

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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It is obvious that certain Spanish politicians have nothing better to do than to blame Gibraltar for everything under the sun. Partido Popular MP Ignacio Landaluce has again accused Gibraltar's mobile telephone operators of interference with the signal of Spanish operators in the area around Gibraltar.

Mr Landaluce claims that there are mobile phone users in the vicinity of Gibraltar who have received bills of thousands of euros because their mobiles have been roaming on Gibraltar signals without their knowledge. He has further complained that these are not isolated cases but that it happens very frequently.

The PP MP has raised the issue in the Spanish Parliament and not being satisfied with the reply has now called on the Spanish Government to make a formal protest to the United Kingdom.

It is clear that Mr Landaluce has a bee in his bonnet when it comes to Gibraltar. His statements time and again show a complete ignorance of the facts which is quite incredible for a man in his position.

It is very common for the mobile telephone signals from different countries to overlap in frontier areas. This is not something which happens only at the frontier between Gibraltar and Spain nor is it something which happens only to Spanish mobile telephone users in this area. The reverse is also common. The signals from Spanish operators can also be picked up by users in Gibraltar. Indeed, in Europa Point it is common to pick up also the mobile telephone signals from companies based in Morocco as well!

Mr Landaluce should know that the solution to this problem is really very simple. Practically all mobile telephones these days allow the subscriber to select the telephone company that they want to use to make a call. This can be permanently set and recorded on the mobile so that stronger signals from elsewhere do not replace the signal from the preferred operator. This means that people in the Campo in the vicinity of Gibraltar would then not receive the invoices for roaming charges that they have complained to him about.

It is not the role of the Opposition in Gibraltar to give practical advice to the citizens of the Spanish hinterland in order to reduce their telephone bills. However, the fact is that Mr Landaluce, in his continuing obsession with Gibraltar, appears to be more concerned with attacking Gibraltar than in solving the problem that he has complained about.

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