

HOW TO SINK

*whalers, driftnetters,
and other environmentally
destructive ships*

Agent #013

Reprinted from Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching

Over 70 percent of the surface of this planet is covered by oceans. Some biologists estimate that 90 percent of the Earth's living biomass is in the oceans, and that 90 percent of the photosynthesis occurs in the oceans. The tropical forests may be the reservoirs of land-based biodiversity, but the oceans are the lungs, or air filters, of this planet.

The assault on the biological integrity of the seas is being waged on many fronts, by many financial buccaneers. Prominent among these ecological corsairs of the high seas are whalers, driftnetters, and toxic-dumping ships. This final section of Ecodefense offers clear directions for sending these outlaw ships to Davey Jones's locker.

I must first interject a few rules: No guns or explosives. You can sink whalers, driftnetters, and toxic-dumping ships by scuttling them. Using explosives could risk life and would definitely be very counterproductive with the media. If you do get caught with explosives, you can expect to do long time.

One other warning: Scuttling ships is not a college prank. It can be deadly serious. Get caught in Norway and you'll do time. Get caught in Taiwan and after a forced interrogation, they might deposit your body at the bottom of the harbor.

However, with the scuttling of ecologically destructive ships comes the possibility of doing tens of millions of dollars of economic damage. We are talking megatage here. The joy of bringing down a whaler can be one of the great pleasures in an eco-warrior's life. It can be the most treasured of feathers in one's spiritual war bonnet.

Tool List

It is our experience that you can quickly and easily get almost all the tools you will need in the country where you will do the scuttling. In fact, you must. We would not recommend going through customs with a one-meter long pair of bolt-cutters. Often there are pawnshops around seaports where you can buy what you need. We would advise buying tools in some town other than where the target ship is. It also may not be wise to stay in the town where the ship is docked.

Make sure that you leave no fingerprints on any of your tools.

There are two items on our list that you will have difficulty getting locally. Those are the lock-picking set and the CS tear gas. Both may be useful. You could disassemble and smuggle a small lock-picking kit into the country where you are going, but if you get caught with it, that will end your action.

Do not fly with tear gas. If you can safely obtain it or something else equally nauseating in the country where the action is to take place, do so.

mediately leave the country. Our experience is that it is best to leave. It may take them twelve hours to figure out that someone has sabotaged them. By then, you can be long gone.

As soon as you are safely away from the ship, take off and dispose of everything that you have worn onto the ship, including your shoes. Remember that your rubber gloves will have a perfect set of fingerprints inside. If possible, melt them; otherwise, dispose of them securely. Then wash yourself. Remove all of the diesel fuel and salt water. Put on clean clothes. Look like a tourist or businessperson - don't look like an anarchist.

Assuming you have not used explosives or violence against people, it will be difficult for the site country to extradite you, but they may try. Each case is different. In the past, countries have not even tried because of the potential embarrassment of a media trial. They want to keep their eco-crimes quiet. It is your personal choice whether you want to further embarrass the country where you did your scuttling by participating in such a trial. Some scuttlers have turned themselves in after the fact. Others have not. Some dream of becoming the "serial scuttler."

while it is locked wide open, so that no one will be able to close it before the boat sinks.

(This is the “high pucker factor” part of the action. Don’t be surprised at this point if your arse, of its own volition, bites five kilos of metal right out of the scaffolding you are sitting on.)

Step 9. Bash The Valve Stem With The Pipe Wrench

Hit it hard with the pipe wrench to try to bend it out of ØtrueÓ and further lock the valve wide open. While you are doing this, the engine room will be flooding all around you. Stay calm and just do it.

Step 10. Take Everything You Brought With You Out Of The Engine Room

Leave no material evidence.

Step 11. Tear Gas The Engine Room

If you have a tear gas canister, just before you step out of the engine room door, open the canister and set it up high someplace. Do not throw the tear gas into the incoming sea water – it will considerably reduce its effectiveness. Just trigger the canister and set it near the door.

Needless to say, you should shut your eyes and hold your breath while you do this. Or put on a gas mask. Then quickly shut the engine room door.

It is a serious crime to take tear gas on a commercial airplane. Do not do it.

Step 12. Put A Heavy-Duty, Long-Handled Lock On Both The Engine Room And The Main Entrance Doors

We may have broken their locks while entering their ship, so we feel it is only proper that we should replace their damaged property. We’re not scoundrels. WE also feel it to be rather improbable that their keys would fit our locks.

If they discover their ship is sinking, they will try to board and pump it out. We use the locks and tear gas to buy time. When a ship gets full enough of water, it hits a critical mass and cannot be rescued. The tear gas and locks help get to this point.

Locks must have a long locking loop on them. These doors are made of thick metal and the locking arm of the lock will have to travel through thick metal before it can catch.

Step 13. Ditch The Tools Overboard

Ease them into the water with a rope on the bag. Do not throw them in; someone could hear the splash of a thirty-kilo bag hitting the water.

Step 14. Get The Hell Out!

You have two basic choices: Either go underground at a safe house, or im-

[Editors’ note: see objections to the use of tear gas elsewhere in Ecodefense (pages 314 and 322, for example). Many ecodefenders believe that pepper sprays are just as effective and much safer (see page 318).]

Before undertaking monkeywrenching of this magnitude, study all of the techniques in Ecodefense. Be sure you can operate without leaving evidence.

