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PORPOISE, ESCORTED FROM BALTIMORE BY POLICE, ONE STEP CLOSER TO RELEASE

National Aquarium in Baltimore and United States Coast Guard Flew Animal to Maine

Baltimore, Md. (Sept. 5, 2003) - A harbor porpoise left the National Aquarium in Baltimore with an escort by Maryland Transportation Authority Motor Unit, Baltimore City and Baltimore County police departments. After arriving at Marin State Airport, the United States Coast Guard flew the porpoise, veterinarians and animal care specialists to Portland, Maine.

The porpoise will continue the final stages of rehabilitation at the Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Center of the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine. He will be released in the Gulf of Maine.

At approximately 14 months of age, the harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) stranded March 21, 2003, along North Carolina's Outer Banks. After spending a night at the Virginia Marine Science Museum in Virginia Beach, Va. for observation, volunteers drove him to Baltimore, Md. During his five-month stay in Baltimore, the porpoise, known as 0304Pp, has gained strength and an impressive 35 pounds. He now weighs 75 pounds.

Porpoises, solitary creatures found off the Mid-Atlantic coast during the winter, migrate north to the Gulf of Maine during the warmer months. Upon release, a satellite tag will allow scientists to track his movements and diving patterns, helping them assess the animal's behavior and health. His movements will also be tracked on-line at:

http://whale.wheelock.edu/whalenet-stuff/stop_cover.html.

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This will be the third harbor porpoise that the National Aquarium in Baltimore's Marine Animal Rescue Program has helped rehabilitate and released. The Program's goal is to rescue, rehabilitate and release stranded marine mammals and sea turtles.

The United States Coast Guard Falcon jet, stationed in Cape Cod, Ma., flew the porpoise on a "mission of mercy." In the past, the Coast Guard has helped the Aquarium transport and release stranded animals, including dolphins and a pygmy sperm whale.

The University of New England's Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Center and the National Aquarium in Baltimore's Marine Animal Rescue Program are members of the Northeast Region Stranding Network. The network is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Baltimore's leading attraction, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium's mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. Its impact extends well beyond the walls through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

The University of New England is an independent university with two distinctive campuses on the coast of southern Maine. The University's mission is to educate men and women to advance the quality of human life and the environment. The Biddeford, Maine campus features a unique Marine Science Center that combines education, research and marine mammal rehabilitation in one facility.