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From: Jill Serjeant, Reuters

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### **U.S. Navy Sued over 'Ear-Splitting' Sonar on Whales**

**LOS ANGELES — A coalition of environmental groups sued the U.S. Navy Wednesday over the use of sonar, saying that the ear-splitting sounds can cause mass whale and dolphin strandings and internal bleeding.**

The Natural Defense Resources Council, or NRDC, leading the coalition, said in a federal lawsuit that sonar used in routine training and testing violated environmental laws. It accused the Navy of failing to take precautions that could spare marine animals injury and death.

Actor Pierce Brosnan, in a videotaped statement, said that without reasonable limits military sonar could contribute to the extinction of some species.

"We owe it to our children to be better stewards of the environment," Brosnan said. "The alternative? -- a world without whales. It's too terrible to imagine."

The Navy had no direct comment on the lawsuit but said in a statement that sonar use and training was critical to U.S. national defense.

Animal welfare organizations have been lobbying for years to restrict military sonar, which is used to locate submarines and other underwater objects.

They have documented dozens of cases of mass whale strandings and deaths around the world that they say are associated with sonar blasts, which are thought to disorient marine mammals and can cause bleeding from the eyes and ears.

Two years ago the NRDC and other groups successfully blocked the global deployment of the U.S. Navy's low-frequency active sonar system and restricted its use to testing and training in a limited area of the north-west Pacific Ocean.

Wednesday's lawsuit targets mid-frequency sonar which the coalition said can emit noise above 235 decibels and sounds like a rocket blasting off.

The suit said the Navy's use of mid-frequency sonar violates the Marine Mammal Act and at least two other federal laws. The legal action seeks to compel the Navy to take precautions such as avoiding migration routes and breeding areas or increasing the volume of sonar activity gradually so that mammals have a chance to flee.

"Military sonar needlessly threatens whole populations of whales and other marine animals," said Joel Reynolds, an NRDC lawyer. "In violation of our environmental laws, the Navy refuses to take basic precautions that could spare these majestic creatures. Now we're asking the courts to enforce those laws."

The Navy said it had "developed and implemented a comprehensive strategy for assessing the potential effects of its use of mid-range active sonar on marine mammals.

"We employ scientifically-based protective measures as part of that strategy," the Navy statement said.

*Source: Reuters*

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