

STATINTL

Peru Ships, Planes Attack Whalers, Seize 4 Vessels

By Walter Hamshar

Peruvian warships and planes bombed and strafed the nine-ship whaling fleet operated under the Panamanian flag by Aristotle Socrates Onassis, international ship operator, while the fleet was hunting whales yesterday and Monday off the coast of South America, according to reports received at the Onassis offices, 655 Madison Ave.

At least four vessels have been seized and the mother ship, Olympic Challenger, is being pursued by Peruvian naval craft. She was last reported 420 miles off the South American coast heading north. No reports of casualties have been received.

The Peruvian government confirmed the attack in an announcement at Lima, according to The United Press, and put the number of seized vessels at five. The government said the action had been taken because the fleet was operating within

the 200-mile territorial waters which are barred to foreign fishing vessels.

The mother ship radioed that she came under attack by a Peruvian plane at 8 a. m. yesterday New York time. The plane hovered above the vessel for several hours strafing the crew, the report said. A distress call was sent out by the whaling vessel because of the attack, but the Challenger is not in a sinking condition.

The Olympic Conqueror and Olympic Fighter, two hunter ships, were boarded by Peruvian Navy personnel 260 miles from the nation's coast, according to the radio report. Their crews surrendered without a struggle and were taken on board destroyers while prize crews were put on board the whaling ships.

On Monday the destroyers Aguirre and Rodriguez captured the whalers Olympic Victor and Olympic Lightning by surprise only 180 miles off the coast, Peru said, which would put them within the prohibited 200-mile zone.

Peruvian officials said the Navy and Air Force had been sent out "in defense of national sovereignty and of the country's marine wealth."

The Panamanian government was reported last night preparing a stiff protest to Peru for the incident. Two Panamanian inspectors are with the whaling fleet, which is manned by 1,000 German crewmen.

Ships in Pursuit

Peruvian ships were in pursuit of the Challenger with orders to capture her to determine how many whales had been caught in the prohibited zone.

Reports that one of the whalers had returned gunfire were scoffed at by an Onassis official. The only armament on board the ships are the whal-

ing harpoons which have a "very limited range."

The battle stems from a decree announced by Peru, Chile and Ecuador barring foreign ships from whaling within 200 miles of their coasts. The decree was announced after the Onassis fleet had set out from Hamburg, Germany, to hunt whales off the South American coast until the season in the Antarctic opens in December.

Orders to Fleet

Mr. Onassis said the fleet had been ordered to proceed and hunt outside the 200-mile zone, which contains the Humboldt Current.

The incident is expected to result in an International Court of Justice action to determine if the three South American nations can legally extend their territorial waters out 200 miles. The extension was to protect the marine life and help the coastal whaling industry in the three countries.

Mr. Onassis pointed out that the territorial limits of virtually all the nations of the world end from three to twelve miles off their coastline at sea.

Chile in Accord

SANTIAGO, Chile, Nov. 16 (AP). —Chilean Foreign Minister Roberto Aldunate said today that if it is true that the Onassis whaling fleet is operating outside the territorial waters of Chile, Peru and Ecuador "that means simply a punishable violation and in no way ignorance of the inalienable right of these three countries to proclaim their sovereignty over the adjacent seas."

The Foreign Minister added that representatives of the three countries will meet in Lima next month to ratify the recent accords on sovereignty and penalties, which include the seizure of the ships and fines.

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