

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The latest incident between a Guardia Civil patrol boat and an RGP launch suggests that the maritime capability of the police needs to be upgraded if the Government is serious about tackling the continuing incursions.

The Opposition has received eyewitness reports of another incident which took place recently in the afternoon of Thursday 17th June in the early evening . A large Guardia Civil patrol boat was observed moving along the new mole in La Linea and it then entered the area of Western Beach. It turned around to go out again and was met by an RGP launch when it reached the end of the runway. The Guardia Civil patrol boat, which was much larger than the RGP launch, then proceeded to accelerate directly towards the RGP and it turned sharply on approach creating a large wave which could have affected the stability of the RGP vessel. The Civil Guard then proceeded to speed towards Spanish waters followed by the RGP launch which gave up the chase after a few minutes.

The Opposition consider that there are a number of very serious issues related to both sovereignty and safety that arise from this latest incident. The first is that the Guardia Civil have no right to enter the waters in the area of Western Beach or any other part of Gibraltar's territorial sea because these waters belong to Gibraltar and not to Spain. The second point is that the behaviour of the Spanish officers poses a threat to the safety of other sea users including in this case the RGP itself.

It is clear from the latest series of incidents that the Guardia Civil have stepped up a gear in their challenge to Gibraltar's jurisdiction over the waters that surround the Rock. Whereas before they were content to pass or patrol through our waters, now they are engaging in dangerous and hostile manouvres against the maritime assets of both the Royal Navy and the Royal Gibraltar Police.

The Opposition considers that the blatant acts of defiance and provocation that the RGP is being subjected to on a daily basis are totally unacceptable. The time has come for the Government to live up to the commitment that it made a year ago to increase the capability of Gibraltar's maritime resources in order to meet the on-going threat from Spain to our sovereignty, our safety and our security at sea.