

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

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The latest incursion by the Guardia Civil into Camp Bay at a time when there were bathers in the water is outrageous and represents a frontal challenge to the sovereignty and jurisdiction that Gibraltar exercises in the waters around the Rock. The problem, as the Opposition predicted, has intensified over the last few weeks given the failure to take strong and decisive action in order to put an end to these incursions once and for all.

The Opposition has received detailed eyewitness accounts of the latest incident that took place yesterday at Camp Bay. A jet-ski with two persons on board was being pursued by a Civil Guard patrol boat inside the territorial waters of Gibraltar. The jet-ski entered Camp Bay and landed on the shore and the Civil Guard patrol boat followed at speed and nearly hit a young girl who was in the water. The Guardia Civil then proceeded to back pedal and position their vessel at the marker buoys waiting for the jet-ski to exit.

At this time, the Royal Gibraltar Police arrived on the scene first with a RHIB and then with a launch. They positioned themselves next to the Guardia Civil vessel. The RGP was followed on the scene by two Royal Navy patrol boats who positioned themselves one at each end of the Guardia Civil launch. This stand-off continued for over half an hour, presumably while instructions were obtained on how to proceed. It ended with the release of the Guardia Civil patrol boat and no arrests.

This latest incursion at Camp Bay follows a string of incidents which have been marked by reckless and irresponsible behaviour on the part of the Guardia Civil. They have shown an increasing disregard for safety at sea and for the normal rules of maritime behaviour that is to be expected from an agency of the Spanish state. The danger that the Civil Guard pose to shipping has now been taken a step further with danger posed to bathers as well.

The Opposition consider that it was only a matter of time before the seriousness of the incidents with the Guardia Civil escalated to this level. The issue now is not only the question of sovereignty, but also safety and security at sea within the territorial waters of Gibraltar. The Gibraltar Government indicated over a year ago that they intended to increase the capability of their maritime assets including the purchase of larger and faster vessels. Given the millions of pounds that the Government have borrowed for capital investment why have they not invested in the purchase of these vessels which they said were necessary to protect our jurisdiction in our waters a year ago. Is it that they are afraid of upsetting the Spanish Government? The situation at sea is getting worse and worse by the day. Spain continues to make a mockery both of the laws of Gibraltar and of our sovereign rights and nobody is doing anything about it.