

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 141/2006
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The reaction of the Government to the comments made on television by Miguel Angel Moratinos has been to accuse the Opposition of hyperactive political opportunism. The Opposition totally rejects that there is any basis for such an accusation.

It is the Government itself that has become hyperactive after they have been caught with their pants down when they said that it was inconceivable that Mr Moratinos had said what was published in AREA.

It will be recalled that in September, the Opposition waited until it had heard all the explanations from the Government and had studied the text of the agreements in detail before expressing a view. The Opposition then said what elements of the agreement it considered unacceptable and would not implement when they are due to come into effect in eighteen months to two years time.

That position was the same before Mr Moratinos spoke as it is now.

It is nonsense to suggest that anybody is taking as gospel what Mr Moratinos has said. What he has spelt out are the advantages to Spain, and the concessions Madrid has obtained, in the judgement of the Government of Spain of which he is the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

What is quite extraordinary is that Mr Moratinos should say that the agreement done with Mr Caruana is more favourable to Spain than the one that was rejected by the whole of Gibraltar in 1987, and that the Government, in reacting to this, should not condemn Mr Moratino's position.

Whether this agreement is more advantageous to Spain than the 1987 one was is a matter of judgement, but one would have thought that of the three parties involved in entering into this agreement, the one best qualified to judge what gives most advantage to Spain is the Foreign Minister of Spain, and not the UK Minister for Europe or the Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

Moreover, the explanation subsequently provided by officials of the Spanish Foreign Ministry of the basis of this comment by Mr Moratinos, is that in the judgement of Mr Moratinos, Spain's involvement through a joint venture company in the day to day running of Gibraltar's air terminal strengthens and provides a copper-bottomed guarantee in respect of its claim on the disputed sovereignty (as they see it) of the isthmus on which the airport is built.

If anyone in Gibraltar had made this evaluation of the significance of granting a contract to run the terminal in 2008 he would without a doubt have found himself at the receiving end of the entire vocabulary of the Government's string of insulting adjectives which they sprinkle on their press

releases whenever their judgement is questioned on anything.

Since it is Mr Moratinos who has made the evaluation, the Government's reaction has been to describe it mildly as a mistake on his part.

As far as the Opposition is concerned, therefore, what Mr Moratinos has said has simply served to reinforce the decision of the Opposition to oppose the involvement of Spain in the terminal in 2008.

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