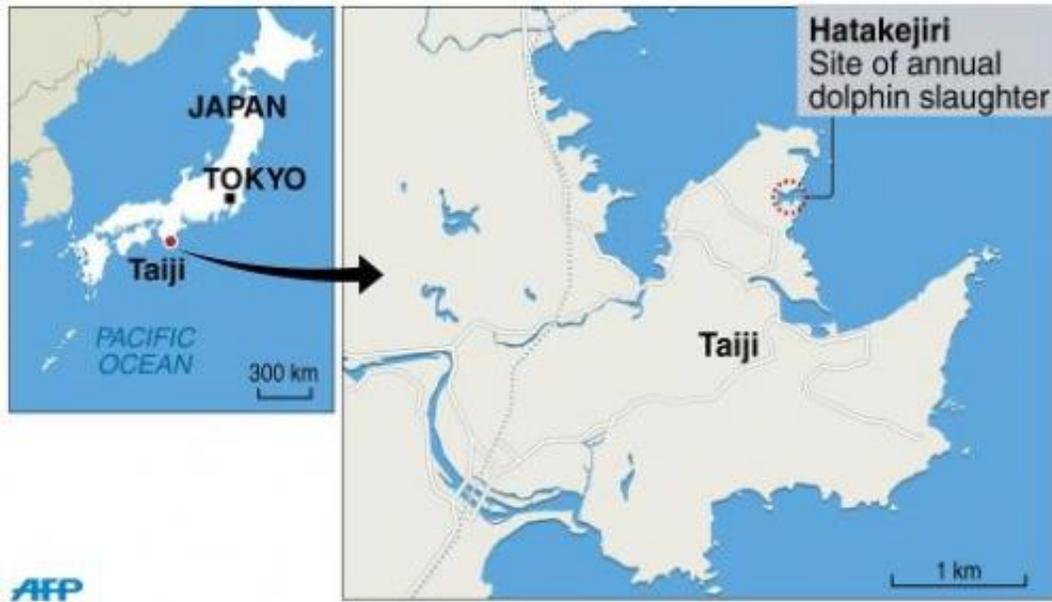
The campaigners are streaming live footage of a secluded bay, into which local fishermen corral hundreds of [dolphins](#) for slaughter, a practice that thrust the small town into the global spotlight in 2010 when it became the subject of the Oscar-winning documentary "The Cove".

Defenders say it is a tradition and point out that the animals it targets are not endangered, a position echoed by the Japanese government.

They say Western objections are hypocritical and ignore the vastly larger number of cows, pigs and sheep butchered to satisfy demand elsewhere.

Japan dolphin-slaughter town

First dolphins of the season slaughtered Tuesday, says environmentalist group Sea Shepherd



Map locating the Taiji dolphin slaughter cove in Japan

But critics of the practice say there is insufficient demand for the animals' meat, which in any case contains dangerous levels of mercury.

The annual dolphin hunting season opened on September 1, and is expected to continue until the end of February.



Every year fishermen corral dolphins for slaughter into this cove near the Japanese village of Taiji

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