

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

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The latest clash between a Guardia Civil launch and the Royal Navy provides ample proof that the Spaniards continue to behave as if all the waters around Gibraltar belong to them. It is probably no coincidence that this is happening at the same time as Argentina is seeking international support from Latin American countries in relation to the Falkland Islands.

The details of this latest incursion have been published in the Spanish press. No official information has been made public in Gibraltar even though the incident is reported to have taken place earlier this month. The Opposition understand that a Royal Navy patrol boat and RIB were challenged by the Guardia Civil in international waters off the east side. The reports indicate that the Navy vessel immediately raised two flags which warned the Spanish launch that they were in danger and heading towards danger if they continued on their intercept course. The Navy also warned the Civil Guard by loudhailer that they had five minutes to leave the scene.

The Civil Guard left the area and proceeded towards Europa Point, this time well within British waters, where they were approached by an RGP launch. The result of the encounter, as reported, was that the Civil Guard continued on their way within British waters and the RGP left the scene. The Royal Navy, which the unit responsible for maintaining the integrity of British sovereignty over our territorial waters, then returned and escorted the Civil Guard to the median line in the Bay until they were back on the Spanish side.

The Opposition considers that the actions of the agencies of the Spanish Government within the waters of Gibraltar must always be forcefully and firmly challenged as appears to have happened on this occasion. There continues to be an absolute lack of respect on the part of Spain for the authority, the jurisdiction and the sovereignty that Gibraltar exercises over its territorial sea.

While the substance of the Spanish position has traditionally been the same one over the years, there can be no doubt that the manner in which they are asserting their claim to our waters has become more aggressive in recent times. It is important to recall that the spate of incursions has coincided with the designation of Gibraltar's waters in the EU as if they were Spanish on a proposal from Madrid. There can be no doubt that the Spanish Government has since proceeded to act in a manner which gives effect to their designation. The European Commission is on record as having suggested that there should be

joint administration of the maritime site between the United Kingdom and Spain. This joint administration, joint patrols or joint supervision is totally unacceptable.

The increased aggression from Madrid over Gibraltar comes at a time when Argentina has also increased the pressure on the United Kingdom in relation to the Falkland Islands. The Argentine Government is seeking support from the Rio Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries to condemn the UK for its oil exploration activities in British waters around the Islands. It has also tabled a further claim in relation to the waters before the United Nations.

It is well known that Spain and Argentina cooperate closely when it comes to furthering their respective claims and that what happens in one area has often had a bearing on the other. The projected opening of the frontier in April 1982, for instance, was postponed as a result of the Falklands war. The United Kingdom has been resolute in its defence of the waters around the Falkland Islands at a political level in the present dispute. They should do the same with the waters around Gibraltar.

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