

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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Spanish politicians are creating unnecessary confrontation in the territorial waters of Gibraltar by continuing to insist that Gibraltar has no waters and that the sea surrounding the Rock belongs to Spain. The Opposition condemn the irresponsible position of Spanish Government on this matter which can only serve as encouragement for their own nationals to come here and defy the authority of the Royal Gibraltar Police in the waters around the Rock.

The misleading and untrue information being disseminated by the Spanish Government is something that is clearly now trickling down from the political establishment to ordinary citizens in Spain. There are those across the border who believe the propaganda being put out by their own Government and repeated by the Spanish media. Indeed, it will be recalled that during the summer months Spanish pleasure speedboats and jet-skis frequently defied the authority of the RGP at different beaches around Gibraltar.

This attitude was also abundantly clear following the arrest last week of a Spanish national who was fishing near Gibraltar and who was arrested because he had an outstanding warrant for a traffic offence. When the boat, which was occupied by two Spanish nationals, was stopped by the Royal Gibraltar Police and documentation was requested, the initial response from the occupants of the boat was that these were not Gibraltar's waters, that they were Spanish waters and that the RGP had no jurisdiction. This has been made clear by the Spaniards themselves when they were interviewed by the Spanish media.

In this instance, the people in question handed over their documentation when this was requested and one of them did not resist arrest. The second Spaniard, who was not arrested, then made his way to the Spanish police and reported the RGP. The Spanish police agreed with him that Gibraltar has no waters and that the RGP had no right to take the action that they took.

To add insult to injury the Spanish Foreign Ministry has now asked London for an explanation following the arrest made by the RGP last week. Madrid should be told that the role of the RGP is to uphold the law of Gibraltar in the territory of Gibraltar and this includes our territorial sea. This is no different to what the Spanish law enforcement agencies do in their own territory and in their own waters.

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