Necessary Tool List

Large bolt cutters (at least 24 inches long)
Large pipe wrench
Large crescent wrench
Large pry bar
Phillips and flat-blade screwdrivers
Vise grips
Flashlights and headlamps
Lock-picking kit
Gloves, waterproof clothing, tarpaulin
Dark set of disposable clothes
Flexible rubber gloves
Complete change of clothes
Long heavy-duty high-quality padlocks (two per ship)
Half-full bottle of cheap hard liquor
Soap and water for clean-up

Optional - But Helpful - Tools
Two-way communications system
Small portable acetylene cutting torch
CS tear gas canisters (slow release type) or pepper spray
Collapsible sea kayak (depending on the site)

Insertion

The critical factor in sinking a ship is being able to sneak aboard it undetected. If you can do that, you can bring the ship down. The actual mechanics of sinking the ship are not nearly as difficult as locating the ship and boarding it undetected.

All ships come to dock for repairs and preparation for the next season. This is when you can sneak aboard the ship for scuttling. There will be times when no one is on board the ship. Do not try to scuttle a ship when someone is aboard it. They will detect you. Typically, nights and holidays are the best times to secretly board a ship. The ships may be moored next to the dock, or anchored out at harbor. You may need a collapsible kayak to get at it. Or you may have to ØborrowÓ a rowboat. Determining when no one is aboard may require much observation. But in some cases when we have found the boat, we have determined immediately that no one was aboard (for example, no tracks in the snow on or around the ship). We have then gone in and sunk the ship on the spot.

Each situation is different. With increased observation, you run the risk of being observed yourself and blowing your cover. If they become suspicious of you, you will not be able to sink the ship. Surprise is everything. At a certain point, you must decide whether the action is feasible or not. If you think it is, then go for it.

Be sure to get the right ship. Make sure that it is an active whaler or drift-netter or other evildoer. Only sink the ships that are guilty of ecological devastation.

Now, Our Fourteen Proven Steps On How To Sink a Ship.

Step 1. Board The Ship Undetected

First board the ship and then hide yourself and your tools. Wear rubber gloves at all times and do not take them off. You can hide in the stairwells, in the middle of the gear stacked on deck, or wherever. You could carry a tarp and hide under it. Then wait. For ten or fifteen minutes, do not move. If someone has seen you board the ship, this will give them the time to come searching for you, and you will find out if you have been seen or not. If they are going to catch you, it is much better that they do so while you are just trespassing, rather than sabotaging. The penalties are not nearly so severe. You should have a half-bottle of hard liquor with you. Take a swig or two so that you have booze on your breath. If they catch you, try to pass yourself off as just another drunk sailor in port. In many port towns, these are common. If you ink you are about to be caught, try to dump your tool bag in to the water. If they find both you and the bag, your tool bag will be very incriminating.

Step 2. Get Into The Engine Room

You may have to cut or pick locks, use pry bars, or even use a cutting torch to get in. Often, though, the doors are wide open. Typically, the entrance to the engine room is near the stem, at the bottom of the ship. Its door may be locked, but you can open its lock in privacy. The engine room is an oily, toxic-waste filled area. You will probably get dirty with the rust and oil in this room.

Step 3. Find The Sea Water Intake Valve

All large ocean-going ships have salt water intake valves and piping. These ships need salt water for deck cleansing, fire fighting, and for cooking their massive diesel engines. There are no air-cooled diesel engines out at sea. Usually, the coolant radiator from the diesel engine is bathed in a steady stream of cool sea water. The best way to find the sea water intake valve is to follow the piping. Ocean-going ships typically have four or five different types of plumbing - for fresh water, salt water, fuel oil, engine oil, and hydraulic fluid. The salt water pipes are generally the thickest. The sea water intake valve is almost always located in the engine room. Keep following the pipes to the thickest one that appears to be attached to the side of the bottom of the ship. Here is where the sea water enters the ship.

Ships with keel-cooling systems are exceptions. Keel-cooling ships pump their engine coolant directly into cooling pipes attached to the keel (outside) of the ship. They do not use internal heat exchange with salt water. These ships typically stay in colder waters. Norwegian whalers use keel-cooling systems. They still need sea water for deck cleaning and fire fighting, however, so they do have salt water intake systems. Their sea water intakes are not as large, but they are plenty big for scuttling. The Norwegian pirate whaling ship, the Nybrena, which we sank on December 27, 1992, had a keel-cooling system.

Step 4. Close The Sea Water Intake Valve

You need to close this so that you can cut off the pressure to the piping. If the ship is in dock for any amount of time, they should have closed the valve already. But we have boarded ships and found the valve left open. We have had to shut the valve, do our work, and then reopen the valve to sink the ship.

Step 5. Remove The Handle From The Valve

We take the handle off so that if they find the ship in the process of sinking, they cannot easily shut off the valve. The valve handle may look either like a steering wheel or a lever type handle. Remove the retaining nut holding the handle on, then pull the handle off. Hide the handle somewhere away from the valve stem. That leaves just the valve stem protruding outward from the valve.

Step 6. Disconnect The Piping Coming Out Of The Valve

Now that you have closed the valve, you have removed the water pressure from the system and you can work more easily. Use your pipe wrench, crescent wrench, and vise grips to remove the pipe or plating near the intake valve. The larger the pipe you remove, the better. You will have to improvise here. Study the pipe and find one that you can take off. Be prepared for spraying water when you are taking the bolts off. This is water already in the system which you are now bleeding out. It will stop draining shortly.

Do not just loosen the pipe. Take all the bolts off and remove it. Carry the pipe away from where you disconnected it. You are getting close.

Step 7. Gather All Your Tools And Put Them Back In Your Bag

Gather everything that you brought aboard. Everything. You want to be ready to make a quick exit.

Step 8. Open The Salt Water Intake Valve With Your Pipe Wrench

This is the moment you have been waiting for. Put your pipe wrench on the valve stem and open the valve.

Salt water should begin spraying all over the place. Keep turning the valve stem until the valve is wide open. (The ship has now hit the fan!) Then lean on the pipe wrench and push it as hard as you can. Try to break the valve