

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

**69/2010**

**26 May 2010**

The antics of the patrol boats of the Spanish state in the waters around Gibraltar are not only intolerable from a political point of view but they also pose a danger to shipping in our territorial waters. This follows the latest incident last week which involved a patrol boat and a cruise liner.

The Opposition understands that last Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> the cruise liner “Grand Princess” was leaving the north mole and heading out into the Bay. A launch belonging to Spain’s Servicio de Vigilancia Aduanera (SVA) was chasing a small Spanish boat inside Gibraltar waters and very close to the cruise ship itself. The SVA then proceeded to stop the small boat right in front of the path of the cruise liner, knowing full well that there was no way in which it could stop in time. The cruise liner maintained its course and both Spanish vessels then moved quickly north out of the way into the waters in the Spanish side of the Bay.

The Opposition considers that the continuing incursions by the Spanish Guardia Civil and SVA launches pose a threat and a hazard to shipping operations in and around the Port of Gibraltar. The fact is that they have no respect for our jurisdiction and that they operate in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters as if they were operating in Spain. It will be recalled that a few months ago a launch from the SVA was performing dangerous manoeuvres around a small boat in the entrance to the Port. The Guardia Civil patrol boat did the same to an RGP launch recently. This incident was filmed by a member of the public and it appeared in the media. Last year, after a Guardia Civil launch actually entered the Port itself at night, the Commander British Forces made it known that they would have been shot at if they had strayed into Admiralty waters inside the harbour instead.

The constant incursions by the agencies of the Spanish state inside Gibraltar waters are a matter for serious concern. This kind of behaviour by these foreign law enforcement agencies is irresponsible, reckless and could provoke a serious accident at any moment. There was no presence by the RGP or by the Royal Navy at the incident in front of the cruise ship last week. This suggests that there is a need for continuous sea-borne patrols in order to be able to respond promptly and protect the integrity of our sovereignty and our jurisdiction from this continuous abuse.