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CANADA FILES WRITTEN ARGUMENTS IN GULF OF MAINE BOUNDARY CASE

The Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, and the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, announced today that Canada has filed with the International Court of Justice its first written arguments (in a document known as a "Memorial") in the case involving the maritime boundary in the Gulf of Maine area. This case centres on a dispute between Canada and the United States as to the dividing line between their respective continental shelves and 200-mile fishing zones on the Atlantic Coast.

The Canadian Memorial was filed on September 27 with the Registrar of the International Court of Justice in The Hague. It sets out Canada's claim to almost half of Georges Bank, the rich fishing grounds and promising hydrocarbon area seaward of the Gulf of Maine, off the coasts of Nova Scotia and Massachusetts. The U.S. Memorial, also filed with the Court on September 27, asserts a claim to the whole of this Bank.

The basic Canadian argument is that the equi-distance line claimed by Canada represents an equitable solution that takes account of all relevant factors. By agreement between the two countries, however, their respective Memorials and other written pleadings are not to be made public until the opening of the oral proceedings in this case. These proceedings will be held in The Hague, possibly in late 1983 or early 1984. At least one further exchange of written pleadings (known as a "Counter-Memorial") will take place before that time.

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The Gulf of Maine area maritime boundary case will be heard by a special five-member Chamber of the International Court of Justice. The president of the Chamber is Judge Roberto Ago of Italy. The other members are Judge André Gros (France), Judge Hermann Mosler (Federal Republic of Germany), Judge Stephen Schwebel (United States) and Judge ad hoc Maxwell Cohen (Canada). The Agent for Canada in the case is L.H. Legault, Q.C., Legal Adviser to the Department of External Affairs; the U.S. Agent is Davis Robinson, Legal Adviser to the State Department.