

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Opposition reject the latest attack on Gibraltar made by Partido Popular Foreign Affairs spokesman Gustavo de Aristegui during a visit to San Roque this week. Mr Aristegui said that the waters around the Rock are Spanish and accused Gibraltar of piracy by having armed patrols in these waters. This is only one of a continuing number of attacks on Gibraltar by Spanish politicians.

It is obvious that Mr Aristegui cannot be very familiar with international law or with the position on the ground. The fact is that the United Kingdom has controlled, administered and exercised sovereignty over these waters for hundreds of years. Moreover, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea confirms that Gibraltar has three miles of territorial sea and is entitled to claim twelve miles where this is geographically possible.

It is clear that Mr Aristegui has the same ill-informed obsession about Gibraltar issues as his party colleague Ignacio Landlauce who wastes no time in attacking us even when his facts are wrong.

On the same subject, the Opposition also note the comments made by Spanish Senator Carracao, this time from the governing PSOE party, that Spain is confident that its view will prevail and that they will win the case about the waters which is before the European courts.

The Opposition consider that the Spanish Senator is wrong in his analysis. It will be recalled that in 2006 the United Kingdom designated an area of Gibraltar waters as a site of community interest under an EU directive. This involved specific legal obligations in relation to the environment and marine life of the maritime zone. The European Commission last year accepted the Spanish proposal for designation of a site which overlapped and absorbed Gibraltar's territorial waters as if they were Spanish. This acceptance of the Spanish proposal and designation by the European Commission is being challenged in Court.

A Spanish victory in this case, through which their designation is upheld, would obviously be a disaster for Gibraltar.

The Mayor of La Linea has now added his voice to the continuing attacks on Gibraltar by threatening to control and restrict the length of the traffic queue to come into Gibraltar. The practical affect of the measures announced by the Mayor is that drivers will be asked to park their car in Spain or to move on and return when the queue is shorter.

This move has the potential to affect and disrupt trade and could have a negative impact on commercial enterprises in Gibraltar. There is a risk that persons waiting to come into Gibraltar, including tourists and others coming in for specific products such as filling up their tanks with petrol, will be put off from visiting Gibraltar if the Mayor carries out his threat.

It is difficult to see how the measures announced by the Mayor can improve traffic flow across the border or even in La Linea itself. The only thing that will happen is that tourists coming to visit Gibraltar, Spaniards working in Gibraltar and Gibraltarians coming back home will have to drive round La Linea in circles until they can come in.

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