

## Implications of SC/61/IA 20

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The extensive campaign of illegal whaling by the USSR from 1948 to 1973 has been well documented. This issue has been extensively reported and discussed within SC, which has accepted a revised catch record for the Southern Hemisphere. Until now, it has been generally assumed that the IWC's introduction of an International Observer Scheme (IOS), beginning in 1972, effectively put an end to this practice. However, in SC/61/IA20, Mikhalev *et al.* present evidence that illegal whaling and falsification of catch data continued well after introduction of the IOS, and with the complicity of the international inspectors involved.

These new revelations raise two important issues. Firstly, they contradict the prevailing belief that the post-IOS Soviet catch data are reliable; the fact that they apparently are not introduces significant problems for use of the existing catch record for IWC Comprehensive Assessments, notably as they relate to Southern Hemisphere minke whales. In light of Mikhalev *et al.*'s suggestion that further investigation may help to clarify the extent of data falsification after 1972, we suggest that a workplan be developed to determine whether sufficient records exist to address this question.

Secondly, the new information highlights a major failing of the IOS, namely that inspectors were restricted to those from countries engaged in bilateral agreements (in this case the USSR and Japan), and were appointed from countries with a vested interest in the whaling being inspected (Mikhalev *et al.* note that the USSR sold whale meat to the Japanese at sea during the period concerned). These problems should be considered in future discussions of inspection and enforcement provisions for any future Revised Management Scheme (RMS). Returning to the IOS is not a solution for the RMS.