

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

30/2010

11 March 2010

The news that there have been at least six incidents between the Guardia Civil and the Royal Navy in the last few weeks shows that Madrid has no respect for the sovereignty, jurisdiction and control that Gibraltar exercises over the sea around the Rock. It is obvious that the time has come for the Gibraltar Government to increase the capacity of its maritime resources as it suggested it was going to do during the budget debate in June last year.

At the time of the budget, the Chief Minister told Parliament that the Government intended to do all it could to put an end to the Spanish incursions, even though it was not their primary responsibility. The House was told that the upholding and defence of Gibraltar's waters was the constitutional responsibility of the United Kingdom. Mr Caruana said: "I do not have a navy and I do not have a diplomatic service. However, the Government of Gibraltar certainly has jurisdictional competences for official acts in Gibraltar waters, and we are certainly intending to upgrade our investment to make much more senior our assets to uphold them." Parliament was told that this involved the installation of the new VTS system and "the acquisition of vessels of a much more important size and capacity with which to exercise and enforce our jurisdictional competences and our statutory obligations."

During the committee stage of the budget debate the Opposition was told, however, that there was provision for these vessels "only in the most notional sense" and that there was no "substantive" provision for them in the estimates. In October, four months later, Opposition spokesman Dr Joseph Garcia, asked in Parliament how many larger vessels the Government intended to purchase, at what cost and which department these vessels would come under. The answer was that the matter was currently under consideration at that time. Given this response, at the last question-time in February, Dr Garcia again probed the matter further and was told that no policy decision had been taken on how many vessels to purchase, at what cost, or which departments these vessels would come under, even though it was still the policy of the Government to purchase such vessels.

The latest information on the continuing incursions which have been leaked to the Spanish media suggests that action is promptly required in order to keep the agencies of the Spanish state out of our waters. The Civil Guard have complained that they are the victims of "harassment" at the hands of the Royal Navy and the Royal Gibraltar Police. They claim that they expected this "harassment" to cease after the UK Ambassador to Madrid was summoned to protest when the Royal Navy used a flag with similar colours to those of Spain's

national flag as target practice. The Civil Guard have said that instead of the so-called "harassment" coming to an end after the protest, it has intensified.

The Opposition considers that it is absolutely ridiculous for the Civil Guard to maintain that they are being harassed. The reality is that for many months it is they who have been infringing the sovereignty of the waters around Gibraltar in a campaign of hostility and provocation. The Government gave a commitment to Parliament that it would act to increase the capability of its maritime resources in order to put an end to the Spanish incursions. In view of the continuing incursions since that commitment was given, which included one into the Port and onto the land territory of Gibraltar itself, it is about time that action was taken.

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