

Sealers' deaths sparks federal probe

by UPI

OTTAWA -- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police force is investigating coast guard activities that led to four seal hunters drowning during the weekend. A guard vessel was towing a disabled 40-foot seal hunting boat through ice-choked waters Saturday when the fishing vessel capsized off Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Two men were rescued by another hunting boat. Three others drowned and a fourth man is missing and presumed dead, officials said. The Canadian Department Fisheries and Oceans and the coast guard issued a statement Sunday that offered condolences to the sealers' families and said the coast guard would conduct its own safety review, the Globe and Mail reported. The hunters were from the Iles de la Madeleine area of Quebec, where family and residents are demanding a full federal inquiry, the report said. Transport Canada spokeswoman Lucy Vignola told the Canwest News Service the agency has also launched an investigation into why no one on board the rescue ship was keeping watch on the towed ship and also why the six sealers were allowed to stay on the *Acadien II* during its rescue.

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