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## **NEW FOOTAGE FUELS WELFARE ARGUMENT OF ANTI-WHALING LOBBY**

**As pro and anti-whalers meet in St Kitts to debate whale killing methods (Sunday 11 - Tuesday 13 June), new undercover footage is released which proves that there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea - even in optimum weather conditions.**

The footage, filmed by investigators from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), shows a Norwegian whaling ship firing a grenade-tipped harpoon into a minke whale. Despite the hunt taking place in perfect conditions, the whale takes some two-and-a-half minutes to die.

The whaling vessel, 'Brandsholmbøen' was filmed by investigators just off the coast of Hamningberg, Norway, last month, as it pursued the whale for 25 minutes before firing at it. Accompanying the hunted whale was another whale, which made a narrow escape. This is unusual for minke whales as they are usually solitary animals except during breeding or when with a calf. It is not known what the relationship between these two whales was.

This timely release coincides with a technical workshop on whale killing methods and associated welfare issues which takes place before the opening of the 2006 meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in St Kitts.

Commenting on the footage, Leah Garcés, WSPA's Director of Campaigns, said: "Despite this hunt taking place in optimum weather conditions, the kill is not instantaneous. This would not be an acceptable 'time to death' for a farm animal, so why should it be permitted for whale? Clearly, on cruelty grounds alone, all commercial and scientific whaling should cease."

EIA spokesperson Jennifer Lonsdale, added: "This investigation once again exposes the cruelty of modern day whaling, where an animal suffers being hunted and killed by an inaccurate shot from a moving vessel. A number of uncontrollable factors such as visibility, sea conditions, speed, and gunner accuracy prevent a guaranteed lethal shot. There is simply no humane way to kill a whale at sea."

This year there is a real fear that pro-whaling nations have gathered enough support within the IWC to overturn some vital and long standing conservation and welfare measures. WSPA and EIA are members of Whalewatch, a coalition of over 140 non-

governmental organisations, that campaigns to stop the unnecessary and inhumane practice of commercial and 'scientific' whaling.

Whalers will kill approximately 2,000 whales this year, taking the total death toll to over 25,000 since the ban on commercial whaling came into force in 1986.

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