

## Canada to prosecute seal hunt protesters

*by UPI*

OTTAWA -- The Canadian government will prosecute seal hunt protesters whose ship had a showdown with the coast guard, a government minister said. Fisheries Minister Loyola Hearn said the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society would face charges over a weekend incident in which its ship and a coast guard vessel came in contact twice, The Gazette newspaper in Montreal reported Friday. "We will protect our sealers. ... We will pursue charges," Hearn told Parliament Thursday. Federal seal hunt regulations specify observers cannot come closer than a half-mile to sealers, but Newfoundland sealer Shane Briand told the newspaper the protesters came within 100 feet of his boat Sunday before the coast guard intervened. "If they (coast guard) hadn't arrived, we would have had to get in our speedboats to escape," he said. The Sea Shepherd group alleges the coast guard ship rammed its ship twice, an allegation denied by government officials, the report said.

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