

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 109/2005
15 November 2005

The Opposition understands that one of the so-called “red-lines” of the Spanish Government in any new Airport Deal is that it should not alter what was achieved in terms of involvement under the 1987 Airport Agreement.

This appears to have been confirmed in a recent interview with the Spanish negotiator Mr Pons in the “Bitacora” programme in which he argued that the 1987 airport agreement, although it was never implemented, did not involve Gibraltar making sovereignty concessions to Spain. Mr Pons argued that although the Gibraltar Government had been involved in its negotiation, the refusal to implement its terms followed the change of Government in Gibraltar in 1988 when the GSLP was elected.

The Spanish position seems to be now that in order to ensure Gibraltarian support for a replacement Airport Deal, the new Deal has to give a greater role to the Gibraltar Government at the expense of the United Kingdom. This is in line with the new Spanish thinking that the UK must be projected as the enemy and that the Gibraltarians must be shown friendship.

The Spanish position is that since both Spain and UK in 1987 jointly stated that the Airport Agreement was without prejudice to their respective positions on the sovereignty of the isthmus, this is sufficient to claim that the deal itself was sovereignty-neutral.

The Spanish view is therefore that on that basis it is not reasonable for the replacement deal to give a lower level of participation to Spain than was conceded in 1987. It appears to be a question of how the wording of the agreement is drafted so that it meets the Spanish “red-lines” without appearing to involve Gibraltar conceding ground.

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