

Clark not taking peace plan to Mideast: officials

By David Lord
The Canadian Press

External Affairs Minister Joe Clark won't be carrying a Canadian proposal to break the impasse in peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors when he arrives in the strife-torn Middle East on Thursday, departmental officials say.

At a briefing Tuesday on the 11-day trip to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel the officials played down Canada's potential role in the stalled peace process, saying Clark is aware that Canada can only play a "fairly modest" part in encouraging moderates on both sides.

In 1979, Clark incensed the Arab world, Canada's western allies and Canadian companies doing business in the Middle East when as prime minister he promised to move the Canadian embassy in Israel to Israeli-occupied Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Clark backed down after Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, threatened economic reprisals, and a special envoy, former

Conservative leader Robert Stanfield, reported that moving the embassy would be a mistake.



Clark's officials, speaking on condition they not be named, said Tuesday the incident now is "ancient history," and wasn't brought up by Arab diplomats during planning for this trip.

They also suggested that Clark should take little heat from Arab leaders for Canada's stand on the confrontation between Libya and the United States last week in the Gulf of Sidra.

One spokesman said at the briefing that since the incident Canada has received "assurances" from U.S. and Libyan officials that Canada's concerns about the safety of the estimated 1,300 Canadian oil workers in Libya will be taken into account.

Canada's official response to the skirmish in which two Libyan missile boats were damaged, two sunk and a missile site attacked, was that the U.S. forces had struck in self-defence after being attacked by Libyan missiles and that Khadafy's claim to the Gulf would not stand up in the World Court.

Clark will be accompanied by department officials and his wife, Maureen McTeer.

One official said the trip is important for Canada because of Canadian exports of goods and services to the region of about \$3 billion in 1984 and because it is an area of "past, present and future conflict."

In Jordan, talks are expected to centre on Amman's key role in the Middle East peace process and the setting up of an agreement aimed at increasing economic ties.

Clark is also scheduled to open a Canadian-funded school for Palestinian refugees and tour farms in the Jordan Valley.

In Saudi Arabia, he is expected to discuss slumping world oil prices, the Arab-Israel dispute

and the Persian Gulf war between Iraq and Iran.

In Egypt, talks will deal with the Gulf war, Israeli-Egyptian relations and aid and he will sign an aid agreement worth about \$80 million to help recover soil in the Nile Delta.

Clark will make a quick visit to Canadian peacekeeping troops in the Sinai Desert before heading for Israel.

Aside from the diplomatic meetings with Israeli leaders, Clark will tour Jerusalem and Bethlehem, visit a memorial to Jews killed by the Nazis during the Second World War and an eye hospital for West Bank Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

Clark left Ottawa for Rome Tuesday and arrives in Jordan Thursday. He will be in Jordan April 3-6, Saudi Arabia April 6-8, Egypt April 8-10 and Israel April 10-14. He is to arrive in Paris April 14 to accompany Finance Minister Michael Wilson and Trade Minister James Keleher to a weekend meeting of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.