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Cap Rouge II Report Ignores Problems at Coast Guard

OTTAWA— “The Report of the Transportation Safety Board into the sinking of the Cap Rouge II in the summer of 2002 addresses the condition of the vessel and the actions of the captain and crew prior to and immediately after the capsizing but does not critically examine the failed rescue attempt by the Coast Guard,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-South Richmond).

The Report observes that the Coast Guard “dive team did everything possible within the scope of their procedures to reach the victims of the capsizing” but fails to critically assess those procedures and the Coast Guard’s efforts that day.

Nowhere in the Board’s Report are we told that the Coast Guard’s front line hovercraft, the Siyay, was unavailable to the dive team when the rescue was initiated. It was in for repairs.

Nowhere are we told of the chaos that occurred when the divers attempted to use the backup hovercraft, the 045, as a diving platform. At one point in the failed rescue, the 045 appeared to be taking on water and had to return to base.

No mention is made of the fact that the Canadian Forces new Search and Rescue Cormorant helicopter with the SAR dive team and main operational dive gear was unavailable that day. The Cormorant had been deployed to the interior of British Columbia.

The Transportation Safety Board’s Report ignores the fact that almost nothing went right in the rescue that day. Chaos reigned. That problems in the Coast Guard may have prevented a rescue from being attempted that day is not evident from a reading of the Safety Board’s Report on the incident.

The Transportation Safety Board ignores the public’s need to know the truth about why people died that day when it restricts its investigation to issues of vessel stability and crew response.

“Their failure to address the actions of the Coast Guard is a glaring omission,” concluded Cummins. “The public expected an independent investigation into the Coast Guard’s response to this tragic event. It didn’t get it.”

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