

## **STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION**

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The Opposition condemn and totally reject the position of the Partido Popular in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Spanish Parliament in tabling a motion which claims that our waters are Spanish. While it is not surprising that the PP should continue with their assault on everything to do with Gibraltar, the institutional nature of this action represents an increase in the seriousness of the attacks.

The motion, which is due for debate this Wednesday, has been tabled by Gustavo de Aristegui and it is expected to be argued by PP MP for Cadiz Jose Ignacio Landaluze. The PP claims that the motion has been prompted because the Royal Gibraltar Police have asked private Spanish boats and civil guard patrol boats to leave the waters around the Rock. It seeks a firm commitment from the Spanish Government to defend what they consider to be Spanish waters.

It is obvious that the purpose of this exercise is to commit the present Government of Spain by a resolution of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which includes Government and Opposition, to a common policy of attempting to take over the territorial waters of Gibraltar.

Indeed, it is not that the PSOE Government needs much prompting on this issue. It will be recalled that a Spanish proposal to designate Gibraltar waters as if they were Spanish in an EU directive was accepted by the European Commission at the end of last year. Following this designation, a Spanish fisheries protection vessel, the corvette "Tarifa", entered Gibraltar waters and proceeded to act as if the waters were Spanish. A Spanish RIB which had been launched from the vessel refused to leave when challenged by the Royal Navy. There have also been a number of cases where Spanish Civil Guard patrol boats have requested documentation from Gibraltarians on pleasure boats inside Gibraltar's present three-mile territorial sea.

It is important to note that over the last couple of days there have been no less than 32 ships calling at Gibraltar, that majority of which came in for bunkers supplied by Gibraltar and paid their dues to the Government of Gibraltar. The motion tabled by the Partido Popular seeks to commit the Spanish Government to the view that all these vessels have been acting illegally. The implications of the motion therefore go further than the issue of demarcation of waters and represent a wholesale attack on the bunkering trade being operated from Gibraltar.

It is no coincidence that the Spanish media has this weekend been showing footage of Greenpeace campaigning against shipping activity in the Bay of Gibraltar and attacking the Spanish Government for permitting it even though these are Gibraltar waters.

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