

Sri Lanka asks Canada to send Tamil home

OTTAWA (CP) — The Sri Lankan government yesterday demanded Canada extradite a Tamil refugee who has accused the Sri Lankan high commissioner to Canada of torturing him while he was in detention in the city of Jaffna in 1979.

The demand was made in Colombo by the Sri Lankan national security minister, Lalith Athulathmudali, while the acting foreign affairs minister, Tyrone Fernando, threatened reprisals against Canadian diplomats if Ottawa decides to inquire into the record of the high commissioner here.

External Affairs Minister Joe Clark added little to clarify the situation when he said there might be allegations of something dark in the past of former Brig.-Gen. Tissa Weeratunga, but that there aren't enough "true facts" to justify Canadian action against him at this stage.

Made charge

He said cautious inquiries are being made by Canadian officials into allegations from several sources about an alleged record of torture and military excess by Weeratunga and his troops battling Tamil separatists since 1979.

The flap arose after Tamil refugee Umapathisivan (Baby) Parara-

jasegaran came to Ottawa Monday and held a news conference at which he accused the high commissioner of torturing him.

Weeratunga insisted in an interview that he is innocent and denied ever harming a hair on Pararajasegaran's scarred head. He went on to say that Pararajasegaran was wanted in Sri Lanka on suspicion of murder.

Cautious reply

However, a spokesman for the External Affairs Department said there is no extradition treaty between Canada and Sri Lanka and therefore no obligation on Canadian authorities to co-operate with that request.

Clark took a cautious line responding to questions from reporters about Fernando's statement.

He said he had not "seen" the supposed threat and he would not say how seriously he regarded it until he had.

Clark's comments also added little to clarify exactly what action the government is taking to determine whether the allegations by Pararajasegaran and others about Weeratunga's past are true.

Clark said that some of the claims are being disputed by the Sri Lankan government and efforts are being made to separate the wheat from the chaff.